



Homeland
Security

Frequently Asked Questions

National Emergency Communications Plan

What is the National Emergency Communications Plan?

National studies, assessments, and after action reports from September 11, 2001, Hurricane Katrina, and other natural and man-made disasters in the last decade have underscored the critical need for improved emergency communications nationwide. These documents show that the lack of emergency communications interoperability across disciplines and jurisdictions hinders situational awareness, command and control, and the overall management of response and recovery efforts.

In 2006, Congress enacted provisions under the Fiscal Year 2007 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act requiring the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) to develop a National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) to provide a roadmap to improve the Nation's emergency communications capabilities. The NECP is a strategic plan that sets goals and identifies key national priorities to enhance governance, planning, technology, training and exercises, and disaster communications capabilities. The NECP provides recommendations, including milestones, to help emergency response providers and relevant government officials make measurable improvements in emergency communications over the next three years.

How was the NECP developed and what stakeholders participated in the creation of the Plan?

Congress directed OEC to develop the NECP in cooperation with a variety of stakeholders, including:

- Federal departments and agencies
- State, local, and tribal governments
- Emergency responders
- Private sector

OEC developed the NECP through a process of general requirements collection, validation, and analysis that included analyzing all 56 Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans (SCIP). SCIPs are locally-driven, multi-jurisdictional, and multi-disciplinary statewide plans to enhance emergency communications interoperability. OEC worked with practitioners from around the country to build criteria and standards in order for States and territories to qualify for grant funding through the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) and the Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grant Program. Prior to NECP development, OEC completed Phase I of

the National Communications Capabilities Report, defining emergency communications gaps across all levels of government. In addition, numerous national-level after action reports and strategies were analyzed for gaps and solutions related to emergency communications.

The NECP was vetted across a broad set of public and private sector stakeholders. Federal participants in the NECP development process included DHS components with emergency communications missions, as well as Federal departments and agencies that serve as members of the Emergency Communications Preparedness Center (ECPC). The SAFECOM Executive Committee and Emergency Response Council provided State and local emergency responder input and guidance. Finally, private sector input was obtained through the National Emergency Communications Cross-Sector Working Group under DHS's Critical Infrastructure Partnership Advisory Council structure.

What are the goals and the vision of the NECP?

DHS defined a series of goals that establish a minimum level of interoperable communications and milestones for Federal, State, local, and tribal agencies to achieve that minimum level. These goals provide an initial set of operational targets that will be further defined by OEC through a process that engages Federal, State, and local governments; the private sector; and emergency responders.

Goal 1—By 2010, 90 percent of all high-risk Urban Areas designated within the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) are able to demonstrate response-level emergency communications¹ within one hour for routine events involving multiple jurisdictions and agencies.

Goal 2—By 2011, 75 percent of non-UASI jurisdictions are able to demonstrate response-level emergency communications within one hour for routine events involving multiple jurisdictions and agencies.

Goal 3—By 2013, 75 percent of all jurisdictions are able to demonstrate response-level emergency communications within three hours of a significant event as outlined in national planning scenarios.

The vision of the NECP is to ensure emergency response personnel at all levels of government and across all disciplines, can communicate as needed, on demand, and as authorized, through improvements in communications operability, interoperability, and continuity nationwide.

Who will be responsible for implementing the NECP?

Improving nationwide emergency communications is a shared responsibility; therefore, all levels of government are needed to successfully implement the NECP. Within the first year of the NECP implementation, OEC will partner with key stakeholders to determine the appropriate metrics for the objectives and initiatives. OEC will provide a status report in its Biennial Progress Report to Congress due in 2009, and in cooperation with key stakeholders, OEC will conduct annual reviews of the Nation's progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the NECP. Additionally, through DHS grant programs, OEC will follow states' progress on NECP goals. Implementation of the NECP will be a coordinated effort among all levels of government including:

¹ *Response-level emergency communications is the capacity of individuals with primary operational leadership responsibility to manage resources and make timely decisions during a multi-agency incident without technical or procedural communications impediments.*

- Executive and Legislative Branches—The NECP includes recommended initiatives and national milestones that will inform emergency communications priorities, activities, and resource allocations for consideration and action.
- Federal Agencies—Federal implementation of the NECP will be done collaboratively among the member agencies of the ECPC. It will also occur through the Federal Partnership for Interoperability Communications (FPIC), where Federal response organizations will work with State and local agencies and governments to improve communications and resource sharing.
- State, Local, and Tribal Governments— The NECP provides information for State, local, and tribal agencies and governments on Federal funding available to assist with emergency communications procurement and planning. It also offers a forum for regional planning and participation.
- Private Sector—The NECP identifies ways the private sector can support emergency communications efforts and provides consistent direction for private sector involvement in standards development and advanced communications technologies.

Is the NECP the next step in the department’s January 2007 assessment of state and local interoperable communications? How does it relate to what the department has already done?

In setting forth a national strategic framework for interoperable communications, the NECP builds upon a number of recent initiatives. The SAFECOM 2006 National Interoperability Baseline Survey provided a snapshot of interoperability capacity and usage among public safety agencies across the Nation. The Office of Emergency Communications built on the findings from the Survey to develop the National Communications Capabilities Report (NCCR), which was delivered to Congress in two phases in 2008. The NCCR included a broad sample of Federal and local agency information, incorporated State and tribal data from ongoing collection activities (i.e., Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans [SCIP]), and expanded the scope of emergency response providers beyond government agencies to include private sector entities. Both the Survey and NCCR provided DHS with a more comprehensive understanding of public safety capabilities needed and in use. Together, the results of the Survey and NCCR were used, along with stakeholder input, to develop the strategic foundation of the NECP (e.g., the goals, objective, and initiatives).

How did the department’s survey of state and local efforts on interoperable communications factor into the development of the NECP?

As previously explained, the NCCR and Survey were both instrumental in identifying gaps in Federal, State, and local public safety communications across the Nation. The NECP objectives and initiatives have been developed to help public safety agencies close many of these gaps. Further, the goals of the NECP were based off a key finding in the Survey that approximately 66% of agencies use interoperability to some degree in their operations.

Will state and locals be required to meet NECP goals?

The NECP is a national strategy that does not independently impose requirements on Federal, State, and local agencies. The NECP goals were developed with input from emergency responders at all levels of government and provide operational targets for improving interoperability for routine, every-day events and for more significant incidents. Grant funding for communications will be aligned with the NECP to support State and local efforts to achieve these goals.

Will grant funding be linked to the NECP?

Yes, NECP goals and objectives will drive funding priorities for interoperability grant programs, particularly the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program (IECGP). For example, the top IECGP funding priorities for FY08 – Leadership and Governance and Common Planning and Operational Protocols and Emergency Responder Skills and Capabilities – align with objectives within the NECP and will help the states implement their SCIPs.

Last year, DHS provided \$1b in grants to state and locals for interoperable communications. What progress has been made?

To date, FEMA and NTIA staff have recommended and NTIA leadership has approved the release of over \$745 million of the grant funds. A total of 39 States/Territories have received approval for the full release of funds and 2 States have received approval for a partial release of funds.

How will the NECP affect the Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans (SCIP) and Tactical Interoperable Communications Plans (TICP)?

The NECP is not a tactical or operational plan and will not supplant SCIPs and TICPs. The NECP relied upon information gathered from the SCIPs and TICPs to determine gaps and priority initiatives. The NECP will serve as a strategic plan to establish overarching national goals and priorities to improve emergency communications, which should inform future iterations of the SCIPs. The SCIPs will be updated in connection with the grant programs administered by DHS, including the new Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program (IECGP).

Will the NECP impose unfunded mandates on State, local, or tribal governments?

The recommendations and solutions contained in the NECP will not be unilaterally imposed upon Federal, State, or local governments. Further collaboration across all levels of government will be needed to implement these initiatives. In addition, the NECP will help OEC refine its future emergency communications grant guidance, particularly for the IECGP, thus ensuring that DHS grant programs help support the implementation of the NECP's recommendations.

What amount of grant funding is available to help States and territories implement the NECP?

There are two specific interoperable communications grant programs with which DHS is involved that support the goals of the NECP. These two programs - the DHS Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program (IECGP) and the Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grant Program, jointly administered by the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration and DHS - provide \$1,016,500,000 for improving interoperability nationwide. In addition to these targeted funds, a number of other DHS grant programs, including the Homeland Security Grant Program, the Port Security Grant Program and the Assistance to Firefighters Grant provide for interoperable communications equipment and planning.

More than \$2.6B in DHS grant funding has been made available to support a host of preparedness needs, among which grantees can prioritize communications expenditures. Historically, "communications" represents the largest investment category for DHS grants as reported in the Grants Reporting Tool.

What is the difference between the Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grant Program and the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP)?

The NECP is a national strategic plan designed to guide future public safety communications initiatives and investments to ultimately drive measurable progress in advancing interoperable emergency communications; while the PSIC is a one-time grant program providing funding to help State and local emergency responders improve public safety communications.

How does the NECP relate to the National Response Framework?

The NECP was developed to be consistent with overarching Homeland Security preparedness and response doctrine. This includes the National Response Framework (NRF) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the National Preparedness Guidelines, and Target Capabilities List, which combine to form a unified structure for response and recovery efforts. The NECP establishes goals, objectives, and initiatives for interoperable and operable emergency communications that will support incident management. This includes objectives and initiatives that focus on improving governance structures and standard operating procedures to bolster response operations. In addition, the NECP contains initiatives and milestones that seek to accelerate the implementation of emergency communications components in the NRF by public safety agencies across the Nation. Taken together, the goals and objectives of the NRF, NECP, and other DHS strategy documents will improve nationwide response efforts, bolster situational awareness, information sharing, and command and control operations.

For more information on the NECP and OEC, please contact OEC@hq.dhs.gov or visit <http://www.dhs.gov>; keyword: OEC.

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