

National Emergency Number Association  
*The Voice of 9-1-1*



September 11, 2007

Mr. Denis Gusty  
Disaster Management Program Manager  
Office for Interoperability and Compatibility  
Department of Homeland Security

Dear Mr. Gusty:

Recently there has been discussion about the need for a standard for telematics data, and some pointed to the DM program as the solution.<sup>1</sup> But the discussion caused us to reflect on the broader problem of which telematics is a relatively small, albeit important, example, and the need to have all these messages, including telematics, conform to a shared approach and vocabulary.

Attention needs to be paid to data coming into Next Generation (NG) 9-1-1 and Emergency Communications, across a broad range of subject areas, of which telematics is just one subset. We believe a comprehensive project plan needs to be developed regarding emergency data standardization for the wide variety of private sources of information that are, or will become, available to 9-1-1 emergency communications centers and other emergency response organizations.

It is critical that standards development regarding the various data subsets which will be part of NG9-1-1/Emergency Communications be done so that overall data interoperability and compatibility are key components. We are concerned about message protocols, about message sets, and about taxonomy.

A variety of data will be coming at our members including vehicle telematics for different kinds/categories of vehicles (cars/trucks, long-haul vehicles, trains, etc), personal information including medical information/medical signs, sensors and chemical/biological detection data, and the list goes on. If these messages and their constituent data elements vary by incident type, interoperability will be very hard to achieve. We believe this calls for a high level project plan. Some of that plan is to focus on requirements and priorities; some is to create standards; some is to coordinate closely with others that are addressing similar issues (such as the Department of Health and Human Services' sponsored HITSP initiative for patient data standards).

<sup>1</sup>Ironically, telematics is the one area of this kind where a longstanding, multi-profession initiative has resulted in a current XML specification which is a de facto standard now being used by OnStar to share emergency data. The Vehicular Emergency Data Set (VEDS) XML specification and effort led by COMCARE for many years and supported strongly by NENA means that no immediate action by you or others is required.

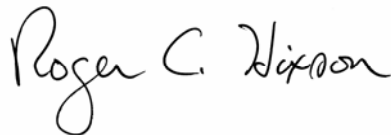
The NG emergency communications system, of which NG 9-1-1 is a critical part, is not just a transport mechanism from point A to B. It is an intelligent system that needs to be able to read standardized data to help it make routing decisions and, even more importantly, to help it make processing decisions concerning certain components of data (e.g. to enrich them with data from other sources), prior to human interaction at the receiving end(s). Not only will this data be found within message content, it will also be found within the call stream, along with the voice/video/text of the actual call.

Due to the wide range of entities which should be involved in emergency data standardization, coupled with its importance and magnitude, it would appear that DHS DM is the logical choice to be the lead facilitator for providing the technical support for developing an emergency communications data project plan and possibly be the one to coordinate the implementation of that plan.

We request that DHS DM accept this important task of being the Next Generation data standardization project plan facilitator for data coming into the emergency response system. We will provide whatever assistance we can as this effort moves forward.

We look forward to working with you.

National Emergency Number Association



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