EAST TO WEST

From Chadron, to Sidney and on to Nebraska City, responders will soon have access to a state-wide network that was designed to improve interoperable communications across Nebraska. Work on the Nebraska Regional Interoperability Network (NRIN) is continuing to progress and has moved into the Southeast, North Central and Northeast regions of the state.

Local responders can now use statewide communication resources and new, developing technologies by utilizing the transport capabilities that NRIN offers.

NRIN is a locally-owned, point-to-point IP-based, microwave network that uses towers across the state to connect public safety answering points (PSAP) and 911 centers. This transport system has the capability of moving data as fast as 100 megabytes per second and it runs at 5(9s) capability, meaning that 99.999 percent of the time there is a redundant connection available. The network can transport large amounts of data, radio, voice and video quickly and efficiently in a secure and reliable fashion.

A good analogy for NRIN is a train track for secure data transmission that runs across Nebraska. Local responders can put anything on the train and move it along the network to other parts of the state. This network has the capability of connecting places that other systems were unable to connect. The many circles that are being created are for redundancy. If the "train" runs into a brick wall it just backs up and takes a different route.

Local communities can use it in a variety of ways, including as a primary 911 system like in the East Central Region, Beatrice and Crete, or, with an 800 MHz system to enhance the connections with local law enforcement and volunteer fire departments. In Cass County, the NRIN connection will be used to provide remote siren capability. In Seward County, the connection is actually used for the Statewide Radio System (SRS). Areas of the west are trying out the network for long distance video arraignments so that prisoners do not have to be transported, and the Nebraska Department of Roads has requested the use of some segments for their highway cameras.

NOTE: This network cannot be used for any kind of direct connection to a world wide web (www) or internet connection.

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) manages the grant dollars for NRIN and the build-out. NEMA contracts the work on behalf of local governments and, when complete, will be located on more than 200 sites. Locations are discussed and negotiated with local boards and memorandums of agreement are signed.

HISTORY OF THE NETWORK

NRIN is a federal, state and local collaboration that was designed to improve interoperable communications after the 9/11 attacks. Tasked with finding solutions to failed critical components in the response to a horrendous disaster, the federal government concluded that one of the biggest deficiencies was the inability of first responders to be able to communicate with each other.

Funding for the interoperable communications build-out originally came from the 2005 public safety communications grant (PSIC) that was later amended to create the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program. In 2007, the PSIC grant awarded $900 million to assist state and local first responders and public safety agencies for equipment and training. States competed for dollars and Nebraska was chosen as 1 of 13 states to receive the grant award.

In 2009, Nebraska formed a working group and appointed members that consisted of four local regional representatives and four state representatives. These 8 representatives spent the next two years putting together a functional plan for the high speed network and the concept that it be **owned and maintained by local and regional entities.** The bid was awarded in 2010, and a decision was made to start the build-out and installation in the western part of the state and move east. The Panhandle Region and parts of the North Central Region were first to be tested and signed off.

THE GOVERNANCE BOARD

NRIN has a governance board that is made up of emergency managers, county/city board members, communications and IT specialist and dispatching supervisors. The members of this board are working diligently with local county and village boards to continue the installation in the eastern part of the state. A large part of the board's responsibilities is to find ways to save dollars by using this network. They are also tasked with finding funding mechanisms to help sustain and manage the infrastructure.

The NRIN governance board handles all the various components of the network and has assigned working committees for quality of service, advertising, outreach, technical issues, administration and sustainment.

A first hand user of the network and Chairman of the Governing Board, Tim Hofbauer, quotes the following: "NRIN provides a great opportunity for response agencies and local government to transport data. It (the network) is allowing counties to provide dispatch function for other counties and is providing information from western Nebraska to eastern Nebraska and vice versa. It has been a cost-savings for local governments across the state. In the East Central Region alone, we are saving between $4,000 and $8,000 a month by using NRIN for our 911 system."

There are three non-voting entities that belong to the Governance Board, NEMA, because of the build-out and the grant management, the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) who diligently configures networking on the routers and monitors the many sites, and the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD), who has constantly helped with technical problems as well as made available their tower sites and many miles of fiber. Also on board with much assistance is the UNL Public Policy Center and the Public Service Commission.

Many private and public organizations have donated the use of their resources for this project in the belief that this network will greatly enhance the capabilities of public service entities.

Completion of this network is expected in the fall of 2018, however, funding relies solely on Department of Homeland Security Grant dollars.

Meet your NRIN Board Members

Tim Hofbauer - Columbus/Platte Co. Emergency Management
tim.hofbauer@plattene.us

Carla Jones – SE Region 911 Communications Director
cjones@beatrice.ne.gov

Kevin Hood – Chairman, Region 26 Council
kevin.hood@ne.usda.gov

Chip Volcek – Hastings/Adams Co. Emergency Manager
cvolcek@acema.org

Kevin Mackeprang – Knox County Supervisor – District 5
kevinmach@gpcom.net

Nan Gould – Region 23 Coordinator
reg23ema@bbc.net

Brian Kesting - IT Director, City of Wayne
bkesting@cityofwayne.org

Jon Rosenlund – Grand Island/Hall Co. Director of EM
jonr@grand-island.com

Heidi Gillespie – Director, Cheyenne Co. Comm. Center
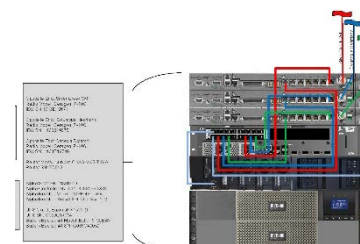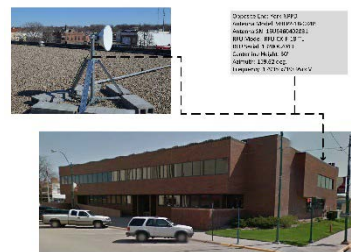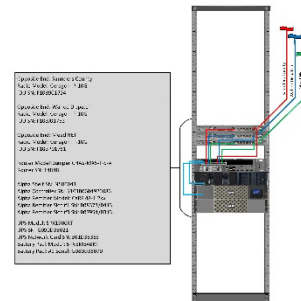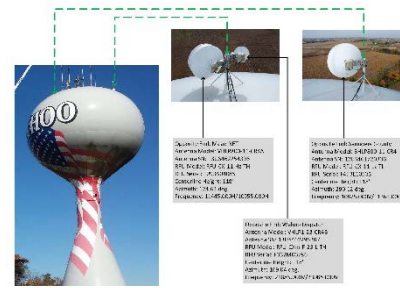heidi@sidney911.org

Shelly Holzerland – Director of Comm. – Fremont/Dodge Co. 911
shelly.holzerland@fremontne.gov

Caleb Johnson – Keith County Board of Commissioners – District 2
calebjohnson@atcjet.net

Brad Eisenhauer – IT Coordinator, Jefferson County
brad.eisenhauer@jeffcolaw.us

Roger Powell – Region 17 Emergency Management
furnasem@atcjet.net

Phil Brazelton – Captain – Comm Division – Wash Co Sheriff's Office
capt.brazelton@washcosheriff.org

Nebraska
Regional
Interoperability
Network

Making Interoperable Communications work for you!

NRIN CONNECTION ACROSS THE STATE