



North Carolina Department of Public Safety

State Highway Patrol

Roy Cooper, Governor
Eddie M. Buffaloe, Jr., Secretary

Freddy L. Johnson, Jr.
Commander

MEMORANDUM

To: Chairs of Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety

From: Eddie M. Buffaloe, Jr., Secretary, DPS *Eddie M. Buffaloe Jr.*
Freddy L. Johnson, Jr., Commander, State Highway Patrol *Col. F.L.J.*

Subject: VIPER Quarterly Report

Date: May 15, 2023

Pursuant to Session Law 2016-94, Section 17B.1, The Department of Public Safety shall report annually no later than March 1 and quarterly thereafter to the chairs of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety on the progress of the State's VIPER system.

Network Status - Network Status - 241 total sites planned for statewide coverage of which 236 sites are constructed and on-the-air representing 98% completion. The remaining five sites are currently underway and in varying stages of the construction process, either site engineering, resolution of leases or the completion of site construction. All the remaining sites are fully funded for construction. The system currently supports 170,788 emergency users. This quarter gain represented slightly more than 3000 additional user radios. An additional statistic that we are also beginning to track is how many counties have directly connected consoles with VIPER network. The number currently stands at 45. We have nine further counties with orders for consoles, which will bring the total in CY23 to 54. Integration of the direct connection consoles greatly enhances the ability for local PSAPs to be able to reroute VIPER radio calls in the event of the loss of a 911 PSAP during emergencies or other unusual occurrences.

New Tower Construction Progress – Three sites (3) are currently under construction. Hot House (Cherokee County) tower and building installations are complete pending power and antenna installation with an anticipated site turn up at the end of Q2 2023. High Top (Buncombe County) has civil work completed along with the equipment shelter install. Equipment installation is pending, and site turn up set for end of Q2. Finally, Hawshaw Mountain (Avery County) has the tower ordered and the foundation work is pending a site issue with an access easement for the land. Site is expected to be on the air by the end of CY23.

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Other Significant Projects/Funding Needs:

- **VIPER Site Coverage Analysis:** With the upcoming completion of all the 241 Legislatively funded sites submitted as part of the 2004 VIPER study delivered to the Legislature, VIPER staff have begun to identify areas of the state where the minimum 95% portable radio in the street coverage has not been met. The 2004 plan provided a “best estimate” of the needed number of sites and now with the 241 sites fully located and under construction, it is now possible, aided by more modern and comprehensive coverage mapping programs, for VIPER to be able to identify these areas lacking sufficient coverage and to prepare a remediation strategy to bring back to the Legislature for consideration. VIPER has determined that an additional thirty-one (31) sites are needed in Western North Carolina and will present that in a written document to the Legislature for consideration in CY23 for a recommendation on potential future funding.