Eligibility Criteria

The national security and emergency preparedness community spans the Federal, State, Local, Tribal and Territorial governments, public safety and emergency responders, industry partners who are responsible for maintaining the Nation's critical infrastructure, and other authorized users. Organizations that rely on telecommunications on a daily basis to provide public health, maintain law and order, ensure public safety, and/or provide financial or utility service should enroll in these vital priority services.

Typical GETS, WPS, and TSP users are responsible for the command and control functions critical to management of, and response to, national security and emergencies.

Five broad categories serve as criteria for determining eligibility for the priority telecommunications services. Users typically perform functions that:

- Serve national security leadership;
- Support the national security posture and U.S. population attack warning systems;
- Support public health, safety, and maintenance of law and order activities;
- Maintain the public welfare and the national economic system; or,
- Are critical to the protection of life and property or to national security and emergency preparedness and disaster recovery activities during an emergency.

Enrollment Process

The first step in the enrollment process is to establish a point of contact (POC) for your organization. Many organizations already have established POCs who facilitate the enrollment process. To determine your POC and enroll in the priority services programs, please contact the **DHS Priority Telecommunications Service Center** at **(866) 627-2255**, or visit one of the following websites: www.dhs.gov/GETS, www.dhs.gov/WPS, or www.dhs.gov/TSP.

About the Office of Emergency Communications

Housed in DHS' National Protection and Programs Directorate's Office of Cybersecurity and Communications, the OEC supports and promotes communications used by emergency responders and government officials to keep America safe, secure, and resilient. The office leads the Nation's operable and interoperable public safety and national security and emergency preparedness communications efforts. Offering training, coordination, tools, and guidance, OEC coordinates with Federal, State, Local, Tribal and Territorial governments, and industry partners to ensure that communications are available at all times. For more information on the OEC, please visit www.dhs.gov, keyword OEC.

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Office of Emergency Communications

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Priority Telecommunications Services

Homeland Security

"We're sorry. All circuits are busy. Please try your call again later."

Imagine that an earthquake occurs in your city, leaving thousands of people injured and causing severe damage to buildings, homes, roads, and utilities. The phone lines are severely congested as people try to call for help and contact their families. Due to extremely high call volumes, public safety personnel can't get critical calls connected to response team members, such as the American Red Cross, hospitals, utility companies, and elected officials. How will they communicate with critical emergency personnel on landline and cell phones when there is network congestion?

Or imagine that a service crew is digging with a backhoe in an unmarked area and the crew accidentally cuts the communications circuits that service several buildings, including a hospital, bank, and the local police. This severely limits the ability of the police, hospital, and bank to make and receive calls, causing major impacts to their communications. How can these organizations ensure that the service provider restores their critical circuits and communications before any other services that were affected?

Communications issues such as these could have disastrous consequences, including jeopardizing thousands of lives and the security of our Nation. Fortunately, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) offers priority telecommunications services to address these communications issues and enhance the ability of our critical national security and emergency preparedness personnel to communicate during disasters.

OEC Priority Telecommunications Services

OEC provides priority telecommunications services to support national security and emergency preparedness communications for government officials, emergency responders, critical infrastructure personnel, and industry members. The Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS), Wireless Priority Service (WPS), and Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) programs provide key Federal, State, Local, Tribal and Territorial governments, and first responder and industry organizations with communications capabilities to support emergency response incidents.

> *"Frost Bank would like to extend our appreciation for both the GETS and WPS programs for allowing us to continue communicating with our Houston and Galveston regions in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike. Without these programs, we would have been hard-pressed to communicate with our regional staff, our security teams, our information technology recovery teams, and our facilities recovery teams."*
>
> Jamie Cale Hahn, Frost Bank Business Continuity Administrator

GETS provides priority on the landline networks:

- Increases call completion during telephone network congestion
- Does not require special phone equipment
- Priority access includes calls to most cell phones

WPS provides priority on the wireless networks:

- Increases call completion on cell phones during network congestion
- Is an add-on feature to your cell phone
- Can be used in conjunction with GETS to provide priority calling

TSP provides priority installation and repair of critical communications circuits:

- Covers voice and data circuits that support emergency operations
- Federal Commuications Commission (FCC) mandated program to prioritize restoration and installation of circuits
- Carriers restore or install TSP circuits prior to servicing other non-TSP circuits

GETS

During emergencies, the public telephone network can experience congestion due to increased call volumes and/or damage to communications infrastructure, hindering the ability of critical personnel to complete their calls. GETS provides authorized personnel priority calling during an emergency or crisis situation when the probability of completing a call is reduced due to excessive call volumes. GETS facilitated response and recovery efforts during and after events such as 9/11 and Hurricanes Katrina, Ike, and Sandy by providing over a 95 percent call completion rate.

GETS is an easy-to-use calling card service that works on both local and long distance networks. Users do not need special phones and the service is accessible nationwide. Calls placed through GETS will receive priority over normal calls; however, GETS calls do not preempt calls in progress or prevent the general public's use of the telephone network. GETS allows users to communicate even during the highest levels of network congestion and also provides priority calling to cell phones on most major carrier networks. There is no charge to enroll in GETS or to make calls to the familiarization line. When making GETS calls, subscribers can be charged the equivalent of long distance phone rates.

WPS

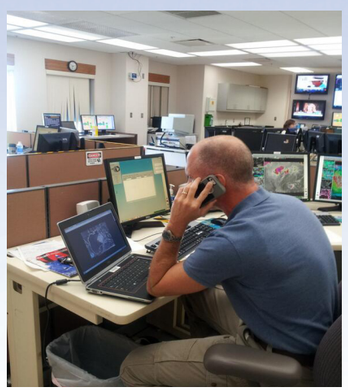
Extremely high call volumes on cellular networks can also hinder the ability of national security and emergency preparedness personnel to complete emergency calls on their cell phones. The WPS program is available nationwide, and is intended to provide authorized personnel priority calling when the cellular networks are congested and the probability of completing a call is reduced. For example, up to 95 percent of WPS calls were successfully completed during the 2013 Presidential Inauguration. After the April 2013 bombing at the Boston Marathon, up to 93 percent of calls placed through WPS were successfully completed, allowing critical personnel to carry out their missions.

WPS is an easy-to-use, add-on feature that is offered by all nationwide cellular service providers. Authorized personnel can subscribe to WPS on a per-cell phone basis. Calls placed via WPS will receive priority over normal cellular calls; however, WPS calls do not preempt calls in progress or prevent the general public's use of the cellular networks. WPS subscribers are responsible for any cellular carrier charges for initial enrollment and monthly subscription, as well as per-minute usage fees.

> *"After the terrorist attacks on 9/11, it became clear that getting Wall Street functioning again needed to be a top priority. The financial services sector relied on the TSP program and their relationship with the telecommunications sector in order to give those circuits and services that supported Wall Street priority restoration and in many cases, priority for installation of new circuits."*
>
> Wayne Pacine, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System

TSP

Following hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and other natural or man-made disasters, telecommunications service vendors can experience a surge in requests to restore existing services and/or install new services. TSP authorizes qualified organizations to receive priority installation and restoration of vital voice and data circuits or other telecommunications services supporting national security and emergency preparedness operations. A FCC mandate ensures that service vendors will prioritize the installation and/or restoration of critical circuits and services with TSP assignments before any non-TSP request.



An organization can only receive a TSP assignment if it maintains services or infrastructures that are considered critical national security and emergency preparedness communications assets. TSP subscribers are subject to minimal telecommunications carrier charges for initial enrollment and monthly subscription fees.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, TSP was critical to restoration and recovery efforts by facilitating the rapid repair of damaged circuits and processing over 200 requests to install new circuits for the response community.