



December 21, 2005

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Donna Wells, Public Information Officer, Washington State Department of Information Services, 360-902-9882; e-mail [donnawe@dis.wa.gov](mailto:donnawe@dis.wa.gov)

**Washington moves forward to implement a statewide interoperable public safety communications system**

**OLYMPIA, Wash.** -- The tragedy of September 11, 2001, and the recent hurricanes that devastated portions of the southern United States created an urgent need for public safety agencies across the nation to examine how they communicate with each other in times of disaster.

Many police, fire, emergency medical personnel, and other first responders operate different radio communications systems and frequencies that often do not allow them to communicate with each other. This slows their ability to function in all types of situations – whether it's a natural disaster, an accident, or a terrorist attack.

**State develops technical plan to improve public safety communications**

To address this communications issue, the Washington State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) developed the Technical Implementation Plan (TIP). The TIP is a critical milestone in the effort to improve public safety communications interoperability in Washington state. Interoperability allows public safety personnel to communicate on demand and in real time across jurisdictions and disciplines. The TIP outlines the costs and the implementation process, and identifies the critical factors and next steps the state must take to advance the plan.

**SIEC selects proposed system to help public safety personnel communicate in real time and on demand**

The SIEC selected a multiple subsystems architecture. This approach is a centrally-managed system of systems and is not restricted to a single frequency band or technology. It will allow the state to leverage existing radio systems in all the public safety radio bands, and provide a phased migration to a standards-based architecture infrastructure – establishing a fully interoperable radio system. This will also enable local governments to partner with the state to provide greater levels of interoperability.

Pending funding, the SIEC will implement the proposed system over a six-year period, starting with a one-year procurement phase that includes developing detailed technical specifications, and selecting and procuring the system's technical components.

-- more--

Agencies that use the proposed system will maintain control over their portable and mobile radios, dispatch centers and console equipment.

SIEC members and key stakeholders will continue to provide oversight and planning, and manage the development and enforcement of standards.

### **Significant benefits of the proposed system**

The improvements will provide public safety personnel:

- statewide coverage enhancements for mutual aid.
- signal and voice quality improvements resulting from digital technology.
- system functionality additions for mutual aid and mobile data.
- additional user capabilities.
- interoperability with other state, federal, local and tribal government agencies.

The real value to Washington state includes:

- avoiding potentially redundant costs by implementing shared systems between agencies that can consolidate fixed assets.
- increasing productivity as a result of better coordination between first responders.
- improving public safety by increasing interoperability for all system users with wide area roaming and secure communications for voice and data channels.

### **State estimates proposed system costs**

The estimated system acquisition and recurring costs are as follows:

- The cost to acquire the proposed system will total approximately \$257 million over the six-year implementation period.
- Proposed system recurring operation and maintenance costs will total \$177 million over the next ten years.

The initial costs to implement the proposed system are in addition to the planned expenditures to operate and maintain state agencies' existing systems during the transition period. SIEC members expect to see the costs of the new system decrease over time as existing equipment is replaced.

### **Next steps**

During the next several months, SIEC members will communicate the details of the TIP and the state's effort to advance the plan to stakeholders. You are encouraged to identify how the plan aligns with interoperable communication projects in your community by contacting the staff of the SIEC or your SIEC representative directly. To look up the name and e-mail address of your SIEC representative, visit the SIEC Web site at <http://isb.wa.gov/committees/siec/members.aspx>.

In other activities, Governor Christine Gregoire included \$500,000 for equipment and staff in her supplemental budget proposal released on December 20, 2005. Her proposal, if funded by the Washington State Legislature, will deploy interoperable communications equipment to help local public safety providers improve their readiness, cooperation and coordination.

To read the TIP, visit the SIEC Web site at <http://isb.wa.gov/committees/siec/index.aspx>. For more information or questions, contact Dennis Hausman, staff to the SIEC, at 360-902-3463 or via e-mail at [dennish@dis.wa.gov](mailto:dennish@dis.wa.gov).