



# Fact Sheet

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## **NATIONAL BASELINE SURVEY ON INTEROPERABILITY**

More than two-thirds of emergency response agencies across the nation use interoperable communications, at varying levels, according to survey results announced today by the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) SAFECOM program. The National Interoperability Baseline Survey queried interoperable capabilities from 22,400 randomly selected law enforcement, fire response, and emergency management services (EMS) agencies nationwide.

### **Key Findings**

Survey findings provide a clear and unprecedented assessment of current interoperable capabilities to better assist local officials in making informed decisions on strategies to improve interoperability and target finite resources. The findings include:

- Approximately two-thirds of agencies reporting use interoperability to some degree
- Agencies tend to be more developed in technology and certain governance-related interoperability areas than they are in standard operating procedures and exercises
- Smaller agencies tend to be less advanced in interoperability than larger agencies.
- Law enforcement, fire response and EMS agencies tend to show the same level of interoperability development
- Cross-discipline and cross-jurisdiction interoperability, at a local level, tends to be more advanced than levels of interoperability between local and state agencies
- Agencies that operate on large, shared systems tend to be at more advanced stages of development than those that operate on stand-alone systems
- Moderate levels of progress in technical approaches, implementation, exercises, command and control, and standard operating procedures correlate to more frequent and regular use of interoperability solutions

### **Accomplishments**

By providing a statistical snapshot of the current capacity of interoperability across local, tribal, and state emergency response agencies, the National Interoperability Baseline Survey:

- Determined the capacity for interoperable communications among law enforcement, fire, and EMS agencies across the nation
- Established a process and mechanism to facilitate regular measures of communications interoperability

- Generated data to help emergency response agencies make better-informed decisions about how to most effectively allocate resources for improving communications interoperability
- Gathered information to inform future efforts for education, incentives, and planning needed to continue improving interoperability capabilities across the country

### **Landmark Survey**

From May through July 2006, the SAFECOM program surveyed approximately 22,400 randomly selected law enforcement, fire response, and EMS agencies. The purpose of this survey was to measure the capacity for interoperability among the nation's emergency response agencies. The survey is the first interoperability assessment derived from a comprehensive definition of interoperability, recognizing the importance of governance, standard operating procedures, technology, training, exercises, and usage. Survey questions assessed agencies' stages of development in each of these five areas, and achieved a statistically valid response rate of 30 percent, with 6,816 agencies responding. Participation in the survey was nearly evenly split between law enforcement and fire response and EMS.

### **SAFECOM**

The SAFECOM Program, managed by the DHS Science and Technology Directorate's Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC), is one of several programs designed to assist in the coordination of interoperability efforts at the local, tribal, state and federal levels, with the goal of improving emergency preparedness and response.

- Established by the Office of Management and Budget and approved by the President's Management Council as a high priority E-Gov initiative, SAFECOM provides stakeholder groups with research, development, testing and evaluation, guidance, tools, and templates on communications-related issues to improve emergency response through more effective and efficient interoperable wireless communications.
- OIC also created the SAFECOM Web site ([www.safecomprogram.gov](http://www.safecomprogram.gov)) for use by the emergency response community in utilizing interoperable communications resources.

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