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IJIS Institute Forms New

Emergency Communications Center Evolution Working Group

The pace of innovation is making advanced technology available for Emergency Communications and Response. These new capabilities are transformative while paving the way for next generation solutions.

Your Expertise Is Needed

The IJIS Institute seeks your participation in the new **Emergency Communication Center Evolution Working Group.**

While the hope is that no one gets sick in the 911 center, the reality is forcing contingency planning on a much larger scale as these mission critical facilities cannot afford a human factor level failure.

Emergency Communications Centers (ECCs) response to the COVID-19 pandemic is forcing rapid change resulting in new plans, processes, and configurations that have never been tried before. While much of the US workforce can work from home using broadband internet, cloud services, and video teleconferencing, very few EECs have the capability/procedures to allow personnel to work remotely. There are challenges including administrative rules or laws, operational processes, cybersecurity concerns, and technology used to support 9-1-1 call handling and dispatch. All ECCs have done Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP); however, during today's crisis many are rolling out new approaches that must be tested and modified as issues arise.

Your knowledge and advice on technology, policy and process issues will help this effort unite industry and government to promote safer and healthier communities.

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Why an **Emergency Communication Center Evolution Working Group** Is Needed

CONCERNS FROM THE FIELD

Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) personnel are concerned about the spread of COVID-19 from coworkers, through contact with surfaces in the PSAP and from interactions with other first responders. To partially mitigate this, ECCs have taken measures including ordering technical and administrative staff to work from home as much as possible. While much of the American public is staying home during the COVID-19 pandemic, first responders including telecommunicators generally cannot.

PROCESS & TECHNOLOGY ISSUES

In this era of video teleconferencing, cloud services, remote desktop, and broadband internet, many of the U.S workforce can work from home. Despite the potential technical feasibility, very few telecommunicators or dispatchers in the ECCs can operate remotely at all, let alone from home. There are challenges including administrative rules or laws, operational processes, cybersecurity concerns, and technology used to support 9-1-1 call handling and dispatch that cannot be operated remotely.

CURRENT REMOTE ECC FUNCTIONS

A recent survey conducted by NENA reports that:

64% OF PSAPS HAD NO CAPABILITY FOR REMOTE ECC OPERATIONS

30% CAN WORK REMOTELY FROM A SEPARATE PUBLIC-SAFETY OR GOVERNMENT FACILITY

7% INDICATED THE ABILITY TO DO SO FROM HOME

NENA concludes that the "COVID-19 pandemic will be instructive to PSAPs and policymakers across the country and hopes that in the future more of them will investigate capabilities for telecommunicators to work remotely or from home."

TOP CONCERNS & ISSUES IN THE ECC

TECHNOLOGY LIMITATIONS

VIRUS SPREAD

CYBER-SECURITY

LAWS & RULES

OPERATIONAL PROCESSES

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Key Things to Consider as We Move Forward Together

New approaches can improve ECC resiliency not only during a future pandemic, but also during other crises such as natural disasters and failures of physical infrastructure.

IMPORTANT THOUGHT POINTS: UNKOWN & NEW TERRITORY

- What are the "trigger points"?
- When take specific actions given evolving events?
- How do you determine what functions you can distribute remotely?
- What are the challenges operational, technical, policy, law, and others?
- What services / capabilities do you relinquish to provide core services remotely?
- What cybersecurity issues need to be considered when remotely operating ECC functions?
- Are partially distributed solutions acceptable? For example, can the ECC perform remote call taking but not dispatch?

- Examples of technical issues with sub-systems? What systems can be sacrificed? Recording for example?
- Do these trade-offs rise to level of problematic? Code violation? Law? CJIS rules and requirements, etc.?
- Often the focus is on large metro areas, need to consider small and medium – not one size fits all.
- Who are the stakeholders that should be consulted during these trade-off discussions?
- What are the best practices to advance capabilities to allow remote access?
- Examples of distributed PSAPs solutions fielded today?

Through the Emergency Communications & Response Advisory Committee the IJIS Institute works to improve the level of understanding of technology and create awareness on the challenges impacting all areas and phases of Emergency Communications and Response. Next steps include collaboration with public safety practitioners to answer the questions posed to provide more specific guidance and recommendations.

If you are interested in joining this important effort, please contact IJIS Institute at info@ijis.org.

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