



STATE OF DELAWARE
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NEWS RELEASE

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DSHS UNVEILS NEW PORTABLE 800 MHZ TOWERS Towers Are Critical Emergency Communications Asset

Today the Department of Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS) unveiled and demonstrated two new emergency communications assets—portable 800 MHz towers also known as Site on Wheels (SOWs).

“Delaware’s 800 MHz systems is one of the few statewide interoperable systems in the country and with the addition of this equipment we will be able to maintain interoperability should we experience emergency issues with one of the communications towers,” said Safety and Homeland Security Secretary Lewis D. Schiliro.

The state-of-the-art 85-foot towers are secured to trailers that can be temporarily positioned anywhere in the State to serve as backup should an existing permanent 800 MHz tower fail.

“Delaware is one of the first states in the nation to acquire portable towers designed to be quickly deployed during emergency situations to re-establish communications in the area of a failed tower,” said DSHS Division of Communications (DivComm) Director Mark Grubb.

Grubb oversees 30 technicians and staff who maintain the State’s 800 MHz system which includes over 14,000 pieces of user equipment. In addition, DivComm also maintains more than 40 permanent 800 MHz towers erected statewide to support Delaware’s public safety emergency communications network. These formidable structures are built to withstand significant weather storms and other potential dangers but they are not indestructible.

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Acquiring the portable towers puts DivComm in a better position to handle an unexpected interruption in a tower signal. DivComm plans to station the trailers at its New Castle and Kent shops so they can be deployed as necessary.

“Radio communications are of paramount importance to first responders during a disaster or critical incident and the Site on Wheels radio towers are critical to the preparedness of the entire emergency responder community,” said Delaware State Police Colonel Robert Coupe.

“Maintaining communication during an emergency is critical to public safety. Our 800 MHz communications system is a life line for our law enforcement, fire service and public safety partners,” said Kevin Wilson, president of the Delaware Volunteer Firemans Association.

The towers were funded through a federal Public Safety Interoperability Communications (PSIC) Grant. Delaware was awarded a total of \$8.1 million. Of which, \$700,000 was allocated to purchase the Site On Wheels (SOW) trailers, transport vehicles and system equipment needed to support the tower operation.

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