

*Remarks for the  
Public Safety Wireless Network Conference  
March 11, 2003*

■ Recognize Delaine Stacy, Robert Latham,  
David Huggins

- Recognize presenters from around the  
country
- Thank them for sharing their expertise

It's been well over a year since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, but the memories of that day are still fresh for us all. The attacks caught us off guard, and the effects of those attacks forever changed America – and the way we protect the public safety.

It certainly changed here in Mississippi. Our focus on protecting our people was broadened, and we've had to learn new methods, develop new partnerships, and strengthen existing ones.

In the days and weeks following 9/11, we took quick action here in Mississippi – and I'm proud of the work that was done by our emergency responders, the National Guard and state agencies.

We were one of the first states to pull together representatives from the state and federal levels to develop a cooperative effort for responding to the threats of anthrax and other biological agents.

We held a summit on domestic preparedness to bring emergency responders together to share new information and methods for dealing with the wide range of threats facing our people.

We have conducted bioterrorism exercises around the state, bringing together city, county and state officials to learn how to respond to potential emergencies facing their areas.

And we prepared for this day as well. On October 16, 2001, I signed an executive order establishing an incident command system to handle emergency responses, a system we are following at the state level.

Under this system, all state and local emergency response personnel utilize common terminology, integrated communications, incident action plans, unified command and management of resources during emergencies.

And just this past February 5, I signed Executive Order 874, establishing the State Interoperability Executive Committee. We are all well aware of the problems faced by emergency responders in New York on 9/11 – fire and police personnel unable to adequately communicate with each other, with tragic consequences.

The committee established last month is charged with coordinating information between state agencies and, more importantly, with providing recommendations for both the immediate and long-term improvement of public safety wireless communications.

The work of this committee is specific, it is focused, and it is geared toward the goal of ensuring that Mississippi's first responders are able to work with each other and communicate with each other – with the end result of lives being saved.

A great deal of effort has gone into the homeland security preparations of our state, and I want to thank the men and women of our fire departments, law enforcement agencies, ambulance services, military and other emergency responders for their dedicated work.

I'm pleased President Bush and Secretary Ridge have released the funding we called for last week as well, providing \$7.5 million for Mississippi's first responders – funding that will be well utilized for training, equipment, and risk and needs assessments.

9/11 changed every community in every state in this nation. No one has gone unaffected. We have a responsibility to the public, to those we serve, to ensure that we are prepared for any possibility, any threat. I know we will meet that responsibility, and meet it well.

Thank you for the opportunity to be with you this morning, and please know how much I appreciate the work each of you does to protect the people of this state.