

# ECN Fall Update – 2021

## DIRECT FROM DANA



Welcome to autumn, Emergency Communication Networks (ECN) Team! Where did summer go?! We have been busier than ever during this final quarter of 2021, and I am grateful for the diligence, dedication, and enthusiasm shown by every member of our great team.

As you know, ECN has returned to a telework environment through the end of 2021. Staff members may schedule time to come into the office on a limited basis as required to execute duties that may not be performed remotely, and all conference presentations or participation must be conducted virtually. Accordingly, all Statewide Emergency Communication Board (SECB) meetings will be held virtually through the end of the year as well. SECB committee chairs may still elect to hold in-person meetings, but with the proviso that they arrange for a virtual option if support from ECN is desired.

## “To Everything There is a Season...”



As a division, we take a moment to bid a fond farewell to Assistant Commissioner Bruce West as he retires after many years of distinguished service to the State of Minnesota. We share the excitement of your upcoming retirement with you and your family, AC West, and we wish you a long, happy, and healthy retirement doing all the things you most enjoy. We would be remiss, however, if we didn't add that we are REALLY going to miss you! Thank you for your support of ECN as a division of DPS, and for your unwavering leadership of the SECB during the time you served as board chair.

On a more somber note, we also mark the unexpected recent passing of Commissioner Dennis Kemp of Nicollet County. Commissioner Kemp was a much-esteemed member of the SECB Legislative, Finance, and Steering Committees until his death on Wednesday, September 29. He was an accomplished public servant with a gift for teaching others in the fields of law enforcement, the fire service, and emergency medical services, in addition to being a man who cared deeply about his family, friends, and colleagues.



## Exercise, Anyone?

Our hearty congratulations go to Akiko Nakamura who successfully finished her first-ever marathon at the annual Grandma's Marathon in Duluth in June. Here she is, looking both strong and happy at mile 23! Congratulations Akiko; we are proud of your achievement and so glad that you are a member of the ECN team!



Meanwhile, several ECN staff members participated in a different form of exercise on August 26, 2021, when several ECN staff members participated in a full-scale emergency-response exercise that was conducted at the U.S - Canadian border near Ranier, Minnesota in Koochiching County. The exercise, sponsored by the Koochiching County Sheriff's Office, was the result of nearly three years of planning and conducting smaller exercises leading up to the event. Participants included federal, state, and local resources from the U.S. and Canada who responded to a simulated train derailment involving a hazardous materials spill on the Rainy River crossing. Capabilities were assessed on operational coordination and communications, public alert and warning, and several levels of emergency services response. ECN's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Program Manager John Dooley and Regional Interoperability Coordinator (RIC) Marcus Bruning served as incident evaluators. Their roles gave them the opportunity to educate and test PSAP personnel, area leadership and responders. The exercise was an excellent opportunity to assess and to increase communication capabilities, effectiveness, and efficiencies. The event also served as an opportunity for ECN to provide subject-matter expertise to others and to further establish and reinforce our role in supporting Minnesota's public safety community.

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We also give a special shout-out to RIC Steve Tait for recently taking the time to teach the fire departments, ambulance services, and sheriff's office of Mower County.

Mower County Emergency Manager Amy Lammey praised his work, stating that, "The tabletop [exercise] was perfect for our need, and our responders had great take-away information; in fact, one of our volunteer fire departments is having a large community event and used Steve's knowledge and suggestions to make the event safer. [We] hope to have the opportunity to invite him down in 2022 to expand on this year's training."

Thank you for your heart of service, Steve!

## Welcome Back, Dave!

ECN is happy to extend a warm "welcome back" to Dave Denton, who recently returned from another 180-day deployment on military orders. We are so glad to have him back on the ECN team again, especially since, with such a small staff and a large scope of responsibility, every staff vacancy impacts our ability to meet the demands placed on our division. Deepest thanks to those staff members who willingly accepted "other duties as assigned" while Dave, once again, served our country with distinction. Thank you, Dave, for your service!

## FCC 911 Fee Diversion Strike Force

The FCC 911 Fee Diversion Strike Force completed and submitted its report by the required September 23, 2021 deadline. The work that this group accomplished this summer will help Congress and the FCC Commission determine the best next steps to take to end the practice of 911 fee diversion. Please find the document here: <https://www.fcc.gov/file/21893/download>

## Save the Date - RSEM Webex!

Please mark your calendars and make plans to join us for the next Regional Stakeholders Engagement Meeting to be held via Webex on Monday, October 25, 2021 from 9 a.m. until 11 a.m. Please see directly below for the agenda for our time together:

### Agenda:

- **Statewide Emergency Communication Board (SECB) updates, including:**
    - 2022 Board/Committee Representation
    - 911 Telecommunicator Work Groups
    - 403 Statute Rewrite Project
    - 2022 – 2024 Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP)
  - **Regional Emergency Communications/Emergency Services Board updates, including:**
    - Strategic Planning
  - **DPS-ECN Program updates, including:**
    - PSAP Cybersecurity Initiative
    - Upcoming Training Opportunities
- 2022 – 2023 SECB Grant Projects

## Upcoming Webinars in 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from hosting our annual conference in both 2019 and 2020, but throughout 2021, ECN has been presenting an ongoing series of educational, informational webinars. These trainings provide stakeholders with opportunities to learn more about governance, technology, and the operational aspects of ECN's four core emergency communication systems: 9-1-1, Land Mobile Radio, Wireless Broadband, and the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System. Our topics in the fourth quarter include:

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## Q4 – 2021 Presentation Topics:

### **What is the Location of Your Emergency? 911 Caller Location Technology**

Tuesday, October 12, 2021 (0900 to 1100)

### **PSAP Continuity of Operations Planning**

Tuesday, October 26, 2021 (0900 to 1100)

### **The Statute 403 Rewrite Project**

Tuesday, November 9, 2021 (0900 to 1100)

### **Regional Planning and Grant Projects**

Tuesday, November 23, 2021 (0900 to 1100)

### **The 2022 – 2024 Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP)**

Tuesday, December 14, 2021 (0900 to 1100)

## Next Generation – 911

As of Sept. 20, the new Minnesota (MN) NG 911 GIS Data Validation and Aggregation Portal is now active. The data portal is a new tool which will be made available to local data providers. It will also contain the next validation step for preparing the data for use in NG 911: the Master Street Address Guide (MSAG) Validation. The portal will give data providers direct access to the validations, and will be the start of the transition for all validations to the new portal.

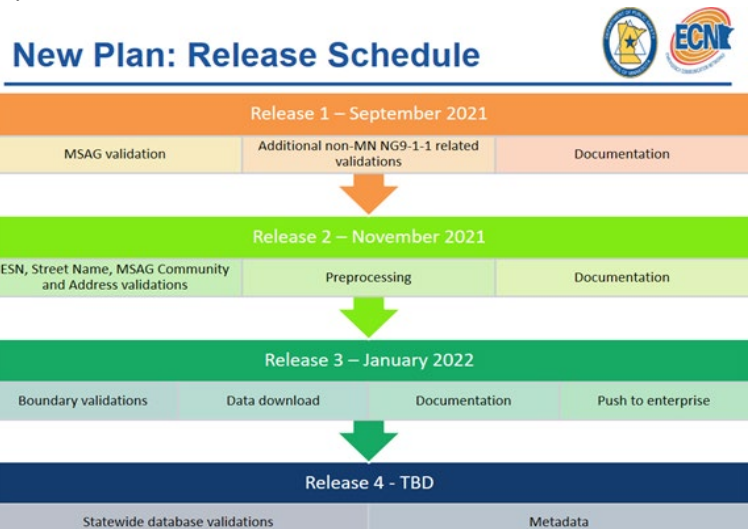
ECN worked through the summer with local stakeholders, 1Spatial and MnGeo to migrate ECN's current data validation process into its new platform 1DataGateway and 1Integrate. This platform will enable ECN to provide a web-based interface for county-level GIS data providers to validate and upload the GIS data that is the backbone of the Next Generation 911 core services solution (NGCS). The state will be issuing a request-for-proposal for this before year's end.

The NGCS, the role of users, and the need to automate the process were the driving forces behind these recent changes to NG 911. This valuable new platform will provide validation results to users in a format that easily aligns with local data sources and produces results almost in real-time. Additionally, this solution shifts the role of validating individual datasets to local data providers, leaving the aggregation and validation of the statewide dataset at the state level. Another benefit of the platform is that data from neighboring PSAPs will be available for download in either the MN NG 911 Data Model or in Geospatial Advisory Council (GAC) versions from the web-based portal.

ECN will accept all GAC non-911 attributes from local data providers and will store them in the statewide database.

MnGeo will be producing GAC versions of the locally-provided data, which will be available for local data providers to download. Thank you to all the county, tribal, and city data contributors! Your data is making a difference.

This first release in September featured the new road centerline (RCL) to master street address guide (MSAG) validation, in addition to a few non-911 validations that came with the 1Integrate solution. Please refer to the graphic for the current release schedule and expected functionality dates. With each release, ECN and MnGeo will provide comprehensive documentation for end-users and the MnGeo regional representative will be available to support the transition.



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## GIS

The Minnesota NG 911 GIS Hub i.e., the communication site, offers a one-stop location for information on the program and the weekly data preparation status of each PSAP. In August, the site had 271 unique visits. The top viewed pages, beyond the home page, were the status and resources pages, with the status page receiving 20.75% of the views. The dashboard shows that 35.2% of the counties are on or have completed address validation. That validation will be the last one offered under the current process.

Norm Anderson is the GIS Project Manager for ECN and MnGeo and may be reached at (651) 201-2483 or (651) 201-7559. Akiko Nakamura is also working on the project and may be reached at (651) 201-7558. Please feel free to contact either Norm or Akiko with questions related to the GIS project. More information about the GIS project may be found on ECN's NG 911 GIS Project website or on the Hub site.

## STATUSBOARD

On Wednesday, September 1, StatusBoard received an update with some new features that had been on the "wish list" for several years. Please note that the recommended browser is now Firefox; Users should no longer use Internet Explorer for accessing StatusBoard. Updates and reminders regarding StatusBoard include the following:

- **Password Reset:** If you do not remember your password, contact your StatusBoard administrator to request a password reset. When a password has been reset for a current user, that user will receive an email with the individual's temporary password. Please make sure that the contact email address is correct. For additional security, *you may no longer use a previous password.*
- **New Users:** When you create a new user, that individual will not receive an email with a password, since there is an initial password set for that function. Please contact ECN Standards and Training Coordinator, [Cathy Anderson](#) to obtain that information.
- **Auto Refresh:** StatusBoard automatically refreshes every 30 seconds; ***make sure to do a manual refresh before making any reservations so you have the most up-to-date information.***
- **Quick-Schedule Reservation and Alert:** Quick-schedules last FOUR hours. If you need the resource beyond that time, please reserve the resource again. An alert column has been added, and an asterisk (\*) will show up in that column 12-15 minutes before the reservation is set to expire.
- **Calendar Reservations and Overriding Another User's Reservation:** When you attempt to reserve a resource that is already reserved (quick-schedule or calendar), you will receive a prompt asking if you want to override the current reservation. Selecting "yes" will bump an existing reservation, and you will be reserving that resource, overriding the current reservation. If a quick-schedule or calendar reservation is bumped, the person who had the resource reserved will receive an email notification that his or her reservation has been bumped. ***Please do not bump other reservations.*** If you see the message "resource reserved," select a different talk group, if possible. Please also remember that a calendar reservation will show up within six hours of a quick-schedule. All calendar reservations are listed in the military time format with no colon.
- **Text Resource Notes:** When entering text resource notes for either a text resource or an existing reservation, please *do not use an apostrophe OR hit the "enter" key.* Using either of these may affect the ability to edit the text resource notes for that resource. Text resource notes will no longer disappear after seven days and will remain until a user deletes them.
- **Employee Resignation/Termination:** When an employee leaves your agency, do not delete that individual's user account; simply LOCK the account since, if the former employee made future reservations, deleting that person's name could adversely affect your agency profile.
- **Admin Tab:** ***Do not change any of the settings under the admin tab.*** Although anyone with admin status is able to make changes to anything within StatusBoard, only ECN or MnIT staff should use the admin tab.

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- **Sign Out:** Remember to log off of StatusBoard at the end of every shift. You will be automatically logged off StatusBoard after 24 hours if you have not logged off prior to that time. Browser updates may cause issues with StatusBoard, e.g., being automatically logged-off prior to the 24-hour period. If you experience issues like being logged off, *try deleting your shortcut and typing in the URL to create a new one.*

If you hear misuse on a talk group or see any agency using the incorrect interoperable resource, please contact ECN Standards and Training Coordinator, [mailto: cathy.anderson@state.mn.us](mailto:cathy.anderson@state.mn.us). Thank you!

## FirstNet

The attack on the World Trade Center in New York City happened twenty years ago on September 11, and many of the advancements to public safety communications since then happened as a direct result of that terrible event. FirstNet, the nation-wide Public Safety Broadband Network, is one of those advancements. Melinda Miller recently attended the Association of Professional Communications Officials (APCO) in San Antonio, Texas. She noted that attendees and presenters, most notably the FirstNet Authority, were deeply interested in continuing to improve the functionality of the network. They all share the same fundamental understanding that technology needs to help, not hinder, first responders.

Melinda reported that the FirstNet Authority is guiding standards, developing new products and working to improve device development on a public-safety-dedicated network. The FirstNet Authority team conference presentation discussed the status of FirstNet and goals for the network roadmap, asserting that the future of the network is in the hands of public safety authorities. As FirstNet Central is the tool for uplift and for outage maps, the functionality of FirstNet Central and the local control tool were highlighted in another session. The company's product development team discussed the factors that differentiate FirstNet from other commercial networks, not the least of which is FirstNet Authority oversight. In Minnesota, Becker County recently made the switch to FirstNet, and the county is relying on high-powered user equipment (HPUE) to increase the coverage that they have experienced to-date. Because HPUE devices have upwards of five times greater the wattage of typical commercial devices, it is possible that other counties will soon also count on HPUE.

Another conference presentation was delivered by the Texas Public Safety authorities who shared a test case highlighting its use of HPUE along the Rio Grande River. That team also shared a very interesting test case for Z-Axis use in the city of Austin, where the state capital building extends ten stories above and below ground.

In another presentation, public safety officials from Chandler, Ariz. introduced a new concept called "over-watch", which entails the use of videography within the PSAP facility. Over-watch is the practice of tasking analysts and operators in a 911 center to also monitor video and social media. The city of Chandler uses this function primarily to monitor officer safety.

In two separate sessions, AT&T provided insight into enhancements of the core network. The focus of the enhancements was to retain features like priority and preemption and some of the public safety specific features. Although FirstNet does not have millimeter wave spectrum designated, the core has been enhanced with 5G technology features.

Coverage is vital to maintaining the safety of Minnesotans, and AT&T has continued to roll-out band class 14 here, with recent deployments taking place in Baudette, the Kabetogama State Forest, and in Kellogg along the Mississippi River. Those deployments bring the total number of on-air, public-safety-designated towers to 15. This additional coverage has already proved to be a boon to public safety by supporting communication during this past summer's unprecedented forest fires. AT&T plans for the remaining eight public-safety-designated towers to be on-air by the end of 2022. Three of the remaining locations will assist with providing coverage within the tribal lands of the Red Lake Nation and in the area of Nett Lake.

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## Wireless Broadband

Strategic planning has been a high-priority project across the governance structure, and the SECB's Wireless Broadband and Applications Committee (WBBA) has been developing goals to include in the 2022 – 2024 Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP). The committee has focused on aligning its priorities and developing concrete objectives that will support wireless broadband in Minnesota. The committee has also prioritized the establishment of a Minnesota Field Operations Guide (MNFOG) chapter for wireless broadband, and reviewed committee goals at its meeting on Tuesday, September 21.



The most recent Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) from Broadband USA focuses on grant funding to tribal nations. This federal program is a \$980 million program directed toward tribal governments. It recently received 280 submissions under the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program to be used for broadband deployment on tribal lands, as well as for telehealth, distance learning, broadband affordability and digital inclusion. Funding for broadband has increased, overall; we invite you to learn more from the Office of Broadband Development and Broadband USA at [DEED](#).

If you would like to become involved with the important work of public safety wireless communications, consider this your invitation to attend the regular meetings of the Wireless Broadband Work Group. The meetings take place on the last Friday of each month at 11 a.m. via Webex. We hope to see you there!

## Communications Unit – Strategic Technology Reserve Workshop

ECN hosted a Communications Unit (COMU) – Strategic Technology Reserve (STR) Workshop at Camp Ripley from Aug. 23 through Aug. 25, drawing attendees from across the state. ECN staff members and trained COMU personnel facilitated discussions and shared first-hand experiences of integrating COMU and STR resources in response operations and communications planning for pre-planned events. FirstNet Authority representatives also shared an overview of communication resources available through the FirstNet Authority and AT&T. This included a look at deployable equipment and how to use tools such as an uplift request, which provides FirstNet users with elevated priority and preemption status during an emergency or planned event.

Participants also toured local and regional STR resources thanks to Alex Peterson, who brought up the Southwest Region's Emergency Communications Truck; Dan Anderson and Mike Ostlund demonstrated the communications capabilities of the Hennepin County Emergency Management Disaster Communications Trailer. Attendees also got a first-hand look and experience at setting up other STR equipment, which included Curt Meyer providing an overview of the Hennepin County Satellite-on-Wheels mobile ARMER site. Brandon Larson, City of St. Cloud, and others from the Central Region led participants through the set-up and demobilization process of the Central Region's STR repeater tower trailer.



The workshop earned very good ratings from participants who appreciated the chance to network with other statewide COMU personnel and requested more hands-on activities for future workshop events. ECN staff looks forward to scheduling its next COMU/STR workshop in 2022.

## IPAWS

Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) enhancements in December 2019 included the addition of the Public Safety category to the list of WEA categories (i.e., WEA handling codes). There are now four categories of WEA available to Alerting Authorities: Imminent Threat, Public Safety, AMBER (BCA only), and WEA Test. WEA handling codes are used for processing on the IPAWS side. Alerting Authorities can use the four categories listed above, and alerting software will allow you to choose based upon the event type.

**What is an Imminent Threat Alert?**

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- This alert type is used for an incident that poses a threat to preservation of life or property.

## What is a Public Safety Alert?

- This alert type is used for information on public safety situations (e.g., boil water notice, location of open shelters after a storm, etc.); it is not intended for life-threatening incidents where immediate action is necessary.
- A Public Safety Alert however, must follow up on an alert previously sent, such as:
  - Conserve water: needed to fight fire at plant, previous Civil Danger Warning (CDW).
  - Storm shelter open now, after a National Weather Service (NWS)-issued tornado (TOR) warning.

## Which alert should I send?

Points to consider when issuing a Public Safety Alert instead of an Imminent Threat Alert:

- Is the situation non-life threatening, but informing the public may be beneficial?
- Will the alert minimize public concern?
- Will the alert minimize impact on local call centers?

## What is the difference?

Simply put, the difference is in the presentation of the alert on the cellular handset.

## What does that mean?

Whether Imminent Threat or Public Safety, the alerts will transmit exactly the same through IPAWS.

The WEA Emergency Alert banner, however, will display differently. Imminent Threat alerts will display as “Emergency Alert” while Public Safety alerts will display the banner “Public Safety Alert.” Please refer to the example images below.

### EMERGENCY ALERTS

#### Emergency Alert

This is a message from the Malheur County Sheriffs Office. There is a fast moving fire in the area of Highway 201 N MP 7-8. Residents in the area, please be ready for emergency evacuations. Have a plan and be prepared to leave should the need arise. Authorities are in the area going door to door attempting to make contact with home owners.

### EMERGENCY ALERTS

now

#### Public Safety Alert

Norfolk Department of Public Health is now in Phase 2 COVID-19 vaccination. All Norfolk residents ages 16+ are eligible. You must preregister through [vaccinate.virginia.gov](https://vaccinate.virginia.gov) or call 1-877-VAX-IN-VA (877-829-4682), which is open 7 days a week, 8am-8pm. Now is the time to protect your family, friends, and self.

## What Are You Permitted to Send?

As an Alerting Authority, permissions are approved by state reviewing official [John Dooley](#). Permissions are based on the event code, as listed in the state Emergency Alert System (EAS) plan and your Public Alerting Application (PAA) worksheet. Please refer to the [Best Practices Guidance](#) manual for more information.

## Grants

On June 30, the performance period for two Minnesota DPS-ECN grant programs ended: the Telephone Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Training (T-CPR) grant and the 2020-2021 State Emergency Communications Board (SECB) grant. Under the T-CPR grant, approximately \$100,000 was made available to PSAPs to achieve compliance with SECB Standard 911-3 (Telephone CPR Statewide Operation Standard) and the T-CPR provisions of Minnesota State Statute 403.03. In the short performance period between April 1 and June 30, 70% of this fund was spent on training to meet the grant requirements. The reduction of overall cost was due to many PSAPs electing to use virtual training rather than in-person training, due to the short timeline of the grant and the ongoing restrictions surrounding in-person meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020-2021 SECB grant, which closed on June 30, is an 18-month, every-other-year grant, to invest in strengthening interoperable communication systems. Regional boards spent nearly \$850,000 under this grant program. Thank you to all who participated in these programs.

Applications for regional funding were due to DPS-ECN by Friday, October 8 for the SECB 2022-2023 grant program. Materials related to the grant have been posted on the ECN website. They include grant guidelines, a one-page fact sheet, the application form, and a work plan form. Please contact ECN Grants Coordinator, [Rebecca Roberts](#), or your regional grant coordinator with questions.

Work continues for the NG 911 suite of grants. Awarded in late 2019, the grant performance period will close at the end of March 2022. ECN assessed the performance of funding allocated to the regions for uses such as GIS data preparation, a CAD-to-CAD study, and CPE purchases in this quarter. The assessment found that some counties and PSAPs are unable to utilize all of the original allocation due to changes in staffing, availability, and the supplanting guidelines set forth by the federal government. ECN is in the process of exploring alternative spending options for these funds. Approximately \$500,000 of the overall grant may be returned to the federal government at the end of the grant period if an alternative expense cannot be identified and approved. The division is coordinating with the regions to identify viable alternatives and will provide updates as projects are reviewed.

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## Finance Update

The public safety 2022-2023 biennial budget doubled the annual appropriation to PSAPs. In FY21, the total amount distributed to PSAPs was \$13,644,000. In FY22, the appropriation total grew to \$27,328,000. As a direct result, the July distribution payments to PSAPs, the first of the new fiscal year, were twice the usual amount.

Due to updated population data, the PSAPs saw monthly distribution amounts change once again with the August distribution. Half of the appropriation is divided evenly, while the other half of the appropriation is apportioned according to population numbers [see: Minn. Statute 403.113 subdivision 2(a)]. Data for the 2020 Census became available in August, so the distribution formula was updated prior to the disbursement of August payments. The amount that each PSAP received for August will be its monthly distribution amount going forward.

Questions? Please contact [Claire Thomas](#) or 651-478-0089.

That's it for this time, ECN Team!