



ACTION MEMO

TO: State and Local Decision-Makers / Elected and Appointed Officials
FROM: SAFECOM and the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC)
SUBJECT: Promoting the Importance of Funding and Sustaining Land Mobile Radio (LMR) Systems

Background: Since the 1930s, public safety agencies have deployed land mobile radio (LMR) to support mission-critical communications. State, local, tribal, and territorial agencies have invested millions of dollars in LMR systems and as a result, there is significant infrastructure in place. Its constant use has enabled responders to adapt LMR technology to a variety of scenarios, which has proved invaluable at keeping responders and the public safe. LMR systems are a daily lifeline for emergency responders; system infrastructure and equipment need continual maintenance to ensure effective, reliable, and secure operations.

LMR and FirstNet: Although the federal government is allocating funding for FirstNet, officials must understand the public safety community will continue to rely on LMR as a primary means of communications. The community will likely integrate new or improved LMR capabilities, features, functions, and services for years to come to elongate the return on the sizable investments. Public safety agencies recognize that LMR systems provide a crucial capability during response operations—mission-critical voice communications—that will not be immediately available through FirstNet. Therefore, public safety agencies must continue to seek funding for LMR systems, equipment, and enhancements in order to sustain and improve mission-critical voice communications among public safety responders.

Recommended Actions: SAFECOM and NCSWIC recommend that public safety agencies and their decision-makers refer to the following best practices:

- **Inform decision-makers and elected officials about LMR systems and capabilities.** Leverage the [LMR Trio](#) and [LMR Brochure](#) to educate public safety officials on LMR technologies and issues. Officials should know that LMR systems are like other technologies and must be regularly updated or replaced.
- **Provide funding and resources for technology refresh and/or system replacement.** LMR systems require resources for ongoing maintenance, operations, and lifecycle upgrades. Officials can leverage the [Funding Mechanisms Guide](#) and the [Value Analysis Guide](#) for information on how to find and prioritize funding for public safety communications systems.
- **Support the people managing LMR systems within your state, territory, or tribe.** Fully fund the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) in your state/territory, their staff, and others managing LMR systems. Without a designated, full-time SWIC or SWIC Program, states/territories are not eligible for certain federal grants. To find the SWIC in your state, visit the [NCSWIC membership website](#).
- **Adhere to the technical standards provided in the annual [SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants](#).** Purchase Project 25 (P25) compliant equipment to ensure LMR systems are compatible with other P25 systems from different manufacturers. Officials should convey required technical standards to leadership, prospective vendors, and expected interoperability partners.
- **Align investments to your Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP).** Ensure purchases support your state or territory's strategic direction and reflect annual planning efforts in the SCIP.

To ensure the public safety community follows a unified approach, officials should reference SAFECOM and NCSWIC materials when considering interoperable communications. This practice will help public safety agencies: 1) avoid costly investments in solutions and devices that may not provide comparable voice services; 2) maintain funding for LMR systems; and 3) ensure mission-critical voice capabilities are available for emergency responders. We thank you for your continued support.

Chief Gerald Reardon Ret.
SAFECOM Chair
Cambridge, MA Fire Department

John Miller
NCSWIC Chair
New Jersey Statewide Interoperability Coordinator