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## UNH Justiceworks Report Says Improved Communication Systems Necessary for Public Safety

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DURHAM, N.H. , The non-interoperability of public communication systems is a serious problem for professionals who respond to crime, terrorism and disaster, according to a new report by Justiceworks, an applied research unit at the University of New Hampshire.

"Learning to Talk: The Lessons of Non-Interoperability in Public Safety Communication Systems," is the latest edition of "Benchmarks and Blueprints," a series of publications created to support the ongoing discussion of crime prevention and control. The report, authored by Donald Lund under a grant from the National Institute of Justice, outlines the state of communications technology among and between public safety agencies.

Non-interoperability refers to the inability of police, firefighters, emergency medical technicians and other professionals to talk with one another when using radio and wireless communication systems.

"We've seen a number of catastrophic events over the last decade where public safety officials in harm's way could not communicate with one another," says Lund, a senior research scientist and coordinator of the ATLAS Project (Advanced Technology in Law and Society) at Justiceworks. "The World Trade Center tragedy last fall cost the lives of scores of firefighters who did not hear over their hand-held radios a call to evacuate the second tower."

Lund also noted that the 1996 Carl Drega incident in New Hampshire had its own share of communications

problems as police from many agencies and jurisdictions responded to the shootings. "There was a great risk to the lives of those police officers due to non-interoperability of police radio systems."

The new report also outlines numerous real-life tactical situations, including Columbine and the Florida wildfires, where communication gaps hampered efforts of public safety officers to respond.

"We live in the digital age," says John T. Kirkpatrick, director of Justiceworks. "Dr. Lund's report calls on all of us to do what we can to provide public safety officials with the advanced communication systems they so desperately need in times of crisis."

Kirkpatrick added that the New Hampshire departments of safety and justice are taking a lead role in seeing that public safety professionals throughout the state can talk with one another when dangerous situations arise.

For more information or to request a copy of the report, contact Joe Pace, Justiceworks coordinator of public affairs, at 603-862-1957.

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