



FEMA Disaster Emergency Communications News Clippings and Topics of Interest



FEMA

Published twice monthly for the FEMA Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) stakeholders, this newsletter provides articles of interest from various sources across the emergency communications and homeland security communities.

RECCWG Events/Highlight(s)

• Upcoming RECCWG Plenaries

Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups (RECCWGs) bring together state, territorial, local, and tribal members along with their private industry, federal, and volunteer partners to network and learn from each other. Regional Emergency Communications Coordinators (RECC) will host their respective groups for topical presentations and informative briefings and will give participants an opportunity to talk about current issues, challenges, successes, and lessons learned in their areas of operations and expertise. To learn more about upcoming RECCWG agendas, contact your RECC.

- **Region 3 RECCWG Plenary** – October 31 – November 1, 2023 (Harrisburg, PA)
Jorge Vidal, Region 3 RECC – jorge.vidal@fema.dhs.gov
- **Region 1 RECCWG Plenary** – November 9, 2023 (Maynard, MA)
John Robinson, Region 1 RECCWG Lead - john.robinsonjr@fema.dhs.gov
- **Region 9 OCONUS RECCWG Plenary** – November 14, 2023 (Virtual)
Bobby Cabino, Region 9 PAO – robert.cabinojr@fema.dhs.gov
- **Region 7 RECCWG Plenary** – November 15-16, 2023 (Kansas City, MO)
Mike Foster, Region 7 RECC – michael.foster@fema.dhs.gov
- **Region 10 RECCWG Plenary** – November 16, 2023 (WA)
Ric Wilhelm, Region 10 Acting RECC – richard.wilhelm@fema.dhs.gov

• The Great ShakeOut “Did You Feel It” Exercise

10:19 AM (Local Time), October 19, 2023

The Great ShakeOut is the world's largest annual earthquake drill and will occur nationwide on October 19, 2023, at 10:10 AM local time. To highlight the significance of accurate ground truth in the early stages of a disaster event, Winlink and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) are collaborating to provide radio operators an opportunity to participate and train on process and procedure for information reporting in the “Did You Feel It” (DYFI) exercise; subsequently, this drill will also underscore how the proficiency of Winlink facilitates this sharing of information. USGS will use the Winlink “Did You Feel It” ground truth data to contribute to the calculations of their earthquake intensity assessments when modeling the Modified Mercalli (MMIS) Intensity Scale, a standard



index used for earthquake severity. Data will be leveraged to improve event response products, including Prompt Assessment of Global Earthquakes for Response (PAGER), a system that provides fatality and economic loss impact estimates following significant earthquakes. The secondary purpose of this event is to illustrate to emergency management officials the ability of the Winlink system to provide situational awareness information they may not otherwise be able to obtain in the initial phases of disaster response. For more detailed instructions on how to participate in the Great ShakeOut DYFI exercise, please visit <https://winlink.org/content/shakeout> or use the following link with specific “how-to” information [ShakeOutWinlinkExercise_cm6.pdf](#).

National News and Events

- **FEMA Seeks Public Feedback on Simplifying FEMA Preparedness Grants**

Deadline: November 7, 2023

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) aims to improve the management and administration of its preparedness grant programs to continue to assist the nation in building and sustaining capabilities to prevent, prepare for, protect against, and respond to terrorist attacks and other hazards. FEMA is issuing this Notice and Request for Information (RFI) to seek public input on simplifying and streamlining its preparedness grant process to improve the efficiency and accessibility of its suite of preparedness grant programs. This national engagement provides an opportunity for interested parties to provide input as part of the DHS 2023 priority to improve management and administration of grant programs by simplifying application processes and improving customer service, while ensuring greater accessibility and equity for under resourced populations. Interested persons may submit comments responsive to this RFI electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal. Follow the instructions for submitting comments and use Docket ID: FEMA-2023-0024. Comments are due no later than 5 p.m. ET on Nov. 7, 2023.

<https://www.fema.gov/event/fema-seeks-public-feedback-simplifying-fema-preparedness-grants>

- **For rural communities, broadband expansion is no single thing**

September 26, 2023

Tourism runs the economy in the old mining town of Silverton, Colorado. From skiers in the winter to hikers and four-wheelers and mountain enthusiasts of all stripes in the summer—without tourism, the town of around 600 people has very little industry. And there is one resource the town is absolutely dependent on—the internet. Most coffee shops, restaurants, and souvenir shops rely on the Internet to keep their business running—without it, owners can’t accept credit or debit cards. Without reliable, affordable internet, rural communities have limited economic opportunities and lack access to education, healthcare, and many other services. The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, created under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, passed in November of 2021, provides grants to states for broadband expansion to provide accessible, high-speed internet especially to rural communities. States, local governments, and nonprofits are now tasked with finding ways to use the currently available funding to bring broadband to residents.

<https://www.route-fifty.com/infrastructure/2023/09/rural-communities-broadband-expansion-no-single-thing/390643/>

- **Kicking off NIST's Cybersecurity Awareness Month Celebration & Our Cybersecurity Awareness Month 2023 Blog Series**

October 2023

2023 marks 20 Years of Cybersecurity Awareness Month! Cybersecurity Awareness Month — celebrated every October — was created in 2004 as a collaborative effort between government and industry to ensure every American has the resources they need to stay safer and more secure online. NIST has partnered with other federal agencies to help raise awareness about cybersecurity and engage with public and private sector partners through



events and initiatives to raise awareness about cybersecurity, provide them with tools and resources needed to stay safe online, and increase the resiliency of the Nation in the event of a cyber incident. This year, the focus is on four key behaviors throughout the month: enabling multi-factor authentication, using strong passwords and a password manager, updating software, and recognizing and reporting phishing.

NIST Blog Series: <https://www.nist.gov/cybersecurity/cybersecurity-awareness-month>

CISA Resources and Partner Toolkit: <https://www.cisa.gov/cybersecurity-awareness-month>

- **NSA Launches Artificial Intelligence Security Center to Safeguard Government Algorithms**

October 2, 2023

The National Security Agency (NSA) has recently announced the establishment of a dedicated Artificial Intelligence Security Center to secure the government's increasing use of algorithms and AI systems. This development comes in response to the rising reliance on AI in defense and intelligence applications, and the center's primary mission is to safeguard these systems against theft, sabotage, and external AI-based threats. General Paul Nakasone, the outgoing director of the NSA, revealed that this new division will operate within the existing Cybersecurity Collaboration Center. The latter plays a crucial role in working with private industry partners and international counterparts to fortify the United States against cyberattacks, particularly those from nations like China, Russia, and other countries known for their active malware and hacking campaigns. The NSA's focus on AI security extends beyond governmental algorithms to encompass AI systems used across various sectors. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into critical government functions, the potential for vulnerabilities and threats also grows. The AI Security Center's mandate is proactively identifying and mitigating these risks to ensure the nation's security. The upcoming U.S. presidential election is a notable factor contributing to the emphasis on defensive measures in the AI security landscape.

<https://www.cryptopolitan.com/nsa-launches-ai-security-center/>

- **LMR licensing activity with FCC improves for business-industrial, but remains near historical lows**

October 6, 2023

Land-mobile-radio (LMR) licensing during the third quarter exhibited some encouraging activity during the third quarter, particularly in the business-industrial arena that has been lackluster for several years, based on figures provided by the FCC's online database. As of Oct. 5, the FCC's Universal Licensing System (ULS) reveals that the agency has received 2,389 public-safety LMR licensing applications, with 2,331 having been approved and 58 pending. If this application pace is maintained and all pending applications are approved, the projected total of public-safety licenses would be 3,136.6—a figure just slightly less than the 3,151 public-safety licenses that were approved last year. Whether the number of public-safety licenses will increase for a third consecutive year will depend on activity during the final quarter of the year, but it appears likely that the number of license approvals for the sector will exceed 3,000. This would mark the third time in a row that public-safety license approvals would exceed the 3,000 thresholds since the pandemic-induced total of 2,763—the all-time low annual total—was posted in 2020. In fact, other than the apparent aberration of 2020, public-safety licensing activity has been remarkably consistent during the other five years since 2018.

<https://urgentcomm.com/2023/10/06/lmr-licensing-activity-with-fcc-improves-for-business-industrial-but-remains-near-historical-lows/>

- **John Morales examines the 2023 hurricane season, now that 70% of it is behind us**

October 6, 2023

It's the home stretch. Seventy percent of hurricane season is behind us as of Friday. By several measures, the season has been quite active as compared to normal. There have been 18 tropical storms producing 87 named storm days, which is 55 percent above the normal to date. Accumulated Cyclone Energy (ACE), which accounts for storm longevity and intensity, is 28% above the normal to date. And we've already reached the average yearly allotment



of three major hurricanes in a full season with Franklin, Idalia, and Lee. On the other hand, the number of hurricanes so far in 2023 has been underwhelming given everything else that's happened. Only one-third of the storms have reached hurricane status this season. Normally, half of the named systems are able to become hurricanes. Had the 2023 hurricanes to storms ratio remained on par with the norm, we should have already seen 9 hurricanes. Instead, there have been only 6. The poster child for underachieving storms is now Tropical Storm Phillipe, which just concluded its two-week life cycle as a tropical system not far from Bermuda. The storm established a record for the longest-lasting continuous North Atlantic tropical cyclone to never intensify to hurricane intensity. Wind shear was ever-present over Phillipe, keeping it from strengthening despite the presence of very warm water in the Atlantic. Those very warm sea surface temperatures, which remarkably have remained at record-hot levels every day for 7 straight months (!!), are the reason for the great number of Atlantic storms so far in 2023. But El Niño enhanced wind shear has been able to keep many storms from strengthening.

<https://www.nbcmiami.com/weather/hurricane-season/john-morales-examines-the-2023-hurricane-season-now-that-70-of-it-is-behind-us/3127838/>

- **Bridging The Digital Divide**

October 13, 2023

In June, the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced how it has allocated funding to all 50 states, Washington, DC, and five territories to deploy affordable, reliable high-speed Internet service to everyone in America. This "Internet for All" initiative is a key component of President Biden's "Investing in America" agenda. States, Washington, DC, and territories will use funding from the \$42.45 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to administer grant programs within their borders. "What this announcement means for people across the country is that if you don't have access to quality, affordable high-speed Internet service now— Whether it's connecting people to the digital economy, manufacturing fiber optic cable in America, or creating good paying jobs building Internet infrastructure in the states, the investments we're announcing will increase our competitiveness and spur economic growth across the country for years to come."

<https://businessfacilities.com/broadband-access-bridging-the-digital-divide/>

Homeland Security / Emergency Communications News and Events

- **No More 'Big Bang' for IT Modernization as DHS Strategy Emphasizes Building Smaller, Data Agility, Smart AI**

October 2, 2023

The Department of Homeland Security "will no longer take the 'big bang' approach with IT modernization" as the department focuses on modernizing in place, improving data management and security, and pursuing new opportunities to integrate artificial intelligence, says the new Information Technology Strategic Plan 2024-2028. "The DHS IT community plays a more critical role than at any time in our Department's history to executing our mission," Chief Information Officer Eric Hysen said at the outset of the strategic plan, stressing the plan's priorities of investing in the department's tech workforce, lead in the responsible use of artificial intelligence, strengthening data management, improving the customer experience, retiring legacy systems through agile development, and being a leader in zero trust adoption and IT supply chain security. "Technology is constantly evolving, and any multi-year IT plan is out of date the second it is finalized. This strategic plan is no exception," Hysen said. "So, while I look forward to working with my colleagues across the Department to implement this plan, I am even more excited to learn with them and continuously improve our approach in the years to come." About 5,000 IT professionals comprise the DHS information technology workforce.

<https://www.hstoday.us/featured/no-more-big-bang-for-it-modernization-as-dhs-strategy-emphasizes-building-smaller-data-agility-smart-ai/>



- **FBI: Crippling 'Dual Ransomware Attacks' on the Rise**

October 2, 2023

The FBI has issued a warning about a rising ransomware trend in which separate attacks are conducted just hours or days apart — otherwise known as "dual ransomware attacks." "Ransomware attacks against the same victim occurring within 10 days, or less, of each other were considered dual ransomware attacks," the bureau explained in a Private Industry Notification released last week. "The majority of dual ransomware attacks occurred within 48 hours of each other." These ransomware attacks happen to the same victim within a short time span and, in the wild, have occurred with threat actors deploying different ransomware variants for each leg of the attacks, such as AvosLocker, Diamond, Hive Karakurt, LockBit, Quantum, and Royal. These variants are released in different dual combinations, ultimately resulting in a mix of data encryption, exfiltration, and extortion. The phenomenon makes sense: After an initial ransomware attack, an organization or company is still reeling from the breach and is at its weakest point, making a second attack to its already compromised system all the more harmful. In addition to dual ransomware attacks, the FBI noted a rising trend of threat actors increasingly using malware, data theft, and wiper tools to manipulate and pressure ransomware victims into negotiating. To combat both of these trends, the FBI encourages anyone to report suspicious activity with details of the time and place as well as affected equipment and the type of activity that occurred.

<https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/fbi-highlights-dual-ransomware-attack-in-rising-cybertrends>

- **One Giant Leap for Mobility: Recapping the 2023 5G Challenge**

October 3, 2023

The 2023 5G Challenge tested whether components of an Open Radio Access Network (Open RAN), such as antennas and radio base stations, can work together to ultimately create a multi-vendor subsystem end-to-end (E2E) 5G network. The Challenge separated the RAN into two contestant parts: a radio unit (RU) subsystem—the first point of contact between user devices and the network, and a central unit and distributed unit pair (CU+DU) subsystem—these units work together to handle specific functions from the RU subsystem. The Challenge also set a brisk pace for contestants to form 5G networks with subsystems from two, three, or four different vendors. During Stage One, the 5G Challenge organizers chose contestants based upon white paper applications. During Stage Two, the host lab evaluated each contestant's subsystem individually, with wrap-around emulators. During Stage Three, a CU+DU contestant and RU contestant worked together to establish an Open RAN with E2E network connectivity. In Stage Four, two contestant pairs from Stage Three worked together to demonstrate mobility. "Mobility" refers to inter-RAN handover events that occur as a phone switches from one base station to another.

<https://www.ntia.doc.gov/blog/2023/one-giant-leap-mobility-recapping-2023-5g-challenge>

- **Growth Continues with Three New Emergency Communications Contracts**

October 5, 2023

Knightscope, Inc., a leading developer of autonomous security robots and blue light emergency communication systems, today announces three new contracts totaling 5 devices for a New York college, a city in Nevada, and a park in Oklahoma. The goal of a strong emergency communications system is to provide a platform for individuals to reduce the number of possibilities for criminals to commit a crime. A University of Southern California study found that public venues with visible security equipment like blue light emergency towers and phones increased the area's perceived safety, making people feel more comfortable at such locations/venues. The objective is straightforward: when someone identifies their own personal vulnerability to crime, they can mitigate the risk by taking preventative measures and communicating with authorities. These three new users are taking proactive measures to build a robust and reliable communications pipeline for employees, faculty, students and visitors to reach professional help when in need or in the case of a life-threatening emergency.

<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20231005941138/en/>



- **Impacts of Restoring Broadband Oversight: National Security**

October 5, 2023

Currently, no federal agency can effectively monitor or address broadband outages that threaten jobs, education, and public safety. And while the FCC has acted on a bipartisan basis to secure our communications networks against companies controlled by hostile foreign governments, the lack of specific authority over broadband leaves open a national security loophole. Reclassifying internet access as a Title II service would allow the FCC to require broadband providers to report and address internet outages, like the FCC does for voice service today, and ensure that response personnel know when service is impacted, especially during emergencies. Reclassification would also allow the FCC to deny companies controlled by hostile foreign governments access to our broadband networks. In its remand of the FCC's decision to roll back net neutrality, the D.C. Circuit Court found the agency's "disregard of its duty to analyze the impact of the public safety renders its decision arbitrary and capricious." Chairwoman Rosenworcel agrees and her proposal, if adopted by the Commission, would kick start the process to rectify this abdication of national security and public safety oversight.

<https://www.fcc.gov/document/national-security-public-safety-restoring-broadband-oversight>

- **Defending critical infrastructure on the cyber battlefield**

October 6, 2023

As recent world events have shown us, critical infrastructure is frequently in the cross hairs of global cyber warfare. In August, the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency warned that China is focusing on "destructive cyberattacks on U.S. critical infrastructure." Russian hackers have sought to disrupt satellite communications, cause denial of service attacks against financial websites and knock out power throughout Ukraine, while compromising U.S. Defense Industrial Base contractor networks. In response, CISA is working with Sector Risk Management Agencies, or SRMAs, to develop specific goals for each CI sector. There are 16 total sectors, and CISA will begin this process with four of them: energy; financial services; IT; and chemical. Prior to the initiative, the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center reported that it received 870 complaints in 2022 about ransomware attacks on CI organizations. Of the four sectors that will take part in goal development first, IT was targeted the most with 107 incidents, followed by financial services (88), energy (15) and chemical (9). The IT sector may be the most vulnerable because it relies on networked devices more than any other sector. Unfortunately, cyber criminals have extended periods to do damage within this environment, with the median dwell time now at 16 days. With more than two weeks to spare, attackers can disrupt a vast range of systems that support nearly everything that make our modern lives possible.

<https://www.c4isrnet.com/opinions/2023/10/06/defending-critical-infrastructure-on-the-cyber-battlefield/>

- **PERSPECTIVE: It's Time to Treat Satellites as Critical Infrastructure**

October 9, 2023

Last February, Russian hackers launched destructive malware against American satellite provider Viasat an hour before the country's troops invaded Ukraine. The hack was the most substantial of the war, as the Ukrainian military (like the U.S. military) relies on Viasat for command and control. SpaceX's Starlink satellite, requested by the Ukrainian government to alleviate internet connectivity disruptions, also faced interference from signal jamming, further limiting bandwidth. While attacks on satellites might sound like the result of expensive and sophisticated military operations, a cybersecurity researcher was able to build a tool to hack into Starlink for just \$25, as demonstrated at Black Hat last year. The ability to cost-effectively sabotage networks stands to become a new weapon in the cyberwar arsenal. Because satellites underpin both military operations and everyday services, they are prime targets for foreign adversaries and other bad actors. China has been "aggressively pursuing" weapons to seize control of U.S. satellites – a capability that would exceed what Russia has deployed in Ukraine.

<https://www.hstoday.us/featured/perspective-its-time-to-treat-satellites-as-critical-infrastructure/>



- **Motorola Solutions Showcases the Power of Collaboration at IACP 2023**

October 14, 2023

Motorola Solutions (NYSE: MSI) will demonstrate how its safety and security ecosystem of technologies can increase the speed and effectiveness of incident response at the 2023 International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Annual Conference and Expo. Protecting people, property and places is becoming increasingly complex, requiring a more proactive and collaborative approach to safety and security. Whether responding to a traffic accident, school safety incident or threat to a large-scale event, first responders are more effective when empowered to collaborate with private organizations, community members and each other. Motorola Solutions (NYSE: MSI) will demonstrate how its safety and security ecosystem of technologies can increase the speed and effectiveness of incident response at the 2023 International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Annual Conference and Exposition this month. "When people are empowered to work together, safety outcomes dramatically improve," said John Zidar, senior vice president, North America Government, Motorola Solutions.

<https://www.criticalcommunicationsreview.com/ccr/news/111522/motorola-solutions-showcases-the-power-of-collaboration-at-iacp-2023>

State and Local News: First Responder Communications and Technologies

- **New communications tower helping Jasper Co. first responders stay connected**

September 30, 2023

A new communications tower off of Highway 17 is helping Jasper County first responders who had constant connection trouble in the area. In less than a month, it has been used around 12,000 times. After a four-year development process, this new communications tower is helping Hardeeville emergency responders who say that for years, they would lose connection in the area south of the city. "Biggest thing is, we had a lot of areas down here we couldn't communicate in, at all," said Hardeeville Fire Chief Steve Camp. The new tower, which is used by all emergency services in the county, adds over 10 miles of communication range in the area near the South Carolina-Georgia Border. Although a ribbon cutting ceremony was held last week, the tower has been in use for over a month, proving itself during Hurricane Idalia. "So just in the nick of time, this tower was built prior to hurricane Idalia hitting the area, and that was a very big help, we had thousands of radio hits on this tower during that couple of day span," said Jodie McMahon, Capital Improvements Project Manager.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/lifestyle/home-and-garden/new-communications-tower-helping-jasper-co-first-responders-stay-connected/ar-AA1hpP0o>

- **Disaster Recovery Centers Change Hours/Days Starting Oct. 1**

October 1, 2023

The three Disaster Recovery Centers on Maui will close on Sundays, beginning Oct. 1, and operate from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Although residents affected by the wildfires do not need to visit a recovery center to register for FEMA assistance, you can speak to FEMA specialists, get help applying for disaster assistance, connect with voluntary organizations and access other federal and state resources.

<https://www.fema.gov/event/disaster-recovery-centers-change-hoursdays-starting-oct-1>

- **How fast is help on the way in emergencies? Can you text 911? We took questions to 1st responders**

October 1, 2023

When you call 911, you want help sent to you immediately, but first responders might need some help from you, too. ABC13 talked to dispatchers who work 24-hour shifts to serve parts of Harris, Fort Bend, and Brazoria Counties. They said one of the biggest things they want the public to know is while they're getting information from you about the problem, help is already on the way. A lot of times, people call and want to get off the phone quickly thinking it delays the response. "All these additional questions or information that we're looking for from the caller is not



delaying help being sent at all. That help is already on the way while we're trying to obtain additional information in case we need to dispatch extra resources," explained Ryan McKnight, communications director for Harris and Fort Bend Emergency Services District 100. "We're not looking to question you, we're not doubting you, we just want to make sure that we send the appropriate amount of help in the fastest time." McKnight started as a dispatcher in 2009 and ended up falling in love with the role, which admittedly, can take an emotional toll. At this center in particular, dispatchers work 24-hour shifts. Shift changes occur at 8 a.m., and dispatchers get a much-needed hour break during the day to step away and decompress. After working those 24-hour shifts, they get the next 72 hours off, which are vital to helping dispatchers reset and care for their own mental health after being the ones who usually hear about emergencies first.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/how-fast-is-help-on-the-way-in-emergencies-can-you-text-911-we-took-questions-to-1st-responders/ar-AA1hsBfX>

- **Delaware County breaks ground on \$40M communications lifeline**

October 5, 2023

Dropped mobile calls are annoying but for first responders, but dropped communications can mean life or death. On Thursday, Delaware County Officials took a big step to assure first responders they will no longer lose that communication lifeline, as ground was ceremonially broken at the Delaware County Department of Emergency Services Building for the nearly \$40 million upgraded public safety radio system. Elected officials joined by first responders and representatives from JVC Kenwood Communications gathered in front of one of the 21 existing towers that will provide a blanket of communications to the entire 191 square miles in the county. "We're really excited," said Timothy Boyce, Delaware County director of emergency services. "Our coverage plan which we've now completed allows us to promise exceptional coverage to all of Delaware County." The project involves outfitting all 21 county tower sites to allow a mesh microwave link among towers to cover the county.

<https://www.delcotimes.com/2023/10/05/delaware-county-breaks-ground-on-40m-communications-lifeline/>

- **Williamson County officials eye cell towers for emergency communications system**

October 6, 2023

Williamson County Commissioners Court considered funding five additional cell towers in the county as a part of officials' efforts to support an expanding multiagency communications system for first responders. The Commissioners Court discussed fiscal year 2023-24 funding for capital improvements Oct. 3. Among the projects, commissioners evaluated the expenses associated with the interconnected data-sharing network Unify. This encompasses a wide range of entities, both within and outside the county, such as fire departments, emergency medical services and schools. In addition to erecting five new towers, the project also entails doubling the number of radio channels and implementing fiber optics. The latter component has already incurred expenditures of nearly \$18 million for the county. The commissioners aim to gather input and secure financial support from the involved entities, which stand to benefit from the project, before allocating significant funding. For the time being, the county will allocate funds for land acquisition related to the towers while officials engage in discussions with these entities.

<https://communityimpact.com/austin/round-rock/government/2023/10/06/williamson-county-officials-eye-cell-towers-for-emergency-communications-system/>

- **Five lessons learned five years after 'worst case' Cat. 5 Hurricane Michael**

October 6, 2023

A little less than five years ago, at 12:30 p.m. Central Daylight Time on October 10, 2018, the inconceivable happened in North Florida: a Category 5 hurricane landfall. Hurricane Michael was one of the strongest handful of hurricanes ever to strike the continental U.S., just the fourth Category 5 on record, and the first Category 4 or higher landfall ever in Florida north of a line from West Palm Beach to Charlotte Harbor. The five years since Michael's 160 mph winds and 14' storm surge seemingly render the fabric of space and time have brought slow healing to the



towns of the Forgotten Coast and Apalachicola River Valley. Thankfully, the worst-affected areas have had the opportunity to recover without another hurricane landfall since 2018. Yet a cataclysm like Michael is never really over, echoing for decades to come in the altered lives, scarred land, and twisted billboards of the Central Panhandle, and in the ways it permanently transformed how hurricanes are prepared for and predicted. As we look back across the five-year gulf of time separating us from this Category 5 monster, five key lessons and changes spurred by Michael come to mind. Consistency is a hallmark of National Hurricane Center track forecasts, not individual hurricane models.

<https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/hurricane/2023/10/06/hurricane-michael-five-years-later-lessons-from-the-florida-ruins/71069285007/>

- **Bremer County to take on \$4.7 million for emergency communication upgrade**

October 10, 2023

Bremer County will sell up to \$4.7 million in general obligation bonds for an overhaul of its obsolete emergency communication infrastructure and equipment. The Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to issue the bonds as part of the financing for what Bremer County Sheriff Dan Pickett says is a little more than a \$5 million undertaking. The board did not need to go to voters for a referendum because the upgrade is deemed part of an “essential service.” “It’s an essential service because it is needed for the safety of everybody and all first responders. This is so police, fire and EMS can talk to each other,” said Pickett. Officials hosted public meetings to inform residents of the impending debt. Officials reported hearing from a substantial number of people in favor, but none openly against the measure. “Supervisors said if we’re the people voting on it, we want people to know about it,” said Pickett. The debt will result in the average county portion of the property tax bill being \$38.80 more per \$100,000 of property valuation each year over the five years it will be paid off. The balance of the cost is being covered from the county’s available pool of 911 surcharge rate funds collected over several years, said Pickett.

https://wfcourier.com/news/local/government-politics/bremer-county-to-take-on-4-7-million-for-emergency-communication-upgrade/article_f23c069a-5e37-11ee-8cdd-d328f608abb9.html

Technology Concerns and Updates (October 1-15, 2023)

- **First of its kind dataset shows future flooding risk at neighborhood level**

September 28, 2023

If you’ve lived in the same geographic location for several years, you’ve probably noticed the seasons changing. And no, not from spring to summer and fall to winter. Depending on your region, you may have noticed spring is a bit rainier or winters aren’t producing as much snowfall as they used to. Climate change is impacting the water cycle around the world, having implications for precipitation, tropical storms, droughts, floods, sea level rise and more. Extreme weather events, like severe inland flooding — caused by extreme rain and snowmelt — are happening more frequently. Researchers at the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Argonne National Laboratory have developed a new dataset that estimates increased inland flood risk from climate change during the mid-21st century. Their article about the dataset, published in the *Journal of Hydrology: Regional Studies*, looks specifically at a study of the Northeastern United States, but the dataset will soon be applied across the country and can be implemented in any global region. The first-of-its-kind study performed six decade-long simulations using supercomputing resources at Argonne’s Laboratory Computing Resource Center and the Argonne Leadership Computing Facility, a DOE Office of Science user facility. “We took two different climate modeling scenarios, 1995 to 2004 and 2045 to 2054, and ran three different models for each. Downscaled high-resolution rainfall data from regional climate models were used to generate inland flooding depths, which had never been done before,” said Sujana Pal, a hydro climatologist at Argonne and lead author of the study.

<https://www.anl.gov/article/first-of-its-kind-dataset-shows-future-flooding-risk-at-neighborhood-level>



- **BRINGING SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS DOWN TO EARTH: A LOOK INSIDE THE CONNECTIVITY ECOSYSTEM**

October 1, 2023

Satellite technology has evolved significantly since the launch of the world's first satellite on October 4, 1957. Since then, satellites have become a prominent topic of discussion in the news, with launches occurring weekly in the hopes of advancing communication methods for future generations. Satellites have numerous capabilities, including providing new pathways for consumers and businesses and opening the door for emerging technologies such as direct-to-device functionality. Today, satellites have countless use cases, providing individuals with anything from GPS navigation in their cars and internet connectivity at home, to providing military personnel communication options on the battlefield and first responders the ability to communicate with essential services amidst an emergency or natural disaster. Satellites are crucial for staying connected, as they provide individuals beyond the reach of cable and fiber connectivity with necessary communication and fill the void of technologies that are exiting the market such as 3G and digital subscriber lines (DSL). When considering the satellite industry holistically, three main satellite types provide the common connections and services the world is most familiar with. Sitting 22,000 miles in the sky, satellites in geostationary orbit (GEO) are the workhorses of the connectivity ecosystem.

https://madison.com/online_features/hot_topics/bringing-satellite-communications-down-to-earth-a-look-inside-the-connectivity-ecosystem/article_a62ae4bb-f16d-5d5b-89fa-6d6525db64b3.html

- **This Giant Satellite Is Causing Astronomical Problems For Scientists: Here's Why**

October 4, 2023

For years, scientists have been raising the alarm about the light pollution caused by satellites operating in low-Earth orbit (LEO), such as the ones launched by SpaceX for its Starlink internet service — in fact, such concerns even resulted in a petition. SpaceX has taken various measures over the years to address the problem, such as testing sun visors and an anti-reflective coating on the satellites. However, Elon Musk's company isn't the only one shipping satellites into LEO, and a new breed of giant satellites that outshine even the brightest stars have also arrived on the scene. That giant satellite in question is BlueWalker 3, the world's first to allow a direct 5G line between a satellite and a phone. Developed by AST SpaceMobile, it unfolds to reveal an aperture spanning 693 square feet. The prototype unit entered orbit just over a year ago, but a series of commercial models called BlueBirds will soon be seen floating in the night sky. That has scientists concerned, as the prototype unit is already one of the brightest objects in the night sky. In a study published in the journal Nature, scientists explain that they collected photos from professional astronomers as well as amateur volunteers to study the light pollution problem.

<https://www.slashgear.com/1410210/giant-satellite-causing-problems-bluewalker-3-explained/>

- **What to know if you didn't receive an emergency alert on October 4.**

October 9, 2023

On Wednesday, October 4th, at around 2:20 PM ET, almost every cellphone in the United States got an alert. FEMA and the FCC tested the country's national emergency system by sending alerts and text messages to every phone connected to a cellular tower. The United States has two emergency alert systems. One for radio and television, and another for wireless devices, namely smartphones. Both systems issued test alerts on radio, television, and wireless devices. According to FEMA, the text was similar to ones sent to phones in 2018 that said "Presidential alert: this is a test of the national wireless emergency alert system and no action is needed." The text message was accompanied by an alert sound, similar to what you hear if your phone is set up to receive Amber Alerts. Some phones did not receive the alert: phones that were off or in airplane mode, phones that were connected to a VPN or virtual private network, phones that opted out of receiving government alerts, phones that were not connected to a cell site that broadcasts the alerts.

https://www.wpsdlocal6.com/news/what-to-know-if-you-didnt-receive-an-emergency-alert-on-october-4/article_17a0e1a6-66a0-11ee-a28b-efa17c2f3437.html



- **5 Fast Facts: NASA's Deep Space Optical Communications (DSOC) Experiment**

October 11, 2023

Slated to launch on October 12 with the Psyche mission (weather permitting), DSOC will demonstrate technologies enabling the agency to transmit higher data rates from deep space. NASA's pioneering Deep Space Optical Communications (DSOC) experiment will be the first demonstration of laser, or optical, communications from as far away as Mars. Launching with NASA's Psyche mission to a metal-rich asteroid of the same name on Thursday, October 12, DSOC will test key technologies designed to enable future missions to transmit denser science data and even stream video from the Red Planet. Until now, NASA has used only radio waves to communicate with missions that travel beyond the Moon. Much like fiber optics replacing old telephone lines on Earth as demand for data grows, going from radio communications to optical communications will allow increased data rates throughout the solar system, with 10 to 100 times the capacity of state-of-the-art systems currently used by spacecraft.

<https://scitechdaily.com/5-fast-facts-nasas-deep-space-optical-communications-dsoc-experiment/>

- **Where Next for States on All Things IT and Security?**

October 15, 2023

Media coverage of the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) Annual Conference was widespread this past week. Here is a roundup of some of the top stories from GovTech: CIOs Peer into Crystal Balls at NASCIO Annual Conference: The future of government technology was up for debate at the annual gathering of state IT leaders Monday, and it's not only about AI and cybersecurity, but also better strategy and relationships. AI: 'A Helping Hand from Our Robot Overlords': Arizona Chief Information Security Officer Ryan Murray sees two significant opportunities for artificial intelligence in cybersecurity.

<https://www.govtech.com/blogs/lohrmann-on-cybersecurity/where-next-for-states-on-all-things-it-and-security>

Conferences and Educational Opportunities for RECCWG Members/Partners

- **CISA Cybersecurity Awareness Month 2023 Webinar Series**

October 17 & 24, 2023 (Virtual)

CISA is hosting a series of free, virtual webinars every Tuesday in October 2023 (3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th) from 2-2:30pm EDT.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/cisa-cybersecurity-awareness-month-2023-2550079>

- **Webinar: Connecting first responders: The future of public safety communications**

October 24, 2023 (Virtual)

Join a conversation discussing the findings of the third annual Verizon Frontline Public Safety Communications survey. From how first responders are thinking about communications during emergency incidents to attitudes towards emerging technologies, the conversation will provide insights into what first responders are saying about the future of communications in the field. You'll hear from public safety and communications leaders on how first responders can adopt tech innovations to be more effective and safer, why a reliable network will continue to be crucial to public safety, and real-life use cases of how communications are crucial during emergency response or large-scale events like the Super Bowl.

<https://www.ems1.com/ems-products/communications/articles/webinar-connecting-first-responders-the-future-of-public-safety-communications-eQep6HC1HUzyf5IP/>

- **New Dates: FCC Tribal Workshop**

November 2-3, 2023 (Indian Island, ME)

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced that the upcoming Tribal workshop has been rescheduled from October 12-13, 2023, to November 2-3, 2023. The upcoming in-person Tribal workshop is for



Tribal governments, Tribal employees, and Tribal members. This event is designed to provide information that will help Tribal Nations identify and evaluate opportunities to develop more robust broadband infrastructure and services in Tribal communities. It is also designed to provide information about FCC policies and programs to address the lack of adequate communications services on Tribal lands nationwide. FCC staff will provide presentations on a broad range of important FCC initiatives that support the deployment of communications infrastructure and services in Tribal communities (e.g., Broadband Data Collection, Affordable Connectivity Program, Universal Service Fund Schools and Libraries Program). Such infrastructure supports Tribal economic development, Tribal schools and libraries, and low-income families, as well as public safety departments, and Tribal government administration. Participants will also receive updates on the current FCC proceedings that provide opportunities for Tribal Nations to inform the FCC to help ensure that Native views and interests are heard in the decision-making process. Registration is free. To register for the workshop, please send your name, title, Tribal affiliation, and contact information, with the subject line "November Workshop" to Tribal.Events@fcc.gov. Questions about the workshop may be directed to the Office of Native Affairs and Policy: Lloyd Collier, Lloyd.Collier@fcc.gov or Derik Goatson, Derik.Goatson@fcc.gov. Walk-ins can also be accommodated.

<https://www.fcc.gov/document/new-dates-fcc-tribal-workshop-indian-island-me-nov-2-3-2023>

- **International Wireless Communications Expo (IWCE) 2024**

March 25-28, 2024 (Orlando, FL)

IWCE connects the people and technologies charged with ensuring that the most critical communications - supporting governments, utilities, transportation, enterprise, public safety, healthcare and critical-infrastructure sectors - always work, even under the most difficult circumstances. Convergence for critical-communications community involves the blending of three distinct technologies - voice, data and video. As emerging technologies continue to evolve, convergence is almost certain to increase. IWCE's four-day technical conference and two-day business expo showcase the latest and greatest in critical-comms technology to ensure the security, dependability, reliability, and redundancy of networks across many vertical solutions and markets.

<https://iwceexpo.com/>

- **APCO 2024**

August 4-7, 2024 (Orlando, FL)

APCO 2024, APCO International's Annual Conference & Expo, is the premier event for public safety communications officials, from frontline telecommunicators to comm center managers to public safety communications equipment and services vendors. Starting August 4, APCO 2024 offers four days of educational sessions, committee meetings and special events, paired with two full days of exhibits. APCO 2024 will be held August 4-7, in Orlando, Florida. The Exhibit Hall will be open August 5-6. Conference attendees represent a wide range of organizations, including emergency communications centers, law enforcement, fire service, emergency medical services, and government agencies, along with service providers and commercial vendors.

<https://www.apco2024.org/>

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