

NEWS from U.S. Congressman

★ **Pete Sessions** ★

32nd District of Texas

National Security * Economic Security * Homeland Security



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Sessions Announces Interoperable Emergency Communications Solution in Dallas

Texas Serves as Model for National Emergency Communications System

Washington, DC – U.S. Congressman Pete Sessions (R-Dallas) today announced the implementation of the Dallas Love Field Wireless Integration Project, an interoperable communications system for emergency response personnel and the private sector first modeled at Dallas Love Field.

The project, originally funded by a \$979,100 grant that Sessions secured from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2005, solves one of the largest problems facing emergency response in our country – the inability of first responders and law enforcement personnel to communicate with each other.

"Our nation learned in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks that the communications infrastructure used by our first responders was ineffective and was in need of reform," Congressman Sessions said.

"As we mark the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, for the first time emergency first responders, the men and women responsible for protecting our families, our community, and our critical infrastructure have the ability to seamlessly communicate with each other, using the existing equipment and devices they have used for years," said Sessions, who has been a leader on public safety issues in Congress.

Currently, in an emergency, whether it is a terrorist attack such as September 11, 2001 or a natural disaster such as Hurricane Katrina, first responders in Texas and across the nation face a major communications problem. Their agencies cannot communicate quickly and efficiently with one another during times of crisis or disaster because the more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies and 35,000 fire and emergency medical agencies operating in the U.S. purchase communications equipment independently of each other. This lack of interoperable communications is a daily problem our nation's first responders and emergency personnel face as they strive to protect our nation and our citizens.

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Recognizing the challenge faced by emergency personnel due to lack of interoperable communications, Sessions worked closely with members of the Texas Congressional Delegation, DHS, the Texas Office of Homeland Security, the City of Dallas, and the North Central Texas Council of Governments, to secure funding for a real solution to the problem.

Sessions secured the initial funding for the Wireless Integration Project through a grant from DHS' Information Technology and Evaluation Program (ITEP), a nationally competitive program initiated by the DHS Chief Information Officer in partnership with the DHS Preparedness Directorate's Office of Grants and Training.

The grant funds were used to implement a first-in-the-nation secure advanced communications service at Dallas Love Field. This service, developed by CoCo Communications, uses overlay software technology to create a "network of networks" that allows networks of various ages using differing equipment to work together in a secure, synchronized, and controlled manner. Legacy devices are bridged onto the network through gateways enabled with the overlay software. This implementation supports the State of Texas Interoperability Plan, the Dallas/Fort Worth/Arlington UASI Area Tactical interoperable Communications Plan (TCIP) and the National Strategy for Homeland Security, and fits with the national objectives of the U.S. DHS.

This service offers many benefits to Dallas and the State of Texas:

- Emergency personnel across the Dallas region will be able to easily communicate with each other and to better coordinate response efforts in an emergency situation.
- Law enforcement, airport, and critical infrastructure personnel can continue to use their existing communications equipment and systems, resulting in a cost effective solution that fits in city and state budgets.
- Communications will be continuous even when key pieces of infrastructure are inoperable, ensuring that emergency personnel have the tools they need to keep our citizens safe.
- New users – both regionally and nationally – can be added to the network easily, making this a long term, scalable solution that will allow coordinated communications on a day to day basis and in times of crisis.

"This is truly a model for other cities, states, and the nation to follow, and I am proud that the City of Dallas and the State of Texas are leading the nation and paving the way to solving an important national problem," said Sessions.

Current participants in the Dallas network include the City of Dallas, and the Dallas Police, Fire, and Aviation Departments; the State of Texas Departments of Public Safety and Department of Health; the Transportation Security Administration; Customs and Border Protection; the Texas Department of Homeland Security; the Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and Southwest Airlines.

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