



FACT SHEET

February 27, 2007

SAFECOM PROGRAM ANNOUNCES CRITERIA FOR STATEWIDE INTEROPERABILITY PLANS

The SAFECOM Program

The SAFECOM program, managed by the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate's Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC), is one of many OIC 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) for use by the emergency response community in utilizing interoperable communications resources.
- Further, SAFECOM created coordinated Grant Guidance to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency with which emergency response communications related grant dollars are allocated and spent.

Criteria for Statewide Interoperability Plans

- According to Section I.C.5 of the 2006 Homeland Security Grant Program, all states are required to develop and adopt statewide communications interoperability plans by December 2007.
- To assist in this process and to ensure all states include essential components, the SAFECOM program has identified the necessary criteria for a communications interoperability plan. In keeping with SAFECOM's practitioner-driven approach, the program formulated the criteria with input from local and state practitioners.
- SAFECOM recommends that states, through their governors, other state and local policy makers, and local emergency responders, use a statewide strategic planning process that gathers the perspectives of all emergency responders. By using a practitioner-driven approach that involves local, tribal, state, and Federal stakeholders, states can develop a strategic plan that effectively meets the needs of end users. As a result, end users will be more likely to adopt the plan.

- SAFECOM recommends that states apply its Interoperability Continuum as a comprehensive framework to address critical elements for planning and implementing statewide interoperability solutions. The Interoperability Continuum graphically depicts five critical elements to interoperability success—governance, standard operating procedures (SOPs), technology, training and exercises, and usage of interoperable communications.
- Criteria are organized by 10 major components of a statewide interoperability plan: background and preliminary steps; strategy; methodology; governance; technology; SOPs; training and exercises; usage; funding; and implementation.

OIC Accomplishments

- Successfully executed the **RapidCom 1** initiative to improve capabilities for immediate, incident-level, interoperable communications in 10 high-threat urban areas.
- Developed the **Interoperability Continuum** to depict the core facets of interoperability according to the stated needs and challenges of the emergency response community, and to aid practitioners and policy makers in their short- and long-term interoperability efforts.
- Published the first-ever **Statement of Requirements (SoR)** (Volume I, version 1.0) for emergency response communications interoperability. It defines future requirements for crucial voice and data communications in day-to-day, task force, and mutual aid operations. OIC recently released SoR Volume II, which will begin to quantify requirements for the emergency response community.
- Developed the **Statewide Communications Interoperability Planning Methodology**, which describes a step-by-step process for developing a locally driven, statewide strategic plan for enhancing communications interoperability.
- Completed two **Regional Communications Interoperability Pilots** to help Nevada and Kentucky develop and refine their statewide communications interoperability plans, and developed tools and models to improve integration and implementation of statewide and local communications interoperability planning.
- Conducted the **National Interoperability Baseline Survey**, which included the release of initial results and publication of a final report to identify areas of increased need and to target funding accordingly.
- **Sponsors and participates in demonstrations and exercises** across local, tribal, state, Federal, and military organizations to showcase interoperable data communications and capabilities.

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