



IAFC/NFPA Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association



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Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association Position on the 700 MHz “D” Block

Public Safety agencies throughout the country continue to face the increasing challenge of responding to the threat of urban terrorism, and/or natural and manmade disasters. As we've seen in the recent past with the events of 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the yearly fire sieges in the Western States, first responders are responding from all parts of the country to combat these events. The ability of first responders to have seamless nationwide roaming capability on a wireless broadband network is essential in assisting with the successful mitigation of the disasters we face.

The creation this type of network for public safety use, must be hardened to public safety standards, provide public safety with priority access and incorporate the latest technologies utilized by the private sector. The public safety community, working with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and industry providers, support a proposal to create such a network, based upon a public-private partnership model.

In 2007 the FCC began efforts to create the nationwide network by issuing the Public Safety Spectrum Trust (PSST) a nationwide Public Safety Broadband License (PSBL) for 12 MHz. of broadband spectrum. The spectrum was allocated to Public Safety by Congress and the FCC in 1997. In early 2008 the FCC conducted an auction of the remaining 700 Mhz. spectrum with the exception of the “D” Block. The FCC then issued an order delaying an action of the “D” Block until further notice and since then no rules have been released by the FCC.

In April and May 2009, representatives of several major national public safety organizations met to discuss the next steps forward to building a nationwide public safety wireless broadband network. Attending the meetings were representatives of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), Major Cities Police Chiefs Association (MCC), National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials-International (APCO) and the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association (MFCA). One of the primary areas of consensus was that public safety should pursue Congressional action to direct the FCC to remove the “D” Block from auction and allocate it directly to public safety as part of the nationwide Public Safety Broadband License (PSBL), now held by the PSST.

The Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association strongly supports this action and pledges our support to work with the other public safety associations to encourage Congress to remove the “D” Block from auction and allocate the spectrum to the PSBL held by the PSST.