



Mark Gordon
Governor

Wyoming Public Safety Communications Commission

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Darin J. Westby, P.E.
Director

Meeting Minutes

I. Call to Order

The Public Safety Communications Commission (PSCC) met via videoconference on Thursday, August 1, 2024. Vice Chairman Monte McClain presided, calling the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

II. Roll Call

The following members were present constituting a quorum:

Monte McClain, Vice Chairman	Karl Germain, Commissioner
Dwane Pacheco, Secretary	Rick Kaysen, Commissioner
Matt Carr, Commissioner	Cindi Shank, Commissioner
Mike Choma, Commissioner	Josh Van Vlack, Commissioner
Phillip Franklin, Commissioner	Matt Waldock, Commissioner

Commissioners Paul Bertoglio and John Wetzel were absent.

III. Introductions

The following attendees participated in the meeting:

Nathan Smolinski, Chief Technology Officer, WYDOT; Mark Kelly, Emergency Communications Manager, WYDOT; Neil Gardiner, WyoLink Support Manager, WYDOT; Aimee Binning, 911 Planning Coordinator, WYDOT; Tim Kunkleman, Regional Director, Lumen; Jeremy Johnson, Emergency Communication Coordinator, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA); MacKenzie Sewell, Assistant Attorney General, Wyoming Attorney General; and Kimberly Chapman, Commission Secretary, WYDOT.

Susan Elliott and Caitlin Casner assisted with virtual meeting management.

IV. Agenda Adjustments

Ms. Chapman highlighted a small change to the agenda. Jeremy Johnson, with CISA, will provide an update on CISA's technical assistance.

V. Action Items

1. Draft Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Commissioner Franklin, seconded by Commissioner Shank, and unanimously carried to approve the May 8, 2024, business meeting minutes and the May 7, 2024, education session minutes.

2. WyoLink Application

It was recommended by Mr. Gardiner, moved by Commissioner Franklin, seconded by Commissioner Shank, and unanimously carried to approve the applications from Park County School District 6, Sheridan County Coroner's Office, and Carbon County, Montana Sheriff's Office.

3. PSCC Policies

Mr. Smolinski presented the proposed commission policies, which included suggestions made by the commission at the May meeting. The primary purpose of the policies is to institute term limits and an elections process. Staff also recommended using staggered terms to ensure there are no concurrent vacancies between the chairman, vice chairman, and secretary.

It was recommended by Mr. Smolinski, moved by Commissioner Pacheco, seconded by Commissioner Germain, and unanimously carried to adopt the PSCC General Commission policies, as written.

Mr. Smolinski announced that elections will take place at the November meeting, as staff believes an in-person format will facilitate a more productive discussion and decision-making process.

VI. Updates/Discussions

1. Director's Update

Director Westby presented a brief update from the director.

The director welcomed Commissioners Van Vlack, Waldock, and Kaysen to the PSCC. He also recognized and congratulated Commissioner Germain on his recent promotion to Lieutenant Colonel of the Wyoming Highway Patrol (WHP).

Teton Pass Slide and Recovery Efforts

Director Westby spent considerable time over the summer addressing the Big Fill Slide that impacted Teton Pass, as well as an earlier, smaller slide on Wyoming Highway 22. He thanked Commissioner Carr, who serves as the Teton County sheriff, for the assistance and communication provided by the sheriff's department during the landslide and subsequent detour on Teton Pass while it underwent reconstruction. The new detour on Teton pass was opened to traffic on June 28, just 20 days after the slide occurred. He reported that WYDOT will award a contract tomorrow for the first phase of the reconstruction of the original route.

Additionally, he thanked Commissioner Carr for communicating and working with WYDOT to address traffic concerns regarding the WYO 22 and WYO 390 intersection project. The intersection was completed by the end of June and the south half of the new bridge was opened to traffic before July 3. Despite ongoing construction, the director reported that the new bridge and reopened intersection enhanced traffic flow for a substantial part of the tourism season.

Western Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (WASHTO)

The director recently attended the WASHTO conference in Omaha, Nebraska. Much of the focus of the conference was on safety, artificial intelligence, upcoming

reauthorizations of federal funding for transportation, the significant challenges with the Buy America requirement, greenhouse gases, and the “August redistribution” of federal aid highway programs to state departments of transportation.

Director Westby reported that Suzie Roseberry, a Geographic Information Systems and Intelligent Transportation Systems (GIS/ITS) Developer with WYDOT, presented a session detailing how the agency uses the Situation Data Exchange to keep drivers informed about changing road conditions and closures.

General WYDOT Update

Director Westby reported that the agency has been working over the last several months to develop its budget for the next fiscal year. The supplemental budget requests are due to the governor at the end of the month. The director reported that there are no significant changes to the existing budget and he hopes it will be approved without significant amendments.

The director and executive staff have prioritized participation in multiple interim legislative committees, attending meetings throughout the summer to provide testimony and support for proposed legislation. He commended Mr. Smolinski for recent testimony he provided to the Joint Corporations Committee on the 911 system and the status of Next Generation 911 (NG911) in Wyoming.

Joint Transportation, Highways, and Military Affairs Committee (JTC) Meeting

Director Westby and his staff are preparing for the next JTC meeting in September. The department will educate legislators on the necessity of increased, sustainable, long-term funding to properly maintain Wyoming's highways and transportation infrastructure.

Vice Chairman McClain commended the WYDOT employees and contractors who quickly reopened Teton Pass after the Big Fill Slide.

2. Chief Technology Officer's Report

Mr. Smolinski presented his update, with additional information provided by Ms. Binning.

He praised Dan Tolman, WYDOT's Information Technology (IT) program manager, and Vince Garcia, GIS/ITS program manager, for their quick response to the CrowdStrike incident last month. They worked through the night to implement fixes to the outage and resume operations at the Transportation Management Center and WHP dispatch, as well as WYDOT Headquarters.

Mr. Smolinski also mentioned an upcoming meeting of the technology division's staff on September 4. Technology staff from across the state will meet in Cheyenne to discuss greater collaboration and coordination between the three technology divisions: Emergency Communications, IT, and GIS/ITS. During the meeting, the group will discuss the strategic plan and provide program updates. On September 5, Mr. Smolinski and several members of WYDOT's technology division will travel to Google Labs in Boulder, Colorado. The purpose of their visit is to learn more about Google's platforms and explore how WYDOT can leverage those resources to improve its operations.

On September 18, Mr. Smolinski and multiple staff members will meet with the county IT managers to provide an overview of WYDOT, WyoLink, and 911. The goal of the meeting is to foster a relationship with this group, facilitating the implementation of new dispatch center technologies and the modernization of the Transportation and Revenue Information Systems.

Joint Corporations, Elections and Political Subdivisions Interim Committee Meeting

Mr. Smolinski reported that he and Ms. Binning provided testimony to the Joint Corporations Committee at the July 30 meeting in Evanston. The 911 working group, including representatives from WYDOT, the Public Service Commission, the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police, the Wyoming County Commissioners Association, the Wyoming Office of Homeland Security (WOHS), and public safety answering points (PSAPs), developed legislative priorities and potential bills addressing outage notifications, 911 surcharges, funding, and authority.

Mr. Smolinski reviewed the "Legislative Priorities and Recommendations for Legislative Changes" document included in the commission packet. He highlighted several key recommendations, including: a new outage reporting model tailored specifically to Wyoming; adjustments to the 911 surcharge reporting requirements, with the PSCC designated as a recipient of those reports; and a \$5 per line cap on 911 surcharges, granting local entities the authority to increase surcharges up to that maximum. The working group proposed granting the PSCC the authority to collect a fixed percentage of the 911 surcharge. This dedicated funding would allow the PSCC to oversee the development of NG911 and control how those funds are spent.

Additional recommendations included designating the Department of Revenue as the centralized clearinghouse to collect and disburse 911 revenue from all Wyoming counties, and the potential to create a dedicated department to oversee NG911 services.

Mr. Smolinski reported that, at the request of the Committee, the 911 working group will continue working with the telecommunications companies to develop legislation for consideration at the October meeting. The Committee also requested more information and education on certain 911 and telecommunications topics.

In response to a question from Commissioner Pacheco, Mr. Smolinski said that the Committee was open to the discussion on the recommended \$5 cap on 911 surcharges. It would be a considerable increase for some counties, but the Committee ultimately understood why that was the working group's recommendation.

NG911 Update

Ms. Binning discussed the annual Federal Communications Commission (FCC) report on the collection and use of 911 fees, which compiles data from local entities. The report noted that Wyoming has 33 PSAPs—28 primary and 5 secondary. Additionally, one county had consolidated its PSAPs, so the numbers will change in next year's report. Wyoming employs 56 full-time and seven part-time telecommunicators, who answered approximately 224,000 911 calls, with 90% of those coming from wireless or VoIP sources.

The surge in wireless 911 calls heightens the need to upgrade emergency communication infrastructure. PSAPs must have NG911 capabilities to receive text and video from callers.

The total cost to provide 911 services in Wyoming in 2023 was \$11.2 million. Additionally, there is \$2.9 million deficit for 911 services, as the state only collected \$8.2 million in fees and surcharges. Ms. Binning cautioned the commission that the state's 911 cost estimates may be incomplete. Many communities cover personnel, operational, and maintenance expenses for 911 services using local funds, prioritizing 911 fees for technology upgrades. Currently, there is no mechanism for counties to report comprehensively on all their 911-related expenditures.

New FCC Rules

Ms. Binning discussed the new FCC rule regarding NG911 transmission, which aims to expedite the transition to internet protocol (IP)-based infrastructure. The transition to NG911 has posed significant challenges for many states that have struggled to move away from the legacy 911 network due to incompatible circuits. To address this issue, the FCC has adopted the first nationwide rules for NG911 transmission. These rules define the responsibilities and set deadlines for originating service providers to implement NG911 capabilities on their networks. This will enable the delivery of 911 calls to the NG911 system.

Lumen Updates

Mr. Kunkleman shared that Lumen is working with the 911 working group to improve communication between carriers and communities, including the PSAPs, around outages. Lumen has been involved in additional conversations with legislators about using state funds to correct some of the shortfalls at PSAPs across the state.

Mr. Kunkleman reported that he is working on the outage notifications report for July and will send it to WYDOT before the end of the week.

WyoLink Funding/American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Mr. Smolinski reporting that almost 50 percent of the ARPA funds have been expended. As the department continues work on several major initiatives, including the microwave project, staff are identifying potential cost savings that could be reallocated or applied to other projects. Mr. Smolinski reported that orders are being delivered to the local entities, completing outstanding invoices.

The other major project utilizing ARPA funds is the construction of two additional WyoLink tower sites. Work on the Kerns site in Sheridan County is progressing, though Mr. Smolinski reported a slight delay due to challenges in obtaining power to the site. Despite this, he still estimates construction will be completed by the end of the construction season. There have also been delays at the Needles Peak site, which is a collocate near Saratoga. WYDOT is partnering with Union Wireless to work through some of the additional environmental restrictions placed on the site by the Bureau of Land Management.

Local Contracts

Utilizing WYDOT's General Fund allocation, Mr. Smolinski is consolidating local maintenance contracts for locally-owned WyoLink towers into a single contract with

Motorola. This will centralize the operations and maintenance of these towers under one provider. He expects to receive figures from Motorola and have a draft contract ready for the communities to review soon.

3. Emergency Communications Program Manager's Report

Mr. Kelly provided an update on the Emergency Communications Program. The update also included information presented by Mr. Gardiner regarding WyoLink operations.

Program Updates

Mr. Kelly reported that the field technicians have switched focus to radio site and tower inspections. The team is completing the subscriber unit installations and awaiting further orders.

Mr. Kelly has been donating old equipment as it becomes available. The state of South Dakota expressed deep gratitude for all the donations received so far, and indicated they would greatly appreciate additional 50-watt units. According to Mr. Kelly, the donation program has fulfilled 206 requests from local organizations, but still has 229 outstanding requests waiting to be filled. He will work to fulfill outstanding requests to locals as old equipment becomes available. Organizations in need of control stations or consolettes should contact Mr. Kelly, as these items were included in recent orders.

4.9 GHz Update

Mr. Kelly discussed management of the 4.9 GHz band, which the FCC has designated for public safety use. The Public Safety Spectrum Alliance (PSSA) and the Coalition for Emergency Response and Critical Infrastructure (CERCI) hold opposing views on the management of the band. The PSSA advocates that the FirstNet Authority should be granted control of the spectrum to oversee band management and broadband for first responders. In contrast, CERCI prefers leaving control of the spectrum in the hands of local emergency response and public safety entities.

The FCC has not yet issued a ruling on this matter, so current licenses remain unchanged. Government entities can continue applying for new public safety licenses as they have done previously.

Wyoming 4.9 GHz Public Safety Spectrum Stakeholder Letter

Addressing the disagreement between the PSSA and CERCI, Mr. Smolinski outlined the state's plan to diplomatically navigate the situation and maintain local control of the spectrum for Wyoming stakeholders. His top priorities are protecting current and future public safety licenses, as he is concerned that transferring control to FirstNet could result in previously free licenses becoming subject to fees.

Mr. Smolinski proposed sending a letter, on behalf of the PSCC, to introduce the issue to approximately two dozen state and local stakeholders. The letter would also serve as an invitation to an August 21 meeting, where stakeholders would receive more information about the activities and potential impacts of the two entities on Wyoming. The goal is to educate the stakeholders and then develop a comprehensive response from the state of Wyoming to file with the FCC, representing the best interests of all residents.

It was recommended by Mr. Smolinski, moved by Commissioner Germain, seconded by Commissioner Waldock, and unanimously carried to approve the issuance of the Wyoming 4.9 GHz Public Safety Spectrum Stakeholder letter on behalf of the PSCC.

WyoLink Operational Updates

WyoLink System Reports

Mr. Gardiner shared WyoLink usage data from the second quarter (Q2) of 2024. There was an average of about 1.7 million push-to-talks (PTT) and 145,215 minutes of airtime for the quarter, which is typical for the time of year. He compared the Q2 2024 totals to the same period in 2023, revealing a slight increase in PTTs and a similar average airtime to the previous year. The top 20 talkgroups for Q2 were law enforcement agencies from 11 counties, four municipalities, and two WHP divisions.

WyoLink System Upgrades

Mr. Gardiner reported that a major system and software upgrade occurred in May and June. The upgrade represented a large leap in technological capability, and almost every component was replaced at the two master sites. Once this step was completed, all of the radio and dispatch centers were also upgraded throughout the following month.

Mr. Gardiner explained that the new Juniper core routers installed at the two master sites connect to the radio and dispatch centers. With the assistance of Motorola technicians, two pallets of Juniper routers were programmed and configured for the radio sites and dispatch centers that are currently on Ethernet. The routers will be installed over the next few weeks.

More sites will be converted from T1 to Ethernet once the Nokia service aggregation routers are installed. A Motorola technician will be in Cheyenne next week to help staff configure, program, and optimize the Nokia routers. These routers will not only allow sites to operate off Ethernet, but they will also provide redundant paths—through microwave and fiber—that build more resilient connections to the WyoLink sites.

Mr. Gardiner thanked all of the WYDOT staff and Motorola technicians for their speed and efficiency on the upgrades. He also thanked all of the subscribers and customers for their understanding and patience while operations were impacted by the upgrades.

A WOHS communications technician has been working two days per week at the WyoLink Office, assisting with radio programming. This support has proven extremely helpful for emergency response and communications during recent wildfires, according to Mr. Gardiner, who thanked WOHS for providing the technician.

Mr. Gardiner reported that 12 counties have talkgroups on FirstNet or Verizon devices. Due to the increased usage of Critical Connect, the WyoLink Office will purchase a second server to handle the talkgroups.

The program will also purchase a three-channel radio site to train technicians and test new equipment. This will help WyoLink technicians become comfortable and proficient with emerging technologies, enabling them to provide improved, seamless service to WyoLink users as the system continues to evolve.

Statewide Interoperability Coordination (SWIC) Updates

Mr. Smolinski and Mr. Kelly provided the SWIC updates.

Critical Connect

Mr. Kelly reported that meetings are ongoing with Montana and South Dakota to integrate their interoperable communications systems through Critical Connect. On September 24, Mr. Kelly and Mr. Smolinski will meet with representatives from both states in Gillette to finalize the details and complete the connection of these systems. Mr. Smolinski explained that the initial priority will be to establish coverage along the Interstate 90 corridor. This will involve connecting land mobile radios and then integrating LTE technology into the connected systems. Once the Interstate 90 corridor is fully connected, the team will then work to integrate other areas of the state.

In July, the team met with representatives from Nebraska, who are using the same version of Critical Connect as Wyoming. However, Nebraska is slightly further along in implementing and utilizing the tool, making them a potentially helpful resource for Wyoming.

Mr. Smolinski reported that the team is developing an interstate, interoperable communications model to connect WyoLink with our neighboring states. The overarching goal is to establish robust, interoperable communications between Wyoming and all of its bordering states.

Mr. Smolinski and Mr. Kelly recently completed a comprehensive one-day Incident Command System (ICS) training hosted by Laramie County Emergency Management. The training covered ICS courses 100, 200, 700, and 800, equipping them with a broader understanding of the ICS framework. According to Mr. Smolinski, this training will enhance the program's ability to collaborate effectively with counties during incident response and event management.

CISA Update

Mr. Johnson updated the team on the resumption of technical assistance and the next steps for the Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan. He will collaborate with Mr. Smolinski and Mr. Kelly to finalize the next steps now that the necessary resources are available. Mr. Johnson aims to present their plan at the November meeting.

Commercial Emergency Communications Services Update

Mr. Kelly reported on several ongoing activities including adding more users and talkgroups into Critical Connect. The program is still working on the agreement with Verizon to establish talkgroups through Frontline.

Mr. Kelly reported that both compact rapid deployable (CRD) units were deployed to Teton County to assist with interoperable communications during the Big Fill Slide incident. He thanked WOHS for transporting one of the units to Teton County for deployment. After the slide incident, one CRD unit remained in Teton County, ready to deploy to the western half of the state as needed. The other CRD unit was transported to Gillette for use at the upcoming Camporee event. The program also deployed a portable highway advisory radio (HAR) to provide weather updates and traffic alerts during Camporee.

The program has provided WYDOT's Geology program with a FirstNet cell modem, enabling the deployment of monitoring equipment at the Big Fill Slide area. Mr. Smolinski thanked Commissioner Carr for providing resources for the deployment of the CRD.

Mr. Smolinski recently attended the 5X5: Public Safety Innovation Summit in Chicago, where he discussed approaches to LMR and LTE convergence with other states. His key takeaway was that the "crawl, walk, run" strategy employed in Wyoming is the right approach. This measured, phased rollout has allowed the team to carefully control system access, avoid capacity/overloading issues, and give users the flexibility to adopt new technologies at their own pace.

VII. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

IX. Announcements

Mr. Smolinski announced that departing Commissioners Harshman and St. Clair will be recognized at the November meeting in Casper. If commissioners have any suggestions on tokens of appreciation for these two gentlemen, please share them with Mr. Smolinski or Ms. Chapman.

Ms. Chapman announced that the next meeting will be held in conjunction with the Wyoming chapter of APCO/NENA's annual conference in Casper. The exact dates are to be determined, but it will be around November 12-13.

Ms. Chapman suggested that the commissioners explore the possibility of holding concurrent in-person meetings with other organizations. If commissioners have any suggestions, please share them with staff or Vice Chairman McClain.

X. Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Franklin, seconded by Commissioner Pacheco, and unanimously carried to adjourn the August 1, 2024, business meeting at 11:04 a.m.