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CONTACT: Patrick Halley
(202) 466-4911, media@nena.org

NENA and VON Coalition Host VoIP E9-1-1 Solution Summit

FCC Commissioner Abernathy addresses over 100 participants who came together to discuss solutions to meet the FCC VoIP E9-1-1 Order

Washington, DC – Over 100 participants from industry and the 9-1-1 community came together yesterday at the first ever “VoIP E9-1-1 Solution Summit” to discuss key issues concerning the FCC’s Order establishing E9-1-1 requirements for IP-enabled service providers. Co-hosted by NENA and the VON Coalition, the event was primarily intended for VoIP providers and their vendors to facilitate and expand an open dialogue on the actions needed to enable national solutions for VoIP E9-1-1.

Addressing the group, NENA President David Jones called for increased cooperation and collaboration among all parties involved in the public-private partnership that is 9-1-1. He said, “If we truly intend to advance E9-1-1, to surmount the challenges before us, to reach our goal of making E9-1-1 available to everyone, everywhere, at any time, we will need a great deal of cooperation and collaboration.” Jones added, “We must learn from the lessons of wireless E9-1-1 and make all attempts to craft national solutions in establishing E9-1-1 for VoIP. A national coordination effort is crucial and NENA looks forward to lending a hand in this effort.”

Welcoming attendees, VON Coalition President, Staci Pies also emphasized the need for collaboration. Referencing the history of cooperation between the VON Coalition and NENA, beginning with the historic agreement to establish, adopt, and deploy industry standards for the delivery of E9-1-1 services, she observed that the Solution Summit would ensure that all critical entities were part of the dialogue. Most importantly, she noted that the Summit “will enable interconnected VoIP providers, ILEC owners of the emergency services infrastructure, vendors, and 9-1-1 entities to work together to ensure not only that consumers will receive the traditional emergency services that they have come to expect, but that we are all better positioned to deliver the robust and innovative emergency services of the future.”

FCC Commissioner Kathleen Abernathy provided the keynote address focusing on the importance of creating and maintaining an atmosphere that rewards innovation and welcomes diversity in meeting the FCC’s order and future IP enabled emergency services. She said, “As we implement the Commission’s E9-1-1 mandate, we must be thinking about how to encourage the deployment of innovative new offerings that use IP’s unique features to save more lives.”

In addition to the discussion of the FCC Order, a legislative panel discussed the “IP Enabled Voice Communications and Public Safety Act of 2005”, VoIP legislation that

was recently introduced by Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) and Congressman Bart Gordon (D-TN). Legislative Counsel to Senator Nelson, Mike Sozan, and Legislative Director for Congressman John Shimkus (R-IL), Ray Fitzgerald, provided an overview of the VoIP legislation and its status in the House and Senate. Fitzgerald also highlighted the importance to the issues being discussed of funding the provisions authorized in the ENHANCE 911 Act of 2004, namely a national 9-1-1 program office and a federal 9-1-1 grant program to upgrade Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) capabilities. NENA is currently working with the Congressional E9-1-1 Caucus to secure funding in this years appropriation bill to fund the ENHANCE 911 Act.

By day's end, a number of issues needing additional attention were identified including areas where industry and 9-1-1 entities must work together to move forward. NENA and the VON Coalition are in the process of drafting a report on the results of the summit and will be publishing them on their web sites in the near future. The E9-1-1 Solution Summit was the first of many needed discussions that NENA and the VON Coalition look forward to facilitating to ensure all parties are working collaboratively to meet this Order.

Facilitating discussion and identifying areas of needed cooperative attention is one of many ongoing efforts of NENA in this area, along with developing national 9-1-1 standards and much needed education and outreach to the 9-1-1 community. Stemming from its Future Path Plan released in 2002, NENA is also leading the effort to bring all parties together, public and private, to design the future 9-1-1 system through its next generation (NG) E9-1-1 Program.

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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.