

Joseph Aldsworth
President, Capital Fire Mutual Aid
Berlin VT.
Joseph.aldsworth@vermont.gov | 802-522-8524

State of Vermont

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. We deeply appreciate your willingness to engage with us and listen to the challenges our communities face. We also want to extend our sincere gratitude to your staff for their continued engagement and commitment to addressing an issue that has persisted for more than a decade.

We wish to express our utmost respect for the Statewide Communications Task Force and Commissioner Morrison. This is a complex and critical issue, and we remain committed to working collaboratively with the Task Force on this essential infrastructure project.

Central Vermont faces a significant and urgent need to modernize its emergency communications infrastructure. This need continues to grow more acute with time, putting increasing strain on our first responders and compounding risks during emergencies. Delaying action only escalates both the cost and the consequences of failure.

We are speaking on behalf of the Capital Fire Mutual Aid System Dispatch Users Group, which serves 29 municipalities across Washington, Orange, and Caledonia Counties—an area of approximately 918 square miles and a population of 76,009 residents. Dispatching services in this region are currently provided by the cities of Montpelier, Barre, Lamoille Sheriff's Department, Mad River Valley Ambulance and Twin State mutual aid.

Our region encompasses critical infrastructure, including:

- 27 State-owned facilities (excluding AOT garages)
- 3 Courthouses and 2 National Guard Armories
- The State's only Psychiatric Care Hospital and Central Vermont Medical Center Level II facility
- Vermont's regional Mass Care Shelter and Medical Surge Facility
- The Waterbury State Office Complex and Capital Complex in Montpelier
- Knapp State Airport, National Life Insurance, and Duke Energy Terminal
- Social support service centers including BART Clinic, Capstone, Downstreet, and Salvation Army
- The region's GMP power backup generator site and Amtrak station
- Norwich University
- Projected 3,864 new housing units by 2030

Given the expanding population and infrastructure demands, upgrading our emergency communications system is no longer optional—it is a necessity.

The original dispatch system dates back to 1990 and was established through a \$200,000 Congressionally Directed Spending allocation championed by Senator Leahy. Over the decades, we've overcome multiple challenges, including:

- Federal narrow banding mandates
- Growing interference from New England and Canada
- Economic pressures and aging infrastructure
- Major flooding events in 2023 and 2024

During the 2023 floods, Montpelier's dispatch center and three of eight towers were compromised for 72 hours, nearly resulting in a catastrophic failure. This severely hindered coordination and endangered lives. Despite these setbacks, Capital Fire Mutual Aid—alongside the cities of Barre and Montpelier—has worked tirelessly to stabilize and strengthen this system.

In the past six years, over \$1.2 million has been invested to update, redesign, and harden this critical infrastructure. These efforts, supported by our municipal partners, have improved resilience, but the core issues remain: Central Vermont's topography, historic architecture, and worsening radio interference continue to jeopardize public safety. The federal narrow banding mandate, in particular, has significantly reduced coverage and compounded these risks.

The recent Disaster Recovery and Resiliency funding awarded to CFMA presents a timely and transformative opportunity to address these issues. We have developed a shovel-ready, state-of-the-art emergency communications system that incorporates:

- P25 digital radio technology
- Trunking and LTE capabilities
- Redundancy and resiliency features
- CAD system integration with the state's Valcour records management system
- A capital replacement plan (currently in its second year, with a balance of \$236,277.46 earning 4.5% interest)

Despite our ongoing collaboration with Vermont DPS and federal partners, we have been unable to secure the remaining funding necessary to complete this project. Today, we are respectfully requesting your assistance in securing \$2.5 million from the identified funds from Senator Perchlik.

This funding will directly support:

- Construction of a 17-site, P 25 compliant, simulcasted and redundant microwave network
- readily expandable and embracing LTE and digital capabilities
- Rapid implementation within a 12–18 month timeline
- Financial Oversight by the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission
- A scalable and replicable model for statewide deployment and integration

- And fits perfectly with what was recommended by Tellivate the Communications Task Forces' Vendor

This project will significantly improve public and responder safety across Central Vermont and serve as a foundational step in building a statewide emergency communications system for Fire and EMS responders.

I have reviewed the LMSID map;

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/279eca0222754f8a954bbf8cf995a1a3>

Our 16-site redundant p 25 simulcast system directly covers the following communities of the Capital Fire Mutual Aid system providing redundancy and resiliency while also enhancing the coverage for the LMI areas as follows;

Barre City	Montpelier	East Montpelier	Plainfield	Williamstown
Barre Town	Northfield	Chelsea	Cabot	Worcester
Waterbury	Waterbury Center		Hardwick	Waitsfield
Randolph	Groton			

We believe this is a defining opportunity to demonstrate our shared commitment to innovation, resiliency, and the well-being of Vermont's communities. By acting now, we can both solve a long-standing regional issue and lay the groundwork for a statewide solution.

Thank you again for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Joseph Aldsworth
President
Capital Fire Mutual Aid

Chair Vermont EMS District #6