# NIST Posts Comments on Public Safety Communications Network

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Commercial standards, created in an open forum and publically available, should be a key feature of a broadband communications network for the nation's emergency services, according to public comments garnered by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). The value of an open commercial standards process for interoperability, innovation and affordability was echoed in many of the comments made in response to a NIST request* last September for suggestions on the planned emergency services network.

Comments came from 29 sources in industry, academia, public safety associations, state and local entities, and private citizens. The portfolio of the comments received by NIST may be viewed at www.nist.gov/oles/public_safety.cfm.

This request for information coincides with the ongoing development of a demonstration test bed of the network by the joint NIST-National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Public Safety Communications Research (PSCR) program. The network would use a portion of the 700 megahertz (MHz) radio frequency spectrum, and the test bed will provide a common site for manufacturers, carriers and public safety agencies to evaluate advanced broadband communications equipment and software tailored specifically to the needs of emergency first responders.

Other recurring subjects in the submitted comments include:

- the need for an open and collaborative process for prioritizing research and development initiatives;
- the value of an open application platform (a set of codes and specifications that software programs can use to "interface" or communicate with each other) such as the Application Programming Interface (API);
- the benefits of network sharing capabilities; and
- the possibility of the network including government-to-citizen communications.

In addition to these topics, several research and development priorities were seen throughout the majority of the submissions. These focused primarily on functions and

features that are not currently utilized by commercial markets, specifically Direct Mode/Talk Around, Priority/Pre-emption, Quality of Service and security/access control.

The PSCR program is a partnership of the NIST Law Enforcement Standards Office and NTIA's Institute for Telecommunication Sciences. PSCR provides objective technical support—research, development, testing and evaluation—in order to foster nationwide public safety communications interoperability. More information is available on the PSCR Web site at www.pscr.gov.

* "NIST Seeks Comments to Help Build Public Safety Communications Network." NIST *Tech Beat*, Sept. 13, 2011, www.nist.gov//public_affairs/tech-beat/tb20110913.cfm#network.