



Telecommunications Service Priority

Issue Background

The National Communications System (NCS) Office of Priority Telecommunications operates the Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) program, established to prioritize restoration of the Nation's most critical telecommunications assets when service requests overburden networks, such as during and after natural disasters. TSP serves our national security leadership; Emergency Alert System officials; public health, safety, and law enforcement agencies; and public welfare and economic officials. It also supports local Government entities and select non-Government users including foreign Governments whose services contribute to United States national security and emergency preparedness functions.

History of NSTAC Actions

By December 1984, the President's National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee (NSTAC) recognized the need for a system that authorized both priority provisioning and restoration of NS/EP services for Federal, State, and local Governments and private users. At that time, the only priority service available was the Restoration Priority System, which covered the restoration of Federal Government, inter-city, and private lines. In February 1985, the NSTAC established a TSP Task Force in recognition of the advantages to NS/EP communications that integrating provisioning into a priority service system could provide. The task force assumed an advisory role in assisting the Office of the Manager, NCS, in developing and eventually implementing the TSP program.

The NSTAC TSP Task Force, acting in an advisory capacity, assisted in creating many of the supporting documents that made the TSP program functional. The task force played an active role in drafting the TSP System Oversight Committee charter and was instrumental in selecting members for that committee, which continues to meet on a biannual basis. The NCS, as the agency tasked with implementing the newly-created TSP program, sought input from NSTAC members companies and Federal, State, and local Government officials during the development of NCS issuances on TSP procedures.

The NSTAC also helped design the 1988 *Petition for Rulemaking and Proposed Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rules* for the TSP System. The FCC issued the *TSP Report and Order* establishing TSP policies and procedures in November 1988. The NSTAC examined the Report and Order to clarify its liability limitation provisions and identified emergency 911 services as an issue of concern. The NSTAC concluded that the Report and Order offered sufficient liability protection to carriers but that it had not completely defined the legal ramifications of preempting a contracted versus a tariff service.

The NSTAC issued its *Final Report of the TSP Task Force* report in September 1990 when the NCS implemented the TSP program. Less than three years later, in March 1993, the program was in full operation. As of January 23, 2008, there were approximately 145,000 TSP assignments, and the NCS continues to add hundreds of priority provisioning and restoration circuits weekly.