



NEWS RELEASE

From Mayor Dean DePiero

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Parma Approves Areawide Emergency Communications System

(Parma) – The city of Parma will soon become the first in northern Ohio to adopt a dramatic new communication system, allowing police, fire and other rescue services to talk directly with each other. The plan was given the go ahead last night by Parma City Council.

“We’re taking the lead role in this to increase safety, speed-up lines of communication and ultimately save lives,” says Parma Mayor Dean DePiero. “And best of all, our radio system will have the capability to benefit other communities throughout the region.”

The program is called “interoperability.” The city of Parma already has in place a cost-effective and FCC compliant emergency communications system that could span Cuyahoga County. It has the capacity to put police and firefighters in many communities on the same channel during a mass crisis. The city will buy new radios and complete setting-up the framework for the system.

Mayor DePiero says Parma is willing to work with Cuyahoga County officials to provide the city’s revolutionary radio communications system with other municipalities, helping to defray operational costs while saving taxpayers money in the process.

“This is a giant leap to give our radio systems the ability to talk to one another,” Mayor DePiero says. “The bottom line is simple – it makes sense for our safety forces and our residents. The need for emergency crews to have direct communication with one another is no longer an option since 9/11. I credit members of Parma City Council for seeing the big picture on the critically important issue.”

(more)

The city of Brooklyn is already on Parma's radio system. The Brooklyn Fire Department has received a grant to upgrade to the national standard for interoperability known as P-25, the ability for different radio systems to communicate with one another. Brooklyn Heights is exploring a similar upgrade and move to Parma's radio system.

Currently, emergency crews are assigned dedicated radio frequencies, but are unable to share each other's frequencies for day-to-day operations. When in place, the new system will allow all city safety and rescue crews to easily communicate on the same channel without having to be routed back and forth by a central dispatcher.

Parma is the only city in northeast Ohio with a radio system that meets the national P-25 standard for interoperability. Parma safety officials say with minimal cost, other county municipalities could sign onto Parma's radio system and have the ability to communicate with each other during a mass crisis.

"We're being proactive," says Mayor DePiero. "We're going save valuable time for emergency crews, and at the end of the day we will have helped to save lives. This is truly a revolutionary move that will intensify safety for our entire region."

Most of Ohio's 88 counties do not have a common frequency band among all law enforcement and safety agencies. In northeast Ohio, police and fire departments use a diverse set of frequency bands that are not compatible. Local emergency experts say Parma's technology will enhance communication between local, state and federal jurisdictions.

The concept of interoperability was initiated in the 1980's, but communities in northern Ohio have been unable to go past the discussion phase in trying to adopt the emergency communication system. Only a handful of states have given their approval to such a unified emergency radio project.

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