

# LESSONS LEARNED 2020

August 12, 2020\*



**Moderator**

Chris Lombard,  
SAFECOM Vice Chair

**Speakers**

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## PREPARING FOR 2020 REAL-WORLD EVENTS: *Lessons Learned for Public Safety Communications*

SAFECOM and the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC) conducted a virtual roundtable. Members shared best practices and lessons learned for balancing response efforts to real-world events during the public health crisis, including natural disasters, cyber incidents, unplanned large-scale demonstrations, and planned events. Speakers discussed their experiences responding to many of the events that occurred in 2020 and highlighted key areas where they focused efforts to ensure the continuity and resiliency of their agency's public safety communications.

During the roundtable, best practices emerged as speakers noted similarities in response efforts across the country. Several of the most common factors include:

- ◆ Ensuring proper resource management
- ◆ Maintaining a healthy and robust workforce through preventive measures
- ◆ Focusing on training
- ◆ Updating or developing plans and procedures
- ◆ Ensuring resiliency and cybersecurity in a virtual environment
- ◆ Applying responsible fiscal choices due to budget limitations
- ◆ Providing accessible educational and mental health services to personnel

The graphic below, and continued on the following page, is an extensive, but not all-inclusive, snapshot of 2020 events that demonstrates the wide array of incidents impacting public safety communications and first responders. Speakers touched on a number of events to include: the tornado outbreak in Tennessee, the national health crisis, widespread civil unrest, the T-Mobile outage, Hurricane Hanna, and Tropical Storm Isaias.

SAFECOM and NCSWIC will continue to share best practices and lessons learned during future webinars with topics including encryption and establishing a virtual emergency operations center (EOC).

\*Webinar recording now available on the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN)

**WINDOWS VULNERABILITIES**

January 14, 2020  
CISA Emergency Directive 20-02: Mitigate Windows Vulnerabilities from January 2020 Patch Tuesday



**ELECTIONS**

February 07, 2020  
CISA releases, #PROTECT2020 STRATEGIC PLAN



**NYC 911 CALLS HIT HIGHEST LEVEL EVER**

March 30, 2020  
New York City's 911 system hit 6,527 medical emergency calls



**EASTER TORNADO OUTBREAK**

April 12-13, 2020  
140 confirmed tornadoes touched down across 10 states



JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

**PUERTO RICO EARTHQUAKES**

January 6 - 7\*, 2020  
Sequence began on December 28, 2019  
\* Largest in a century



**GUANICA, PUERTO RICO 5.0 EARTHQUAKE**

February 4, 2020  
Prompted re-inspections of homes, schools, and other buildings



**TORNADO OUTBREAK**

March 2-3, 2020  
25 people killed, west and middle Tennessee



**NATIONAL HEALTH CRISIS**

March 19, 2020  
CISA releases Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce



**NATIONAL HEALTH CRISIS**

April 8, 2020  
CISA Alert (AA20-099A): COVID-19 Exploited by Malicious Cyber Actors

**NORTH KOREAN CYBER THREAT**

April 15, 2020  
CISA Alert (AA20-106A): Guidance on the North Korean Cyber Threat

**NATIONAL HEALTH CRISIS**

April 27, 2020  
U.S. Coronavirus (COVID-19) death toll surpasses 50,000



# Best Practices and Lessons Learned

## PLANNING

- Develop scalable local, statewide, and regional emergency communications plans that include procedures for shared information and resources to support operable, interoperable, secure, and resilient communications
- Modify operations plans/standard operating procedures to account for social distancing regulations within temporary emergency shelters
- Pre-program talk groups into radios to support interoperability and limit time spent on reprogramming
- Review and update continuity of operations plans on a regular basis and conduct periodic training with members from all disciplines involved in emergency response to promote familiarity with the plans prior to an incident
- Leverage existing relationships with neighboring jurisdictions, partner offices, and wireless carriers, and foster new relationships with non-traditional partners

## CYBERSECURITY

- Remain vigilant and up-to-date on the latest cyber vulnerabilities by subscribing to alerts, bulletins, and reports available from CISA's [National Cyber Awareness System](#)
- Utilize the [CISA Services Catalog](#), a list of risk management and response services, to build resiliency and form partnerships encouraging information sharing and promote the protection of physical and digital systems
- Implement proven protocols for teleworking (e.g., [CISA Telework Guidance](#)) to lessen potential points of intrusion
- Evaluate current communications and cybersecurity resiliency capabilities (e.g., CISA's [Public Safety Communications and Cyber Resiliency Toolkit](#)) and implement mitigation strategies to address identified vulnerabilities
- Work with commercial network providers and CISA's [Priority Telecommunications Services](#) to ensure priority internet and voice connections to support emergency response efforts

## TRAINING

- Utilize virtual or in-person statewide and regional technical assistance offerings from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), to keep up-to-date with new technologies, enhance governance policies, and manage Communications Unit (COMU) resources
- Ensure all relevant staff are functioning under the same operational framework, response approach, and procedural guidance, such as the National Incident Management System Incident Command Structure for consistent response management
- Encourage personnel to take advantage of the expanded availability of COMU trainings and emphasize the importance of such trainings

## PERSONNEL

- Promote staff health and safety by implementing preventive measures (e.g., encouraging hand washing and providing access to hand sanitizer) and establishing safety protocols (e.g., temperature checks, medical screening questionnaires)
- Explore telework and other remote work options to limit potential exposure to and transmission of a virus
- Provide accessible educational and mental health services to personnel and their families
- Utilize an internal coordination group to help manage staffing and testing of exposed staff, and ensure the availability of adequate testing resources based on response staffing requirements

## RESOURCES

- Establish protocols to transfer calls for service from public safety answering points temporarily closed (e.g., for cleaning due to illness or quarantine; power outages)
- Maintain an adequate stockpile of resources (e.g., consumable resources to include personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, and batteries; extra/replacement equipment) as availability and accessibility may be limited during an emergency

### NATIONAL CIVIL UNREST

May 27, 2020 - continuing

Widespread protests across the U.S., initiating in Minneapolis

### NATIONAL HEALTH CRISIS

May 28, 2020

U.S. COVID-19 death toll surpasses 100,000

### T-MOBILE OUTAGE

June 15, 2020

Fiber-optic circuit and backup circuit failed causing service disruptions

### WASHINGTON D.C. FOURTH OF JULY EVENTS

July 4, 2020

Crowds gathered on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. for various events to celebrate the Fourth of July, including a military flyover.

### NATIONAL HEALTH CRISIS

July 29, 2020

U.S. COVID-19 death toll surpasses 150,000

### HURRICANE ISAIAS

August 2-5, 2020

59 million people on the east coast were under tropical storm or hurricane warnings when the Hurricane made landfall in North Carolina

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

### NATIONAL HEALTH CRISIS

May 15, 2020

CISA releases Emergency Communications Pandemic Guidelines

### MICHIGAN FLOODS AND DAM FAILURES

May 20, 2020 - continuing

Heavy rain and collapse of Edenville Dam and Sanford Dam resulted in massive flooding

### FIRE ON PIER 45

May 23, 2020

Fire broke out on Pier 45 in San Francisco

### TROPICAL STORM CRISTOBAL

June 7, 2020

Cristobal made landfall over southeastern Louisiana

### CARE NEW ENGLAND RANSOMWARE ATTACK

June 16, 2020

CNE's payroll system affected and some minor procedures delayed

### LONE PINES, CA 5.8 EARTHQUAKE

June 24, 2020

Tons of boulders and debris crashed down at the Whitney Portal camping area

### TROPICAL STORM FAY

July 10, 2020

Storm made landfall in Northeast U.S.

### USS BONHOMME RICHARD EXPLOSION

July 12 - 15, 2020

21 sailors, civilians hospitalized after fire aboard naval vessel

### NSA AND CISA ALERT (AA20-205A)

July 23, 2020

Recommend Immediate Actions to Reduce Exposure Across Operational Technologies and Control Systems

### HURRICANES HANNA AND DOUGLAS

July 25 - 26, 2020

Hanna made landfall along the Gulf Coast of southern Texas and Douglas skirted Hawaii

### TORNADOES TOUCHED DOWN IN MASSACHUSETTS AND CONNECTICUT

August 2, 2020

National Weather Service investigating tornadoes that cut through a wide swath of Connecticut and western New England Sunday afternoon and evening

### APPLE FIRE

August 2, 2020

Cherry Valley, California -- 20,500 acres scorched, 7,800 ordered to evacuate; 5% contained, as of, August 2, 2020