

BACKGROUND

SAFECOM was formed after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, to improve public safety communications across the Nation. Since its formation, SAFECOM is continuously working to improve emergency response providers' interjurisdictional and interdisciplinary emergency communications operability, interoperability, and security across state, local, tribal, territorial (SLTT), regional and international borders, and with the Federal Government, allowing emergency responders to communicate through different communications systems to exchange information. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) administers and supports the program and its stakeholder activity.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

SAFECOM has played an important role improving interoperability through a variety of accomplishments and initiatives over the years.

National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP)

The NECP is the Nation's strategic plan to strengthen and enhance emergency communications capabilities. It navigates the complex mission of maintaining and improving emergency communications capabilities for emergency responders and serves as the Nation's roadmap to ensuring emergency communications interoperability at all levels of government. The NECP establishes a shared vision for emergency communications and assists those who plan for, coordinate, invest in, and use operable and interoperable communications for response and recovery operations. The purpose of the NECP is 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.

SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants

SAFECOM members started providing input and feedback to CISA's grant guidance efforts in 2003. This effort ensures that the emergency response communications related grants process is efficient and effective for SLTT recipients. The [grant guidance document](#) is updated annually and provides guidance on eligible emergency communications activities and equipment.

Emergency Communications Governance Guide for State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Officials

SAFECOM members developed a [governance guide](#) that includes recommendations and best practices to establish or update emergency communications governance structures representing the entire emergency communications ecosystem.

Membership

SAFECOM uniquely brings together over 60 representatives from SLTT emergency responders, appointed and elected officials, and major intergovernmental and national public safety associations. SAFECOM's membership also coordinates with elected and appointed officials, and other key emergency communications stakeholders to provide input on the challenges, needs, and best practices facing emergency communications.

Interoperability Continuum

In 2007, SAFECOM began collaboration with CISA to help communities assess their current level of interoperability. The [Interoperability Continuum](#) focuses on five key areas: governance, standard operating procedures, technology (security and continuity of operations for voice and data elements) training and exercises, and usage. The brochure, and its corresponding graphic, depicts what is accomplished at each end of the spectrum under low and high degrees of leadership, planning, and resources. This Continuum aids public safety practitioners and policy makers with planning short- and long-term interoperability efforts.

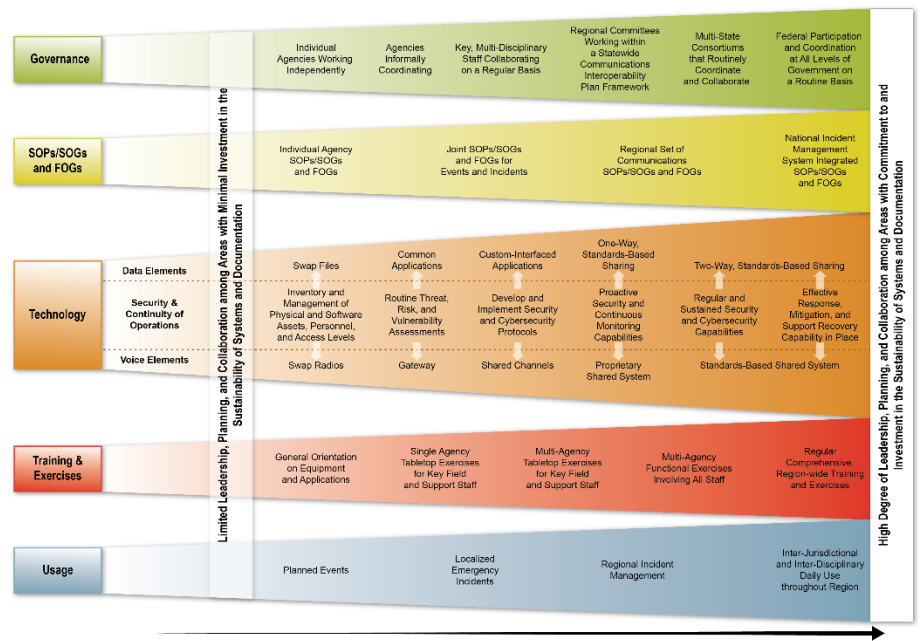


Figure 1: Interoperability Continuum

SAFECOM PRIORITIES

SAFECOM utilizes four committees to promote SAFECOM initiatives, develop informational products, and engage with the public safety community, allowing for a flexible and responsive organization. Committees may also form working groups within or across the committees to accomplish their work.

Education and Outreach Committee

The Education and Outreach Committee functions as SAFECOM's advocate in the public safety community and focuses on promoting SAFECOM's role and impacts to the nationwide emergency communications community. This involves leading SAFECOM's efforts with member and non-member organizations to best communicate SAFECOM's mission, goals, and priorities.

- Interoperability Continuum Working Group

Funding and Sustainment Committee

The Funding and Sustainment Committee concentrates on identifying innovative means of [funding and sustaining](#) emergency communications systems and activities. The Committee also prepares and disseminates information on appropriations and new funding sources available to the public safety community at all levels of government.

Technology Policy Committee

The Technology Policy Committee promotes [technologies, resources, and other policies](#) related to emergency communications and interoperability. While this Committee is often focused on emerging technologies, like Next Generation 911 (NG 911), it also continues to support land mobile radio (LMR), promote broadband technology development, and partner with other federal groups to

further the use and security of existing emergency communications systems.

- Identity, Credential, and Access Management (ICAM) Working Group
- NG911 Working Group
- Project 25 (P25) User Needs Working Group

Governance Committee

The Governance Committee focuses on public safety communications governance, which includes improving SAFECOM's own governance structures and processes in addition to [resources for external statewide governance bodies](#) for public safety communications. The Governance Committee also manages SAFECOM's membership and manages [programmatic resources](#).

- Cybersecurity Working Group
- Membership Working Group

Task Forces

SAFECOM also establishes task forces to develop a specific product or address a unique problem for the public safety community.

- Communications Section Task Force and Incident Communications Advisory Council
- Information Sharing Framework Task Force
- P25 Compliance Assessment Program Task Force

SAFECOM'S INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS

SAFECOM has been instrumental in building the public safety communications community. For instance, SAFECOM was a strong advocate for the deployment of a national public safety broadband network, which resulted in the passing of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012. This bill authorized the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) to plan for, build, and deploy a nationwide interoperable broadband network to help public safety responders and officials communicate efficiently during emergencies. FirstNet holds the spectrum license to build, deploy, and operate the network, in consultation with federal, SLTT public safety entities and other key stakeholders. Many SAFECOM members serve on FirstNet's Board and Public Safety Advisory Committee, which provides public safety subject matter expertise to FirstNet.

Furthermore, SAFECOM also identified the need for greater communication between the Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWIC) to further enable interoperable communications. Thus, in 2010, SAFECOM helped establish the [National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators \(NCSWIC\)](#). NCSWIC now supports the SWICs in all 56 states and territories by developing products and services to assist them with leveraging their relationships, professional knowledge and experience with public safety partners. NCSWIC helps support the public safety communications community as one of SAFECOM's closest partners.