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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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January 20, 2005 Bismarck, ND --- Through a collaboration of several private and government entities, the State of North Dakota is now better prepared to deal with intentional bio-terrorism and other unintentional threats over a secure wide area network (WAN) that will enable healthcare providers to videoconference in real-time at 42 different locations across the entire state.

The Bioterrorism Wide Area Network (BTWAN) in North Dakota represents one of the nation's most sophisticated high-speed, broadband networks for emergency responses, utilizing the fiber optic system installed and maintained by Dakota Carrier Network, an eight-year-old system owned by 15 independent local telephone companies. A federal grant from the Health Resource Services Administration (HRSA) provided the funds for designing and building the BTWAN under the guidance of the North Dakota Department of Health and the North Dakota Healthcare Association (an affiliation of hospitals in the state).

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and subsequent public health issues like the anthrax scare and public speculation about smallpox and other potential bio-terrorism agents, the federal government began funding states through the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and HRSA to help local and state level organizations prepare for emergencies.

"We believe this is an important resource for North Dakota," said Gov. John Hoeven. "We appreciate the work of everyone involved, and we also believe it is a model that can help other states, as well."

Design and construction of the BTWAN involved some of North Dakota's most recognized information technology companies, including AVI Systems of Bismarck, which installed all the Polycom video systems; MultiBand of Fargo, which installed the Cisco routers and switches; and Dakota Carrier Network, which will provide the transport and manage the network. Bob Pope, president of Nexus Innovations of Bismarck, was project manager for the BTWAN, which took nearly a year to design and install.

"The BTWAN system represents a practical and necessary health, communications and educational link for the many communities served by health care providers and emergency responders," explains Chip Thomas, President of the North Dakota Healthcare Association (NDHA). "It is a cooperative result of a private/public effort in which all the contributing parties worked diligently to come in with

workable solutions, timely execution of duties and within budget. We look forward to using the system in a variety of ways to meet the purpose of preparedness through enhanced communication capability.”

“We are pleased to provide the backbone for this critical network,” says Evan Hass, general manager of Dakota Carrier Network, prime contractor with the North Dakota Health Care Association for getting the BTWAN designed and built. “DCN has dedicated much of its resources to providing leading edge broadband communications for North Dakota organizations to use in transmitting video, voice, and data communications for private and public purposes. It has been our goal to enable customers to access the most contemporary technology for reliable and secure communications. We are committed to all of North Dakota - our company will remain diligent in the on-going management of this critical network.”

Rural Healthcare people are enthusiastic about the new network. Ron Volk, CEO of the St. Aloisius Medical Center in Harvey says, “The BT-WAN is a great information, communication and education tool. The connections that we at St. Aloisius have with other Hospitals in North Dakota has brought us a saving in dollars already by being able to have meetings at our desk, in-service education from our facility and state information on bioterrorism without traveling. The BT-WAN is already showing us a return, we are looking at more ways to use this as we get more familiar with its capabilities. This has become a great asset to St. Aloisius.”

“The BTWAN system will provide an efficient, cost effective, dependable method for North Dakota hospitals and other entities to plan for and operate effectively in case of a Bioterrorism event”, said Mitch Leupp, CEO of Mountrail County Medical Center in Stanley. “The capability and use of this system however is much broader than just Bioterrorism. It will provide a cost effective means of conducting meetings and delivering education to every corner of the state. By way of high speed video conferencing we can conduct meetings and deliver education to every facility and its staff. They can access information that could not normally be obtained due to distance and time restrictions.”

“The network system is a state-of-the-art development whose time we hope never comes,” says Glenn Bosch of AVI Systems. “However, in the event that it does, the system can dial up every healthcare location at the same time, or involve only regional connections for ad hoc meetings and other communication opportunities for different emergency situations.”

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## About Dakota Carrier Network

Founded in 1997, DCN is owned by 15 independent local telephone companies representing over 800 employees statewide, with headquarters in Fargo, ND and the network operations center located in Bismarck, ND. DCN utilizes two Synchronous Optical Network (SONET) rings that provide redundant protection from service disruptions. DCN provides one point of contact for organizations with interests across the United States, with interconnections to other fiber optic networks and the convenience of one contact point for all administration, maintenance, upgrades and service. Dakota Carrier Network provides Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM) service as well as gateways to the Internet and emerging technologies such as Internet Protocol (IP) networking and Dense Wave Division Multiplexing (DWDM). [www.dakotacarrier.com](http://www.dakotacarrier.com)

## About AVI Systems

Founded in 1974 in Bismarck, ND, AVI Systems has become one of the nation's leading providers of audio, video, videoconferencing, and related systems. AVI has offices in Bismarck, Minneapolis, Des Moines, Kansas City, Omaha, St. Louis, San Diego, Chicago, Bensenville (IL), Grand Rapids (MI), Madison and Milwaukee (WI). AVI System is employee-owned with \$80 million in annual sales. Some clients for the design and construction of communication systems include Best Buy, AT&T, Carlson Companies, Sprint, ConAgra, and Target. [www.avisystems.com](http://www.avisystems.com)

## About Multiband

Multiband Corporation, formerly Vicom, Incorporated, formed in 1975, provides voice, data and video systems and services to business and government clients, and to multiple dwelling units (MDUs), including apartment buildings and time share resorts. The Company's products and services are sold to clients located throughout the United States. The Company has two operating divisions, Multiband Business Solutions and Multiband Subscriber Services, which encompass the wholly owned subsidiary corporations Multiband USA, Inc. and URON, Inc. Multiband has offices in Fargo, Minneapolis, Rochester, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver, Chicago and Tampa employing 115 people with satellite facilities through subcontractors in St. Louis, Dallas and New York. For additional information, please go to [www.multibandusa.com](http://www.multibandusa.com).

## About Nexus Innovations

Based in Bismarck, ND, Nexus Innovations specializes in providing strategic solutions for organizations with complex business and technical needs. Clients include financial institutions, healthcare providers, utility companies, investment firms, service-based businesses, court systems, and the public sector. [www.nexusinnovations.com](http://www.nexusinnovations.com)