

Nebraska

Office of the CIO

Information & Communications Technology

State-to-State Operability and Interoperability using Critical Connect

Project Dates: Fall 2022 to Present

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## Executive Summary

Providing secure and reliable communication to first responders across the State of Nebraska is paramount and expected by our customers. As communication needs evolve, agencies often operate on different systems that are not naturally interoperable. The inability to connect quickly and reliably during emergencies or multi-agency operations can lead to critical delays.

## IDEA

Could Nebraska implement Motorola Critical Connect to bridge the gap in coverage along our borders with our neighboring States? Breaks in communication can be disastrous for first responders. In researching options and capabilities of our current statewide radio system, the critical connect looked promising, and no other State had implemented this solution.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The Public Safety team, led by Dave Collett, laid out their plan to implement this solution. The first steps were research, upgrades to the current system, and staff training on the capabilities of Critical Connect. Communication with our neighboring States was the longest part of the project. We had to ensure the partnering State's radio system was up to date and capable of using Critical Connect. Once the technical logistics were worked out both State radio systems had to make the changes to their systems to connect via a connection node. We worked with Motorola to ensure each agency has proper Talkgroup mappings, User IDs, routing rules, and security credentials.

## IMPACT

On June 3rd, 2025, Nebraska State Patrol successfully tested roaming using a WyoLink tower to talk back to North Platte Dispatch. This opens a new avenue of cooperation and communication between the states. The next targets on the list for this cooperation are Missouri, South Dakota and Kansas. Iowa has also expressed interest in completing this connection.

To a Nebraska Statewide Radio System (SRS) user, the ability to instantly communicate in an emergency is crucial. That ability just got easier with a connection between the SRS and the Wyoming WyoLink system Using an Inter Sub System Interface (ISSI) through Motorola Critical Connect, the two states have collaborated to make seamless roaming between the states a reality. There are two parts to this system. The first part allows users to communicate with their counterparts in the neighboring state. This requires sharing talkgroups between the states. It can be used when there is a chase from one state to the other or when there is a fire near the border requiring coordination

between the states. The second part allows users to roam onto the sites of the neighboring state. This enhances the coverage of each state without the need to build extra sites. With the cost of a site running around \$1.5 million this is a huge savings for both states. We can coordinate additional sites on each side of the border to provide the greatest advantage for both states.