Press Release

May 2006
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SAFECOM TO LAUNCH LANDMARK NATIONAL INTEROPERABILITY BASELINE SURVEY

WASHINGTON – The Department of Homeland Security announced plans today for its SAFECOM program to conduct a ground-breaking National Interoperability Baseline Survey. The online survey will be conducted in May and is designed to provide a comprehensive assessment of communications interoperability capacity among law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services emergency responders across the Nation.

"The National Interoperability Baseline Survey represents a significant milestone for the SAFECOM program and for interoperability improvement efforts nationwide," said Dr. David Boyd, DHS's Director of the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility. "It will provide us with a deeper understanding of where we, as a Nation, stand in achieving public safety communications interoperability. It will help us make better decisions about the steps we should take and the way we should invest resources going forward. It also will provide a benchmark against which to measure the effectiveness of future improvement efforts."

The National Interoperability Baseline Survey is more comprehensive than previous surveys and is designed to assess and generate insights into five critical areas that determine an organization's capacity for interoperability – governance through administration and decision making, standard operating procedures, technology, training and exercises, and usage of interoperable communications. The areas are identified in SAFECOM's Interoperability Continuum, which provides the framework for the survey.

SAFECOM officials worked with public safety community representatives from across the Nation to develop the survey and to determine which public safety disciplines should complete it. To achieve a representative sample, SAFECOM is asking approximately 22,400 agencies from 50 states and the District of Columbia to respond to the survey. SAFECOM officials also will ask the homeland security directors of the 50 states and the District of Columbia to complete a shorter version of the survey.

An initial letter will be sent to selected respondents informing them about the survey. A follow-up postcard will provide instructions for completing the survey online. In addition to collecting survey data, SAFECOM officials will reinforce the online survey findings by conducting

approximately 30 site visits in 9 regional areas to gather supplementary qualitative and anecdotal information from the public safety community. Preliminary findings will be released in August 2006 with a final report anticipated for October 2006.

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