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## **NEARS Partner Organizations and E9-1-1 Institute Co-Sponsor Emergency Alerting and Response Demonstration**

June 16, 2005, Washington, D.C. – National organizations representing every facet of emergency response conducted a live demonstration of the National Emergency Alerting and Response Systems (NEARS) technologies before a capacity crowd of Capitol Hill staffers who focus on Homeland Security and Emergency Response issues. NEARS is a non-profit, cooperative effort to demonstrate an effective approach for interagency messaging.

Hosted by Senators Conrad Burns (R-MT) and Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and sponsored by the 17 NEARS Partner and Supporting Organizations and the E9-1-1 Institute, the event was part of an ongoing educational campaign to make policymakers aware of the collaborative efforts to demonstrate and deploy interoperable emergency data messaging. THE NEARS approach uses national emergency message and data standards, commercial information technologies, and a shared, electronic directory of agencies called the Emergency Provider Access Directory (EPAD). This directory gives agencies the ability to register for emergency messages based on their geography, incident interest and agency type. The live demonstration showcased two emergency scenarios. The first demonstrated emergency message exchange for a hazmat incident that required extensive public warning and alert capabilities. The second showcased a smallpox bioterrorism event indicating how just-in-training can be incorporated to improve disease detection. Both scenarios incorporated a variety of software tools used by emergency responders today.

“The NEARS initiative represents the next stage in emergency communications,” Senator Burns noted. “It solves the problem of equipment interoperability, which has hindered first-responders for many years. But it also moves emergency communications from a voice to a data platform, which allows the first-responders to have many, many more tools at their disposal to save lives. I am proud to have sponsored legislation that helped establish the NEARS program and I will continue to support this program in the future.” Senator Clinton noted, “The lack of secure and effective communications among public safety organizations is a serious concern and should be addressed immediately.

However, through bold initiatives like NEARS, we are taking a substantive step in ensuring that there is cooperation and information sharing among those public safety agencies responding to emergencies.”

"The NEARS Initiative not only propels emergency communications out of a voice-centric world and into a new realm of enhanced information sharing between public safety, first responders, and the public to respond to a crisis; but it also solves the age-old riddle of interoperability. This is an exciting development for public safety," stated the Honorable Gregory Rohde, Executive Director of the E9-1-1 Institute, who moderated the event.

Dr. Jack Potter, Director of Emergency Medical Services for Valley Health Systems, and the Vice Chair of COMCARE, said: "The ability for agencies to share emergency data messages across professional and jurisdictional boundaries using commercial technologies that best suit their needs on a day-to-day basis is what will enable a fast, accurate, and efficient response to major emergencies."

Other panelists included: Inspector Lou Cannon, U.S. Mint Police and DC Fraternal Order of Police Lodge President; Patrick Halley, Government Affairs Director for NENA; Chief Will Chappleau, City of Chicago Heights, Chief of Fire Department and Director of Emergency Management Agency; and Edward Caleca, Vice President of Technology, Distribution, and Operations for PBS. The demonstration was introduced by COMCARE Chair Richard Taylor, Executive Director of the N.C. Wireless 9-1-1 Board and past president of the National Emergency Number Association (NENA).

NEARS is a three-track initiative that when complete, has the potential to cut costs for emergency response agencies, improve the efficiency of emergency operations and facilitate information sharing – allowing agencies to save time and lives within the communities they serve.

NEARS Partner Organizations include the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), the American Public Health Association (APHA), the Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA), the Brain Trauma Foundation (BTF), COMCARE, the Emergency Interoperability Consortium (EIC), the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA), the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), the George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute (GWHSPI), the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), the National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP), the National Association of EMTs (NAEMT), the National Association of State EMS Directors (NASEMSD), the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), and the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC). Supporting Organizations include the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA).

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