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NENA Creates Nationwide Initiative to Advance Telecommunicator Emergency Response Teams

More than 100 NENA and APCO Chapter Representatives and 9-1-1 leaders from two dozen states attend inaugural meeting October 25th in Greensboro, NC.

ARLINGTON, VA. (October 27, 2005) - In the chaotic aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma, the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) has formed a new task force to develop and implement a national system of telecommunicator emergency response teams to safeguard 9-1-1 service during times of critical need. The new task force, consisting of NENA leaders, NENA and APCO state chapter representatives and other 9-1-1 professionals, convened a special meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina, on October 25th to kick off the effort. More than 100 people, from two dozen states, came for the meeting. A second meeting on the topic is planned in Anaheim, California, on January 23rd in connection with the California NENA Chapter's annual meeting.

NENA's goal is to assist the effort in helping states to be ready to systematically deploy trained, recognized teams of telecommunicators whenever a local 9-1-1 infrastructure is compromised by a natural disaster or terrorist event. In addition to several other states, North Carolina is a recognized leader in this area with its TERT program (Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce). After Katrina struck, the N.C. TERT received a formal request through the state Office of Emergency Management within the national Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) to deploy and assist with PSAP staffing in St. Tammany's Parish in Louisiana. Other states also provided remarkable examples of assistance with TERT-like teams, often on an ad hoc basis.

Attendees in Greensboro heard first hand from communication center managers working in the Gulf Coast, as well as telecommunicators and TERT team leaders who were deployed there. In addition they were addressed by Dwayne West, President of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), and participated in a series of lively question-and-answer sessions throughout the day. Attendees also received detailed "how to" information and resources to enable them to create their own teams.

An important goal for the day-long meeting was to develop consensus from national and regional leaders for priorities and task force responsibilities. Jason Barbour, ENP, NENA Second Vice President, and co-

founder of North Carolina's TERT, will head the task force. "We're extremely pleased with the interest our members have shown to help their colleagues in time of need," said Barbour. "This meeting reinforced the need to move this initiative forward on a national basis."

Out of the dialogue from attendees, the following key issues emerged:

- It is important that NENA represent 9-1-1 interests in coordinating with the federal resources and leadership, specifically FEMA and EMAC.
- Each state should be encouraged to create their own TERT program; NENA can assist in providing resources for champions in each state.
- NENA should hold a Critical Issues Forum or other educational program on TERT in Washington DC in the next year and include instruction during the National Conference in Pittsburgh in June.
- The creation of a nationwide state-by-state database of state TERT coordinators needs to be developed and promoted with a standardized template so that PSAPs in need can be matched with appropriate resources.

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About NENA

NENA's mission is to foster the technological advancement, availability, and implementation of a universal emergency telephone number system. In carrying out its mission, NENA promotes research, planning, training and education. The protection of human life, the preservation of property and the maintenance of general community security are among NENA's objectives. With more than 7,000 members in 46 chapters across the U.S. and Canada, NENA serves as "The Voice of 9-1-1" through policy advocacy, the establishment of national standards, certification and testing programs, and a wide variety of educational offerings. For more information, visit www.nena.org.