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News Brief

700 MHz Demonstration Broadband Network Planned for Mid-2010 (12/16/09)
The federal government will establish a demonstration 700 MHz broadband network for public safety by mid-2010. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced plans to create the network for the nation's emergency services agencies using a portion of the spectrum freed by the recent transition of U.S. broadcast television from analog to digital technologies.

This demonstration network is currently in the preliminary planning stages and is expected to go live in mid-2010. The new system will provide a common demonstration site for manufacturers, carriers and public-safety agencies to test and evaluate advanced broadband communications equipment and software tailored specifically to the needs of emergency first responders.

There are currently no government or independent laboratory facilities in the United States to test and demonstrate the public-safety specific behaviors of a 700

MHz broadband network, and the applications that could run on top of it, said federal officials. To address this critical gap, NIST and NTIA, through the joint Public Safety Communications Research (PSCR) program, will begin building the network to provide manufacturers with a site for early deployment of their systems, an opportunity to evaluate technologies in a multivendor environment, and create integration opportunities for commercial service providers.

A national broadband network could offer public-safety groups around the country access to advanced communications technologies including video, mapping and GPS applications, and other applications. Emergency responders, vendors, carriers, academia and other pertinent stakeholders also will able to access the demonstration network.

"This is an excellent opportunity for NIST and the PSCR to leverage our skills and assets to ensure the successful adoption and deployment of a new, nationwide communications system for public safety," said Dereck Orr, PSCR program manager. "The demonstration of these new technologies, implementations and services is a critical step in successfully deploying the next generation of mission-critical systems."

The PSCR program is a partnership of the NIST Office of Law Enforcement Standards and the NTIA's Institute for Telecommunication Sciences (ITS). PSCR provides objective technical support — research, development, testing and evaluation — to foster nationwide public-safety communications interoperability. Interested industry and public-safety representatives can contact Orr at dereck.orr@nist.gov or Jeff Bratcher at jbratcher@its.bldrdoc.gov for information on how to get involved.

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