

Lisa Fowlkes

From: Lisa Fowlkes
Sent: Tuesday, April 11, 2006 3:04 PM
To: Lisa Fowlkes
Subject: RE: COMMENTS

FCC General Email Box
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear FCC General Email Box,

As a member of the First Response Coalition (FRC), I applaud the initiative of the "Hurricane Katrina Independent Panel" and urge you to work aggressively to solve the emergency communications interoperability crisis.

Ironically, ever since public safety agencies began using radios, emergency personnel have faced challenges communicating with one another. Often, first responders in the same jurisdiction are unable to communicate directly with one another, complicating emergency operations. Following the 2001 terror attacks, the media provided extensive coverage of the communications and interoperability problems that plagued emergency response efforts in New York City and Washington, D.C. The 9/11 Commission report even identified communications failures among first responders in New York as a contributing cause to the death of over one hundred firefighters.

On the heels of the 9/11 Commission's findings, policymakers made repeated promises to give first responders the resources they need to save lives and property... yet nothing was done. Four years later, Hurricane Katrina once again exposed the severe communications deficiencies that frustrate an effective emergency response. We cannot allow these communications problems to plague first responders in another disaster.

I support the First Response Coalition's following priorities, and think the Independent Panel should, too:

1. Our nation needs a national policy to improve first responder communications interoperability. Currently, local departments are unable to link their communications systems with state and federal emergency response agencies. When first responders can't communicate they are unable to coordinate an effective response.
2. Additional spectrum should be allocated to public safety. Although recent legislation provided an additional 24 MHz of spectrum to public safety as part of the transition to digital television, this spectrum will not be available until 2009. Moreover, it is unlikely 24 MHz will be sufficient to accommodate new data and voice technologies.
3. Additional funding is necessary to solve the communications interoperability crisis. Now that a "hard date" for the transition to digital television is set, the remaining 700 MHz spectrum is set to be auctioned, generating over \$12 billion. Panel members should support the immediate appropriation of a portion of the funds from the auction to first responders so that they may acquire the communications equipment they need to

provide an effective emergency response.

Thank you for taking an active role in helping to solve the emergency communications and interoperability crisis. The work you are doing is incredibly important to all Americans.

Sincerely,

Nayeem Aslam

