



2023 SAFECOM Annual Summary

A summary of key products, activities, and major meeting outcomes in 2023

April 2024

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A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR



Since SAFECOM's establishment in 2001, the communication and information management technologies used by the nation's public safety community have evolved and advanced dramatically, including video, data, internet protocol (IP), and broadband communications. With this technological progression has come new challenges, as emergency responders continue to experience more frequent and extreme weather events, expanded risk of cybersecurity attacks and other cyber threats, and the lingering impacts of a global pandemic.

The heart of SAFECOM's mission is to improve public safety communications operability, interoperability, and security—a mission that remains salient today as more sophisticated systems emerge and the threat landscape continues to evolve. SAFECOM is one of the first organizations to bring together representatives from public safety associations as well as emergency responders in the field. SAFECOM serves as a tremendous resource to first responders by providing key guidance on financial assistance programs and investment priorities, improving interagency communications, developing relationships across jurisdictions and disciplines, and establishing best practices, resources, and tools aimed at building resilience across emergency communications systems while reducing risk to physical security and cybersecurity issues and threats.

As we continue to see rapid changes in consumer products available for day-to-day communications, emergency communications must embrace and tackle the associated opportunities and challenges new technologies pose. Comprised of representation from more than 75 associations and agencies across the nation, SAFECOM remains dedicated to understanding emerging communications technologies, issues, and needs that affect the public safety community; collaborating across the public safety community and its partners to develop consensus-based guidance for emerging communications technologies, issues, and needs; and disseminating public safety communications guidance to stakeholders.

I encourage you to review and share [SAFECOM's resources](#), which span the spectrum of interoperability, from governance to technology to training and exercises. While great strides have been accomplished in the landscape of emergency communications, there is always more work to be done. SAFECOM strives to be on the frontlines of the ever-evolving landscape, *assuring a safer America through effective public safety communications*.

Chief Gerald R. Reardon
SAFECOM Chair

INTRODUCTION

In 2023, SAFECOM, administered by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)¹ and led by the SAFECOM Executive Board, worked to enhance public safety communications capabilities and improve coordination among the community. SAFECOM supported the progress of strategic priorities through its four committees: Governance, Education and Outreach, Funding and Sustainment,² and Technology Policy.³ Additionally, SAFECOM members supported a number of other initiatives through organized task forces and working groups comprised of SAFECOM members and subject matter experts across multiple disciplines and levels of government, with an emphasis on identifying cybersecurity risks relevant to public safety communications; supporting the transition to Next Generation 911 (NG911); providing user input to Project 25 (P25) standards and compliance; incorporating the full scope of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services into the incident management organizational structure; and creating and piloting an Information Sharing Framework (ISF). This document summarizes key 2023 SAFECOM products, activities, and summaries of meetings conducted throughout the year.

SUMMARY

VISION

Assuring a safer America through effective public safety communications

MISSION

SAFECOM, as an advisory body to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), improves public safety communications operability, interoperability, and security across local, regional, state, tribal, territorial, and international borders, and with federal government entities



To achieve our vision and mission in 2023, SAFECOM:

Focused on:

- Governance
- Education & Outreach
- Funding & Sustainment
- Technology Policy
- Cybersecurity
- Next Generation 911
- Information and Communications Technology Services
- Information Sharing
- Project 25 User Needs and Compliance

Welcomed 25
new members

Published over 30 new
resources and conducted
more than 70 meetings

¹ 6 U.S. Code Section 571 (c) (2) requires CISA to administer the Department's responsibilities and authorities relating to the SAFECOM program, excluding elements related to research, development, testing, and evaluation and standards.

² Jointly coordinated with the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC).

³ Jointly coordinated with NCSWIC.

2023 IMPACT ON PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS

EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Executive Board serves as the program’s leadership group and provides strategic guidance to SAFECOM on emergency responder user needs. The Board is also responsible for maintaining programmatic resources, including the *SAFECOM Strategic Plan* and the *SAFECOM Annual Summary*. The *Strategic Plan* outlines the function of SAFECOM and its sub-groups’ current year planned priorities, products, and activities. The *Annual Summary* highlights SAFECOM’s previous year accomplishments and activities.

Executive Board Accomplishments

Chair: Chief Gerald Reardon
First Vice Chair: Assistant Chief Chris Lombard
Second Vice Chair: Chief Jay Kopstein
 ✓ [2022 SAFECOM Annual Summary](#)
 ✓ [2023 SAFECOM Strategic Plan](#)

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Governance Committee focuses on public safety communications governance, which concentrates on improving both governance structures and processes internal to SAFECOM, as well as external statewide governance bodies for public safety communications. In 2023, the Committee oversaw the management of SAFECOM’s annual elections process and assessed candidates for new SAFECOM membership. The Committee focused on updating the *Writing Guide for Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG)*, a tool to assist local agencies and jurisdictions with developing guidelines for first responders when responding or operating during emergency events. Additionally, the Committee began updating the 2018 *SAFECOM Recommended Guidelines for Statewide Public Safety Communications Governance Structures*⁴ to more effectively integrate lessons learned and best practices for establishing governing bodies. This resource is expected to be published in 2024.

Governance Committee Accomplishments

Chair: Major George Perera
Vice Chair: Sheriff Paul Fitzgerald
 ✓ Annual SAFECOM Elections
 ✓ Annual Membership Assessment Process
 ✓ [Writing Guide for SOGs](#)

2023 SAFECOM Elections

In 2023, SAFECOM conducted elections for the SAFECOM First Vice Chair, two Executive Board member positions, as well as leadership for the Education & Outreach and Funding & Sustainment committees.

The 2023 Elections resulted in the following members filling leadership roles:

- **SAFECOM First Vice Chair:** Assistant Chief Chris Lombard, SAFECOM At-Large (Seattle Fire Department, Washington)
- **SAFECOM Executive Board Member:** Chief Douglas Aiken, National Public Safety Telecommunications Council
- **SAFECOM Executive Board Member:** Sheriff Paul Fitzgerald, National Sheriffs’ Association
- **Education & Outreach Committee Chair:** Battalion Chief Cody Worrell, SAFECOM At-Large (Surprise Fire Department, Arizona)
- **Education & Outreach Committee Vice Chair:** Captain Chad Steffen, SAFECOM At-Large (Goodhue County Sheriff's Office, Minnesota)
- **Funding & Sustainment Committee Chair:** Lloyd Mitchell, Forestry Conservation Communications Association
- **Funding & Sustainment Committee Vice Chair:** Major Darryl “DL” Anderson, SAFECOM At-Large (Stark County Sheriff’s Office, Ohio)

⁴ Publication of this guidance directly contributed to National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) Objective 1.1; Success Indicator: States and territories create or revise policy and plans to formalize and fund emergency communications governance bodies, such as Statewide Interoperability Governing Bodies; and NECP Objective 1.3; Success Indicator: Governance bodies undertake technology integration and migration initiatives (e.g., broadband, 911, alerts and warnings, information management, network infrastructure, cybersecurity) to guide implementation by public safety.



Assistant Chief Chris Lombard
SAFECOM First Vice Chair



Chief Douglas Aiken (ret.)
Executive Board Member



Sheriff Paul Fitzgerald
Executive Board Member



Battalion Chief Cody Worrell
Education & Outreach
Committee Chair



Captain Chad Steffen
Education & Outreach
Committee Vice Chair



Lloyd Mitchell
Funding & Sustainment
Committee Chair



Major Darryl "DL" Anderson
Funding & Sustainment
Committee Vice Chair

2023 NEW MEMBERSHIP

Each year, the Governance Committee reviews SAFECOM's current membership for gaps in public safety disciplines and expertise. After analyzing SAFECOM's membership composition, the Governance Committee reviewed SAFECOM membership applications and provided recommendations for new members to the Executive Board.

In 2023, the following new at-large members joined SAFECOM⁵:

- Nicolas "Nic" Briseño, Story County Sheriff's Office (Iowa)
- Richard Fiske, Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
- Richard LaSaracina, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (Connecticut)
- Michael Mahoney, City of Cambridge Emergency Communications (Massachusetts)
- Peter Rogers, Tennessee Advanced Communications Network
- John Schrader, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Additionally, several existing SAFECOM associations appointed new representatives, including:

- Brandon Abley, National Emergency Number Association (NENA, Alternate Representative)
- Steven Alonzo, International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC, Alternate Representative)
- Robert Buxton, National Emergency Management Association (NEMA, Alternate Representative)
- Tony Downs, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO, Alternate Representative)
- Jeremy Dunkley, The National Association for Amateur Radio (ARRL, Alternate Representative)
- Assistant Chief Matthew Flagler, IAFC (Primary Representative)
- Ambassador Lance Gumbs, National Congress of American Indians (NCAI, Primary Representative)
- Josh Johnston, ARRL (Primary Representative)
- Stephen Martini, Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO, Alternate Representative)
- Phil Nichols, National Governors Association (NGA, Primary Representative)

⁵ New membership as of January 2024.

- Major George Perera, Major County Sheriffs of America (MCSA, Primary Representative)
- Eric Rossmeisl, National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials (NASEMSO, Primary Representative)
- Brian Schaeffer, Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association (Metro Chiefs, Alternate Representative)
- Rick Schute, International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM, Primary Representative)
- Joel Thacker, NEMA (Primary Representative)
- Tim Tran, All-Hazards Incident Management Teams Association (AHIMTA, Primary Representative)
- Adam Wasserman, National Association of State 911 Administrators (NASNA, Primary Representative)
- James “Jim” Weaver, National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO, Primary Representative)
- Marty Williams, American Public Works Association (APWA, Alternate Representative)



CYBERSECURITY WORKING GROUP: The Cybersecurity Working Group⁶ shares actionable guidance and informational materials with peers regarding cybersecurity risks relevant to public safety communications. The Working Group shares planning and mitigation guidance regarding known threats and vulnerabilities to public safety communications, consolidates and publishes information on cybersecurity services and grant programs, and works collaboratively with other groups to develop and share information on equipment and protocol vulnerabilities impacting the public safety mission.

In 2023, the Cybersecurity Working Group continued its mission by developing products with a focus on specific cybersecurity concerns based on membership insights and stakeholder interviews. This year, the group explored various forms of cyber risks to public safety communications, identified methods and resources to help secure these systems, and developed recommendations on public safety cloud adoption and data backup considerations. The Working Group also distributed six SAFECOM Cybersecurity Advisories. In addition, the working group received briefings on key initiatives, such as the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Cybersecurity Framework 2.0 update, artificial intelligence (AI) deepfakes and their risks to public safety, and hosted a comparison on land mobile radio (LMR) and IP networks webinar. The Working Group’s published products were also presented to stakeholders at various industry conferences.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

The Education and Outreach Committee promotes SAFECOM’s role in and impact on public safety communications nationwide through participation in public safety incidents and virtual events, as well as through blog post and website update publications. In 2023, Chief Cody Worrell transitioned from Vice Chair to Chair and Captain Chad Steffen was introduced as the Vice Chair. The SAFECOM Education and Outreach Committee continued its mission

Cybersecurity Working Group Accomplishments

- Co-Chairs:** Major George Perera, Mark Hogan
- ✓ Distributed six SAFECOM Cybersecurity Advisories to reinforce critical alerts:
 - CISA and Partners Disclose Snake Malware Threat from Russian Cyber Actors
 - Microsoft Releases July 2023 Security Updates
 - Microsoft Releases August 2023 Security Updates
 - CISA and Partners Release Deepfake Threats Cybersecurity Information Sheet
 - CISCO Emergency Responder Platform Vulnerability
 - LMR National Interoperability Encryption Key Compromise

⁶ Efforts undertaken by the Working Group directly contributed to NECP Objective 6.2; Success Indicator: SAFECOM and NCSWIC share planning and mitigation guidance regarding known threats and vulnerabilities.

Education and Outreach Committee Accomplishments

- Chair:** Michael Davis (2020 – 2023)
- Chair:** Chief Cody Worrell (2023 – current)
- Vice Chair:** Chief Cody Worrell (2022 – 2023)
- Vice Chair:** Captain Chad Steffen (2023 – current)
- ✓ [SAFECOM Factsheet](#) Update
- ✓ [Introduction to SAFECOM Presentation](#) Update
- ✓ [SAFECOM Membership Spotlight Series](#) (featuring [Keith Victor, SAFECOM At-Large](#))
- ✓ [SAFECOM Membership Spotlight Series](#) (featuring [Darryl Anderson, SAFECOM At-Large](#))
- ✓ [SAFECOM Membership Questionnaire](#)
- ✓ [Catching up with SAFECOM: An Education and Outreach Committee Quarterly Newsletter](#)
- ✓ SAFECOM School and New Member Orientation
- ✓ [SAFECOM Website](#) Updates

to promote the vision and goals of SAFECOM by providing updates to the *SAFECOM Factsheet*, which provides an overview of SAFECOM; gives a brief description of the SAFECOM membership, strategic priorities, committee structure, and public safety influence; and highlights recent SAFECOM accomplishments. The Committee also showcased its diverse membership and collective experience with its second iteration of the *SAFECOM Membership Spotlight* featuring SAFECOM At-Large member Keith Victor (Connecticut Capitol Region of Council of Government). The third iteration of the Spotlight featuring SAFECOM At-Large member Darryl Anderson (Stark County Sheriff’s Office) was also published. These Spotlights highlight the represented association or organization as well as members’ unique skill sets, achievements, and education that work together to improve the public safety community.

The Committee published the first edition of *Catching up with SAFECOM: An Education and Outreach Committee Quarterly Newsletter*. This newsletter was distributed to SAFECOM and its affiliates via a web-based email subscription management system housing over 60k+ subscribers. Future iterations of the newsletter will be distributed on a quarterly basis with the goal of educating readers on SAFECOM’s most recent publications, community actions, and upcoming public safety events where SAFECOM will be present. The Committee also developed the *SAFECOM Membership Questionnaire* to collect public safety experience, identify membership gaps, obtain updated information on SAFECOM’s membership body, and assist in updating SAFECOM resources to reflect the current state of the nation’s emergency communications. The *SAFECOM Membership Questionnaire* was released to the full membership in May 2023 and was completed in October 2023, with an 80% completion rate. Highlights from the data reflect 32 of 50 states have SAFECOM members, 62% of SAFECOM members volunteered to staff a SAFECOM booth at a conference, and 74% of membership is active duty. In the next year the results will continue to be analyzed and put into a report for review by the SAFECOM Executive Board. Finally, the Committee hosted a SAFECOM School in May and December 2023 to provide new members with opportunities to learn more about the SAFECOM program, membership requirements and expectations, and the importance of active participation.

FUNDING AND SUSTAINMENT COMMITTEE

Throughout 2023, the Funding and Sustainment Committee,⁷ in coordination with the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC), continued to create a series of products highlighting strategies for maintaining and securing funding for emergency communications projects. The Committee began the year by providing subject matter expertise on the *Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants*, helping to make emergency communications policies, best practices, and technology standards consistent across the nation.

Funding and Sustainment Committee Accomplishments

- SAFECOM Chair:** Lloyd Mitchell
- Vice Chair:** Chief Bill Bamattre (2019 – 2023)
- Vice Chair:** Major “DL” Anderson (2023 – current)
- ✓ [FY23 SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants](#)
- ✓ [Interoperability Business Case Document Refresh](#)

In addition, members developed and updated resources to assist stakeholders during times of constrained funding. Published in April, the *Interoperability Business Case: An Introduction to Ongoing Local Funding* helps emergency response officials and project coordinators develop a compelling business case by presenting steps and considerations for securing interoperability funds. The Funding and Sustainment Committee also began the process of updating the *Emergency Communications System Lifecycle Planning Guide* suite of documents. The updated document suite includes refreshed graphics, revised content, and a user-friendly planning tool. Lastly, the

⁷ Efforts undertaken by this Committee directly contributed to NECP Objective 1.2; Success Indicator: Governance bodies coordinate with elected officials to champion public safety communications priorities and lifecycle planning among decision makers.

Committee provided the planning and framework for a digital Emergency Communications Grant Applicant Resource Hub to be published on CISA.gov. The purpose of this resource is to provide potential grant applicants with best practice guidelines and tips to ensure a seamless grant application process.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY COMMITTEE

Technology Policy Committee Accomplishments

Chair: Phil Mann

- ✓ [Paging: A Vital Link for Public Safety](#)
- ✓ [LMR for IT Professionals White Paper](#)

The Technology Policy Committee⁸ promotes the use of technologies, resources, and processes related to emergency communications and interoperability in coordination with NCSWIC. The Technology Policy Committee also encompasses the NG911 Working Group and the P25 User Needs Working Group (UNWG). In 2023, the Committee continued to support

LMR systems, promote broadband technology and deployment, and encourage public safety information sharing. The Committee also worked with government partners to further the use and security of various technologies within the emergency communications ecosystem—Identity, Credential, and Access Management (ICAM), NG911, advanced technologies, and cybersecurity.

The Technology Policy Committee released several products in 2023. The *LMR for Information Technology (IT) Professionals* white paper demonstrates considerations IT professionals should make when coordinating with LMR engineers to plan, integrate, and maintain an LMR system. The Committee also published the *Paging: A Vital Link for Public Safety*, which promotes a basic understanding of paging technology use in emergency communications. The Committee also received an ICAM update in June and a Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD)-to-CAD Interoperability Initiatives presentation in July.

P25 USER NEEDS WORKING GROUP: The P25 UNWG⁹ is a forum for education, discussion, and input on issues directly or indirectly related to the P25 Suite of Standards from a broad range of public safety users and subject matter experts. The UNWG has an informal advisory relationship with the P25 Steering Committee, subject to the approval and oversight of the Technology Policy Committee, SAFECOM, and NCSWIC. In 2023, the working group published *Link Layer Encryption (LLE) and Link Layer Authentication (LLA): Are You Really Secure?*, a white paper explaining the difference between the two systems and why both are important. The UNWG also completed the white paper, *Global Positioning System (GPS) for Public Safety Location Services: Use Cases and Best Practices* for publication in 2024. In April and October, the group met in person with the APCO P25 Interface Committee (APIC) Encryption Task Group (ETG) to convey the user community's input to the development of the LLE P25 Standard. This is a series of meetings, scheduled to continue in 2024, to establish a collaborative and coordinated path forward to identify appropriate actions that manufacturers will implement to ensure both effective operability and interoperability of upcoming LLE offerings. Additionally, updates to the *Statement of P25 User Needs* document were completed in 2023 (anticipated publication in 2024), and the working group began scoping a white paper on LMR in the cloud.

P25 UNWG Accomplishments

- SAFECOM Co-Chair:** Scott Wright
NCSWIC Co-Chair: Brad Stoddard
- ✓ Engagement Plan with the APIC ETG
 - ✓ Engagement Plan with P25 Steering Committee and Federal Partnership for Interoperable Communications (FPIC)
 - ✓ [Link Layer Authentication and Link Layer Encryption: Are You Really Secure?](#)
 - ✓ *GPS for Public Safety Location Services: Use Cases and Best Practices*
 - ✓ *Statement of P25 User Needs*

⁸ Efforts undertaken by the Committee directly contributed to NECP Objective 4.2; Success Indicator: Public safety organizations use up-to-date defined practices, procedures, pre-plans, specific venue/location response plans, incident type response plans, standard operating procedures, tactical response directives, and/or Tactical Interoperability Communications Plans that identify primary, secondary, and backup communications assets (e.g., networks, devices, and applications) for effective communications coordination and information sharing during planned events and incidents. Efforts also contribute to NECP Objective 5.1; Success Indicator: SAFECOM and NCSWIC identify public safety technology and infrastructure capability gaps.

⁹ Efforts undertaken by the Working Group directly contributed to NECP Objective 5.2; Success Indicator: SAFECOM and NCSWIC guide standards-based LMR evolution.

NG911 Working Group Accomplishments

Chair: Mark Buchholz

Vice Chair: Greg Holcomb

- ✓ [Preparing for Technological Transformation in ECCs](#)
- ✓ [Considerations for Cyber Disruptions in an Evolving 911 Environment](#)
- ✓ [Two Things Every 911 Center Should Do to Improve Cybersecurity](#) (update)
- ✓ [911 Cybersecurity Resource Hub](#)

NG911 WORKING GROUP: The NG911 Working Group¹⁰ utilizes stakeholder feedback from multiple levels of government and associations to identify short- and long-term priorities to support efforts to fund, assess readiness, and complete the transition to NG911. The Working Group developed resources and engaged the 911 community to highlight actionable steps that Emergency Communications Centers (ECCs) can take to enhance their cybersecurity posture. The NG911 Working Group updated the *Two Things Every 911 Center Should Do to Improve Cybersecurity* document and published the *Considerations for Cyber*

Disruptions in an Evolving 911 Environment document to highlight considerations for ECCs when updating their Continuity of Operations (COOP) plans to better respond to cyber disruption events in a NG911 environment. The Working Group also developed the *911 Cybersecurity Resource Hub* to compile cybersecurity resources specifically for ECCs. This one-stop shop makes it easy for ECCs to report a cyber incident, find real-world case studies, access cybersecurity education and training opportunities, and learn about best practices to identify and protect networks from cyberattacks (anticipated publication March 2024). The Working Group shared best practices and lessons learned from real-world cyberattacks on ECCs at national conferences and webinars. For example, the Working Group partnered with the Federal Bureau of Investigation to host a joint *Responding to Bomb Threats and Swatting Incidents* virtual session to raise awareness about bomb threats and swatting incidents and provide the ECCs with key assessment and response criteria, including decision-making for evacuation or sheltering in place. The Working Group helped ECCs prepare for new technologies while also supporting the health and wellness of public safety telecommunicators. The *Preparing for Technological Transformation in ECCs* document highlights how ECCs can use emerging tools and technologies such as AI, remote dispatching, and integrated cloud technologies to supplement staffing, enhance data sharing, and improve delivery of critical emergency services. These documents have been widely shared throughout the 911 community.

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION TASK FORCE

The Communications Section Task Force (CSTF)¹¹ addresses challenges associated with supporting ICT services within the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command System (ICS). Maintaining the highest degrees of readiness and information sharing are the cornerstones of the CSTF. Through the CSTF, members promote the consistent recruitment, training, retention, and support for ICT personnel. In 2023, the CSTF, together with CISA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), developed functional guidance to outline the roles and responsibilities needed to enhance NIMS ICS in support of ICT functions. This document provides a framework to incorporate the full scope of services into the incident management organizational structure to meet the increasing demands for voice, data, and video capabilities. The CSTF identified 11 positions to serve as resources of the ICT function within NIMS ICS, to include:

CSTF Accomplishments

Chair: Assistant Chief Chris Lombard

Vice Chair: Greg Hauser, North Carolina SWIC

- ✓ Completed revisions to the [NIMS ICS ICT Functional Guidance](#)
- ✓ Promoted FEMA's publication of the *ICT Functional Guidance*
- ✓ Conducted outreach and shared information on the *ICT Functional Guidance* through conference panels and webinars

¹⁰ Efforts undertaken by the Working Group directly contributed to NECP Objective 4.4; Success Indicator: ECCs/PSAPs address systems and staffing to support communications continuity-of-operations planning. Efforts also contribute to NECP Objective 5.2; Success Indicator: The National 911 Program coordinates, in collaboration with all levels of government, the optimization of 911 services, including the nation's transition to NG911. Efforts also contribute to NECP Objective 6.2; Success Indicator: SAFECOM and NCSWIC encourage cybersecurity for NG911.

¹¹ Efforts undertaken by this Task Force directly contributed to NECP Objective 3.1; Success Indicator: Public safety organizations coordinate training and technical assistance across levels of government (as applicable) to ensure current and consistent information. Efforts also contribute to NECP Objective 3.3; Success Indicator: SAFECOM and NCSWIC develop training curriculums for additional positions within the Information Technology Service Unit. Efforts also contribute to NECP Objective 4.1; Success Indicator: Public safety organizations possess primary, secondary, and backup communications capabilities aligned with the NIMS ICS and share appropriate forms (e.g., ICS 205) illustrating the status of an agency's capabilities.

- Auxiliary Communicator (AUXC)
- Communications Coordinator (COMC)
- Communications Unit Leader (COML)
- Communications Technician (COMT)
- Cybersecurity Planner (CYBP)
- Incident Communications Center Manager (INCM)
- Incident Tactical Dispatcher (INTD)
- Information Technology Service Unit Leader (ITSL)
- Information Technology Support Specialist (ITSS)
- Radio Operator (RADO)
- Unified Help Desk (HELP)

The CSTF continues to build out position descriptions, develop position task books, and create training course curricula for each ICT position in the functional guidance document.

INFORMATION SHARING FRAMEWORK TASK FORCE

ISFTF Accomplishments

Chair: Sheriff Paul Fitzgerald

- ✓ ISF Technical Feasibility PoC
- ✓ ISF Industry RFI
- ✓ Initial ISF Deployment Strategy

The Information Sharing Framework Task Force (ISFTF)¹² works to develop an Information Sharing Framework (ISF) to ensure the effectiveness of new products and technologies as agencies transition to mobile and fully interconnected environments. Making data interoperable and turning it into information that can be shared is a requirement that spans traditional boundaries. First responders should be able to discover, access, and consume relevant information on a need-to-know basis, regardless of jurisdiction, affiliation, or location.

The [Approach for Developing an Interoperable ISF](#) document was published in November 2021 and Operational Proofs-of-Concepts (PoCs) were conducted in 2022 and completed in Q1 2023. From 2022 to the present, the ISFTF has been supporting the Iowa Department of Public Safety to apply the ISF principles in defining requirements to acquire a CAD-to-CAD interoperability capability. This process has been extremely valuable to the ISFTF as the team continues to optimize the ISF and customize it to real-world use cases. In addition, 2022–2023 also focused on scoping a Technical Proof-of-Concept (TPoC), submission for research and development (R&D) funding, and developing a strategy to engage with the industry to design, develop, test, and implement the integration layer of the ISF as a service platform. In January 2023, members of the ISFTF engaged with cloud infrastructure and service providers, CAD vendors, and vendors supplying situational awareness software, dispatch services and security services to the public safety ecosystem. This Industry Day held at the Interoperability Institute at Texas A&M University clearly answered the first question regarding the ISF Integration Layer as a service platform which was, “is it technically feasible?”

The answer to this first question was yes. Figure 1 illustrates the ISFTF project stages and status as of Q1 2024.

R&D funding submission was written and approved for funding in 2023 resulting in the ISFTF working with DHS Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) to send a Request for Information (RFI) to Industry in August 2023. The ISFTF reviewed the RFI submissions and

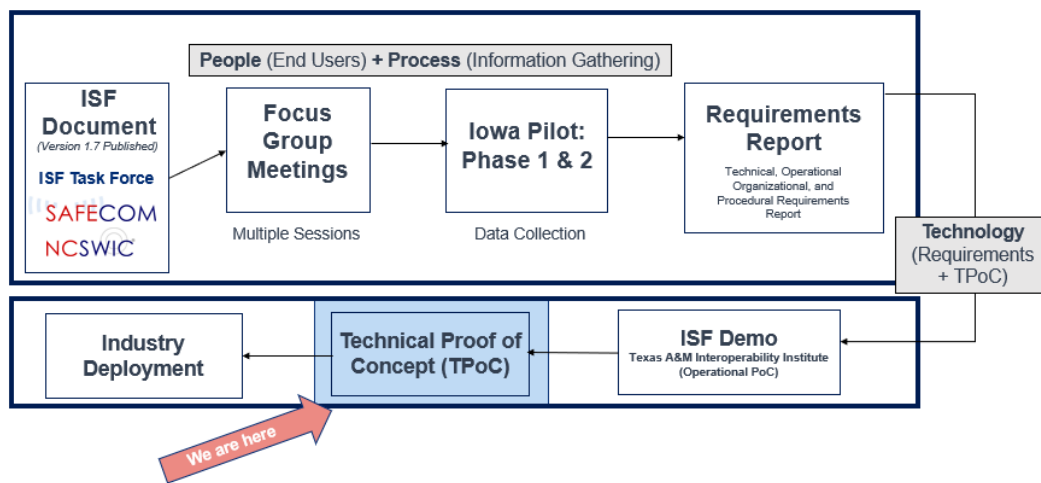


Figure 1: ISFTF Project Stages, as of Quarter 1 2024

¹² Efforts undertaken by the Task Force directly contributed to NECP Objective 5.3; Success Indicator: SAFECOM and NCSWIC publish best practices and updated guidance on standard operating procedures to help the public safety community overcome data storage, exchange, maintenance, and analysis challenges.

held an ISFTF meeting in October to share results and discuss further engagement with Industry. Members of the ISFTF spent the rest of 2023 writing a detailed Statement of Objectives (SOO) for a PoC to design, develop, test, and implement the Integration Layer of the ISF as a service platform. The TPoC SOO will be released for proposals from Industry in early 2024.

P25 COMPLIANCE ASSESMENT PROGRAM TASK FORCE

The P25 Compliance Assessment Program Task Force (CAPTF)¹³ provides public safety community input into the DHS S&T P25 Compliance Assessment Program (CAP), which assesses communications equipment compliance to the P25 Suite of Standards. In 2023, the P25 CAPTF provided the S&T P25 CAP with user input and guidance on P25 CAP interface testing, developed and implemented an engagement plan with the P25 UNWG, and proposed CAP website content revisions.

P25 CAPTF Accomplishments

Chair: Chief Gerald Reardon

Co-Chair: Roger Strope

- ✓ Provided user input and guidance on proposed P25 CAP interface testing
- ✓ Supported CAPTF engagement with the P25 UNWG
- ✓ Proposed CAP website content revisions

2023 MEETINGS

In-person meetings are an integral part of the SAFECOM program. CISA hosted a number of large and small in-person meetings throughout the year to promote collaboration and networking among members as well as determine solutions to some of the nation’s most pressing issues on emergency communications interoperability. Below, please find select summaries for some of the group’s larger in-person meetings. Full summaries of these in-person meetings may be found under the *Joint Meetings* or *SAFECOM Meetings* section of the [SAFECOM website](#).

In addition to the two larger bi-annual meetings, SAFECOM’s sub-groups also met in-person and virtually throughout the year. Across 12 sub-groups, SAFECOM held 72 committee, working group, and task force meetings in 2023, including 11 in-person meetings. Several sub-groups also presented at public safety and emergency communications conferences.

SPRING 2023 BI-ANNUAL MEETING (MAY 8-10; PASADENA, CA)



Photo: SAFECOM members assembled for the Spring 2023 SAFECOM Bi-Annual Meeting in Pasadena, CA

SAFECOM members convened in-person on May 8-10, in Pasadena, California, for the Spring 2023 SAFECOM Bi-Annual Meeting, where members heard sessions from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) Civil Program Office Manager, Dr. Edward Chow, on how AI can support first responders. Members also heard real-world public safety communications successes and challenges from San Bernardino

¹³ Efforts undertaken by the Task Force directly contributed to NECP Objective 5.2; Success Indicator: SAFECOM and NCSWIC guide standards-based LMR evolution.

County Fire Protection District Fire Chief Dan Munsey. SAFECOM also received updates from the NIST Public Safety Communications Research Division (PSCR), First Responder Network Authority, CISA Priority Communications Services, and a SAFECOM membership spotlight on the National Criminal Justice Association. Other interactive sessions allowed members to network, lend their voices to shape the future of SAFECOM, and review and validate research findings for the *National Emergency Communications Plan* (NECP) update.

During the meeting, CISA Executive Assistant Director (EAD) for Emergency Communications, Billy Bob Brown, Jr., emphasized that SAFECOM is a success because of the members who come together and collaborate to address challenges within the public safety community. He presented Mark Buchholz, SAFECOM At-Large (Washington County Consolidated Communications Agency, Oregon), with a CISA Award of Appreciation in recognition of his service and contributions to SAFECOM since 2014.

In addition to the SAFECOM Meeting, members had the opportunity to attend a guided tour of NASA JPL. The tours included an overview of JPL's activities and accomplishments. Members of several sub-groups also met to further collaborate on identified work products, including the SAFECOM Executive Board, SAFECOM Governance Committee, Communications Section Task Force, and the SAFECOM School and New Member Orientation. View the [full summary](#) on SAFECOM's website.

FALL 2023 BI-ANNUAL MEETING (DECEMBER 4-7; CAPE CORAL, FL)



Photo: SAFECOM and NCSWIC members assembled for the Fall 2023 SAFECOM-NCSWIC Bi-Annual Meeting in Cape Coral, FL

SAFECOM members came together for the Fall 2023 Joint SAFECOM-NCSWIC Bi-Annual Meeting on December 4-7, in Cape Coral, Florida, where members first met jointly with the NCSWIC to receive a keynote address from CISA Deputy Director Nitin Natarajan on the Agency's strategic focus areas and plans to work with public safety to address communications interoperability and cybersecurity issues now and into the future. Members also heard real-world public safety communications successes and challenges in response to the Maui wildfires and the East Palestine, Ohio train derailment. Other sessions provided the latest updates on LLE and how LLE differs from LLA, provided an overview of the Public Safety NG911 Coalition and efforts by public safety to define NG911 and interoperability, as well as updates on the deployment of NG911 across the State of California's Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). Members also received an overview of Open AI tools and implications for public safety and cybersecurity, as well as a working session on emerging technology in LMR and the future of LMR. CISA also provided an update on the next iteration of the NECP and updates on CISA's latest offerings and services.

The following day, SAFECOM reconvened independently to receive updates on membership and on each of SAFECOM's committees, working groups, and task forces; discussed the evolution of 911 technology and how the roles and responsibilities of public safety telecommunicators have expanded to address these new technologies; discussed current and ongoing Congressional legislation with regards to public safety communications; highlighted one of SAFECOM's newest associations, the ARRL: The National Association for Amateur Radio, including their current public safety communications priorities; received an update on the FirstNet Authority's current initiatives and

how they will more broadly affect the emergency communications community in 2024; and heard real-world public safety communications successes and challenges in response to the Royal ransomware cyberattack in Curry County, Oregon.

In addition to the SAFECOM Meeting, members of several sub-groups met to further collaborate on identified work products, to include the SAFECOM School, NG911 Working Group, P25 UNWG, Communications Section Task Force, Joint SAFECOM-NCSWIC Funding and Sustainment Committee, Joint SAFECOM Education and Outreach Committee, SAFECOM Governance Committee, SAFECOM Governance Committee, and SAFECOM Executive Board. View the [full summary](#) on SAFECOM's website.

SAFECOM AT EXTERNAL CONFERENCES

SAFECOM members presented panel sessions at several significant public safety and emergency communications conferences in 2023, including the AHIMTA Education & Training Symposium, International Wireless Communications Expo (IWCE), NENA Annual Conference & Expo, and APCO Annual Conference. Sessions presented at these conferences are listed below:

- **AHIMTA Education & Training Symposium** (March 4-9; Long Beach, CA)
 - *Information and Communications Technology within the National Incident Management System*
 - *Evolving the National Incident Management System to Protect Information and Manage Communications Technology*
- **IWCE** (March 27-30; Las Vegas, NV)
 - *Are Your Radio Communications Really Secure? Why You Need Link Layer Authentication*
 - *Depending on Third-Party Infrastructure in an Emergency*
 - *Avoid Alert Fatigue: Incorporating Alerts and Warnings into Emergency Communications Governance*
 - *Cyberattacks on 911: Lessons Learned*
 - *Project 25 Questions? Ask the Experts*
 - *P25 New Standards, Interoperability, and Security for 2023 and Beyond*
 - *SAFECOM/NCSWIC - Partners in Adopting New Emergency Communications Technology*
- **NENA Annual Conference & Expo** (June 17-23; Grapevine, TX)
 - *Help! My Center Is Under Attack! What Do I Do Now?*
 - *Cyberattacks on 911: Lessons Learned*
- **APCO Annual Conference** (August 6-9; Nashville, TN)
 - *Public Safety Cybersecurity: New Trends, Insights, and Resources*

SAFECOM'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATIONWIDE GUIDANCE

SAFECOM members continued to support [National Emergency Communications Plan](#) implementation by completing activities aligned with each of the plan's goals and objectives. The plan addresses current gaps within emergency communications, reflects new and emerging technological advancements, and provides guidance to drive the nation towards a common end-state of emergency communications. SAFECOM incorporates the plan's success indicators and implementation activities into its annual strategic planning and product development. With SAFECOM's contributions, significant progress has been made in the last four years of NECP implementation. Across the SAFECOM/NCSWIC workstream 62% (or 56) of implementation activities have been completed. Another 29% (or 26) of implementation activities are in-progress, resulting in over 90% of planned activities either completed or started within four years. SAFECOM members are also actively involved in providing updates to the next iteration of the NECP.

SAFECOM members also contributed to the development of the latest iteration of the [SAFECOM Nationwide Survey](#) (SNS), which supplies essential data on emergency communications capability gaps that can be used to advocate for funding, establish priorities, and improve operations. The SNS measures progress made while identifying gaps in emergency communications and defining the range for new capabilities. SAFECOM members were directly involved in the review and update process for the SNS. Specific activities included assistance in increasing awareness of the

SNS among SAFECOM associations through brainstorming and direct marketing efforts. SAFECOM members served as key conduits to the members of the emergency communications ecosystem and played a critical role in communicating the importance of the SNS data to potential respondents.

SAFECOM members also contributed to the [Fiscal Year 2023 SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants](#). Updated annually, this guidance offers current information on emergency communications policies, eligible costs, best practices, and technical standards for state, local, tribal, and territorial grant recipients investing federal funds in emergency communications projects.

Through the Joint SAFECOM-NCSWIC Communications Section Task Force, members provided input into the [NIMS ICT Functional Guidance](#). This document is the first major update to the ICS in over 10 years. It positions information technology and cybersecurity resources equally alongside traditional communications resources and promotes elevation of the leadership for these resources within an incident response and recovery organization.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024

Looking ahead to 2024, SAFECOM will continue to host regularly scheduled bi-annual SAFECOM meetings, as well as engage in public safety and emergency communications conferences. Members will present on several topics, such as:

- Information and Communications Technology Overview
- Solving Resource Overload: Cybersecurity Resource Hub for Emergency Communications Centers
- Making Technology Work for Your Emergency Communications Center

SAFECOM aligns many of its priorities and initiatives to the nationwide goals established in the NECP. In 2024, SAFECOM will focus on enhancing public safety and emergency communications interoperability by:

- Publishing materials on statewide interoperability governance needs¹⁴
- Publishing materials on public safety communications funding priorities and lifecycle planning¹⁵
- Integrating emerging technology lessons learned and best practices into governance body resources and publicizing new integration/adoption guidelines¹⁶
- Showcasing available resources on emergency communications human factor principles¹⁷
- Develop a standard set of qualifications for an emergency communications instructor and curriculums for additional positions within the Information Technology Service Unit¹⁸
- Identifying methods, practices, or procedures implemented to maintain highest degrees of readiness and information sharing about available communications capabilities¹⁹
- Guide standards-based LMR evolution²⁰

¹⁴ Contributes to NECP Objective 1.1, Success Indicator: States and territories create or revise policy and plans to formalize and fund emergency communications governance bodies, such as Statewide Interoperability Governing Bodies.

¹⁵ Contributes to NECP Objective 1.2, Success Indicator: Governance bodies coordinate with elected officials to champion public safety communications priorities and lifecycle planning among decision makers.

¹⁶ Contributes to NECP Objective 1.3, Success Indicator: Governance bodies undertake technology integration and migration initiatives (e.g., broadband 911, alerts and warnings, information management, network infrastructure, cybersecurity) to guide implementation by public safety.

¹⁷ Contributes to NECP Objective 3.2, Success Indicators: Public safety organizations implementing mobile data applications utilize training and tools to ensure that responders effectively use and are not overloaded by available information. Public safety organizations implement tools and trainings to address emerging technology impacts.

¹⁸ Contributes to NECP Objective 3.3, Success Indicators: Ensure training addresses information sharing (e.g., voice, video, and data) for multi-agency responses. SAFECOM and NCSWIC develop training curriculums for additional positions within the Information Technology Service Unit.

¹⁹ Contributes to NECP Objective 4.1, Success Indicator: Public safety organizations possess primary, secondary, and backup communications capabilities aligned with the NIMS ICS and share appropriate forms (e.g., ICS 205) illustrating the status of an agency's capabilities.

²⁰ Contributes to NECP Objective 5.2, Success Indicator: SAFECOM and NCSWIC guide standards-based LMR evolution.

- Release SOO for a PoC to design, develop, test, and implement the Integration Layer of the ISF as a service platform²¹
- Share cybersecurity planning and mitigation guidance regarding known threats and vulnerabilities²²
- Encourage cybersecurity for NG911²³

The 2024 SAFECOM Strategic Plan outlines a work plan for product development for the coming year. In addition to identifying key topics and activities to enhance public safety and emergency communications operability, interoperability, and security, SAFECOM took steps to ensure its strategic priorities align with the NECP. Some of SAFECOM's guidance documents planned for publication in 2024 are:

- *SAFECOM Recommended Guidelines for Statewide Public Safety Communications Governance Structures*
- *Public Safety Cloud Adoption Considerations*
- *Data Backup Considerations for Public Safety*
- *SAFECOM Cybersecurity Advisories*
- *Cyber Risks to LMR: Second Edition*
- *Public Safety Communications Evolution Brochure*
- *FY24 SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants*
- *Emergency Communications System Lifecycle Planning Suite*
- *Grant Application Best Practices Hub*
- *Cybersecurity Funding and Emergency Communications: Advocating for Public Safety Priorities*
- *The Financial Benefits of Sharing Systems*
- *Public Safety Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Resource Guide*
- *Communications Dependencies Case Study: Maui Wildfires*
- *911 Cybersecurity Resource Hub*
- *AI Integration in 911 Centers*
- *Mitigate Swatting Threats Awareness Resource*
- *Emergency Communications Cybersecurity Center (EC3)*
- *Geographic Information System Resource*
- *GPS for Public Safety Location Services*
- *Use Cases on the Need for Improved Frequency Capacity Efficiencies for Conventional P25 Networks*
- *Address Paging and Alerting Needs*
- *LMR In A Cloud-Based Environment*
- *Address the Transition from LMR to LTE*
- *Update ICT Curriculum*
- *Guidance in coordination with DHS S&T related to Inter-RF Subsystem Interface (ISSI)/Console Subsystem Interface (CSSI) conformance testing documents; interface testing; ongoing issues with emergency call cancel across interfaces; CAP testing related to LLA*
- *ISF Service Platform SOO*
- *Statement of Work for ISF Service Platform*

Many SAFECOM products are available on the [SAFECOM website](#).

For additional questions regarding the SAFECOM program, please contact SAFECOMGovernance@cisa.dhs.gov.

²¹ Contributes to NECP Objective 5.3, Success Indicator: SAFECOM and NCSWIC publish best practices and updated guidance on standard operating procedures to help the public safety community overcome data storage, exchange, maintenance, and analysis challenges.

²² Contributes to NECP Object 6.2, Success Indicator: SAFECOM and NCSWIC share cybersecurity planning and mitigation guidance regarding known threats and vulnerabilities.

²³ Contributes to NECP Object 6.2, Success Indicator: SAFECOM and NCSWIC encourage cybersecurity for NG911.



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EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS