



# 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 *EMS*  
Freddy L. Johnson, Jr., Commander, State Highway Patrol *Col. F.L.J.*

**Subject:** VIPER Quarterly Report

**Date:** November 15, 2021

*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 235 sites are constructed and on-the-air representing 98% completion. The remaining six 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 153,488 emergency users. This quarter gain represented slightly more than 2,780 additional user radios.

SUA Status - VIPER has just completed its upgrade to Release 7.20.2. The Legislature provided a one-time appropriation of \$1.5M for the Service Upgrade Assurance (SUA) program which allowed VIPER to enter into a nine-year agreement with Motorola to provide a long-term SUA contract with subsequent system upgrades scheduled every three (3) years. This contract has a defined, recurring funding appropriation of \$1.5M from the Legislature, which began 1 July 2019, with the approval of an FY19-20 mini-budget. The 7.20.2 upgrade represents the first three years of the nine-year agreement. A new multi-year contract will be required in FY27-28 to continue the SUA beyond the current agreement period.

New Tower Construction Progress - VIPER completed the Anson W/T (Anson County) site during the last quarter. Two sites (2) are currently under construction, Aho (Watauga County) and Hayesville (Clay County). VIPER hopes to have the Aho and Hayesville sites operational by the end of Q1 2022, weather permitting. VIPER is currently awaiting NC DENR approval for the tower access road at Hot House (Cherokee County) and we are projecting a site turn up during Q2 2022. VIPER continues to work on leases or perform engineering work at Jones Pond (Anson County), Hawshaw Mountain (Avery County), and High Top (Buncombe County).

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Other Significant Projects/Funding Needs:

- **Microwave Upgrade:** VIPER operates a statewide microwave network in conjunction with the University of North Carolina Public Television. This network utilizes T1 technology (circuit based) which has been the national standard for connectivity for over 50 years. With the transition over the Ethernet and the ability to manage bandwidth needs more efficiently, the Manufacturer (Alcatel) will no longer support our MDR-8000 microwave radios past the end of CY2021. This will require the state to seek funding to replace the current, end of life microwave radios beginning in FY2022. The anticipated funding requirement for the replacement of the microwave radios is \$19,325,000. VIPER has been successful in receiving support from not only Governor Cooper's budget proposal but also from both the Senate and House budget proposals in the Legislature to date.