



OEC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

May 2014

Providing Support and Services to the Emergency Communications Community

The Department of Homeland Security's Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) supports Federal, State, Tribal, Territorial, and Local organizations by providing over 50 technical assistance (TA) offerings designed to promote and enhance interoperability, resiliency, and survivability of emergency communications nationwide.

Since its creation in 2007, OEC has completed over 1,000 TA engagements in all 56 States and Territories, ranging from Communications Unit Leader (COML) training to microwave design analysis. For Fiscal Year 2014, OEC will continue to focus on providing planning support to State, Local, Territorial and Tribal communities with planning support related to FirstNet's deployment of the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN).

REQUESTING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

At the beginning of each fiscal year, OEC coordinates with Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWICs) for each State, who may submit up to five prioritized requests for technical assistance. SWICs select offerings from OEC's TA Catalog and submit a TA request form online through the Public Safety Tools site (www.publicsafetytools.info). OEC is currently accepting TA requests for FY 2014.

A TAILORED APPROACH

Technical assistance provides stakeholders with an objective, third-party review of current communications practices, policies and procedures, as well as technologies to help assess both capabilities and performance. Many offerings can be customized or combined, and OEC encourages States to collaborate across disciplines, agencies, and jurisdictions. By tailoring TA across multiple disciplines, OEC ensures its offerings are conducted effectively and efficiently. In addition, this approach helps SWICs build relationships not only within their States and Territories, but also with neighboring States. It also helps OEC foster relationships across all levels of government. After completing a TA engagement, OEC solicits feedback and evaluation of its services in order to revise and improve the scope and focus of the offerings.

OEC TA services fall into the following general categories:

- Governance
- Standard Operating Procedures & Communications Support
- Communications Unit Training & Support
- Communications Exercise & Operations Support
- Broadband Support to NPSBN/FirstNet
- Communications Systems Engineering Support
- Tactical Communications Enhancement Support
- Regional Communications Enhancement Support
- Tribal Nation
- Communications Assets Survey and Mapping (CASM) Tool Support
- Special Offerings

Availability of OEC's State and Local TA Services

TA services are supported by Federal funding and are provided at no cost to the requesting agency. However, due to the limited resources available, OEC must work with requestors to prioritize requests and defer less urgent requests until future review cycles. Despite these challenges, OEC will ensure that each State and Territory receives support.

COML and COMT Train-the-Trainer

In response to stakeholder demands, OEC initiated train-the-trainer offerings for its COML and Communications Technician (COMT) workshops. To date, OEC has trained over 5,000 responders through these courses. OEC updated the TA catalog to include more offerings for COML and COMT training courses in addition to a revised list of broadband offerings.

Broadband



Another of OEC's initiatives over the last year has been the office's ongoing support to FirstNet's Board of Directors in their efforts to develop and deploy

the NPSBN. OEC's Technical Assistance Branch is providing various tools and workshops that are now being used to provide broadband support through more than 40 TA engagements. Service offerings in this category will assist States/Territories, Tribal nations and regional or urban areas in understanding public safety broadband technology and support their planning for participation in the NPSBN. Since OEC introduced the first broadband 101 technical assistance offering, it has evolved into four separate workshops as FirstNet continues to develop policies and plans for implementation of the NPSBN. These four offerings focus on broadband overview and education, broadband governance, broadband planning, and broadband engineering and data collection. OEC has coordinated with FirstNet on each tool to ensure alignment with their approach.

Dispatch Operations and Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1)

In an effort to reach out to first-line responders at Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) and dispatch centers, OEC initiated a dispatch operations workshop in 2012. This workshop complements the Public Safety Communications Center Continuity of Operations (COOP) offering for PSAPs by helping PSAP managers assess operations and readiness,

and focus on current best practices and trends in public safety communications centers. The NG9-1-1 offering, also introduced in 2012, is designed to help PSAPs/dispatch centers assess and integrate next generation technologies into their daily operations.

Auxiliary Communications

Amateur radio operators serve as a unique resource to public safety in times of natural disasters and other emergency. The OEC TA auxiliary communicators workshop helps amateur radio volunteers understand the Incident Command System (ICS) response structure and how their capabilities may support State emergency operations.

Threat Assessments and Mitigation Support

OEC provides communications threat assessments and mitigation support to assist in preparing and responding to natural and man-made disasters. Threat assessments characterize the impacts on communication systems due to a disaster or crisis and provide support on how to mitigate, recover, and restore communications.

NEW OFFERINGS



OEC's TA Catalog reflects new offerings as they are introduced. New offerings are frequently based on feedback from stakeholders during the delivery of current offerings. Have new ideas on offerings? OEC encourages its stakeholders to provide feedback and ideas for new offerings at OEC@hq.dhs.gov.

ONLINE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In addition to on-site TA support, OEC provides online tools and products that focus on technical assistance and complement many of the TA Catalog offerings. The Public Safety Tools site at www.publicsafetytools.info is a dynamic, interactive site which is regularly updated.

VISIT WWW.PUBLICSAFETYTOOLS.INFO FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please contact OEC@dhs.gov or visit www.dhs.gov (keyword OEC).