

## *NLETS to Serve as Temporary Conduit for Fire and EMS Homeland Security Messages*

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Given the present terrorist threat environment and the imperative for timely and complete information exchange, R. David Paulison, U.S. fire administrator, expressed concern that the fire and emergency medical services (EMS) frequently do not receive critical information affecting the preservation of life and the protection of property. Currently, the fire and EMS communities do not have direct access to a national fire and EMS information distribution network.

As a temporary measure, the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) collaborated with the National Infrastructure Protection Center (NIPC) for the interim use of the National Law Enforcement Telecommunication System (NLETS) to provide more timely and complete threat and critical infrastructure protection (CIP) information to a larger segment of the fire and emergency medical services. NLETS is a sophisticated message-switching network linking local, state, and federal agencies together for the expeditious exchange of interstate law enforcement and public safety-related information.

According to this arrangement, effective February 17, 2003, when NIPC information is particularly applicable to firefighters and emergency medical personnel as determined by USFA, it will be forwarded by NLETS to police agencies with special directions. A message header will ask police officials to disseminate the information as soon as possible to the local fire and EMS department chief officers because of the nature of the information and necessity for preparedness. The information will always be limited to official use only and will never be for general public consumption.

NIPC is asking the major law enforcement associations to tell their members about the initiative and to help make it a success. USFA has contacted major fire and EMS associations to request the same assistance and to recommend that department chief officers among their members take time now to discuss this development with their local police officials. USFA maintains that agreements between and among departments should be concluded as soon as possible regarding how the transfer of this information will quickly and easily occur in their locality.

The USFA Critical Infrastructure Protection

Information Center (CIPIC) will continue to develop CIP news and information technology for the fire and EMS sector during 2003. There are high expectations that this sector will have its own dedicated electronic messaging system in the near future. Once implemented and tested, the new USFA CIPIC e-mail list server should eliminate the dependence on NLETS for sector-wide distribution of essential CIP information.