

# Statewide Interoperability Coordinators Newsletter



volume four, may 2009

## A Note from Chris Essid



It was a pleasure to see so many of you in Chicago last month at the Office of Emergency Communications' (OEC) first National Conference on Emergency Communications. Bringing together over 450 members of the emergency response community, the National Conference was a great opportunity to collaborate on emergency communications challenges. Taking the time to meet in person is important to our partnerships. Attendees had the opportunity to renew old friendships and build new relationships. And with many Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWICs) or their equivalents in attendance, your statewide perspective was well represented, providing valuable perspectives and participation to this inaugural event.

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## June SWIC Meeting: Building Support in San Diego

The next Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWIC) meeting, again hosted by the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices in partnership with the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), will take place on June 24-26, 2009 in San Diego, CA. In response to requests from many SWICs, the June meeting will allow each SWIC to invite up to two additional people per State and territory in order to build support and cohesiveness for statewide communications interoperability efforts. These additional individuals must be engaged in the statewide effort in one of a few pre-selected roles to qualify for attendance.

The NGA Center for Best Practices and OEC, working with a planning committee consisting of SWICs, encourage each SWIC to use the additional team member slots for an elected official, a Homeland Security Advisor, and/or State Administrative Agency representative. The Chair and Vice-chair of the Statewide Interoperability Governing Body are also acceptable attendees. If unable to obtain two individuals from the above roles, one SWIC office senior staff member with specific responsibility for Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan implementation and communications interoperability may be included.

The June meeting will include a mix of plenary and breakout sessions covering topics related to the lanes of the Interoperability Continuum, grants and funding, National Emergency Communications Plan measurement, and working with Federal partners and across State lines. If you have questions regarding the meeting, please contact David G. Henry at [dhenry@nga.org](mailto:dhenry@nga.org) or at 202-624-5366. ■

## National Conference

The first National Conference on Emergency Communications was held last month in Chicago, IL. On April 22-24, over 450 members of the emergency response community from across the country attended the event, representing public safety, government officials, and private industry. 43 of the 56 Statewide Interoperability Coordinators and Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan Point of Contacts were among those in attendance at the National Conference. The theme, *Effective Communications for a Secure Nation*, advanced the goals of the [National Emergency Communications Plan](#) (NECP) and enlisted the emergency response community in support of NECP implementation.

The agenda included plenary sessions and speaker panels addressing NECP implementation, State and local governance planning and coordination, and grants and tools development information. Keynote speakers Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Programs Juliette Kayyem, Federal Emergency Management Agency Grant Programs Directorate Assistant Administrator Ross Ashley, and Washington, D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency Director Darrell Darnell engaged participants with insight into the priorities of the Administration and State and local government.

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## Meet the Coordinators



### **Alaska – Kathy Day**

*Alaska Statewide Interoperability Coordinator  
Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*

I have worked for the State of Alaska for the last 27 years, retiring in 2002 from 20 years as a Peace Officer. My background is eclectic because I am also a forensic anthropologist and worked at the Alaska State Medical Examiner's Office for five years before accepting the position at Alaska's Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management in 2007. I am a Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team member and also a member of the Incident Response Coordination Team for the National Disaster Medical Response Services. In my "spare" time I am also a faculty member at the University of Alaska, Anchorage where I have been teaching for the last 20 years.

I have over 20 years of experience in project management and my position as Alaska's Interoperability Coordinator continues to be challenging. I manage all of the Federal interoperable grant programs single-handedly and am involved in all of our statewide interoperability initiatives. Up here we usually remind everyone that geographically, our State is the largest and there is a huge section of Alaska that is not accessible by roads. As a result, we have come to realize that in some cases, we have to achieve operability before we even think about interoperability. We also have our share of natural disasters including floods, avalanches, and volcanic eruptions. We do not have the luxury of driving to another State if our airport is closed because Anchorage is 2,400 miles from Seattle, which is why we are also working closely with our Canadian neighbors on cross-border interoperability. We have made significant strides this past year and we are especially proud of our governance structure and our current initiatives that include a good deal of training and exercises for various public safety agencies. Finally, although we may do things differently up here, we are pretty friendly so if you get the chance to ever visit our great State, feel free to contact me. ■



### **Indiana – David Smith**

*Director, Indiana Integrated Public Safety Commission  
Statewide Interoperability Coordinator*

Things have changed quite a bit during the 43 years I've been in the public safety communications business! Following 17 years with the Indiana State Police (Communications and Criminal Justice Data Divisions), I served as 911 Director for Racine, WI; directing the consolidation of police, fire, and emergency medical system 911 Dispatch Centers. My private sector experience includes managing the installation of 11 statewide systems used to access the National Crime Information System. I've also designed and implemented custom communications law enforcement data terminals throughout several States.

In 1996, I returned to Indiana to direct Marion County's JUSTIS law enforcement, courts, and records system. In 2000, the State recruited me to direct the team preparing to implement a statewide 800 MHz public safety interoperable communication system known as Project Hoosier SAFE-T. That was prior to 9-11 and getting anyone to talk about interoperable communications was impossible. But 9-11 changed the dialogue, and as a result, the build-out of the 136+ site system is now nearly complete. Today, there are more than 50,000 users on the system!

In addition to the mammoth task of managing the SAFE-T system and its users, our small agency is now focusing on strengthening standard operating procedures, training, and next-generation statewide data interoperability. We are also reigniting our early efforts at inter-State interoperability via the Midwest Public Safety Communications Consortium. ■



### **Louisiana – Brant Mitchell**

*Assistant Deputy Director of Interoperability and Technology  
Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness*

I began working at the Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) in 2001 as a staff member with the Louisiana National Guard attached full-time to GOHSEP. I served as the National Guard's Counter-Terrorism Program Manager and eventually became the Program Manager for the Homeland Security Grants for Louisiana. In August 2006, I officially joined GOHSEP as the Section Chief for the newly formed Regional Support Section. While serving in this position, I continued to provide program management for the State's Homeland Security Grants and was responsible for the implementation of the State's Homeland Security Strategy. I also provided program management for the Public Safety Interoperable Communications grant, a \$19 million dollar grant that has enhanced interoperable communications throughout the State. In this capacity, I worked closely with the Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee in developing priorities for the grant, the development of the Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan, and the development of the grant's application, which was recommended as a best practice by a peer reviewed panel convened by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. In July 1, 2008, I was appointed as the Assistant Deputy Director of Interoperability for GOHSEP. By legislation, my current position also serves as the Chairman of the Statewide Interoperable Executive Committee. I also represent GOHSEP on the State's GIS Council where I previously served two years as the Vice Chair. I am currently a Major in the Louisiana National Guard where I am assigned to the J-6 in the State's Joint Forces Headquarters. I am a recipient of the Bronze Star and a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom where I commanded an Infantry company in Baghdad, Iraq. ■

## Statewide-NECP Alignment

As featured in the March 2009 SWIC Newsletter, the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) identified eight National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) milestones with recommended actions applicable to the States and territories. OEC will continue in each newsletter to detail the support it provides to implement the milestones. The next two milestones are highlighted in the table below. For more information about the NECP or OEC, please contact OEC at [OEC@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:OEC@hq.dhs.gov).

### NECP Initiative 1.3: Strategic and Tactical Planning Milestone:

- *By 7/31/09, tactical planning among Federal, State, local, and tribal governments occurs at the regional interstate level.*

### NECP Initiative 3.2: Implementation of the National Incident Management System and the National Response Framework Milestone:

- *By 7/31/09, all Federal, State, local, and tribal emergency response providers within Urban Area Security Initiative jurisdictions have implemented the Communications and Information Management section of the NIMS.*

### How OEC Can Help:

- *OEC will provide outreach and technical assistance to enhance regional interstate tactical planning.*
- *OEC will collect and share template standard operating procedures with States.*
- *In coordination with Federal Emergency Management Agency, coordinate tactical planning through the Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups.*
- *OEC offers Communication Unit Leader (COML) training nationwide.*
- *OEC will develop and offer other Communication Unit training.*
- *OEC will recommend the alignment of emergency communications grant policy to support implementation of the NECP. ■*

### “National Conference” from page 1

In addition, State and local emergency response officials had the opportunity to provide examples of ongoing challenges and successes related to emergency communications interoperability. The conference provided a forum for attendees to provide input on current and future U.S. Department of Homeland Security initiatives and discuss best practices and lessons learned for operable and interoperable emergency communications. Conference outcomes included the following:

- Engaged conference participants with Federal officials to collect input on technical and operational initiatives to better support nationwide interoperability
- Implemented social media tools, including Twitter, to interface with the emergency response community and the public
- Clarified rules, regulations, and decision making process for State, local, territorial, and tribal communities to secure grant funding
- Identified partnering opportunities for emergency responders to work closer together to implement the NECP's goals and objectives

“In these uncertain times and limited resources focus is essential,” said Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) Director Chris Essid in his closing remarks, “It is clear to me that wringing out the inefficiencies at the Federal level is a priority of this Administration and of all the Federal staff in this room today. We can do better and we will do better. We now emerge with a national focus poised to produce extraordinary results.”

For more information on OEC and the National Conference on Emergency Communications, please visit [www.DHS.gov](http://www.DHS.gov) keyword OEC or <http://www.nationalecconference.com/>. ■

## The Importance of a Full-time SWIC

The Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) strongly recommends that States establish a full-time Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC). The position of a SWIC is a fundamental component for successful statewide communications interoperability governance systems and coordination efforts. The SWIC and his/her staff are key players in statewide communications interoperability, and the position serves as the cornerstone of the State's coordination efforts.

While governance committees provide the needed guidance and input on statewide activities, there is a need for a point of accountability to manage the complex and time consuming process of maintaining and implementing the Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) and aligning the SCIP to the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP). The SWIC is essential to fulfilling this crucial role.

The SWIC is intended to be responsible for the daily operations of the State's interoperability efforts. Primarily, the SWIC's implementation efforts will be guided by the initiatives outlined in the SCIP and NECP. As implementation proceeds, the SWIC seeks guidance, input, and recommendations from the joint efforts of the statewide interoperability governing body, State agencies, and regional governance entities. The SWIC's duties involve coordinating interoperability and communications projects, maintaining governance, and assembling working groups to develop and implement key recommendations. Specifically, the SWIC should address outreach, SCIP program management, grants coordination, policy development, and measurement. Simply put, the SWIC serves as the liaison and primary point of contact for Statewide Interoperable Communications efforts.

For more information on the importance of a full-time SWIC and how this position fits into the statewide governance system, please refer to the guide titled *Establishing Governance to Achieve Statewide Communications Interoperability: A Guide for SCIP Implementation*, which is located [here](#). ■

## OEC Staff Spotlight



### Robert Rhoads

Robert "Dusty" Rhoads joined the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) in December 2008 as a Telecommunications Specialist for OEC's Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach team within OEC's Multi-Jurisdictional Communications Services Division. In this capacity, Dusty works directly with the Statewide Interoperability Coordinators from all 56 States and territories; the Metropolitan Area Working Group; the National Governors Association's and the National Association of Counties' Policy Academies; and supports State, local, and tribal stakeholder engagement and outreach initiatives. Prior to joining OEC, Dusty served 33 years in the fire service and retired in December 2008 as a Battalion Fire Chief in the Fairfax County, VA Fire and Rescue Department. During his tenure in Fairfax County, he managed emergency incidents involving single or multiple jurisdictions including multi-alarm fires, hazardous materials incidents, multi-casualty incidents, and swift water rescues. He also developed and supported regional efforts to improve communications and response, and served as a uniformed fire supervisor in the Public Safety Communications Center. Dusty also worked for 11 years in the private sector, integrating,

testing, and demonstrating situational awareness and incident management applications over wireless networks.



### Richard Reed

Richard "Rich" Reed joined the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) in December 2008 as the Director of Technical Assistance Services within OEC's Multi-Jurisdictional Communications Services Division. In this capacity, Rich manages direct technical assistance for State, local, territorial, and tribal public safety agencies. Prior to joining OEC, Rich was the Director of Systems Integration for MorganFranklin Corporation from July 2004 to December 2008. Rich brings more than 21 years of experience in communications and has an extensive background in Land Mobile Radio and satellite communications installation and repair. Prior to his work at MorganFranklin, Rich served as the Director of Systems Integration at the White House Communications Agency where he built a division of engineers, technicians, and project managers that supported the White House; National Security Council; and other Federal, State, and local entities in solving complex communications challenges with technology integration and process engineering. He began his career as a Navy Electronics Technician maintaining radio and radar systems aboard the USS Fahrion. ■

### "chris" from page 1

All of us at OEC appreciated how much you and the other participants shared your successes and challenges in both plenary and breakout sessions. We hope that you were able to connect with your peers over common challenges and benefited from each other's expertise and experience.

Looking ahead, I am excited to see you at the next SWIC meeting on June 24-26 in San Diego. The meeting, again held in partnership with the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices, is an opportunity to build on our discussions from both last month's National Conference and our first SWIC gathering held last December in Orlando. We look forward to an exciting meeting focused on the issues most relevant to the statewide interoperability effort.

In this issue of the SWIC Newsletter, look for articles focused on aligning with the National Emergency Communications Plan, the benefits to having a full-time SWIC position and diverse representation on statewide interoperability governing bodies, and recent developments with OEC's technical assistance offerings. Also look for three new SWIC bios in the Meet the Coordinators section. As always, I hope that you will find this newsletter helpful and informative and I welcome your feedback and suggestions for future issues. ■

## Calendar

May

13-15

2009 US-Canada  
Cross-Border  
Interoperable  
Communications  
Workshop  
– Niagara Falls, NY

June

2-4

COML Type III  
Training  
– Albuquerque, NM

2-4

COML Type III  
Training  
– Milton, MA

23-25

COML Type III  
Training  
– Pearl, MS

24-26

SWIC Meeting  
– San Diego, CA

## The Importance of Multi-Jurisdictional, Multi-Disciplinary Representation in State SIGBs

In order to achieve interoperable communications between all potential responders to an incident, it is important that States develop a statewide governance system that incorporates and respects the input of the Federal, State, regional, local, and tribal practitioner communities. Statewide buy-in is instrumental in the success and sustainability of both the governance structure and communications interoperability as a whole. For this to take place, the structure cannot be top-down or exclusive, but instead must be collaborative and inclusive of all stakeholders.

Key elements that are recommended in the overall design of a statewide governance system include working from the bottom up and actively engaging stakeholders. A successful program relies heavily on State and local emergency response practitioners for input and guidance as it works to define and implement interoperability solutions. The governance system should represent the full range of emergency response interests that are affected by communications interoperability. This helps ensure that solutions address community needs and incorporate diverse perspectives.

Specifically, the statewide interoperability governing body (SIGB), which serves as the primary steering group for the statewide interoperability effort, must have multi-jurisdictional, multi-disciplinary representation. The SIGB should consist of member organizations representing Federal, State, regional, local, tribal, and relevant association/non-governmental interests. Recommended participation includes State government, State associations, State agencies, interstate regional representation, tribal nations, Federal government, non-governmental organizations, public works, bordering States, State associations representing hospitals and public health organizations, and private industry.

For more information on the importance of multi-jurisdictional, multi-disciplinary representation in State SIGBs, please refer to the guide titled *Establishing Governance to Achieve Statewide Communications Interoperability: A Guide for SCIP Implementation*, which is located [here](#). ■

## Policy and Grants

On April 8, 2009, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced final allocations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 Preparedness Grants, including \$48.6 million for the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program (IECGP). IECGP provides funding for planning, training, exercise, and equipment to State, local, territorial, and tribal governments to carry out initiatives identified in Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans (SCIPs) and improve interoperable emergency communications for responding to natural disasters and acts of terrorism.

To date, IECGP has provided \$97.2 million for State, local, territorial, and tribal governments to address initiatives identified in SCIPs. Statewide Interoperability Coordinators play a unique role in this grant program as it requires the State Administrative Agencies to coordinate with them in proposing projects and meeting program requirements.

Per the FY 2009 IECGP guidance, States and territories are required to submit annual reports to the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) on progress in implementing their respective SCIP. Each State and territory will be asked to update its SCIP Implementation Report by July 30, 2009. Further guidance will be released by OEC in the coming weeks.

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

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

## Technical Assistance Underway Across States/Territories

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) improved the process used to align technical assistance (TA) to needs identified by the States and territories as they work to address nationwide priorities contained in the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP). States and territories had the opportunity to submit TA requests for OEC support based on their needs and local priorities. To ensure that TA was targeted to support each State's overall strategy for improving emergency communications, all TA requests were required to address Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) initiatives.

To date 54 States and territories have submitted FY 2009 TA Forms – representing a total of 238 individual TA requests. These requests breakdown by service area as follows:

- 91 requests (38%) for Governance and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)
- 88 requests (37%) for Training and Exercises
- 59 requests (25%) for Technical and Engineering Support

Due to limited availability of resources, requests were prioritized using multiple factors including the ranking provided by the State, impact on the SCIP, and impact on the NECP. Although OEC is not able to support all of these requests in FY09, OEC has ensured that technical assistance is underway in every State and territory that requested support.

In late summer 2009, States will have an opportunity to update their request for the upcoming fiscal year (FY 2010). States will receive their current prioritized list of pending TA requests and will have the opportunity to remove and/or re-prioritize current requests and/or add new TA requests. Requests received prior to this periodic review will be sent to the State coordinators for consideration during the upcoming review period.

For more information regarding specific TA offerings, the TA Catalog is available [here](#). ■

# SCIP Corner



## Striving for Success

Between October 2008 and June 2009, 49 States and territories will have held Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan Implementation Workshops. Through the SCIP Implementation Workshop initiative, the Office of Emergency Communications is focusing on supporting and facilitating the process of SCIP implementation. OEC, along with the States and territories, continue to strive for success in these workshops and in the implementation process.

**What does success look like for the States and territories in regards to the SCIP Implementation Workshops?** Each State and territory determines their specific priorities and desired outcomes for a successful workshop. Examples of topics that have been identified to achieve those outcomes include SCIP review and updates; governance planning, such as developing governance charters and improving governance structures; SCIP alignment to the National Emergency Communications Plan; technology planning; and standard operating procedure development.

**What does success look like for OEC in regards to SCIP Implementation Workshops?** The success for OEC is based on the successes of the States and territories. In planning for each workshop, OEC holds interviews to determine what success would look like for that particular State or territory and designs the workshop to attain those outcomes. These workshops provide an opportunity for OEC to learn first hand about the challenges that face each State or territory and to provide services that are needed to work toward solving those challenges. OEC also strives to inform practitioners about its resources and initiatives, and how they impact the States and territories and their SCIPs.

There were a few workshops in March that focused on unique topics. These two workshops were held with the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

### **Kentucky SCIP Implementation Workshop: Successful Funding Strategies**

The Kentucky workshop focused on developing funding strategies for their top priority SCIP initiatives. Once priority

initiatives were decided upon, participants discussed and determined sustainable funding strategies to support the implementation of each initiative.

*"The SCIP Workshop was one of the best facilitated working sessions in my history with the Kentucky Wireless Interoperability Executive Committee. The agenda, pace, and guidance from OEC staff was perfect, which resulted in well documented outcomes and next steps for our committee as we moved forward with implementing our communications objectives."*

– Mary Pedersen, Chief Information Officer, Office of the Governor, Kentucky Office of Homeland Security

### **Virginia SCIP Implementation Workshop: Measuring Implementation Success**

The Virginia workshop focused on establishing performance metrics for SCIP Implementation. Participants brainstormed measures of success for the implementation of each initiative. Then, all of the initiatives were prioritized and assigned owners and timelines.

*"The Workshop was a great success for the Commonwealth! With the facilitation and guidance from the OEC team, we had the opportunity to get the Executive Committee members together to develop action plans for several of the Commonwealth's large initiatives so that we now have a clear path moving forward."*

– Constance McGeorge, Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator, Office of the Governor, Office of Commonwealth Preparedness

Although the final date for States and territories to request a workshop was March 27, if you were not able to hold a workshop, but are still interested in having an OEC Federal Representative visit your State or territory, or to learn more about OEC and its key initiatives, please contact OEC at [OEC@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:OEC@hq.dhs.gov). If you have any feedback on your experience with the workshops, please share it with OEC in order to inform future technical assistance and workshops. ■

## 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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