



DEFEND TODAY,
SECURE TOMORROW

CISA'S WIRELESS PRIORITY SERVICE TURNS 20



The 2002 Olympic Torch

OVERVIEW

Wireless Priority Service (WPS) celebrated its 20th anniversary in February 2022. This milestone marks two decades since the original deployment of the WPS Immediate Solution in Salt Lake City in support of the 2002 Winter Olympics.

WHAT IS WPS?

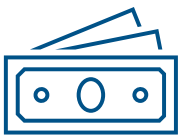
Extreme weather, a crowded sporting or entertainment event, or a downed or damaged telephone line can congest or degrade telecommunications networks. In these situations, the availability of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA) WPS allows the Nation's security and public safety personnel to seamlessly communicate, distribute information, and coordinate response activities within and outside their organizations by prioritizing their calls. WPS is available in all nationwide networks and some regional networks and has a call completion success rate over 95%.

WPS supports federal, state, local, tribal and territorial governments and industry and non-profit organizations, including personnel from the 16 critical infrastructure sectors. Today, there are over half a million WPS users – a huge increase just in the past year. WPS is an essential tool in the communications plans of many organizations, addressing the need for interoperable, secure, and resilient communications.

HISTORY

In 1995, the National Communications System (NCS) petitioned the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to develop and implement a uniform nationwide cellular priority access capability to support national security and emergency preparedness users. The petition led to the development and deployment of priority treatment end-to-end across participating commercial cellular networks, allowing authorized personnel to make cellular calls during emergencies. Today, WPS's complementary landline service is the Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS).

RECENT ENHANCEMENTS



By 2020, carriers had waived all associated fees, making WPS accessible to more users.



As of 2020, new subscribers receive text messages notifying them when WPS is activated on their phones.



In 2018, Carriers and CISA established a streamlined process for mass activations of WPS.



The PTS dialer app was launched for Android (2016) and iOS (2018) to speed the calling process and reduce dialing errors.

“Building WPS to have the highest signaling priority has made it a game-changing service for enrolled users”.

-Frank Suraci
Senior Advisor, NS-EP Communications

“Head-of-the-line privilege from AND to the tower? That’s awesome!”

-Billy Bob Brown, Jr.
Executive Assistant Director for Emergency Communications, CISA