



**Maryland Fire Chiefs
Statewide ALERT Network**

The dictum by which the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association functions.

The benchmark upon which decisions are made will only be predicated upon how they impact the people we are sworn to serve.

When we function in an environment that is a monopoly in nature we have the ethical responsibility to prepare and execute at no less than 100% level. The programs of this Association have been more closely focused to meet that challenge through educational opportunities, interaction with State & Local agencies, and cooperative efforts with other Fire Service organizations.

**Charles N. Black, President
Maryland Fire Chiefs
2002 - 2003**



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Mission Statement

First responders to any disaster, terrorist incident, or major natural calamity are always members of the Fire & EMS service. Their safety in the performance of their sacrifices for the lives and property of the citizens of Maryland is a paramount concern for the successful resolution of any event. Information is the key to the safe and successful management of all incidents.

We must strive to collect, evaluate, and disseminate all available information on weather conditions, chemicals, hazardous materials, threats, potential warnings, and terrorist activities (both foreign & domestic) in a timely manner gathered from as many sources as possible to assist the decision making capability of those in harm's way.

We will make every effort, and use all technology, interoperability options, and resources at our disposal to provide current and immediate information in a secure and accessible manner to the officers and incident commanders of the Fire & Emergency Responders in Maryland and surrounding areas.



"It means we've got to coordinate between the federal government and the state government and the local government like never before. We've got to share information on a real-time basis, so first responders and police chiefs can move as quickly as possible."

"We're charged with the security of the country, first responders are charged with the security of the country, and if we can't share information between vital agencies, we're not going to be able to do our job."

***President of the United States
George W. Bush***

April 20, 2004
Kleinshans Music Hall
Buffalo, New York

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HISTORY

Just after September 11, 2001 the Maryland Fire Chiefs, under President Black, formed the Data, Technical Information and Strategic Planning Committee to study and implement ways to aid in protecting our "Homeland" from future terrorist attacks, and safe guarding the first responders.

There was no available method by which Chief Officers of the Fire & EMS service could be informed of critical and timely information, in a 24/7 environment, concerning the possibility of future terrorist attacks. Providing up to date information to assist chief officers in preparing for and responding to potential terrorist incidents and disasters was clearly needed. So began the planning for the alert network.

There was no central collection point of this type of information. The necessary information flows from a wide variety of Federal & State agencies, organizations, and networks, which did not communicate with each other.

The Statewide ALERT Network was passed by unanimous vote of the Maryland Fire Chiefs at the spring, 2003 meeting. Volunteers created the system from scratch, communicating with as many agencies as possible with new procedures for data collection, review and dissemination. A notification methodology was developed, with reception issues, verification and security accessibility at the top of the list.

The first ALERT was sent in mid April, 2003 with the corresponding secure 3 level encryption web page for sensitive information.

Maryland lies in an area of potential risk. This necessitated creating a working relationship with our neighboring states.

To achieve some redundancy and add additional features we began participating in a pilot program of the (NCS) National Communication Systems - (ENS) Emergency Notification Service. The pilot ended on January 31, 2004.

Interoperability among the team members and the recipients of the alerts was a concern. In a continuing effort to improve our operation we sought additional partners. Nextel has provided the interoperability and connectivity that gives us additional flexibility and easier 24/7 coverage.

With the lapse of the ENS notification service and the increasing vulnerability in using vendors or relying on government programs, we were prompted into managing our own system for reliability and security. A grant from Maryland Emergency Management Agency was sought and in February 2004 our grant was approved.

The collection of the information has been the far more daunting task. It is an unending quest to contact the owners of the information and maintain reliable and continuous sources of the information critical to the operation of the Statewide ALERT Network.

There have been many meetings, telephone conversations, and emails with many Federal, State, and Local agencies to gain access to pertinent and critical information that can help to provide for the safety of our first responders and ultimately the security of our Homeland.



Nextel is pleased to partner with the Maryland Fire Chiefs on the creation and operation of the Maryland Statewide Alert Network. Clear communications can help reduce the likelihood of major incidents and increase the effectiveness of public safety's response to those events that can't be stopped.

Nextel proudly provides first responders with wireless products and services that provide 24/7 access to critical information from the Maryland Chief's Alert Network.

Nextel is proud to be associated with this dedicated group of volunteers who been able to accomplish so much, so quickly, with so little. The grant award is well deserved and a worthy investment in the Maryland Fire Chiefs Statewide Alert Network.

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**The Maryland Fire Chiefs – Statewide ALERT Network wishes to
thank the following supporters!**

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