

SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants

Since 2007, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency has worked with SAFECOM members and federal partners to develop the annual *SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants* (*SAFECOM Guidance*) for entities applying for federal financial assistance of emergency communications projects. It provides guidance to state, local, tribal, and territorial government grant recipients on:

- Recommendations for planning, coordinating, and implementing projects
- Emergency communications activities that can be funded through federal grants
- Best practices, policies, and technical standards that help to improve interoperability
- Resources to help grant recipients comply with technical standards and grant requirements

SAFECOM's public safety practitioners develop *SAFECOM Guidance* and other resources to benefit the community, including a list detailing federal financial assistance opportunities, funding mechanisms for public safety communications systems, and informational brochures such as sustaining land mobile radio and implementing Project 25 standards. The latest release of the *SAFECOM Guidance* and other funding resources are located on the SAFECOM website at <https://www.dhs.gov/safecom/funding>.

Applicable to All Federal Programs Funding Emergency Communications

SAFECOM Guidance provides general information on eligible activities, technical standards, and other terms and conditions that are common to most federal emergency communications grants. Grants are administered by numerous federal agencies and are subject to various statutory and programmatic requirements. Thus, grant recipients should review individual grant guidance carefully to ensure their proposed activities are eligible, and that all standards, terms, and conditions required by the program are met.

With the caveat to follow program requirements when applying for federal funding, *SAFECOM Guidance* is recognized as the primary guidance on emergency communications grants by the Administration, the Office of Management and Budget, and federal grant program offices. Best practices and technical standards located within the *SAFECOM Guidance* help ensure that federally-funded emergency communications investments are interoperable and support national policies. *SAFECOM Guidance* address all types of emergency communications, including land mobile radio, data exchange, alerts and warnings, and Internet Protocol-enabled technologies such as public safety broadband and Next Generation 911 systems.

Compliance Requirements for DHS Grants

In 2015, DHS began requiring its grant recipients to adopt *SAFECOM Guidance* recommendations and comply with specific terms and conditions outlined in Appendix D, "Compliance Requirement for DHS Grants" of the document. While only DHS/Federal Emergency Management Agency grant recipients are required to comply with *SAFECOM Guidance*, all entities are highly encouraged to follow its recommendations on emergency communications grants.

Emergency Communications Priorities

SAFECOM Guidance is designed to promote and align with the national emergency communications goals established in the [National Emergency Communications Plan](#), as well as other applicable Presidential Policy Directives, federal statutes, and regulations. SAFECOM members identified investment priorities to promote a consistent approach to improving emergency communications nationwide. State, local, tribal, and territorial government grant recipients are encouraged to target funding toward the following priorities:

- ❖ **Priority 1: Governance and Leadership**
Enhance decision-making, coordination, and planning for emergency communications through strong governance structures and leadership
- ❖ **Priority 2: Statewide Planning for Emergency Communications**
Update plans and procedures to improve emergency responder communications and readiness in a dynamic operating environment
- ❖ **Priority 3: Emergency Communications Training and Exercises**
Improve responders' ability to coordinate and communicate through training and exercise programs that use all available technologies and target gaps in emergency communications
- ❖ **Priority 4: Activities that Enhance Operational Coordination**
Ensure operational effectiveness through the coordination of communications capabilities, resources, and personnel from across the whole community
- ❖ **Priority 5: Standards-Based Technology and Equipment**
Coordinate research, development, testing, and evaluation activities to develop innovative emergency communications capabilities that support the needs of emergency responders

Before applying for federal funding, *SAFECOM Guidance* recommends grant recipients review national and state plans, and coordinate with their statewide emergency communications leaders to ensure that proposals support current strategies. *SAFECOM Guidance* also provides information on changes in the emergency communications landscape, federal grant requirements, and restrictions to assist grant recipients in developing projects that are more likely to be awarded.

About SAFECOM

SAFECOM was formed in 2001 after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as part of the Presidential E-Government Initiative to improve public safety interoperability, allowing emergency responders to communicate effectively before, during, and after emergencies and disasters. SAFECOM's mission is to improve designated emergency response providers' inter-jurisdictional and inter-disciplinary emergency communications interoperability through collaboration with emergency responders across federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, and international borders. For additional information regarding SAFECOM, visit <https://www.dhs.gov/safecom>.