

Homeland Security Scorecards Reinforce Need for a National First Responder Communications Strategy and a “Date Certain”

Washington, D.C. – January 3, 2007 – The following statement should be attributed to Steven Jones, Executive Director of the First Response Coalition (FRC – www.firstresponsecoalition.org):

“The Department of Homeland Security’s just-released Nationwide Interoperable Communications Assessment shows that while some cities may be making some progress on public safety communications interoperability, many have a long way to go. First responder communications are still compromised by inadequate planning, insufficient resources, and a lack of coordination. The findings in this DHS study and the dire warnings in many other government reports on interoperability failures cannot continue to go unheeded. It is time to put words into action. **The FRC urges President Bush to immediately follow the release of this report with the establishment of a national strategy and target date within the next decade to achieve interoperable first responder communications so they can better protect our communities.**”

Background

On June 20, 2006, the First Response Coalition called upon President George W. Bush to commit the country to solving the public safety communications crisis within the next decade. Just as President John F. Kennedy in 1961 challenged the nation to send a man to the moon, the FRC believes President Bush can and should make a similar national commitment and announce his support for full first responder interoperability by the August 29, 2006 anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. [The FRC’s letter to the President and issue brief are available here.](#)

Once the President has committed to a date certain, the FRC recommends the following actions be taken to begin the process of achieving nationwide interoperability:

- 1. The White House should host a National Interoperability Summit**, with participants from the first response community, telecommunications and technology industries, scholars and experts, and policymakers to develop a roadmap for achieving interoperability.
- 2. The federal interoperability grant process must be streamlined to provide greater transparency and accountability.** Congress needs to designate funds specifically for interoperability projects in the states, and states and localities must work together to identify how interoperability funds are being spent at the local level.
- 3. A clear and effective process for state and local collaboration, as well as between government and industry, needs to be developed.** National coordination and a set of interoperability standards will help put all the affected parties on the path to seamless nationwide communications systems.

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About the FRC - <http://www.firstresponsecoalition.org/>

The FRC is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization promoting the needs of America’s first responders in the areas of communications interoperability and data/information preparedness. The FRC represents the broad spectrum of first responders and their “friends and family” – the communities and individuals served by first responders everyday. The First Response Coalition consists of tens of thousands of concerned citizens and first responders, as well as numerous advocacy groups. These organizations have joined our campaign because they understand that when we protect first responders we protect ourselves.