



## Homeland Security

## Midwest Floods: Successes and Lessons

“These floods highlighted the fact that we need to allocate our time and resources to training.”

Torrential rains pounded the Midwestern United States during the first half of June 2008 causing disastrous flooding across the region. Flooding caused dams to fail, rising waters swept cars away, hospitals were evacuated, and Interstates were shut down. Indiana and Illinois were particularly hard-hit by the storms. At least 44 counties in Indiana and 40 counties in Illinois were declared Federal disaster areas. Sophisticated radio systems, leadership, and training programs helped the States successfully respond to the emergency; while learning some important lessons in the process that will help both States respond more effectively in the future.

### Indiana Realizes Importance of Training

On June 4, 2008, rain waters began soaking areas of south-central Indiana, leading to initial floods around Bloomington. Later that week, Columbus was hit hard by rising flood waters. When the Bloomington Police Department came to assist, the Columbus police department reprogrammed its radio system to allow Bloomington’s emergency responders to seamlessly operate on the same channels, enabling the two cities to communicate almost immediately.

Before the storms hit, Indiana had recently begun implementation of a new radio system. Indiana’s plans to get a border-to-border system in operation, detailed in its Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP), included county communications plans. The SCIP also sought to strengthen the State’s basic infrastructure by adding more repeater sites and radios, eliminating incompatible systems. Indiana emergency responders developed training initiatives including a Web-based training and certification program.

With little time between the completion of the SCIP and the floods, not all of the training planned for in the SCIP had yet occurred. However, since Indiana officials developed the SCIP training programs with disaster preparedness as a priority, the basic plan for a successful

response was ready. The plan aided in the response to the floods, though more training for responders prior to the incident would have been helpful.

Sally Fay, Communications Director for the Integrated Public Safety Commission/Project Hoosier SAFE-T, says “Some users were unfamiliar with the need to limit activity, but we had the right system in place.”

Indiana plans to take full advantage of the new training programs in coming months. The new training programs will address the gaps and capabilities identified during the flood response. “These floods highlighted the fact that we need to allocate our time and resources to training,” said Fay. Indiana officials expect to complete the Web-based training program in July 2009. Regional inter-agency, cross-discipline exercise planning is ongoing.

### Radio Equipment Passes Test in Illinois

During its response to the floods, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) used a digital trunked radio network system capable of providing statewide coverage. According to Steve Jackson, Communications Unit Leader (COML) for IEMA, Starcom21 allowed emergency responders to “divide work groups into separate talk group configurations while providing a common platform for interoperability.”

“The system handled the loading wonderfully; there were a few system busies, but callbacks came immediately,” says Jackson. “Even experienced emergency managers who have been in this business all their lives were just simply blown away by the coverage and capabilities,” he continued.

Although the system performed well, Jackson noted that Illinois is considering steps to improve response efforts. “We are looking to equip the Sites on Wheels



A home that was inundated by the floods.

(SOW) with backhauls,” he says. This process will make the SOWs more valuable than the stand-alone site trunk. Illinois is also considering ways to link systems on both sides of the Mississippi River to create a large, cohesive coverage pattern.

### Lessons Learned

Officials from Indiana and Illinois learned lessons from the flood response. Fay notes that dispatchers do not always have the sufficient training to handle such a high volume of incoming calls. Instead of just using repeaters, it was necessary to switch to the talk-around system to improve interoperability.

Jackson advises to reach out sooner to other areas. “Go looking for communication difficulties that exist within your assigned area, hopefully solving problems proactively,” he says.

Indiana and Illinois faced unique challenges during the devastating floods in the Midwest. However, their infrastructures, COMLs, and training helped them respond successfully to this emergency. While both States continue to address gaps in their response capabilities, the floods demonstrated the progress they have already made toward moving emergency communications forward.

For more information on the Indiana response contact Sally Fay, Communications Director, Integrated Public Safety Commission/Project Hoosier/SAFE-T at sfay@ips.IN.gov.

For more information on the Illinois response, contact Steve Jackson, COML, IEMA at Stephen.Jackson@Illinois.gov.

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## About

# EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS QUARTERLY

The US Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) supports and promotes the ability of government officials and emergency responders to communicate in the event of natural disasters, acts of terrorism, or other man-made disasters, and works to ensure, accelerate, and attain interoperable and operable emergency communications nationwide.

OEC is a component of the Office of Cybersecurity and Communications (CS&C) within DHS's National Protection and Programs Directorate. CS&C is responsible for the overarching mission to prepare for and respond to incidents that could degrade or overwhelm the operation of our Nation's information technology and communications infrastructure. This mission is part of the larger DHS strategy to ensure the security, integrity, reliability, and availability of our information and communications networks.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS QUARTERLY's mission is to provide the emergency response community, policy makers, and Federal, State, local, and tribal officials with information about the latest in emergency communications nationwide, including current and upcoming OEC initiatives; stories from our partners and from the field; and best practices and lessons learned.

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## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

### From Paper to Reality:

#### Implementing the National Emergency Communications Plan

In the last issue of the EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS QUARTERLY (ECQ) I announced, on behalf of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), the release of the first-ever National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP). As explained, the NECP is a strategic plan that sets national goals and objectives for improving interoperability, operability, and continuity of communications for Federal, State, local, and tribal emergency responders.

The completion of this "capstone" plan was a momentous step forward on the road to enhancing emergency communications. However, we all know that a plan is just a piece of paper unless—through commitment, hard work, and perseverance—it is made into reality. Immediately following the submission of the NECP to Congress this past July, OEC set out to begin implementation.

Since July, OEC has aligned its efforts to the NECP's goals, objectives, initiatives, and milestones. The NECP is the framework for many of our current programs and will guide future initiatives and priorities. Additionally, we worked to allocate our financial and human resources to focus on achieving the vision of the NECP.

Our commitment to this plan, in large part, comes from our confidence that it reflects the gaps and solutions identified by emergency responders on the ground. The Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan, national-level after action reports, and input from more than 150 emergency responders from across disciplines and jurisdictions and members of the private sector were used in the development of the NECP. It is not a top-down, Federal plan, but a bottom-up, national plan. Because of the nature of its development, we feel confident in OEC's ability to support the implementation of the NECP.

Ultimately, OEC understands successful implementation of the NECP requires a nationwide, cross-discipline, cross-jurisdictional, intergovernmental effort on behalf of the emergency response community. Just as the NECP was developed through coordination and collaboration, we all have a shared responsibility to implement it. OEC's role is to provide guidance and support and to offer a big-picture, national



**Chris Essid, Director**  
Office of Emergency Communications

perspective to these efforts to enhance emergency communications.

Long before the NECP existed, many of us were already invested in a mission to improve emergency communications. Those efforts are recognized and brought together in the NECP as part of a coordinated nationwide strategy to make measurable improvements to interoperable and operable emergency communications. At OEC, through coordination with our Federal partners and emergency responders from around the country, we have focused on providing Communications Unit Leader (COML) training, technical assistance, SCIP Implementation workshops, and emergency communications grants that align with the NECP, as well as many other programs and initiatives.

In this issue of the ECQ, you will learn more about these efforts. Look for an article on one of our recent COML training courses on Page 5; a story on SCIP Implementation Workshops on Page 7; the latest on the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program (IECGP) on Page 6; and the Emergency Communications Preparedness Center (ECPC) on Page 4. We hope that as you learn more about the NECP's and OEC's vision for emergency communications, you will be inspired to get more involved in our various programs and initiatives. Each article in the ECQ provides a point of contact to obtain more information. We hope to hear from you as we work together to advance nationwide emergency communications.

For more information on the NECP or OEC, contact [oeq@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:oeq@hq.dhs.gov).



## Cincinnati Police Collaborate to Achieve Clear Campus Communications

Managing the safety of college students and the surrounding community can pose unique challenges for emergency responders. The University of Cincinnati has more than 36,000 students, in addition to a large faculty and staff. The students and staff live, drive, shop, and work in the community beyond the campus boundaries, just as the wider community uses the campus and its resources. Fortunately, the University of Cincinnati Police Department and the Cincinnati Police Department created communication channels, coordinated procedures, and formed a relationship that allows the two departments to seamlessly police and serve the area's population.

### A Longstanding Partnership

Until the late 1970s, the University of Cincinnati Police Department was a division of the Cincinnati Police Department. When the school joined the university system of Ohio in 1977, the campus police became a separate department, but the relationship between the two remained. This relationship was enhanced by personal connections. University Police Chief Gene Ferrara was with the Cincinnati Police Department for 17 years before joining the university's department. Captain Mike Neville, Police Communications Section Commander for the Cincinnati Police Department, patrolled a neighborhood near the university early in his career.

The personal bonds and a mutual respect led to a strong working relationship and formal incident response mutual aid agreements. Although the two departments shared a strong working relationship, they realized that they still needed to address interoperable communication issues. Captain Bob Rohrbach handles communications for the University of Cincinnati Police Department. He recalls a time when connecting with the city's dispatch on their radios was not easy. "We could switch over and talk to the city if we needed to, but it was clunky," says Capt. Rohrbach. Likewise, the city's radios could not directly communicate with those of the university's police force.

The system's shortcomings became apparent in February 1997 when an incident occurred that required seamless communications between the city and university police during the pursuit of a patient that had escaped from the university hospital. Capt. Rohrbach says the incident demonstrated the difficulty in cross-communications. "It was hard for an officer in the field to change the channel while chasing someone," says Capt. Rohrbach.

### Clear Lines of Communication

When the Cincinnati Police identified one of the university's residence halls as the ideal location for a new communications tower,

the university allowed them to use the space in exchange for access to the city's communications system. "The deal became, if we could have access to your system, you can put your antenna there for nothing," says Chief Ferrara.

Today, Capt. Neville calls the two radio systems "very compatible and interoperable." Both operate in the 800 megahertz (MHz) frequency, and campus and city police officers can easily access each other's talk groups.

The two departments now have formal memoranda of understanding (MOU) that define the terms under which they share resources. Among other topics, the MOUs address shared use of the city's computer-aided dispatch system, which allows the departments to communicate online through their respective dispatchers.

### Working Together to Strengthen Both Forces

The strong relationship between the two police departments makes each more effective. The two departments hold joint training exercises, which include active shooter drills with a communications element. Also, the city's police officers often attend classes through the university's criminal justice program.

In the case of a crisis similar to the April 2007 Virginia Tech shootings or the February 2008 shootings at Northern Illinois University, the existing relationships and agreements would enable the city police force to immediately assist the university's police department.

Capt. Rohrbach praises Ohio's Hamilton County, which includes Cincinnati, for designing its radio systems with everyone in mind. "When the city lined up its talk routes, the universities were included." When asked how other campus and municipal police departments can improve their working relationship, Capt. Rohrbach acknowledges that they were fortunate to have a strong existing tie, but believes that common goals should be enough to bring other forces together. "Many people lose if you don't have that working relationship," says Capt. Neville.

For more information on the partnership between the University of Cincinnati Police Department and the Cincinnati Police Department, contact Chief Gene Ferrara at [ferrarer@ucmail.uc.edu](mailto:ferrarer@ucmail.uc.edu).

## Campus Shooting

### Training and Exercises Prepare Responders in Northern Illinois

On February 14, 2008, gunfire erupted on Northern Illinois University's (NIU) campus in DeKalb, Illinois. A former student shot and killed five and wounded many others in a lecture hall before taking his own life. As the gunshots echoed around campus, public safety officials from the university and the surrounding city rushed to respond.

"Like most people, we never thought that it would happen in our city," said DeKalb Fire Department Interim Chief Bruce Harrison, "But we were prepared when the unthinkable happened." Within minutes of the shooting, NIU's Department of Public Safety and the DeKalb Police Department responded, as did the DeKalb Fire Department, which provides emergency medical services for the university. Like many public safety departments across the country, these three agencies operate on disparate communications systems. When emergency response officials responded to the gunfire at NIU, three separate dispatch centers received emergency calls, and the first responders operated on three different frequencies.

Nonetheless, campus and city emergency responders were prepared. The university had received earlier threats of violence in 2007, spurring emergency preparedness efforts, coordinated among multiple agencies. Several months before the February shooting, city and campus emergency response officials collaborated to arrange a joint mass casualty drill. This elaborate drill tested the communications capabilities of all responding agencies. As a result, emergency response officials learned how to coordinate an effective multi-agency response during future incidents.

Chief Harrison attributes February's successful response to the partnerships between the campus and the city, which resulted in collaborative planning. "Communications technology is important, but it comes down to relationships," said Chief Harrison, "It's important to work collectively to find solutions."

Because the agencies had previously conducted exercises and had a plan in place the day of the 2008 shooting, members of the various emergency response agencies could communicate with each other. "We were a prepared community at all levels," says Chief Harrison.



# Emergency Communications Preparedness Center Coordinates Federal Efforts

The Emergency Communications Preparedness Center (ECPC), created under the authority of Title XVIII of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended, serves as the Federal focal point for intergovernmental information on interoperable emergency communications.

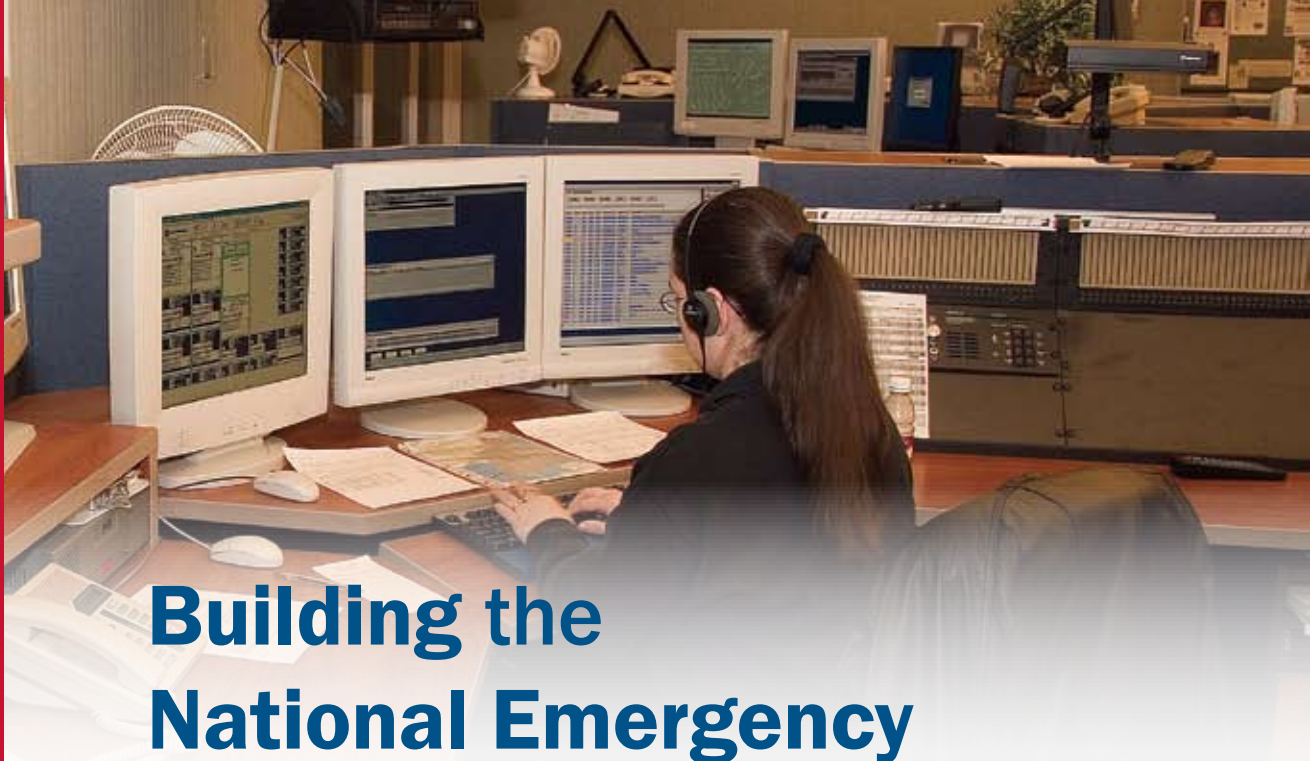
The ECPC is comprised of representatives from the Departments of Homeland Security (DHS), Defense, Commerce, Justice, Agriculture, Energy, Health and Human Services, Interior, Labor, and Treasury, as well as the Federal Communications Commission and the General Services Administration. ECPC activity began in September 2007 with the formation of the ECPC Working Group, which is led by the DHS Office of Emergency Communications (OEC).

ECPC participants quickly identified goals and objectives for future action including coordinating Federal input to interoperability documents such as the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) and drafting an annual strategic assessment that details the coordination efforts of Federal departments and agencies to advance emergency communications. They also identified the need for developing an ECPC Clearinghouse.

The ECPC Clearinghouse will enable Federal, State, local, and tribal governments to publish and share information to support and promote emergency communications in accordance with the goals and objectives set forth by Congress and the NECP. Once established, the Clearinghouse will serve as a tool to minimize unnecessary duplication of emergency communications efforts and provide users access to a document library and a centralized information source. "Creating a focal point for emergency communications information is critical," says James Downes, who represents DHS as chair of the ECPC Working Group. "The ECPC is working diligently to develop this vital resource to improve coordination of interoperability and emergency communications projects." A Clearinghouse pilot is planned for early 2009, with a phased stakeholder rollout initiated shortly thereafter.

The ECPC is also compiling a catalogue of Federal emergency communications programs and initiatives among member departments and agencies; the database currently has more than 130 entries. "The ECPC continues to make great strides," says Michael A. Brown, RDML, USN, Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of Homeland Security Office of Cybersecurity and Communications. "The catalog is critical in that it provides a baseline of the expansive Federal emergency communications landscape."

For more information about the ECPC contact OEC at [oecc@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:oecc@hq.dhs.gov).



## Building the National Emergency Communications Plan

### A Case Study of DHS Employing National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee

Along with practitioner feedback, a number of reports were used during the development of the Department of Homeland Security's National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP), which was submitted to Congress in the summer of 2008. One of these reports was the Report to the President on Emergency Communications and Interoperability, published by the President's National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee (NSTAC).

The NSTAC is a Presidential Advisory Committee, supported by DHS, which consists of industry chief executives from major communications, network service providers, information technology (IT), finance, and aerospace companies, as well as network service providers. NSTAC addresses a wide range of policy and technical issues regarding communications, information systems, information assurance, critical infrastructure protection, and other national security and emergency preparedness (NS/EP) communications issues.

Responding to issues that arose during the recovery efforts following Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma, the NSTAC examined critical emergency communications and interoperability issues. In January 2007, the NSTAC published its findings in the *Report to the President on Emergency Communications and Interoperability*. The report focuses primarily on solutions to overcome impediments to emergency response command and control and decision making, particularly during incidents resulting in catastrophic loss of communications infrastructure and involving multiple response organizations.

The NSTAC report identifies several critical elements of national emergency communications plans and programs. Many other elements were incorporated into the NECP, including large-scale State and regional shared public safety networks and Federal grants, benchmarks to achieve defined interoperability objectives, and specific private sector emergency communications and interoperability support roles.

The NECP reflects the following key NSTAC findings:

- Increase network and resource sharing among Federal, State and local users
- Develop standard operating procedures and processes
- Promote use of priority communications services such as the Government Emergency Telecommunications Service and Wireless Priority Service, particularly at the State and local responder level
- Promote development of standards-based solutions, and deployment and use of rapidly deployable and next generation Internet Protocol-based technologies
- Increase coordination among public and private sector stakeholders through training, exercises, workshops, and partnerships

To further interoperability issues OEC collaborated with members of the private sector on the NECP via OEC's National Emergency Communications Cross Sector Working Group, which included members of the communications; IT; emergency services; and State, local, tribal, and territorial sectors. The NECP provides consistent direction for private sector involvement in standards development and the advancement of next generation communications technologies.

Successful implementation of the NECP requires a coordinated effort among public and private stakeholders. OEC continues to build on established private sector relationships, leveraging the vital input and perspectives of industry and critical communications infrastructure owners and operators to continually enhance NS/EP communications capabilities.

For more information and to access the NSTAC's Report to the President on Emergency Communications and Interoperability, please visit [www.ncs.gov/nstac/nstac.html](http://www.ncs.gov/nstac/nstac.html).

To learn more about OEC's National Emergency Communications Cross Sector Work Group, or to become a member, contact OEC at [oecc@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:oecc@hq.dhs.gov).



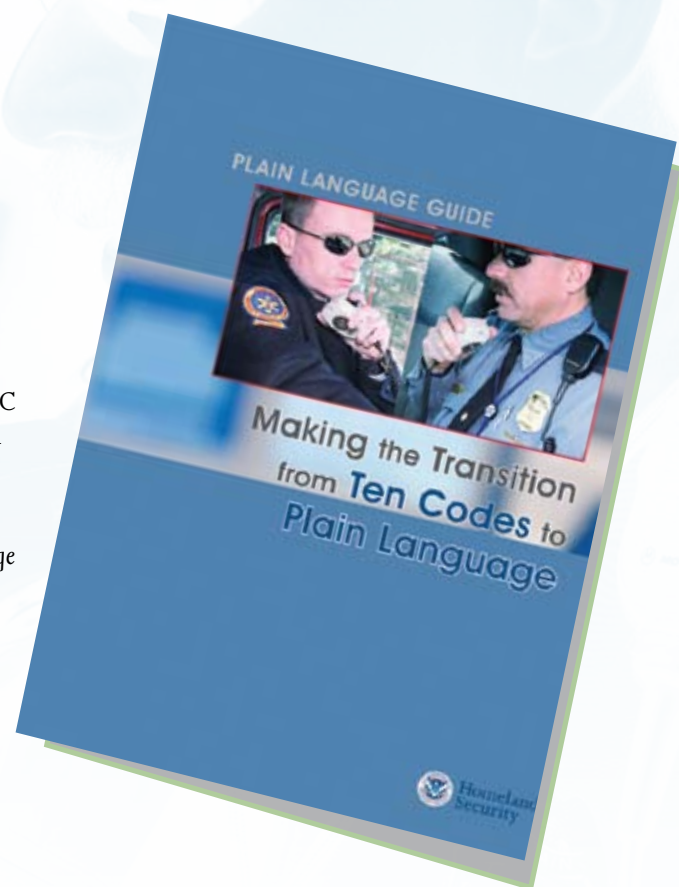
# Plain Language Guide – Making the Transition from Ten Codes to Plain Language

The Plain Language Guide – Making the Transition from Ten Codes to Plain Language, released in July 2008, assists emergency responders in making the transition from the use of “10-codes” to “plain language” during radio communication. The establishment of plain language communications standards is a recommended milestone of the Office of Emergency Communication’s (OEC) National Emergency Communications Plan and a Fiscal Year 2008 Compliance Objective of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

The guide demonstrates how plain language improves interoperability among agencies, explains the value in using plain language, and documents the efforts, resources, and key actions required to implement plain language in a State, territory, region, or agency. Developed with practitioner input, the guide provides a four-phased approach to the transition process, as well as best practices and lessons learned.

This tool was developed through a collaborative relationship between OEC and the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility.

The Plain Language Guide – Making the Transition from Ten Codes to Plain Language is available at [www.safecomprogram.gov](http://www.safecomprogram.gov). Visit this website to download additional OEC guidance documents.



## COML Training in Action During Hurricane Gustav

On August 26, 2008, three dozen public safety communications specialists gathered in Houston, Texas, for a three-day All-Hazards Type III Communications Unit Leader (COML) training. Meanwhile, in the Caribbean, Hurricane Gustav hit Haiti, Cuba, and Jamaica and was moving steadily across the Gulf of Mexico. Forecasters predicted that the storm would be a Category 3 by the time it hit the United States coast.

The coming hurricane gave the students at the Houston training a real-life event around which to focus their training and communications planning. COML trainer Michael Paulette says he and fellow trainer Chris Suter of the San Ramon Valley Fire District decided on the fly to make the hurricane the subject of the COML training exercises. Paulette and Suter had just started the session when a student asked permission to break from class to participate in the Texas Governor’s briefing on the storm.

As most of the students hailed from the Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas/Fort Worth Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) regions, they were similarly eager to hear from the Governor as the storm approached. Rather than breaking class, the trainers set up a conference call to receive the Governor’s briefing in the classroom. Paulette and Suter then reworked the training course so that it focused on real issues that would be faced during the hurricane response.

Responsible for operational and technical aspects of communications, COMLs train on a variety of technical and operational procedures to use during incidents. The operational training includes creating a communications plan, setting up a communications center, and establishing field communications between Incident Command and dispatch centers. Technical aspects include tasks such as determining the appropriate radio channels or talk groups to be used, programming and deployment of cache radios, and interference mitigation.

In the Houston training, students were required to plan for a multi-jurisdictional response to a hurricane. The communications plans had to be adjusted when instructors introduced a new challenge - a large traffic accident

involving a vehicle evacuating hospital patients. The accident required more first responders on scene, complicating interoperable communications. “As we got deeper into the training,” says Paulette, “the communications plans got more detailed and complex.” On the last day of the training, each region presented their communications plan to the group. Participants from the Houston area went one-step further and brought their equipment to the training. “We then went outside and the Harris County Sheriff’s Office and Houston Police Department actually activated its equipment and implemented their communications plan,” said Paulette.

### Training Opportunities

The COML course follows standards of training for other Incident Command System (ICS) functional positions. For many years, the only available training for ICS COMLs was through Federal and State wildland firefighting agencies. The Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) and Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC) built upon this curriculum, material from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Urban Search and Rescue communications specialists, and experience nationwide with the development of Tactical Interoperable Communications Plans. “The all-hazards model supports communications coordination in multiple environments with multiple emergency responders,” says Dan Wills, Sedona, Arizona Battalion Chief, and a COML instructor.

OEC provides instructors and training materials through the Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program. Paulette says the current training program aims to offer at least one class in each of the 10 FEMA regions every three months, as well as train-the-trainer courses. The ultimate goal is that each

region will have enough qualified trainers and trained personnel to continue the process on their own. “What we’re hoping to do is assist the States, territories, and urban and metropolitan areas with training until it becomes a self-sustaining process,” says Paulette.

Candidates for COML training should have an emergency response communications background with exposure to field operations and fundamental emergency response communications technology, supervisory, and personnel management skills.

For more information regarding COML training, visit [www.npstc.org/commUnitLeader.jsp](http://www.npstc.org/commUnitLeader.jsp), or for course prerequisites, schedule, and a copy of the All-Hazards Type III COML Task Book go to [www.safecomprogram.gov](http://www.safecomprogram.gov).

## Background: COML Training

During all-hazards emergency response operations, radio communications among multiple jurisdictions and disciplines—including law enforcement, fire service, and emergency medical service—is essential. Unfortunately, the absence of an on-scene radio communications coordinator often has compromised critical operations. To close this capability gap, the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), in partnership with the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC), developed performance and training standards for All-Hazards Type III Communications Unit Leader (COML) training. OEC and OIC worked with emergency responders and Federal partners—including the Incident Management Systems Integration Division (IMSID)—to formulate curriculum recommendations for a comprehensive All-Hazards Type III COML course. “This training is for a situation where the complex technical or operational needs of the incident exceed the initial response,” says Dan Wills, Sedona Arizona Battalion Chief and a COML instructor.



## SAFECOM Grant Guidance Released

On November 5, the Department of Homeland Security Office of Emergency Communications released the annual SAFECOM Recommended Guidance for Federal Grant Programs. The document, developed in coordination with the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility and State and local emergency responders, fulfills a statutory requirement to establish coordinated guidance for Federal grant programs.

The document outlines recommended allowable costs and application requirements for Federal grant programs providing funding for interoperable emergency communications. The recommendations are designed to ensure that Federal grant funding for interoperable emergency communications is aligned with National goals, objectives, and initiatives established in the National Emergency Communications Plan. In addition, it is intended to ensure that investments made by State, local, and tribal governments through Federal grant funding align to strategic and tactical plans already developed. Ultimately, this will help to drive consistent and measurable progress in strengthening emergency communications capabilities.

The guidance can be found on the SAFECOM website at [www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFEOM/grant/default.htm](http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFEOM/grant/default.htm)

## Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program Update

Congress appropriated \$50 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 for the new Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program (IECGP), which was awarded to States and territories on September 11, 2008. All 56 States and territories received allocations based on risk and statutory minimums. In July and August of 2008, the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Grant Programs Directorate (GPD) conducted a joint peer review process to evaluate the applications and provide feedback to the States and territories on their proposed projects.

Funding for the program will enable States, territories, local units of government, and tribal communities to implement their Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans and align to the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan to further enhance interoperability. Based on interoperability gaps identified in Department of Homeland Security (DHS) studies and assessments, the FY 2008 IECGP promoted two priority groups: 1) Leadership and Governance and 2) Common Planning and Operational Protocols and Emergency Responder Skills and Capabilities. For FY 2009 updates to priority group one include the establishment of common planning and operational protocols. Additionally, priority group one includes

the establishment of statewide interoperability coordinators and statewide interoperability governance bodies. Priority group two recognizes the need for continued training and exercises to ensure responders have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to operate emergency communications solutions or follow procedures during events. Finally, for the 2009 program, equipment is an allowable cost if the grantee can demonstrate achievement of the objectives in Priority Group 1 and 2. Two other significant changes that appear in FY 2009 IECGP:

- A 75% Federal and 25% State cost share, cash or in-kind, requirement for equipment purchases only.
- No more than 50 percent of total program funds may be used for personnel activities. Due to this requirement, applicants must identify sustainable sources of funding and work to integrate new staff into the State and local budgets to maintain the coordinator position and its support staff.

Applications were submitted on January 23, 2009. Per legislation, FEMA GPD must award all IECGP funds prior to **April 15, 2009**. Additional information on the IECGP program can be found on the website [www.fema.gov/government/grant](http://www.fema.gov/government/grant).

## Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grant Program Releases Summary of Projects

In September 2007, the Federal government awarded nearly \$1 billion to public safety agencies nationwide to improve their interoperable communications capabilities. This fall, the Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grant Program will release the first two public project summaries, identifying where the money was invested and its initial impact on improving emergency communications.

The PSIC report titled *Improving Interoperable Communications Nationwide: Overview of Initial State and Territory Investments* provides a high-level trend analysis of the approved investments submitted by the States and territories. The report offers initial insights on the impact of the program's infusion of almost \$1 billion into public safety interoperable communications.

The Investment Summaries provide a detailed look at each State's or territory's allocation of PSIC funding and proposed projects. Each summary includes an overview of the budget and a brief summary that addresses each investment's contribution to solving statewide, regional, and/or local interoperable communications gaps.

PSIC is a one-time grant program designed to enhance interoperable communications, including voice, data, and/or video, and provide public safety agencies the opportunity to achieve meaningful and measurable improvements in public safety interoperable communications. PSIC is jointly managed by the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency's Grant Programs Directorate.

For more information on the PSIC Grant Program, please visit the NTIA website at [www.ntia.doc.gov/psic](http://www.ntia.doc.gov/psic).



# DHS Releases New Emergency Communications Governance Guide

Establishing Governance to Achieve Statewide Communications Interoperability: A Guide for SCIP Implementation, released 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 defining their governance methodologies and systems, and 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*, go to [www.safecomprogram.gov](http://www.safecomprogram.gov).



# OEC Technical Assistance Strategy Revised

In July 2008, the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) revised its Technical Assistance (TA) Strategy to align with the Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans (SCIPs) and the National Emergency Communications Plan. OEC has also expanded its TA service to include Federal agencies; Federal TA requests are collected through the Emergency Communications Preparedness Center.

States and territories submitted their initial TA requests in September 2008. State or local emergency response agencies may refer to the OEC TA Catalog for a complete list of offerings and submit prioritized TA requests that align to at least one of their SCIP initiatives. TA requests will be reviewed against the SCIP initiatives, and OEC will coordinate approved TA requests.

The OEC TA catalogue is available on the SAFECOM website at [www.safecomprogram.gov](http://www.safecomprogram.gov), under the "Statewide Planning" section. For more information on requesting OEC TA, please contact [OEC@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:OEC@hq.dhs.gov).

# SCIP Implementation Workshops

In an effort to help States and territories implement their Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans (SCIPs) and accomplish their emergency communications priorities, in August 2008 the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) began reaching out to the 56 States and territories to offer SCIP Implementation Workshops.

The workshops bring together Federal, State, and local representatives to discuss a State's or territory's communications gaps and SCIP initiatives. The focus of the workshops is to help the State or territory implement its SCIP and accomplish its priorities. During the workshops, OEC provides an overview of its programs and offerings, including the National Emergency Communications Plan and the OEC technical assistance available to all States and territories.

The workshops are participatory and hands-on, focusing on the specific needs and priorities of each State or territory. At a minimum, participants will leave the workshop with a clear understanding of the State's or territory's current status of SCIP Implementation, gaps, and initiatives and how OEC's work will support these efforts. Feedback gathered during workshops will help OEC adapt its policies, tools, and technical assistance offerings to better meet the needs of States and territories.

OEC began conducting SCIP Implementation Workshops in October 2008 and will continue to conduct workshops through May 2009.

For more information regarding SCIP Implementation Workshops or OEC, please contact [OEC@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:OEC@hq.dhs.gov).

# Q&A ON THE STREET

## What is the biggest challenge facing 911 communications?

**Wrentree Kelly-King**  
Assistant Supervisor  
Department of Public Safety  
Communications Center



*"Finding money for training and equipping our centers with advanced technology, including digital text messaging, video relays, and the next generation equipment that we need."*

**Chris Frederick**  
Public Safety Communicator



*"The influx of different nationalities- we have to use our language line every day for translation."*

**Jeff Davidson**  
Public Safety Communicator II



*"The proliferation of cell phones — previously you'd get one call after a traffic accident, now you'll get 30 calls. Cell phones also make it difficult to locate the caller."*

**Arlene Foote**  
Public Safety Communicator III



*"A lot of people dial 911 for non-life threatening emergencies. Non-emergency numbers should be posted more prominently."*



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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### FEBRUARY

2/26: Ohio SCIP Implementation Workshop

### MARCH

- 3/5: Virginia SCIP Implementation Workshop
- 3/10: North Carolina SCIP Implementation Workshop
- 3/10: Missouri SCIP Implementation Workshop
- 3/11-12: Govsec, US Law, Ready Conference, Washington, DC
- 3/18: Utah SCIP Implementation Workshop
- 3/18-20: International Wireless Communications Expo (IWCE) Annual Conference & Exposition, Las Vegas, NV
- 3/19: Hawaii SCIP Implementation Workshop
- 3/19: Kentucky SCIP Implementation Workshop
- 3/23-26: American Samoa SCIP Implementation Workshop
- 3/24: Montana SCIP Implementation Workshop
- 3/24: Pennsylvania SCIP Implementation Workshop

### APRIL

- 4/1-9: CTIA Wireless Annual Conference & Expo, Las Vegas, NV
- 4/8: Nebraska SCIP Implementation Workshop
- 4/9: Oklahoma SCIP Implementation Workshop
- 4/15: Oregon SCIP Implementation Workshop
- 4/16: Indiana SCIP Implementation Workshop
- 4/16: Wisconsin SCIP Implementation Workshop
- 4/22-24: National Conference on Emergency Communications, Chicago, IL



**Homeland Security**