
SAFECOM National Interoperability Baseline Survey**Definition**

The National Interoperability Baseline Survey is a mechanism for determining and measuring interoperable communications nation-wide for the purpose of improving their effectiveness for public safety practitioners.

Survey Purpose and Impact

SAFECOM is conducting the National Interoperability Baseline Survey in order to:

- ❖ Determine the capacity for interoperable communications among law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS) agencies across the Nation.
- ❖ Establish a process and mechanism to make it possible for agencies to regularly measure communications interoperability.
- ❖ Generate data to help public safety officials make better-informed decisions about how to most effectively allocate resources for improving communications interoperability.
- ❖ Gather information to guide and measure the effectiveness of future communications interoperability improvement efforts that local, tribal, state, and federal public safety organizations execute.

First of Its Kind

The survey differs from previous interoperability assessments. It is derived from a comprehensive definition of interoperability that SAFECOM developed in partnership with the public safety community and founded on the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum. This definition recognizes the importance of key items – governance (administration and decision making), standard operating procedures (SOPs), technology, training and exercises, and usage -- in establishing reliable communications interoperability. The definition serves as the basis for the survey questions, which assess the stage of development of responding agencies in each of five critical areas.

Survey Respondents

To complete the online survey, SAFECOM is employing a stratified, random sample of law enforcement, fire, and EMS personnel. Within each state and in the District of Columbia, SAFECOM will invite randomly selected public safety agencies representing these three disciplines to complete the survey. In total, approximately 22,400 agencies will be asked to respond. In addition, SAFECOM will ask the Homeland Security Directors of each state and the District of Columbia to complete a shorter version of the

survey. This version will be focused on what is currently underway to improve communications interoperability in their respective jurisdictions.

In addition to collecting survey data online, SAFECOM will conduct approximately 30 site visits in 9 regional areas to gather supplemental qualitative and anecdotal information from the public safety community. The data gathered during these site visits will deepen SAFECOM's understanding of survey findings. It will afford the program an opportunity to identify trends, analyze questions, and clarify ambiguities within the findings collected through the online survey.

Timeframe for Completion

The survey will be administered electronically in May 2006. Prior to administration of the survey, SAFECOM will send a letter to potential respondents informing them about the survey and asking them to participate. A postcard will follow, with instructions for completing the survey online. Non-respondents will receive a second postcard urging them to complete the survey.

SAFECOM anticipates presenting preliminary response information and conducting follow-up site visits in August 2006. The final report will be published in October 2006.

SAFECOM, a communications program of the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC), with its federal partners, provides research, development, testing and evaluation, guidance, tools, and templates on communications-related issues to local, tribal, state, and federal public safety agencies. The Department of Homeland Security's OIC is managed by the Science and Technology Directorate's Office of Systems Engineering and Development. For more information about the SAFECOM program, visit www.safecomprogram.gov or call 866-969-SAFE.