



**Interoperable Emergency Communications: Does  
the National Broadband Plan Meet the Needs of  
First Responders?**

**Oral Testimony of**

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Mr. Chairman:

I am Jeffrey Johnson, president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and chief of the Tualatin Valley Fire Department in Beaverton, Oregon. I thank you for the opportunity to discuss H.R. 5081 which allocates the D Block of spectrum directly to public safety. This is a top priority for America's fire service leadership and the only one for the Public Safety Alliance. (PSA membership list attached)

On behalf of the IAFC and the partners of the Public Safety Alliance, I thank Representatives Peter King and Yvette Clark as well as over 50 cosponsors – and the number is growing – who clearly understand public safety's need for this unique slice of spectrum. As you are aware, the US Senate has also introduced legislation which will accomplish this goal. We are grateful for this response from Congress for what is public safety's most important issue.

Over the past fifty years, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has allocated thin slices of spectrum to public safety as the need for more communications capability arose. Currently, 55,000 public safety agencies operate mission critical radio systems - each with their own FCC license - over 6 or more different bands. Our goal of interoperability is difficult; it is expensive. This is no criticism of the FCC; this is just the way it has always been done. After the events of 9-11, Katrina and other major disasters, it is clear that a new model is necessary: that is a national architecture for public safety wireless communications.

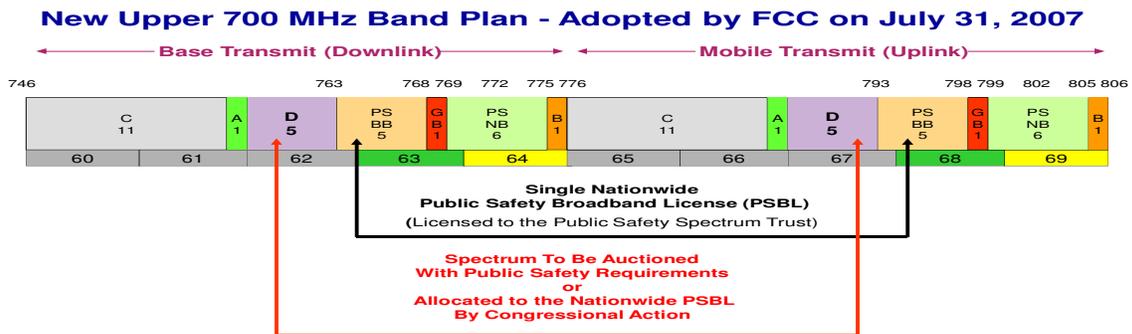
To achieve a nationwide, public safety, wireless, interoperable, broadband network, a single licensee and a single technology is required operating on a network with sufficient capacity to handle day to day operations as well as the capability to manage major incidents. This network needs to be mission critical at the outset. In the beginning, this system will handle only data and video. At some future time – years away – we envision a possible transition to mission critical voice, namely Radio over IP. We all need to take a long term view – to start out with sufficient spectrum so that we will have the ability to migrate to mission critical voice if technology eventually supports it. This will happen when the technology is developed and public safety has confidence in it.

The following elements of mission critical are key to a successful public safety network:

- The network must be hardened to public safety standards. This means towers must be able to withstand the elements that might disable them. Towers in hurricane-prone areas and tornado alleys must be designed accordingly. Back up electrical power must be available 24/7.
- Public safety must have control over it. We cannot have commercial providers deciding what is or is not an emergency and what is the priority. Public safety transmissions have to go through at the moment – without delay. The lives of fire fighters, the lives of medics, the lives of law enforcement officers depend on this. This is our responsibility.
- The public safety mission critical voice network must have the ability to broadcast and receive one-to-one and one-to-many and the ability to broadcast and receive without the network infrastructure being operative. This is called “talk around” capability – also known as simplex. This is a command and control imperative. You know that we operate under extremely hazardous conditions. If the network, for any reason, cannot provide connectivity, then we need the capability to communicate without the network. This means communicating in the simplex mode. And, that is the heart of public safety communications.
- The network must have back up capabilities in the event of network loss. We envision satellite capability for the network to be available when a tower is disabled. Satellite can also cover remote areas that don't have towers. Our mission is geography oriented whereas commercial carriers are concerned with population.

Here are some of the critical needs that can be met with broadband data and video in the fire service: building diagrams, hydrant locations, haz-mat inventories, traffic controls that clear the response routes, real time video to improve situational awareness, wildland fire thermal and weather imaging, video feed of trauma patients directly to the ER, freeway traffic cameras streamed to responders so that the precise location and severity of an incident can be accurately determined. The list is endless. And I can tell you that law enforcement has its own long list.

The point is, in order to achieve a nationwide public safety broadband network to provide connectivity coast to coast, border to border, we need the 10 MHz of D Block of spectrum, currently slated for FCC auction, to be added to the current 10 MHz of spectrum licensed to the Public Safety Broadband Licensee to build out a 20 MHz network. You can see on the spectrum chart, below, that this is the ideal spectrum. The public safety block abuts the D Block. This is perfect for public safety.



Only with this particular spectrum configuration, and none other, can public safety be assured that it will have the ability to build the network it needs now and into the future. This is yours and our one-time opportunity to get this right.

We urge prompt and timely passage of HR 5081.

Mr. Chairman, we want to assure you and your colleagues that we are working tirelessly with Members of Congress, the FCC, Department of Homeland Security and others in the administration to achieve this public safety communications landmark.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here this morning. Now I am available to respond to any questions you may have.

# The Public Safety Alliance

The Public Safety Alliance is a partnership with the nation's leading public safety associations, which includes International Association of Chiefs of Police, International Association of Fire Chiefs, National Sheriffs Association, Major Cities Chiefs Association, Major County Sheriffs Association, Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association, International, National Emergency Management Association and APCO. The partnership is operated as a program of the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) International.

The purpose of the Public Safety Alliance's is to ensure law enforcement, fire and EMS agencies are able to use the most technologically advanced communications capability that meets the difficult, life-threatening challenges they face every day as they protect America.

The goal of the Public Safety Alliance is to raise awareness in Congress and the White House about what our Nation's law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services need to build out a nationwide, interoperable, 4G, wireless communications network to protect America.



International Association of Chiefs of Police | International Association of Fire Chiefs  
National Sheriffs Association | Major Cities Chiefs Association  
Major County Sheriffs Association | Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association  
Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials International  
National Emergency Management Association