

Statewide Interoperability Coordinators Newsletter

volume five, july 2009



A Note from Chris Essid



As we mark the one-year anniversary of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) on July 31st, the Office of Emergency Communications is taking stock of our progress toward NECP implementation and renewing its commitment to achieving the Plan's goals and milestones. As we do this, we are reminded of the importance of partnerships to see success.

At last month's Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWIC) meeting, I emphasized the importance of taking a bottom up, stakeholder driven approach to the work of improving statewide and nationwide interoperability. Especially in this time of economic uncertainty, collaboration and teamwork are more important than ever to ensure that resources are maximized.

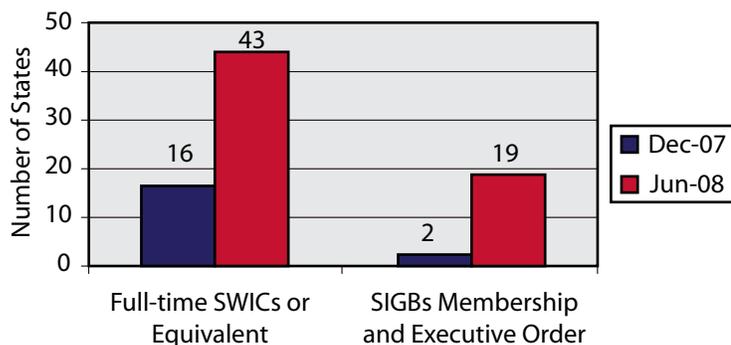
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States and Territories Make Progress in NECP Implementation

By July 31, 2009 the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) recommends States and territories to:

- Establish a full-time statewide interoperability coordinator (SWIC) or equivalent position.
- Incorporate the recommended membership (including representation from all levels of government; all regions within the State or territory; and police, fire, and emergency medical services) into the Statewide Interoperability Governing Body (SIGB) and establish the SIGB via legislation or executive order.

The chart below shows the progress States and territories have made in implementing these two important milestones since the submission of their Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans in December 2007.



For States and territories still working toward implementing these two milestones, Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) support is available through technical assistance. In addition, governance subject matter experts (SMEs) are available to discuss your current situation and provide recommendations to meet these milestones. You can request a phone conversation with a SME by contacting Amanda Musser at Amanda.Musser@dhs.gov. ■

Second SWIC Meeting Fosters Partnerships and Support

The second gathering of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWICs), held June 24-26 in San Diego, California, was attended by representatives from 48 States and territories. Thirty-nine of the States and territories had one or two additional representatives at the meeting, allowing SWICs to build support for their work with important stakeholders from their State or territory. The meeting, once again hosted by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices 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.

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Meet the Coordinators



New Jersey – Jody Nestor

*New Jersey Interoperability Coordinator
Office of Information Technology*

After 26 years in the private sector and directing 4,400 personnel with a half billion dollar budget, I opted to retire and care for an ailing parent. Following good rehabilitation and recovery, it was time to adjust and “enjoy” this new lifestyle with some temporary work with the State of New Jersey. That was five years ago and temporary has changed to a new career in public service. Providing human resource management support to the Office of the Attorney General gave me the opportunity to develop the State's Interoperability Plan as an assistant to the Chief Public Safety Communication's Officer. In 2007 through legislative changes and program placement I was assigned to the Office of Emergency Telecommunication Services (NJ-OIT) as the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator. This was “quickly” followed with becoming a member of the New Jersey Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Interoperability subcommittee, Interim Vice Chair of the Federal Communications Commission Region 28 700 megahertz Planning Committee, member of their Technical Committee, and then elected Secretary/Treasurer. The word “yes” in public service communication seems to be a given.

Managing the research, reading, and writing of grant proposals and awards; providing justifications; working on vendor contracts and procurements; and planning, planning, and planning would elevate my learning curve as well as my organizational cultural awareness. As we all can relate, the human side of interoperable communications can be greater than our technology challenges. Both micro and macro collaborations may be the energy drainers, yet they are the necessary successes that build our vital partnerships. In New Jersey I find myself committed to balancing the UASI Region projects with the State and local interoperability funding plans.

New Jersey depends on the Counties Interoperability Working Groups, State Police, Emergency Management, the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Office of the Attorney General, and the Office of Information Technology to partner for citizen safety. I am excited to be involved in this modern paradigm of communication, interoperating with technology and people. Lastly, where would we be without that work/life balance in maintaining our stresses with family and fun, I make time to utilize my certifications in ski instruction and floral design to attain that goal. ■



Washington – Alan Komenski

*SIEC Project Manager/Washington State Interoperability Coordinator
Washington State Patrol*

I currently serve as the State Interoperable Executive Committee (SIEC) Project Manager with the Washington State Patrol, the lead agency for interoperability in Washington State. In that capacity, I function as the State's Interoperability Coordinator and one of only two full-time employees in the State dedicated specifically to our interoperability efforts. I have been working in the emergency communications field for 37 years, mainly in the capacity of director of regional 9-1-1 communications centers in Rochester, New York, Ramsey County (St. Paul), Minnesota, and Bellevue, Washington.

I have been in my current position with the Washington State Patrol since January 2008, after having served as a member of our SIEC for five years, representing the Association of Washington Cities. My interest in enhancing interoperability had roots long before my service on the SIEC in working on many “regional” radio projects where making interoperability happen was all about the agreements we could put into place. When I got started, technology rarely supported more than swapping radios, connecting two repeaters together, or providing radio console patches.

I am a past chairman of Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO's) Automation Committee and of APCO's Data Transfer Committee where in addition to long standing interest in voice interoperability, my activities have included efforts to achieve interoperability standards for the exchange of data between disparate computer aided dispatch systems and for the delivery of emergency alarm information to communications centers through standards based data interfaces. That experience included service as a member on the Network Reliability & Interoperability Council (NRIC) Cyber Security Sub-committee and with the Integrated Justice Information Systems (IJIS) Institute as a member of the Public Safety Technical Standards Committee.

Washington has chosen a “system of systems” approach to statewide interoperability. We very much strive for interoperability to be a “statewide” effort rather than a “state-centric” effort and, to that end, our outreach efforts to local jurisdictions and stakeholders is paramount in moving the regions of our State and, the State as a whole, further down the Interoperability Continuum. Key to our future success will be the leveraging of both State and local planning, system development, and governance efforts so that they provide interoperability in a complimentary and cost effective manner and based on performance measures that demonstrate the effectiveness of our efforts and progress in obtaining the highest levels of interoperability that are both achievable and appropriate for each region throughout the State, with our neighboring States, and with our Canadian public safety partners. ■

Updated SCIP Implementation Reports Due 7/30

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program (IECGP) requires States and territories to report progress to the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) on Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) implementation through the SCIP Implementation Report.

In 2008, OEC worked with the States and territories to prepare a SCIP Implementation Report based on a comprehensive review of the State's respective SCIP. These reports describe the current status of interoperable communications across the five lanes of the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum to include capabilities, interoperability gaps, and strategic initiatives to address the gaps.

Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWICs) and SCIP points of contact are required to update the report by July 30th to ensure it reflects current status of its SCIP implementation efforts. The updates should reflect progress in implementing initiatives. It should also reflect any changes made to the SCIP in the past year, such as changes to initiatives and/or the addition of new initiatives. Detailed instructions on updating the report were provided by OEC to the SWICs on June 22nd.

OEC recommends that SWICs coordinate the review of the report with the statewide governing body and other relevant stakeholders as appropriate. These governance structures are essential to strengthening the partnerships required to address interoperable communications and achieve buy-in to the SCIPs.

Following completion of the update, States are encouraged to share these reports with stakeholders, such as elected officials, to increase awareness of their statewide efforts. OEC will use the successes and challenges identified in the reports to update Congress. This process will also enable OEC to more effectively align its resources and programs and continue to measure progress within each State and territory. Questions regarding this requirement can be sent to OEC@hq.dhs.gov. ■

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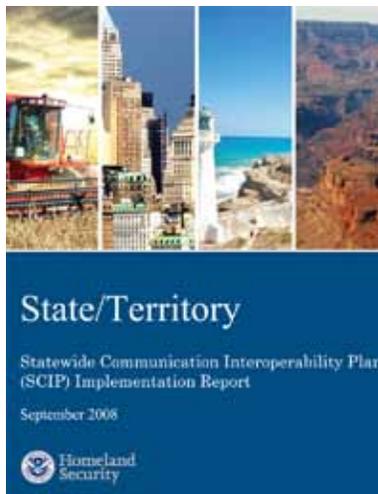
As a former SWIC for the Commonwealth of Virginia, I am proud and excited to see the number of SWICs grow. I encourage you to reach out to each other for support, building the human connections to advance our collective mission of interoperability. This growing community can also provide support to States and territories that are still making the case for a full-time coordinator position. As I like to say, the job of a SWIC is to stick your nose in other peoples' business, to knock down walls that stop people from coordinating, and to build bridges to increase partnerships.

For those of you not able to attend last month's meeting, look for an overview of our discussions on the first page of this newsletter. You will also find valuable stories from your SWIC counterparts in the "Meet the Coordinators" section on page 2.

As always, I hope that you will find this newsletter helpful and informative, and I look forward to continuing our work together. ■

NACo Accepting Applications for September Interoperability Policy Forum

The National Association of Counties (NACo), in partnership with the National League of Cities (NLC) and the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), will host its second of two Interoperability Policy Forums on September 24-25 in Phoenix, Arizona. The forum will cover a range of interoperability issues including overviews of the Interoperability Continuum and the National Emergency Communications Plan, examples of successful regional and local interoperability coordination, tips on securing interoperability funding, and considerations when evaluating and purchasing new equipment. The forums are open to two-to-three person teams composed of representatives from cities and at least one county. Team members must be from member cities of the NLC or member counties of NACo. In addition, the teams must reflect multiple disciplines (such as emergency management, fire, law enforcement, public health, transportation, etc.) and have at least one publicly elected official in a governing position. An optional fourth team member can be someone who has responsibility for development and coordination of the Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan. Most travel costs will be covered by NACo. NACo Policy Forum Applications are due on August 4th. To learn more, visit <http://www.naco.org/interop> or contact Rocky Lopes at ropes@naco.org. ■



OEC Staff Spotlight



John E. Peterson

John joined the Federal staff of the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) in January 2009 as a Telecommunications Specialist for OEC's Multi-Jurisdictional Communications Services (MCS). He has a long career dealing with day-to-day operational and emergency communications for the military, the Federal government and for public safety organizations. In brief, his experience includes positions as a Communications Electronic Staff Officer (US Army 1978-1988), a Telecommunications Specialist for National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) (1988-2001) and then worked for Thompson, Ramo, Wooldridge (TRW) (2001-2003) working with land mobile radio and radio trunking systems. Just prior to joining OEC, John held the contractor Program Managers' position for the National Communications System (NCS) SHARED RESOURCES (SHARES) Emergency High Frequency (HF) Radio Network (2004-2008) which is the largest Federal government emergency radio network in the United States today. In OEC he oversees the technical assistance requests and OEC engagements provided to Regions VI and VII. John has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Telecommunications from the University of Nebraska. He has been a licensed amateur radio operator for the past 25+ years; most of that time being involved with emergency auxiliary HF/Very High Frequency (VHF) communications. In his spare time

John is involved with emergency auxiliary communications with various volunteer groups around the country. If you're interested in contacting John, he can be reached at 703-235-5479 or john.e.peterson@dhs.gov.



Amanda Musser

Amanda joined the Federal staff of the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) earlier this month as a Telecommunications Specialist for OEC's Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach team. Amanda had been supporting OEC as a Senior Consultant with Touchstone Consulting Group since September 2007. In that capacity, she supported the Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) peer review process, development of the SCIP Implementation Reports, and execution of the SCIP Implementation Workshops. While working for Touchstone Amanda also provided support to the Metro-Boston Homeland Security Region in implementing their Five-Year Strategic Plan for Communications Interoperability and to the Office of Management and Budget in managing the government-to-government portfolio which included the SAFECOM program. Amanda holds a Bachelor of Science in Finance from the Pennsylvania State University. She is Six Sigma green belt certified and recently received the Project Management Professional (PMP) certification. Amanda can be reached at (703) 235-5801 or amanda.musser@dhs.gov. ■

Calendar

July

Communications Unit Leader Training Course

- 14-16** – Agawam, MA
– Columbia, SC
- 21-23** – Anchorage, AK
- 28-30** – Pelham, AL
- 29-31** – Westchester, NY
- 20-21** NGA Policy Academy on Governance
– Minneapolis, MN
- 30** SCIP Implementation Reports Due

August

- 4** NACo Policy Forum Applications Due
- Communications Unit Leader Training Course - Train the Trainer**
- 5** – Indianapolis, IN
- 17** – Los Angeles, CA

Communications Unit Leader Training Course

- 11-13** – Concord, NH
- 21-23** – Seattle, WA

September

- 3** Technical Assistance Requests Due
- 24-25** NACo Interoperability Policy Forum
– Phoenix, AZ

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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U.S.-Canada Cross Border Interoperable Communications Workshop

On May 13 – 15, 2009, the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) and Public Safety Canada (PS Canada) hosted the first U.S.-Canada Cross Border Interoperable Communications Workshop. This event brought together public safety communications practitioners, and policymakers from both the U.S. and Canada to Niagara Falls, New York, to discuss enhancing interoperable communications on and along the common border.

OEC and PS Canada organized the workshop as an opportunity for participants to identify existing gaps in cross border public safety communications and to develop solutions for enhancing interoperable communications capabilities. More than 150 participants, including Statewide Interoperability Coordinators and representatives from States along the U.S. northern border, contributed to three days of discussions and presentations. This included in-depth break out sessions on the issues of spectrum coordination, air and marine interoperability, and administrative and operational solutions to interoperable wireless communications.

One of the several plenary sessions focused on challenges State and local governments face in establishing statewide interoperability while adhering to laws and regulations within the coordination zone. Such restrictions can contribute to the already daunting challenge of developing and implementing systems, plans, and governance structures at the State level. Terry LaValley from the Vermont Department of Public Safety and Scott Bradford from the Montana Department of Administration shared some of their experiences in tackling these challenges and in maximizing the use of available resources to establish operability and interoperability.

Later this summer, OEC and PS Canada will release a summary of proceedings documenting the more than 20 potential best practices and 30 follow-on action items identified at the workshop. This includes a number of commitments by Federal leadership in attendance for expanding support for these efforts further into the emergency communications community and with other government leaders. Because of the warm reception and overwhelming praise to OEC and PS Canada for hosting such a forum, a second workshop is planned for the fall of 2010 in Canada to measure progress toward goals established in Niagara Falls and address additional challenges.

For more information on the workshop, email OEC@dhs.gov. ■

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The 112 participants learned about Federal funding opportunities and successful State partnerships with Federal agencies, shared best practices related to stakeholder outreach and engagement, discussed the National Emergency Communications Plan's (NECP) goals and new after-incident reporting tool related to the NECP goals, and met with their Federal Emergency Management Agency regional counterparts.

The attendees overwhelmingly encouraged OEC to provide continued support for the group to meet in the future. The third SWIC meeting will be held in the late fall or early winter. To be a member of the planning committee for the next meeting, please contact Amanda Musser at OEC at Amanda.Musser@dhs.gov. ■

PSIC Grant Program Establishes Assistance Efforts

States and territories are currently implementing investments funded under the Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) grant program. PSIC grants will enable the 56 States and territories to make meaningful and measureable improvements in emergency interoperable communications and to fill gaps identified in the Statewide Communication Interoperable Plans (SCIP). The PSIC assistance program will help ensure that States and territories effectively implement PSIC investments and comply with programmatic requirements.

Although assistance will be tailored to each State or territory's individual needs, it will provide ongoing support through several coordinated service offerings, including:

- Project Management Templates and Best Practices
- Understanding Grant Requirements
- System Engineering Support
- Planning and Operations Support
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Review

Requesting Assistance

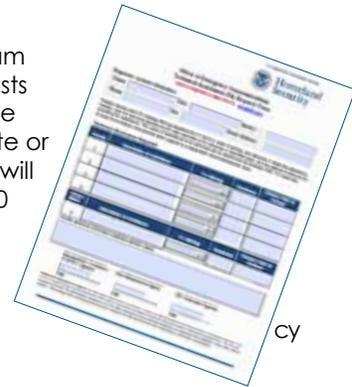
Assistance can be requested by completing the Technical Assistance Request Form. Completed request forms should be returned via email to FEMA-TARequest@fema.gov, and all requests, including support for sub-grantees, must be submitted by the State Administrative Agency (SAA).

For a more detailed list of the PSIC service offerings, please see the Grant Programs Directorate Information Bulletin No. 313 located at <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/government/grant/bulletins/info313.pdf>. For any additional questions regarding PSIC assistance, grantees can email PSIC@dhs.gov. ■

If you would like to contribute articles for upcoming SWIC Newsletters to highlight innovative practices in your State or territory, please contact OEC at OEC@hq.dhs.gov

OEC's 2010 TA Program Request Due 9/3

The response to the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) Technical Assistance (TA) program in 2009 was overwhelming, with 55 of the 56 States and territories participating. While not all requests could be supported due to budget constraints, OEC was able to provide TA offerings to every State and territory requesting support. OEC will be offering States and territories an opportunity to update or make additional TA requests for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010. During August 2009, each State and territory will receive its current prioritized list of pending TA requests, a revised TA Request Form, and the FY 2010 TA Catalog.



OEC has expanded the TA Catalog for FY 2010 to provide newly developed offerings, including regional Field Operations Guides, Information Assurance, and Data System Support. In addition, Federal agency support has been integrated into the catalog, and a Federal agency request form has been added.

States and territories will have the opportunity to re-prioritize current requests and add new TA requests from the offerings in the TA Catalog. States and territories should list their 2010 requests in priority order on the TA Request Form. OEC encourages States and territories to use their updated SCIP Implementation Report and regional TA Point of Contact (POC) as a source for identifying their TA needs for 2010. Each TA request should include a short description of the assistance needed, the type of assistance (i.e. the TA Catalog item), the desired timeframe for providing the assistance, and the State's POC responsible for coordinating the TA. All TA requests must align to a Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) initiative; however, States and territories will no longer be required to identify the specific SCIP goal that aligns with the TA request. States and territories may submit up to five TA requests, with at least one request for direct support to a designated urban/metropolitan area. All requests submitted by States and territories must be signed by their respective Statewide Interoperability Coordinator or SCIP POC and the State Administrative Agency.

OEC looks forward to building upon the success of the 2009 TA Program by continuing to provide technical assistance that will enhance interoperability capabilities and promote achievement of the National Emergency Communications Plan goals.

You may direct any questions regarding OEC's 2010 TA Program to OEC@dhs.gov or by contacting your Regional TA POC at:

Name	FEMA Region	Email	Phone
Kevin Baggett	Regions I and II	kevin.baggett@dhs.gov	703-235-5685
Ken Born	Regions III and IV	kenneth.born@dhs.gov	703-235-5673
Dick Tenney	Regions V and VIII	richard.tenney@dhs.gov	703-235-5873
John Peterson	Regions VI and VII	john.e.peterson@dhs.gov	703-235-5479
Ross Merlin	Regions IX and X	ross.merlin@dhs.gov	703-235-5305

For more information regarding the new prioritized TA offerings, the complete TA Catalog is available at http://www.safe-comprogram.gov/SAFECOM/library/interoperabilitybasics/1384_oectechnical.htm.

All completed and prioritized FY 2010 TA Request Forms must be submitted to oec@dhs.gov by no later than September 3, 2009. ■

SCIP Corner



First Round of SCIP Implementation Workshops Completed

Last month, the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) completed the last Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) Implementation Workshop for this fiscal year. OEC executed workshops with 49 of the 56 States and territories, and engaged more than 1,300 stakeholders. The majority of the workshops focused on enhancing governance structures to support SCIP implementation, updating SCIP initiatives, and developing detailed plans for SCIP initiative implementation. OEC learned that great progress is being made in implementing the SCIPs; however, much work remains to be done.

In the coming months, OEC will plan for a second round of SCIP Implementation Workshops to be delivered in 2010. As such, OEC welcomes your feedback on the first round – including both what worked well and what should be done differently in the second round. Please send your feedback to Amanda Musser at Amanda.Musser@dhs.gov. OEC will provide more detail on the next round of workshops this fall. ■