

State of New Hampshire

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COMMISSIONER OF SAFETY



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DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY NEWS RELEASE

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SAFETY DEPARTMENT RECEIVES FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS GRANT

CONCORD, N.H. - The State of New Hampshire will receive \$5,966,760 under the federal Public Safety Interoperable Communications Grant Program (PSIC) from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Safety Commissioner John Barthelmes announced Friday.

The purpose of the grant is to provide funding that will enhance the ability of public safety agencies to further build interoperable communications capabilities.

"Interoperable communications" refers to the ability of state, county and local police and fire departments and emergency medical responders to communicate with one another by voice or data on common radio frequencies during an emergency.

New Hampshire has invested approximately \$50 million in the past 10 years in purchasing and providing new radio systems for state and local emergency response agencies and is considered to be far ahead of most of the states in promoting the concept of interoperable communications for all statewide first responders, including hospitals. All the new mobile and portable radio systems and base stations issued to date are capable of digital voice communications over multiple frequencies. That enables first responders from one part of the state to assist those in another part of the state and communicate on the local jurisdiction's frequency.

"This is a process that has taken us years to get where we are today, and with technology continually advancing and changing, this additional federal money will enable us to pursue additional opportunities for statewide collaboration amongst state, county, local and even federal first responders as well as neighboring states to enhance communication capabilities," Commissioner Barthelmes said.

"Although this grant has mandatory requirements to provide communications in the 700 Megahertz band which is not currently in use by state and local governments, we believe this grant offers some opportunities for additional exchange of digital data among first responders," he said. "In addition to the mandatory requirements we will also be able to use the grant to continue to enhance our existing high-band VHF communications." he said.

(MORE)

Communications grant

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The funds will not be available to the states until March 2008 and project completions will be scheduled by September 2010. According to the Commissioner, a representative group of state, county and local stakeholders will be involved in a tandem effort to finalize a Statewide Interoperability Plan and to assist in prioritizing PSIC investments that align with the strict grant guidance yet make sense for New Hampshire's first responders.

Future local and county competitive applications will be considered for the pre-designated federal investment priorities, and under the terms of this grant, will require a 20 percent local funding match.

Additional information will be posted by Safety's Grants Management Office at <http://www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/homeland/index.html>