Emergency Communication Networks (ECN) is extremely grateful to welcome Dan Craigie back as our 9-1-1 Program Manager. We have missed his enthusiasm and leadership over the past 13 weeks, and we know he will jump right back in where he left off to guide our multiple 9-1-1 program initiatives to fruition.

Please remember Chris and Cathy are both out on medical leaves of absence. Cathy is expected to return on Dec. 9, and Chris before the end of the year. Dave Denton’s military orders were extended 361 days on Oct.1.

We intend to begin the hiring process to add staff: a financial technician to support accounts receivable, accounts payable, and our multiple professional and technical service contract efforts; and a 9-1-1 project analyst to support the 9-1-1 ingress network migration project. As well, we look forward to dedicating someone to support our grant efforts on a more full-time basis, rather than at the current approximate 25 percent. This promises to be a lengthy process, but one that we look forward to tackling head-on in an effort to find more dedicated public safety professionals who share our mission and vision and will be eager to lend much-needed support to ECN initiatives.

The Statewide Emergency Communications Board (SECB) meetings for November and December have been canceled due to them falling on Thanksgiving and on the day after Christmas. The SECB chair will be making recommendations for the 2020 committee chairs, the members, and the responsibility of each standing committee at the first SECB meeting after the Jan. 1, 2020. Members of any of the eight committees interested in serving in the role of the committee chair to a committee on which they serve are encouraged to submit a brief bio and highlight their indication of interest to Dana Wahlberg (651-201-7546) by Friday, Dec. 20.

The Regional Leadership Meeting (RLM) in St. Cloud was well attended on Oct. 28. Special thanks to John Dooley, Marcus Bruning and Steve Tait for taking the lead on the coordination and logistics for this meeting. In particular, there was much discussion on the proposed regional grant planning initiative and on the 2020 Public Safety Communications Conference. Jim Jarvis, representing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), provided an overview of the three national priorities and associated goals for advancing emergency communications through the 2019 updated National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP). Mark your calendars for the next RLM on Jan. 27, 2020 in St. Cloud from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
ARMER Life Cycle Sustainment

Tusa Consulting is finishing up their one-on-one interviews with ARMER System Administrators. The information collected is used to populate a spreadsheet that helps us to visualize contractual responsibilities.

After the first of the year, Tusa staff will be available to come out to each Emergency Communications/Services Board (ECB/ESB) regions to meet with local administrators, leadership, and financial officers to discuss the impact our contract negotiations could have on local entities. Regional ECB/ESBs are encouraged to start looking at dates to host these meetings. Contact Jim Stromberg (651-201-7557) to coordinate with Tusa.

Push-to-Talk over Cellular Connectivity to ARMER

The Land Mobile Radio Committee created a workgroup to study the technical implications of connecting a foreign system — such as a Push-to-Talk-over-Cellular (PoC) device — to ARMER. The workgroup will consider the different ways that this type of technology could connect to ARMER and the technical risks associated with each type of connection. They will review existing standards and, as needed, develop recommendations to strengthen standards to better protect ARMER. The first of an estimated three to five meetings will be held in November.

Coverage is Still the Bottom Line

Last month I, Melinda Miller, talked about the FirstNet Coverage Review and the information we receive from AT&T each quarter. I talked about joining the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) community (Minnesota ECN) and using the free OpenSignal app if...
you are a FirstNet or AT&T subscriber. That led to questions about whether we were still planning to get a coverage review tool. When we first kicked off the SLIGP2.0 project, Dana Wahlberg and I investigated the possibility of using NetMotion through the State Patrol. That didn’t pan out, so earlier this year we started down the path of an RFP. As you know, the new administration has been with us for not quite a year, and a relatively new process has been put into place. It has been in the works for a few years, but this year it has been made official. The purchase of new software begins with a presentation to the MN.IT project review board. That is the next step for getting a coverage review tool. If the presentation is accepted, I will have time with MN.IT staff to help with the RFP, or MN.IT could choose to do the work in-house. I’m hoping for the later.

Do you have use cases you would like to share with me on why having a coverage assessment tool would be valuable? Or maybe you are aware of a tool that could do the job? Would your agency be willing to participate by installing a background app? Email or call me to let me know: Melinda Miller, 651-201-7554. I will give a short synopsis of some of the tools I’m aware of and my thoughts on what is required.

Requirements: The app should work on Android, iOS, and Windows, although most tools of this nature only work on Android with diagnostics in Windows. It should be free to first responders who are willing to install the service. The state or service would provide an administrative portal for diagnostic reporting, preferably accessible by key personnel at an agency level and hosted by the state or service cloud. It would be a bonus if the app was certified through the FirstNet app catalog.

- Solutelia, U.S. – A Colorado company that has been advertising its ability to test band class 14.
- RantCell, United Kingdom – A company that has just started touting their ability to test 5G service.

Your feedback is always welcome; please email or call me: Melinda Miller (651-201-7554).

The Communications Conference will be here before we know it, and ideas for conference sessions, specifically topics related to wireless broadband, are needed. You can submit requests for sessions to me or any of the program managers at ECN.

**IPAWS**

**IPAWS Usage and Weekly Testing**

In the month of October, we saw several uses of the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS): The first was in Duluth to have residents shelter in place, and a second one in Wadena for a dangerous escaped convict. Also in October, three more counties started weekly testing:

- Itasca
- Crow Wing
- Traverse

Congratulations to the 42 counties and two state agencies now testing on a regular basis.

**Wireless Emergency Alerts 2.0**

In or around the last week of September, some of the mass notification vendors released changes to support Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) 2.0. Code Red has been announcing on their webinars in late October that on Nov. 6, they would release a new interface to coincide with the WEA 2.0 release.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has postponed their release until further notice and has hinted that in November, an official release date will be posted.
If you have the capability of changing the handling value (this is new with WEA 2.0) on your screen now, please only use the Imminent Threat WEA - Handling value.

Please do not use Public Safety or WEA Test - Handling values until after FEMA releases WEA 2.0. Please note that WEA testing guidelines are still in development, please do not use this handling code until further guidance is published from the IPAWS Committee.

The new fields for increased character counts and Spanish messages will not deliver to WEA 2.0-compatible devices until after FEMA’s release.

**Proficiency Demonstrations**

Please use the proficiency demonstration as a training opportunity for the things you may not do but would like to know how to do. The monthly proficiency demonstration is performed in the test environment with the FEMA Lab so it does not go public.

Items to work on during the monthly proficiency demonstrations:

- Updating and/or canceling a message.
- Drawing polygons to outside your jurisdictional boundary. Did you get an error?
- Polygons: Circles vs. Squares. Do you get any error messages?
- Do your written procedures flow properly?
  - Good opportunity to see if someone else can follow them without error.

**Administrative**

It would be appreciated if you would let us know when any of the points of contact on your memorandum of agreement (MOA) change so that we can update the ECN (contact John Dooley (651-201-7099) with your updates) data, and keep FEMA up-to-date also.

**IPAWS Training**

If you would still like to have a training session conducted in your jurisdiction, we would be glad to facilitate one for you. Contact John Dooley (651-201-7099) to arrange one.

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**Interoperability**

**Information Technology Service Unit Leader**

The Department of Homeland Security has created a new Communications Unit position dedicated to supporting the information management, cybersecurity, and application management needs of the Communications Unit. Called the information technology service unit leader, or ITSL, the position is a leader-level position on par with the communications unit leader. When matured, planned positions under the ITSL include IT network manager (NEMG), infrastructure manager (ITMG), and unified help desk manager (HELP).

Minnesota’s first ITSL student recently completed classroom training and provided a report to the COMU workgroup. In summary, he reported, “I see the ITSL being a valuable addition to the ICS organizational structure and has given me skills on how to prepare and respond to incidents in that role.”

The COMU Workgroup encourages others interested in this training to let SWIC Jim Stromberg (651-201-7557) know so he can recommend you for a future class.

**National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP)**

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) recently updated the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP). This is the nation’s strategic plan to strengthen and enhance emergency communications capabilities. The NECP identifies three priorities:

1. Enhance effective governance across partners with a stake in emergency communications, embracing a shared responsibility of the whole community from traditional emergency responders and supporting entities to the citizens served.
2. Address interoperability challenges posed by rapid technology advancements and increased information sharing, ensuring the most critical information gets to the right people at the right time.
3. Build resilient and secure emergency communications systems to reduce cybersecurity threats and vulnerabilities.
Similar to the [Strategic Plan of the Statewide Emergency Communications Board](https://www.ecn.state.mn.us/SECB/StrategicPlan), the NECB identifies specific goals:

- **Governance and Leadership**: Develop and maintain effective emergency communications governance and leadership across the Emergency Communications Ecosystem.
- **Planning and Procedures**: Develop and update comprehensive emergency communications plans and procedures that address the evolution of risks, capabilities and technologies across the Emergency Communications Ecosystem.
- **Training, Exercises, and Evaluation**: Develop and deliver training, exercise and evaluation programs that enhance knowledge and target gaps in all available emergency communications technologies.
- **Communications Coordination**: Improve effective coordination of available operable and interoperable public safety communications capabilities for incidents and planned events.
- **Technology and Infrastructure**: Improve lifecycle management of the systems and equipment that enable emergency responders and public safety officials to share information efficiently and securely.
- **Cybersecurity**: Strengthen the cybersecurity posture of the Emergency Communications Ecosystem.

You can read more about the NECP and view the entire plan on the [NECP website](https://www.ecn.state.mn.us/NECP).

### Upcoming Events

Thank you to everyone who attended the Regional Leadership Meeting in St. Cloud this month. As you heard, we are gearing up for the 2020 Public Safety Communications Conference. We listened to your comments from last year and have made some changes so we can continue to provide the education and opportunities you have asked for. Watch for updates coming soon!

Remember to mark your calendar for the next Regional Leadership meeting, which will be held on Monday, Jan. 27, 2020.

### Special Announcement

There are a few great resources for Minnesota fire departments, law enforcement agencies and government entities.

There are several state teams and assets that can help you with victim searches, trench rescues, structural collapses, hazardous materials releases and everything in between. These resources are available free of charge by contacting the Minnesota state duty officer at 651-649-5451 or 800-422-0798.

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety State Fire Marshal Division manages the State Emergency Response Teams.

You can learn more about these teams and assets [in this fact sheet](https://www.ecn.state.mn.us/SECB/StateEmergencyResponseTeams).

Please contact State Teams Coordinator Tom McDonough (651-201-7225) for more information.

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**Grants**

As the year draws closer to an end, regions will need to begin their closeout processes for the SHSP and SECB grants. The SHSP grant ends Dec. 1, while the SECB grant ends Dec. 31. Please turn in any grant documentation to your regional grant coordinator as soon as possible so they can get their payment requests in to ECN. ECN is currently in the planning stages for next year’s SECB grant while still waiting for details on the upcoming SHSP grant. For the NG9-1-1 grant, the application deadline for the GIS project has been extended to Dec. 8. Please work with your regional grant coordinator in getting your application turned in if you represent a Greater Minnesota PSAP.