

[Press Releases](#) :: May 27, 2010

Standards Needed to Ensure Interoperability in Public Safety Communications Equipment, Subcommittee Hears

(Washington, DC) – Today, the **House Committee on Science and Technology’s Subcommittee on Technology and Innovation** held a hearing to review the status of interoperability for public safety communications systems that enable first responders from multiple agencies and jurisdictions to communicate. Specifically, the hearing discussed the status of the technical standards for public safety land mobile radio (LMR) systems.

“We’ve learned an important lesson from September 11th, Hurricane Katrina, and other disasters: interoperable communication is critical to effective emergency response. When time is of the essence and lives are at stake, a clear flow of information is essential. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for police officers and firefighters from a single region, or even a single city, to be using incompatible communication systems. This lack of interoperability has contributed to the deaths of first responders and hindered the ability to rescue people in harm’s way,” stated **Subcommittee Chairman David Wu (D-OR)**.

Members stressed the importance of open standards and compatible communications technologies to ensure first responders can communicate easily with their counterparts in different agencies during emergencies.

Since 1989, representatives from the public safety community, private industry, and the federal government have been working together to develop “P25” technical standards to ensure that digital LMR systems from different vendors are interoperable. The purpose of these standards is not only to ensure interoperability, but also to promote market competition, spectrum efficiency, and an easy transition from analog to digital radio systems. Although progress had been made in regards to these standards over the past two decades, some of the standards are still not complete.

Unlike many wireless standards, the P25 process does not have required third party testing to validate that radios meet the requirements of the standard. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) have developed a voluntary testing program, the Compliance Assessment Program (CAP), to assure public safety agencies that the P25 systems they purchase will function properly. The hearing also examined the status of this program.

“The most important question for the first responders who rely on this equipment is “does it work?” In addition to being mission-critical technology, these systems represent major expenditures for government agencies across the country. Particularly at a time of uncertain and dwindling budgets, cost-effective procurement enabled by an open-architecture is essential,” added **Wu**. “It is important that the standards development process move forward, and that the public safety community and industry continue to work together to make further advances in first responder technology.”

For more information, visit the Committee’s [website](#).

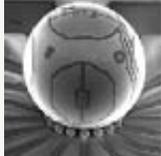
###

111.205

News from the House Science and Technology Committee
2321 Rayburn House Office Building | Washington, DC 20515
tel: (202) 225-6375 | fax: (202) 225-3895
SciTech@mail.house.gov | [Contact us Online](#)

Bart Gordon, Chairman
<http://science.house.gov/>

Subcommittee Quick Links



**Technology
& Innovation**



**Energy &
Environment**



**Investigations
& Oversight**



**Research &
Science
Education**



**Space &
Aeronautics**