

# Spring 2022 Bi-Annual Meeting

June 6 - 9 | Coronado, CA



## Joint SAFECOM-National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC) Executive Summary | Wednesday, June 8, 2022

### Welcome Back, SAFECOM!

Chief Gerald Reardon, SAFECOM Chair and SAFECOM At-Large (City of Cambridge Fire Department, Massachusetts), welcomed members to the first in-person SAFECOM meeting since November 2019. He acknowledged upcoming and recent departures of long-time SAFECOM members:

- Rick Comerford, International Association of Emergency Managers
- Michael Murphy, SAFECOM At-Large (Baker Police Department, Louisiana)
- Jon Olson, National EMS Management Association
- Theron Rutyna, National Congress of American Indians
- Captain John Vallarelli, SAFECOM At-Large (Metropolitan Transportation Authority Police Department, New York)

Chief Reardon also welcomed new SAFECOM members who joined since the previous virtual engagement in May 2021:

- Kurt Anzelmo, National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (Alternate)
- Brooks Shannon, National Emergency Number Association (Alternate)
- Jesse Cooper, Major Cities Chiefs Association
- Chief Glenn Hanson, International Association of Chiefs of Police (Alternate)
- Deputy Chief Keith Kelley, International Association of Chiefs of Police
- Bill Phillips, National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System
- Deputy Chief Chris Sadler, DRONERESONDERS Public Safety Alliance



Photo: SAFECOM Membership, June 2022

## SAFECOM SCHOOL & NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION

Tuesday, June 7, 2022

The Education and Outreach Committee hosted the SAFECOM School & New Member Orientation, Tuesday, June 7. Special guest speakers included Chief Gerald Reardon, SAFECOM Chair; Deputy Chief Chris Lombard, First Vice Chair; and Lloyd Mitchell, SAFECOM Funding and Sustainment Committee Chair.

Attendees included 10 of SAFECOM's newest members who spent the evening learning about SAFECOM's history, goals, objectives, and mission. Discussions were also held on

protecting the SAFECOM brand including member responsibilities, code of conduct, and an in-depth review of the 1993 Hatch Act. Members were also introduced to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA) role in SAFECOM and received an overview of CISA resources and key federal staff who support SAFECOM. At the conclusion of the SAFECOM School, new and veteran members convened for a networking dinner.



*Photo: Deputy Chief Chris Lombard and Mr. J.M. Rowe presenting during the SAFECOM School*

## Real-World Event: Radio Access Authorization



*Photo: Seized radios with unauthorized programming and transmitting capabilities in Stark County, Ohio*

Rick Schmah, Ohio Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), and Jim Jarvis, CISA, Emergency Communications Coordinator for Region 5, paneled a session on how Ohio's Department of Administrative Services, Office of Information Technology worked to implement radio authentication, sometimes referred to as link layer authentication, and considered other solutions to combat unauthorized use of its statewide Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) for criminal activity.

MARCS is a 700/800 MHz radio and data network that utilizes trunked technology to provide statewide interoperability to its subscribers throughout Ohio and a 10-mile radius outside of Ohio. Radio authentication through MARCS is becoming an increasingly important component in saving lives of first responders and eliminating illicit radio programming while also ensuring proper radio programming and Project 25 (P25) standard compliance. The panelists illustrated the need for radio authentication by sharing two cases involving the unauthorized use of MARCS for illegal activity. In both cases, criminals were able to access the protected channels due to a weak encryption system and lack of radio authentication. As a result, the information they were able to receive from the channels was used to aid their illegal activities, such as theft. Panelists recognized link layer authentication as a necessity to minimize the use of unauthorized radio access. In December 2020, the P25 steering committee, with the help of CISA, voted to adopt the policy that includes P25 radio authentication. MARCS is the first public safety/service operator to initiate P25 radio authentication implementation on such a large scale. MARCS and the P25 steering committee are committed to making it a best practice for securing trunked radio systems. Panelists concluded the session by addressing concerns regarding funding for implementing radio authentication and enforcing link layer authentication when some responders still see encryption and codes as an effective method of securing channels. Mr. Jarvis recommended submitting a regional grant request, articulating the justification and needs for radio authentication to obtain funding.

## COVID Response Efforts: Rapid Establishment of Systems

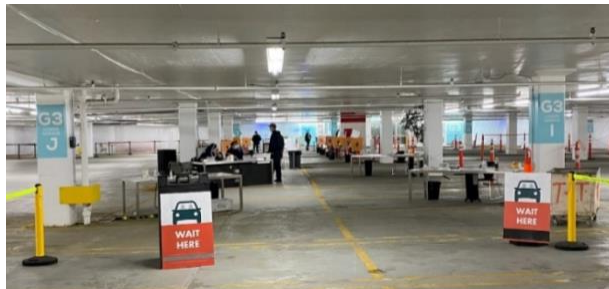


Photo: Converted shopping mall garage into COVID vaccination site

To kick off the second session of the day, Chief Gerald Reardon, SAFECOM Chair and SAFECOM At-Large (City of Cambridge Fire Department, Massachusetts); Annah Akasa, Washington D.C. Deputy SWIC; and Andi Baughn, Indiana Deputy SWIC, shared emergency communications successes while establishing ad hoc clinics, Alternate Care Sites (ACS), and distribution points during the pandemic. Chief Reardon stated that finding locations for such sites, keeping up with wireless communications, and making sure individuals were virtually connected while in these sites were great challenges. Additionally, following Health Insurance

Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines to make sure patient information was completely confidential was an extremely challenging task. The Communications Unit Leader (COML) and the Communications Technician (COMT) were instrumental to the success of these sites and demonstrated their value when establishing them, whether provided through the state or federally.



Photos: ACS established at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C. (Left) and a drive-thru clinic at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Indiana (Right)

Annah Akasa and Andi Baughn shared their experiences operating ad hoc clinics and ACS. Ms. Akasa supported communications for the Walter E. Washington Convention Center ACS in Washington D.C. From construction to operationalization, the process to assess possible ACS sites, award the contract, and construct and fit-out the site only took six weeks. Key to its success was engaging with partners and stakeholders early and often, including key agencies within the District; federal partners such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services, and the US Army Corps of Engineers; Defense/Military support through the National Guard and Department of Defense; as well as support from Events DC and the Medical Operator (Medstar Health). In assessing a potential site, the District relied on best practices learned from other cities, such as New York, Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, and Los Angeles. The District took into account sites with existing infrastructure to reduce time and costs, such as utilities, backup power, loading docks, kitchen, office space, fire suppression, ventilation, information technology, bathrooms, and Americans with Disabilities Act compliance. Key accomplishments from the experience included senior leadership engagement and buy-in; relationship building; and identifying the tools required ahead of time. Challenges included lack of overall documentation and the feeling of “building the plane while flying it,” as well as technology solution implementation and migration.

Ms. Baughn supported communications for Indiana, including at a drive-thru clinic at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Indiana, which is the largest stadium for a sporting event in Indiana. This ACS was run by the state along with FEMA. Ms. Baughn overcame different challenges while coordinating with FEMA. For example, the federally requested COML was unfamiliar with FirstNet, which is dominant in the state’s emergency communication systems. Ms. Baughn also encountered challenges in the form of a missing Information Technology Service Unit Leader. Ms. Baughn and her team were reliant on the National Guard for filling these gaps and fostered a great relationship to efficiently provide services to the citizens of Indiana.

## Eliminating In-Building "Wireless Dead Zones"

John Foley, Managing Director of the [Safer Buildings Coalition](#) (SBC), introduced the ongoing challenge of wireless "dead zones." He detailed various components, such as energy efficient glass, that negatively impact signal in a building and shared the most common solutions to improve signal. For example, if a structure has a weak signal, the building owner, contractor, and/or code officials may authorize the installation of an Emergency Responder Communications Enhancement System (ERCES). The system provides reliable communication from within a building for first responders to communicate with each other as well as their central dispatch. However, some buildings also utilize signal boosters, which the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) states can only be used in weak signal areas. When utilized improperly, unauthorized signal boosters cause harmful public safety radio interference that may disrupt a building's ERCES.



### 3 Pillars of In-Building Public Safety Communications:



Image: Safer Buildings Coalition's 3 Pillars of In-Building Public Safety Communications

Mr. Foley detailed his work as a member of the SBC No Noise Task Force, which promotes information on in-building wireless communications; collaboration among the government, industry, and public safety stakeholders; and alignment of building codes across organizations. Specifically, he works to identify and report the improper use of signal boosters or any other devices that cause noise on public safety radio. Mr. Foley invited Steve Devine, Director of FirstNet Strategy and Policy for AT&T, to join him in answering questions regarding vendors' motivations for selling equipment, compliance solutions for smaller communities with limited budgets, and clarification on who is responsible for different types of compliance testing.

## Priority Services for Emergency Communications



Dawn Manga, CISA, discussed the latest updates for CISA Priority Telecommunications Services (PTS) and impacts on emergency communications. Recently, the [PTS Dialer App](#) for Government Emergency Telecommunications Services (GETS) and Wireless Priority Service (WPS) was updated for functionality on both iOS and Android devices. The app provides users a streamlined way of making priority calls when landline networks or cellular networks are congested. The app is now available on Apple's App Store and Google Play.

Ms. Manga highlighted ongoing collaboration with service providers like FirstNet as CISA works to align their messaging with vendor partners when it comes to the advertisement of priority telecommunication services. Various providers have started including CISA branding in their marketing materials, a major step forward in creating a trusted partnership between the federal government and industry service providers.

As CISA looks to build on existing resources to best support their stakeholders, they will be looking to hire additional operations staff, as well as technology and requirements subject matter experts. In addition, CISA will be executing more contracts in the upcoming fiscal year focused on the governance of cyber resiliency in Next Generation 911 (NG911) systems.

## Using Unmanned Aerial System and Drone Technology in Public Safety

Sheriff Paul Fitzgerald, National Sheriffs' Association, introduced Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) Team Leader Jason Grubbs and Lieutenant Gary Backous of the Story County Sheriff's Office, Iowa. In 2019, Story County established a committee to develop standard operating procedures for public safety UAS operations in support of public safety response efforts. UAS can help with natural disasters, crime scenes, and fire response efforts, and can allow local police departments to view and clear buildings from a distance. UAS can also deliver instructions to people and personnel who are stranded or unable to access a communications network. In April 2022, the Story County Sheriff's Office UAS Team won an [Association of Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International - XCELLENCE Award for "XCELLENCE in Mission" for Public Safety](#). Story County distinguished itself by its commitment to public safety in 2021 as it responded to several high-profile incidents. These events included the tragic drowning of multiple Iowa State University Rowing Team members, a train derailment in Ames, and the conduct of multiple high-risk search warrants in support of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration, and local law enforcement. Story County Sheriff's Office also frequently helped locate missing people and assisted volunteer fire departments with their thermal imaging.



Photo: Story County Sheriff's Office UAS Team operating a UAS (Credit: Story County Sheriff's Office)



Photo: Chula Vista Police Department operating a UAS (Credit: CVPD)

Captain Miriam Foxx, [Chula Vista Police Department](#), stated that her department serves the second largest city in San Diego County. The department has no helicopter unit and relies on UAS for airborne support. In May 2018, Chula Vista was selected as one of 10 testing sites for drone usage in the country. At the time, Chula Vista only had one launch site and flight data was manually tracked. Today, the department has city-wide coverage and flight data is managed by an Air Data Computer system. Chula Vista can use UAS technology to respond immediately to multiple situations but does not use UAS for surveillance purposes. To build trust and maintain transparency with the public, Chula Vista only operates a UAS in emergency situations and the community can view the flight path and reason for its current location and use. The department would like to implement a stronger drone presence and fully automated flights in the near future.

Deputy Chief Chris Sadler, [DRONERESPONDERS Public Safety Alliance](#), stated that his association has over 4,000 members in 75 countries. Members coordinate to share knowledge and best practices on UAS usage primarily in the areas of firefighting, traffic accidents, disaster response, locating a lost person, and hazmat operations. UAS technology also creates an opportunity to livestream intelligence information from a distance and capture recordings and images.

### Now What? A Look at the New Normal for Emergency Communications

Deputy Chief Chris Lombard, SAFECOM First Vice Chair, moderated a discussion to explore how the emergency communications community has changed during the pandemic to create new potential areas of interest for SAFECOM, including key public safety issues on the horizon and how SAFECOM can help solve these issues. Key areas of interest included:

- Identifying concerns with the FirstNet reauthorization ([H.R. 6788](#))
- Clarifying actions to address [911 fee diversions](#)
- Supporting [4.9 GHz](#) and [5.9 GHz](#) preservation for public safety
- Advocating for [Z-Axis](#) accuracy compliance



**DRONERESPONDERS**

- Continuing to advocate for public safety use of [T-Band spectrum](#)
- Identifying how SAFECOM can support the [sunsetting of 3G](#)
- Considering alternative funding (e.g., auction proceeds, similar to FirstNet) for [NG911](#)
- Supporting the reduction of legislative barriers between the [FCC and NTIA](#)
- Opposing imposition of proposed [administrative fees on Amateur Radio](#) users

## SAFECOM Member Spotlight: All-Hazards Incident Management Teams Association



Paul Broyles provided a SAFECOM Member Spotlight presentation on the [All-Hazards Incident Management Teams Association \(AHIMTA\)](#). Founded in 2010, AHIMTA is a dedicated group of incident management, emergency management, and public safety professionals from all disciplines seeking to promote, support, and enhance the profession of incident management. AHIMTA aims to accomplish these goals by

establishing standards and promoting the cooperation of federal, state, local, and tribal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector in all phases of incident management.

Some of AHIMTA's most notable accomplishments are the publication of the [Interstate Incident Management Qualification Systems \(IIMQS\) Guide](#), All-Hazards Type 3 Command and General Staff position descriptions and [position task books](#), and [mission ready package for type 3 incident management teams \(IMT\)](#), and attaining a seat on the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) Advisory Board. Mr. Broyles specifically highlighted the IIMQS, which provides a minimum standard that states are encouraged to adopt for consistency in IMT personnel qualifications across the U.S., particularly for EMAC deployments. Currently, there are 13 states who have adopted the IIMQS with an end goal of nationwide adoption.



*Photo: Paul Broyles, AHIMTA, presenting the SAFECOM Member Spotlight*