Why This Matters

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) personnel require interoperability to communicate both with other DHS components and external partners, including Federal, State, and local entities. DHS established a goal that all components would be able to communicate using interoperable radio systems, and it planned to achieve that goal by establishing a common radio channel and purchasing standardized equipment. Interoperable communication is critical during daily operations, planned events, and emergencies.

DHS Response

We made two recommendations to improve DHS' oversight of interoperable radio communications. DHS did not concur with the first recommendation and concurred with the second and is taking action to implement the recommendation.

Although the Department created an office to coordinate Department-wide radio activities, the office does not have the necessary authority to ensure the components achieve interoperability. The current structure, based upon cooperation and not authority, is the same management approach that proved ineffective in the past.

For Further Information:

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202)254-4100, or email us at DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov

DHS' Oversight of Interoperable Communications

What We Determined

DHS did not provide effective oversight to ensure that its components achieved Department-wide interoperable radio communications. It did not establish an effective governing structure that had the authority and responsibility to oversee its goal of achieving Department-wide interoperability. Without an authoritative governing structure to oversee emergency communications, DHS had limited interoperability policies and procedures. As a result, personnel do not have interoperable communications that they can rely on during daily operations, planned events, and emergencies.

What We Recommend

The Under Secretary for Management to:

1) Create a structure with the necessary authority to ensure that the components achieve interoperability.

2) Develop and disseminate policies and procedures to standardize Department-wide radio activities, including program settings such as naming conventions to ensure interoperability.