



Homeland Security

NATIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

OVERVIEW

In 2008, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) National Protection & Programs Directorate (NPPD) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) led the development and implementation of the first National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) consistent with the requirement in Title XVIII of the Homeland Security Act of 2002. In 2014, OEC revised the document to account for changes in emergency communications policy, legislation, and technologies.

As the Nation's strategic plan for emergency communications, the NECP establishes a vision of "Enabling the Nation's emergency response community to communicate and share information across levels of government, jurisdictions, disciplines, and organizations, for all threats and hazards, as needed, and when authorized."

CHANGING EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS LANDSCAPE

The emergency communications landscape has evolved significantly since the first NECP due to the emergence of new technologies, policies, and a broader range of stakeholders that support emergency response operations. OEC worked closely with over 350 Federal, State, local, tribal, and territorial jurisdictions, as well as private sector representatives to update the NECP with the goal of bringing public safety communications into the 21st century. The 2014 NECP aims to maximize the use of all communications capabilities available to emergency responders – voice, video, and data – and to ensure the security of data and information.

While the updated NECP encourages the continued operation and maintenance of Land Mobile Radio (LMR) systems, it also addresses the current use and planned deployment of broadband technologies, such as:

- Mobile applications and services, such as broadband, video streaming, texting, location-based services, and telemetry;

- Wireless emergency alerts and Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1); and
- Social media to exchange critical information during emergencies.

STAKEHOLDERS

The NECP is a plan for the Nation. It provides information and guidance to those that plan for, coordinate, invest in, and use communications for response and recovery operations. This includes traditional emergency responder disciplines such as fire, law enforcement, and emergency medical services; entities that need to communicate and share information during emergencies (public health, public works, transportation agencies); and appointed and elected officials.

The plan is also designed for all decision-makers who are responsible for setting mission priorities, developing budgets, and planning for and acquiring communications technology assets. In keeping with the "whole community" approach, the plan includes additional stakeholders, such as alerts and warnings agencies, 9-1-1 centers, utilities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), international partners, the communications sector, auxiliary resources, and even the public.

PRIORITIES

The NECP's top priorities for the next three to five years address the people, processes, and technologies to enhance emergency communications. The priorities are:

- Identifying and prioritizing areas for improvement in current LMR communications systems used by responders;
- Ensuring emergency responders and government officials plan and prepare for the adoption, integration, and use of broadband technologies, including the development and deployment of the National Public Safety Broadband Network; and



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- Enhancing coordination among stakeholders, processes, and planning activities across the broader emergency response community.

GOALS

The 2014 NECP goals are strategic and aim to enhance emergency communications capabilities at all levels of government in coordination with the private sector, NGOs, and communities across the Nation. Each goal is supported by a series of objectives and, within each objective, there are several actionable recommendations that stakeholders can choose to implement. The five goals are:

Goal 1 - Governance and Leadership: Enhance decision-making, coordination, and planning for emergency communications through strong governance structures and leadership

Goal 2 - Planning and Procedures: Update plans and procedures to improve emergency responder communications and readiness in a dynamic operating environment

Goal 3 - 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

Goal 4 - Operational Coordination: Ensure operational effectiveness through the coordination of communications capabilities, resources, and personnel from across the whole community

Goal 5 - Research and Development: Coordinate research, development, testing, and evaluation activities to develop innovative emergency communications capabilities that support the needs of emergency responders

IMPLEMENTATION & MEASUREMENT

Implementation of the NECP is a shared responsibility among OEC's stakeholders. Previously, OEC partnered with emergency response agencies to develop operational performance and capability assessment programs. A similar approach will be applied to measure progress of this NECP. Specifically, assessment actions will focus on the following three measures:

- (1) Demonstration of operational emergency communications;
- (2) development of emergency communications capabilities; and
- (3) completion of NECP recommendations and implementation actions.

This three-pronged measurement process will generate detailed results on progress and provide a basis for formulating priorities and strategies for future plans, such as Statewide Communications Interoperability Plans (SCIPs).

For more information, please visit www.dhs.gov/cyber.

Please contact ocnecp@dhs.gov or visit www.dhs.gov/oec for further information about the NECP.