

# DHS Releases National Emergency Communications Plan

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The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has released the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) to address gaps and determine solutions so that emergency response personnel at all levels of government and across all disciplines can communicate as needed, on demand, and as authorized. The NECP is the nation's first strategic plan to improve emergency response communications, and complements overarching Homeland security and emergency communications legislation, strategies and initiatives.

"This is a comprehensive plan designed to drive measurable and sustainable improvements to operable and interoperable emergency communications nationwide over the next three years. It emphasizes the human element and cross-jurisdictional cooperation, going beyond simply buying new equipment," says Homeland Security Under Secretary Robert Jamison. "We have recently approved Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans for all 56 states and territories. Aligning these plans with the NECP will move emergency communications forward and further promote a coordinated nationwide strategy."

The NECP defines three goals that establish a minimum level of interoperable communications and a deadline for federal, state, local and tribal authorities:

- By 2010, 90 percent of all high-risk urban areas designated within the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) can demonstrate response-level emergency communications within one hour for routine events involving multiple jurisdictions and agencies.
- By 2011, 75 percent of non-UASI jurisdictions can demonstrate response-level emergency communications within one hour for routine events involving multiple jurisdictions and agencies.
- By 2013, 75 percent of all jurisdictions can demonstrate response-level emergency communications within three hours of a significant event, as outlined in the department's national planning scenarios.

The NECP enhances governance, planning, technology, training and exercises, and disaster communications capabilities with recommendations and milestones for emergency responders and relevant government officials. It is designed to drive measurable and sustainable improvements over the next five years consistent with the: National Response Framework; National Incident Management System; National Preparedness Guidelines; and Target Capabilities List. NECP goals, along with these other department strategies, will improve nationwide response efforts and bolster situational awareness, information sharing and command and control operations.

The department's Office of Emergency Communications developed the NECP in cooperation with more than 150 public and private sector emergency communications officials. The department's new Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program will further enable states to align their plans with the NECP.