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CONTACT: Dale Curtis  
(202) 715-1520, Nena\_media@yahoo.com

## **NENA Initiatives Provide Stronger Framework for Modernization of Nation's 9-1-1 Services**

*Telecom and Public Safety Leaders Recap Year-Long Effort  
Addressing 9-1-1 Operations, Technology, Policy, and Funding;  
Work Products Include Cost Estimates, PSAP Guidelines, and Policy Report*

Washington, DC – The National Emergency Number Association (NENA) today unveiled the first-year results of an ongoing campaign to accelerate modernization of the nation's 9-1-1 services.

In a briefing for reporters at the National Press Club in Washington, NENA described a year-long series of expert studies and leadership consultations on the steps needed to speed upgrades of 9-1-1 services, especially automatic location technology for wireless callers (called "wireless enhanced 9-1-1," or wireless E9-1-1). The work was carried out under the auspices of NENA's Strategic Wireless Action Team (SWAT), which was launched in November 2002.

The NENA SWAT work products include:

- The first detailed estimate of E9-1-1 infrastructure requirements and costs, both current and projected, as well as the estimated timeframes and costs of various solutions;
- A detailed *Operational Evaluation Checklist* for use by emergency call centers, also known as public safety answering points (PSAPs);
- A *PSAP Staffing Guidelines Report* to assist PSAPs in evaluating their staffing and budget needs;
- An analysis of more than 400 counties and tribal nations that still have only a basic voice response with no automatic data on any caller's location or call back number;
- Specific and customized technical assistance to more than a dozen states, localities and Native American tribes; and
- A report reflecting the state of the dialogue among 9-1-1 system stakeholders, including major telecommunications carriers, public safety groups, 9-1-1 technology providers, and government leaders.

The various tracks of the overall initiative worked together to create the most detailed picture ever of the nation's 9-1-1 challenge in an era of heightened concern for public and personal security.

"The NENA SWAT Initiative has delivered the most detailed set of tools and resources ever assembled to support modernization of the nation's 9-1-1 system," said Richard Taylor, president of NENA and executive director of the North Carolina Wireless 9-1-1 Board. "We are proud of this work and grateful to our partners. But now it's up to an even broader set of leaders to make E9-1-1 a top priority and get the job done, for the sake of our families, our communities, and our homeland security."

John Melcher, chairman of the NENA SWAT Initiative and deputy director of the Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network in Houston, added: "For too long, the 9-1-1 system has been characterized by fragmented responsibility and inadequate resources. We launched this initiative in the belief that getting the right people together in the same room, and developing a common information base, would result in a new framework for progress. And indeed, we have forged a new sense of partnership and possibilities. But there's a lot more work to be done."

### **Wireless E9-1-1 Spreading Across U.S. in Uneven Pattern; Public Places High Priority on Faster Action**

One of the most notable results of the SWAT project is an expert analysis that concludes only half of all PSAPs will have the ability to locate wireless callers with any precision by the end of 2005, roughly eight years after the federal government ordered such technologies, and four years past the initial government deadline.

The analysis, conducted by the Monitor Group, a global professional advisory firm, projects the number of call centers with precise location capability (called "Phase II") could grow to 80 percent by 2010, up from 20 percent at the end of 2003. But despite that welcome progress, an incomplete patchwork of protection will continue to leave millions of wireless callers in potential danger if they cannot tell dispatchers where they are.

Although wireless E9-1-1 technology is readily available, a variety of technical, policy, and funding problems have complicated its adoption. An inability to locate wireless callers has been a factor in a growing number of tragic accidents and crimes.

Another analysis revealed that Americans are practically unanimous in placing a very high priority on upgrading the 9-1-1 system. A survey of 2,712 Americans showed that nearly 60 percent believe that today's homeland security environment increases the importance of the 9-1-1 system. After hearing a description of wireless E9-1-1, 99 percent said it was important that this technology be provided as rapidly as possible, with 75 percent calling it "very important."

Survey respondents also rated E9-1-1 at least as important as a number of other public policy priorities, including education (59% say 9-1-1 is more important), universal health insurance (65%), highway maintenance (75%), and homeland security (75%).

## **Insights and Directions for Future Action**

Another notable product of the SWAT project is a policy report by Monitor Group based on a year-long dialogue among all of the stakeholders in the 9-1-1 system: telecom carriers, public safety groups, 9-1-1 technology providers, and government leaders. The report outlines a set of observations and findings aimed at speeding nationwide deployment of wireless E9-1-1.

Despite different perspectives, the stakeholders are united on guiding principles for wireless E9-1-1, including ubiquity, efficient use of scarce resources, fairness, timely deployment, “future proofing,” and maintenance of service quality. At the same time, they recognized several constraints, including the need to work with more than 6,000 diverse, locally managed 9-1-1 systems, and the need to work within the confines of political and economic reality.

Although many details of implementation remain to be resolved, the stakeholders agreed on several general findings:

- Although all parties must do more, state governments should bear an increasing level of responsibility and accountability for adoption of Phase II wireless E9-1-1.
- Policy makers should address system-wide funding gaps that are estimated to total more than \$1 billion per year.
- More effective coordination at all levels, with a focus at the state level, is essential to progress. Closer coordination should be broadly encouraged and bears repeated emphasis for states that are dramatically behind in deployment of Phase II services.
- Performance requirements for wireless service providers should be technology neutral and focused on adherence to existing consent decrees, as well as responsiveness to new requests for Phase II deployment by PSAPs.
- “Future proofing” the E9-1-1 system – making it compatible with emerging new features, infrastructures, and devices – is a critical and urgent matter warranting continued review and attention by policymakers, business leaders and technical experts alike.
- Deploying wireless E9-1-1 in rural areas presents unique challenges with respect to accuracy and costs, requiring additional attention from all parties.

The 9-1-1 stakeholders said further action on these findings should help accelerate nationwide deployment of wireless E9-1-1 and other advanced technologies. But they emphasized that much work still remains to be done, and ever-closer cooperation will be needed to convert the findings into actual solutions.

## **Congress on Verge of Action**

Today’s media briefing comes in the midst of major Congressional action on the 9-1-1 system. In November, the House approved a bill (H.R. 2898) that would provide for federal matching grants to states for 9-1-1 system upgrades, and impose conditions on such aid. Senate leaders have confirmed that a companion bill (S. 1250) is expected to

come to a vote in the near future. NENA supports both bills and is working with the sponsors and other members of the Congressional E91-1 Caucus to finalize the legislation and send it to President Bush for his signature.

The SWAT Initiative was also designed to complement several other E9-1-1 projects, including the Federal Communications Commission's E9-1-1 Coordination Initiative; the Department of Transportation's Secretarial Initiative; the E9-1-1 Institute's Wireless Networks Committee; and the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials' Project Locate.

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*A not-for-profit corporation, the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) is the only organization dedicated solely to the study, advancement, and implementation of 9-1-1 as America's universal emergency number. For more information, visit [www.nena.org](http://www.nena.org).*