

Highlights of [GAO-04-699T](#), testimony before the Subcommittees on Cybersecurity, Science, and Research & Development and on Infrastructure and Border Security, Select Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Critical infrastructure protection (CIP) activities that are called for in federal policy and law are intended to enhance the security of the cyber and physical public and private infrastructures that are essential to our nation's security, economic security, and public health and safety. As our reliance on these infrastructures increases, so do the potential threats and attacks that could disrupt critical systems and operations. Effective information-sharing partnerships between industry sectors and government can contribute to CIP efforts.

Federal policy has encouraged the voluntary creation of Information Sharing and Analysis Centers (ISACs) to facilitate the private sector's participation in CIP by serving as mechanisms for gathering and analyzing information and sharing it among the infrastructure sectors and between the private sector and government. This testimony discusses the management and operational structures used by ISACs, federal efforts to interact with and support the ISACs, and challenges to and successful practices for ISACs' establishment, operation, and partnerships with the federal government.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-699T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Robert F. Dacey at 202-512-3317 or Daceyr@gao.gov.

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

Establishing Effective Information Sharing with Infrastructure Sectors

What GAO Found

Federal awareness of the importance of securing the nation's critical infrastructures—and the federal government's strategy to encourage cooperative efforts among state and local governments and the private sector to protect these infrastructures—have been evolving since the mid-1990s. Federal policy continues to emphasize the importance of the ISACs and their information-sharing functions. In addition, federal policy established specific responsibilities for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other federal agencies involved with the private sector in CIP. The ISACs themselves, although they have similar missions, were developed to serve the unique needs of the sectors they represent, and they operate under different business models and funding mechanisms.

According to ISAC representatives and a council that represents many of them, a number of challenges to their successful establishment, operation, and partnership with DHS and other federal agencies remain. These challenges include increasing the percentage of entities within each sector that are members of its ISAC; building trusted relationships and processes to facilitate information sharing; overcoming barriers to information sharing, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the various government and private sector entities that are involved in protecting critical infrastructures; and funding ISAC operations and activities. According to a DHS official, these issues are being considered, and the department is developing a plan that will document the current information-sharing relationships among DHS, the ISACs, and other agencies; goals for improving those information-sharing relationships; and methods for measuring progress toward these goals.

Information Sharing and Analysis Centers by Sector

Sector	ISAC	Established
Banking and Finance	Financial Services	October 1999
Chemicals & Hazardous Materials	Chemical	April 2002
Emergency Services	Emergency Fire	October 2000
Energy	Electric	October 2000
Energy	Energy	November 2001
Food	Food	February 2002
Government	Multi-State	January 2003
Information Technology & Telecommunications	IT	December 2000
	Telecom	January 2000
	Research & Education Network	February 2003
Transportation	Public Transit	January 2003
	Surface Transportation	May 2002
	Highway	March 2003
Drinking Water & Water Treatment Systems	Water	December 2002
Other	Real Estate	April 2003

Source: GAO