Statewide Interoperability Coordinators Newsletter

A Note from Chris Essid

Last month, 47 of the 56 Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWICs) joined us for the first meeting of SWICs in Orlando, Florida. The meeting was a wonderful opportunity to network, share best practices, discuss the roles and responsibilities of a SWIC, and discuss governance structures and funding. For me, this meeting was a priority. As Virginia's coordinator through 2007, I often spoke of the need for this group to come together.

It was an honor to meet so many of you, all of whom are dedicated to the goal of enhancing interoperability in your States and across the Nation. At the meeting's close, I heard a great deal of enthusiasm from participants, who expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet their counterparts from their neighboring States and

First SWIC Meeting a Success!

Representatives from 47 States and territories met on December 3-4 in Orlando, Florida for the first meeting of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWICs). The meeting, hosted by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) in partnership with the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), focused on networking, sharing best practices, and introducing resources that might assist SWICs in their interoperability efforts. Participants discussed the essential roles and responsibilities for the SWIC position, and shared best practices related to statewide governance and funding. The attendees overwhelmingly encouraged OEC to provide continued support for the group to meet in the future. The NGA Center will coordinate a second meeting in the late spring or early summer. To be a member of the planning committee for the next meeting, please contact Erin Lee at the NGA Center at elee@nga.org. ∎

Communications Unit Leader Training Courses Available

This year, there will be several opportunities to participate in the Office of Emergency Communication's (OEC's) All-Hazards Type III Communications Unit Leader (COML) training course *(see the Calendar on Page 3 for upcoming dates)*. The course trains emergency responders to serve as prospective radio COMLs during all-hazards emergency operations. COML responsibilities include developing plans for the effective use of incident communications equipment and facilities, managing the distribution of communications equipment to incident personnel, and coordinating the installation and testing of communications equipment. It is designed to significantly improve communications across disciplines and jurisdictions during incident response efforts. OEC asks that Statewide Interoperability Coordinators share this opportunity with the local jurisdictions in each State and territory. For more information about COML, including a full list of prerequisites, please click here. ∎

National Emergency Communications Conference Coming in April

To support nationwide efforts to enhance emergency communications, the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) is planning a National Emergency Communications Conference to be held April 22-24, 2009 in Chicago. The conference will promote:

- Sharing of information, strategy, tools, and relationships to achieve the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

- Opportunities for emergency response practitioners to identify solutions, break-down barriers, and redefine leadership roles and responsibilities.

- Networking and partnership building among members of the emergency communications community.

OEC Staff Spotlight

Taylor Heard

Taylor Heard was selected in October 2008 to serve as the Office of Emergency Communications' (OEC's) Deputy Director. He is responsible for driving the Office's strategic efforts to accelerate and attain operable and interoperable emergency communications among public safety agencies and across Federal, State, local, and tribal governments nationwide. Taylor previously served as Chief of Staff for OEC following its inception in April 2007. In this role, he directed all human capital, budget, procurement, and acquisition-related activities for the Office. Taylor has also served as the Executive Secretary for the Directorates for Preparedness and National Protection and Programs within the Department of Homeland Security. He earned his master's in Foreign Service from Georgetown University and his bachelor's in International Affairs from Samford University.

Kenneth Born

Kenneth Born began work at the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) in August 2008 as a Telecommunications Specialist within OEC's Multi-Jurisdictional Communications Services division. In this capacity, Ken supports OEC's efforts to provide technical assistance to State and local agencies across the Nation. Prior to coming to OEC, he worked for a variety of State government agencies including the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, the Illinois State Police, the Commonwealth of Kentucky's Office of Technology, and the State of Maryland's Office of Technology. In Kentucky, he held the equivalent position of Statewide Interoperability Coordinator. Ken was also an Adjunct Faculty member at the University of Illinois teaching coursework in computer science and management information systems, and started his career as a software developer supporting law enforcement applications in the wired and wireless environment. He earned his master's in Business Administration, his bachelor's in Political Science, and his associate's in Police Science Administration. He is also Project Management Professional-certified. ∎

share ideas and solutions. I am pleased that you are interested in keeping this group together and meeting again in the late spring.

I can see that December's meeting served as a catalyst for greater discussion and collaboration among SWICs. Moving forward, the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) is committed to continuing to support statewide coordination efforts in a variety of ways including technical assistance, Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) Implementation Workshops, guidance documents, grant policy alignment, a SWIC Web portal, and this newsletter.

In this issue of the *Statewide Interoperability Coordinators Newsletter*, you will find articles on OEC's SCIP Implementation Workshops, Communication Unit Leader Training, and tools; the latest updates on the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program; and a preview of the first National Emergency Communications Conference. It also includes an introduction of some of my staff at OEC. In future issues, we hope to introduce each of you to each other, so please let me know if you are willing to be interviewed for the next issue by e-mailing OEC@hq.dhs.gov. I hope that you will find this newsletter helpful and informative and I welcome your feedback. and suggestions for future issues. ∎

- Lessons from recent activities, including NECP implementation efforts, Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan Implementation Workshops, and other communications interoperability meetings.

- Increased understanding of the next phase of NECP implementation.

OEC will send an e-mail with more information about the National Emergency Communications Conference in the coming weeks. ∎

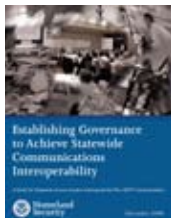## Six States Chosen for Governance Policy Academy

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, with support from the Office of Emergency Communications and the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility, selected six States to participate in a new policy academy, *Public Safety Interoperable Communications: Focus on Governance*. Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Massachusetts, New York, and Washington will each be awarded up to $50,000 to support a governance-specific project. Projects include developing governance body charters and by-laws; templates for multi-jurisdictional, multi-disciplinary agreements; performance measures to support requests for funding; and regional governance bodies. The States will also be involved in outreach efforts to underrepresented communities to strengthen diversity on their respective governance bodies. The six States convened in New Orleans, Louisiana on January 8-9, 2009 to discuss statewide governance and develop action plans for their projects. ∎

Chris Essid Featured on FCC Speaker Series

Chris Essid, Director of the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), will be the guest speaker for the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB) Speaker Series on Wednesday, January 14, 2009 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. He will discuss highlights of OEC's recently developed National Emergency Communications Plan. The Speaker Series provides the latest news and developments in public safety communications and related initiatives. The meeting will be broadcast live with open captioning over the Internet from FCC's website here.

Tool Highlight

The guides and resources that the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) develops serve a common purpose to empower emergency response practitioners to advance communications interoperability in their communities and beyond. In order for these guides to have the widest dissemination possible, OEC encourages its stakeholders to share links and/or electronic copies of the guides to practitioners in the field and other interested parties. For more information, please click here.

Establishing Governance to Achieve Statewide Communications Interoperability: A Guide for SCIP Implementation, approved by the Department of Homeland Security in December 2008, was developed by OEC to help States establish multi-disciplinary and multi-jurisdictional coordination at all levels of government. Without creating mandates or requirements, the guide is designed to assist States and localities in developing and/or refining their governance methodologies and systems, supporting States in their efforts to achieve statewide interoperability. By encouraging a coordinated, practitioner-driven approach to governance, the guide seeks to facilitate the implementation of communications interoperability strategies outlined within the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP); each State's Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP); and other Urban Area Security Initiative, regional, and local planning documents. For an electronic copy of *Establishing Governance to Achieve Statewide Communications Interoperability*, please click here.

The *Writing Guide for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)* tool provides guidance for developing an MOU. It includes recommendations for structuring the MOU, questions to consider when generating content for each section, and sample language to illustrate how a community could write each MOU. It can be accessed here.

The *Writing Guide for Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)* guide assists communities that want to establish SOPs. SOPs are formal written guidelines or instructions for incident response. SOPs typically have both operational and technical components and enable emergency responders to act in a coordinated fashion across disciplines in the event of an emergency. It can be accessed here.

The *Creating a Charter for a Multi-Agency Communications Interoperability Committee* guide focuses on the governance element of the Interoperability Continuum. Specifically, it helps communities that are interested in creating a charter document for their multi-agency interoperability committee or governance group. It can be accessed here.

The *Interoperable Communications for Planned Events* guide is intended to assist emergency response officials who are responsible for designing and executing interoperable communication plans for planned events. This tool provides a comprehensive and explicit process to ensure successful communications during planned events. It can be accessed here.

For questions or comments concerning any of these resources, please e-mail OEC@hq.dhs.gov. ■

Calendar

January

8-9 NGA Center Policy Academy - New Orleans, LA

26-29 COML Type III Training - Bell Buckle, TN

27-29 COML Type III Training - Morris Plains, NJ

February

3-5 COML Type III Training - Indianapolis, IN

24-26 COML Type III Training - Oklahoma City, OK

March

10-12 COML Type III Training - Harrisburg, PA

10-12 COML Type III Training - Urbandale, IA

About the SWIC Newsletter

The *Statewide Interoperability Coordinators Newsletter* is designed to be a source of information, news, and updates for Statewide Interoperability Coordinators and their staff. We hope that it will be a valuable resource as you lead your Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan implementation efforts, future statewide planning, and alignment to the National Emergency Communications Plan.

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IECGP Updates: Deadline Extended

The Fiscal Year 2009 Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program (IECGP) funding goals and priority groups were developed based on the goals, objectives, and milestones outlined in the National Emergency Communications Plan and key gaps identified through the Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) development process.

Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWICs) play a unique role in this grant program as it requires the State Administrative Agencies (SAA) to coordinate with them in proposing projects and meeting program requirements. If this contact has not already occurred, SWICs should contact the SAA to ensure that there is coordination and alignment to statewide strategies.

SAAs must complete and submit applications through www.grants.gov no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, January 23, 2009 (previously January 13, 2009). Submitted IECGP Investment Justifications will undergo a joint Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Grant Programs Directorate (GPD) review process to ensure that all Investment Justifications are compliant with program requirements before the funds are awarded in April 2009.

For all IECGP-related questions, please contact:
Centralized Scheduling and Information Desk (CSID)
askcsid@dhs.gov
800-368-6498

For other interoperable communications policy-related inquiries, please contact:
Darcy Bingham, OEC
darcy.bingham@dhs.gov
703-235-5648 ■

SCIP Corner

SCIP Implementation Workshops: Making a Difference on the Ground

The Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) is conducting Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) Implementation Workshops across the Nation in an effort to help States and territories implement their SCIPs and begin aligning them to the National Emergency Communications Plan. To date, 46 States and territories have signed up for workshops and OEC has completed workshops in Arkansas, Idaho, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, Puerto Rico, and West Virginia.

"OEC came to our State to facilitate our [SCIP Implementation] Workshop with our Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee members. The one-day workshop was an extremely valuable tool that allowed our stakeholders to prioritize the SCIP goals, develop action steps to continue forward progress, and strengthen our partnership with OEC. I want to thank OEC for the concise and organized workshop they provided to our State; it was extremely valuable and well worth the time spent. I would highly recommend to my colleagues in other States to take advantage of this opportunity."
— Rick Andreano
Statewide Interoperability Coordinator, MA

Workshops are tailored to each State's needs, enabling them to make progress on their identified priorities. Participants work hard—the workshops are designed to require active involvement from all attendees. Most importantly, the workshops provide an opportunity for stakeholders from all disciplines and levels of government to come together to advance interoperability in their State.

"The exchange of information and networking were excellent and we would recommend the [SCIP] Implementation Workshop to all who are involved in the process of creating radio and data interoperability."
— Thomas Johnson
Statewide Interoperability Program Manager, MN

Examples of outcomes from the first eight workshops include action plans for the highest priority SCIP initiatives, a prioritized list of technical assistance needs, a governance charter and action plan to create a working group for sustainable communications interoperability funding, and a strategic roadmap for data interoperability initiatives. OEC anticipates that each State and territory will have unique outcomes that align to the greatest challenges facing them in their SCIP implementation efforts.

"Idaho is moving forward with the development of regional interoperable communications governance structures that will be driven by our local response community. The SCIP [Implementation] Workshop recently conducted in Idaho by OEC delivered the message that governance is the "umbrella" under which all decisions about interoperable communications will be made in a collaborative manner. The workshop gave us direction and made sense of the SCIP implementation process."
— Dodie Collier
Interoperable Communications Program Manager, ID

It is not too late to schedule a workshop for spring of 2009! To schedule a workshop or to provide feedback on the workshop, please e-mail OEC at OEC@hq.dhs.gov. ■