

Key Messages

Our Nationwide Plan for Interoperable Communications—including its principles, initiatives, and actions—must be implemented immediately across all levels of government.

Although we seek the continued support of the Federal players such as OIC and OEC, this Plan is our statement of what we think is required to move forward on this issue.

Together we are one, strong, powerful voice that can activate change across our Nation, and we need your active support and commitment along the way.

If we do not act now, interoperability challenges will continue to put the lives of public safety practitioners and those awaiting help at risk; this, we cannot afford.

The public safety community must use our shared principles to drive partnerships, design systems, forge agreements, and allocate resources with confidence and concurrence toward achieving a system-of-systems.

Background on the Issue

- Today, technology can bring news, entertainment, and information to the masses in real time and on devices smaller than we ever imagined possible.
- At the same time, public safety practitioners working in the same jurisdiction are still unable to communicate with one another.
 - Effective interoperable communications can mean the difference between life and death.

(Share a personal anecdote, if appropriate, of when your job/mission was compromised by a lack of communications interoperability.)

Our Nationwide Community

- The Emergency Response Council (ERC) is a cross-disciplinary body representing practitioners from more than 50 agencies and organizations.

(Share what community you represent, e.g., discipline, location, length of service.)

- Together, we represent the interests and needs of more than 60,000 public safety agencies and their responders comprising the Nation's public safety community. We are dedicated to the critical, national mission of improving public safety communications interoperability.

Beginnings of the Plan & Our Commitment

- On June 14, 2007, the ERC (of which I am a member) met in Denver, Colorado, to forge agreements on the critical actions that must happen to strengthen interoperable communications nationwide.
- We know that as individuals, none of us have the authority to implement a nationwide plan for interoperability, but together we are one, strong, powerful voice that can activate change across our Nation through our commitment to these actions and principles.

For Use By Champions of the Nationwide Plan for Interoperable Communications

- We are sharing these decisions with our associations, states, regions, tribes, localities, governance groups, partners, departments, agencies, programs, Federal leaders, and anyone we meet involved in emergency response, recovery, prevention, and preparedness.
- The Federal Government, states, and local and tribal governments must join in this effort to help impact interoperable communications by exponentially expanding involvement and reaching across the Nation.

Interoperable Communications Landscape

Local and tribal governments, states, and the Federal Government must share and act on a common understanding of the **vision** we are striving to achieve; our **successes** toward that vision; and the Nation's **current interoperable communications condition**. Together, these factors make *now* the time to drive forward a Nationwide Plan for Interoperable Communications.

Our Vision: (Where we want to go)

There is an integrated system-of-systems in regular use, which allows public safety personnel to communicate via voice, data, and video with whom they need on demand, in real time, as authorized.

- Public safety can respond anywhere, bring their own equipment, and can work on any network immediately when authorized.
- Public safety will have the networking and spectrum resources it needs to function properly.
 - *The system-of-systems approach must allow public safety agencies the flexibility to select equipment that best fits their technical requirements and budget constraints, while still achieving interoperability. When implemented, a system-of-systems approach makes it possible for distinct systems owned and operated by different public safety agencies to communicate with each other.*

Our Successes: (Where we've come from)

(Highlights of major successes included below. If you have personally been involved in any of these initiatives or similar projects, share those anecdotes now.)

Over the past decade, much has been done to move the Nation toward our system-of systems vision.

- We have collectively partnered with the Federal Government to:
 - Define interoperability and the challenges of interoperability through the National Task Force on Interoperability.
 - Provide consistent ways to implement interoperability through tools like the Interoperability Continuum in order to outline common ways for public safety to improve interoperability.
 - Measure the state of interoperability to show our progress and work that remains to be done.
 - Gain focused funding for interoperability through Federal grant programs and coordinated grant guidance.
- We have individually influenced our communities and associations to begin incorporating interoperability into our daily response efforts and into our emergency response planning efforts.
- We have seen localities, tribes, regions, and states innovatively improve their communications by building systems that dynamically meet the needs of end users and utilize advances in technology effectively.

Our Current Condition: (The time is now)

We believe that the time is now for the development of a locally- and practitioner-driven Nationwide Plan for Interoperable Communications:

- We have made huge advances toward achieving interoperability.
- Much work remains to be done and the need for concentrated action and commitment is urgent.

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- Key players are paying attention like never before.
 - Congress has an unprecedented focus on interoperability.
 - The Department of Homeland Security has a renewed focus on interoperability.
 - Public safety has made progress to the point where now it is critical to act together.
 - Federal and state governments are creating grants specifically for interoperability.
 - All levels of government are beginning to use the Interoperability Continuum to address all of the critical elements to plan for and implement interoperability solutions.
 - Additional spectrum will soon be available to public safety.
 - Recent natural disasters have highlighted the tragic impacts of deficient communications equipment and technology on the ability of public safety practitioners to protect communities and save lives.

Our Stand for Change:

We are relying on Congress; the Administration; national associations and organizations; local, tribal, and state governments; and responders nationwide—including you:

- *Congress* must determine whether new legislation is required.
- *Federal agencies* focused on interoperable communications must coordinate and align their resources to reach states and localities. They must pull together key public safety practitioners and interoperability experts to work together to implement these agreements.
- *States* must implement these agreements by seeking input from locals to ensure their needs are integrated into state solutions. States must work with end users to align their resources to connect down to regions, tribes, and localities.
- *Localities* must implement these agreements with their neighbors to ensure they are planning and working together before they buy.
- *Associations* must enroll their members into these agreements to champion them as the way to approach nationwide interoperability efforts.
- *Individual public safety practitioners* must do their part to own these agreements, commit to them, and act on them every day.
- The *public* must understand that their way of life, property, and lives are at risk if these agreements do not become a reality.

Our Nationwide Plan for Interoperable Communications: Principles, Initiatives, and Actions

To achieve the “system-of-systems” vision, we believe everyone involved in emergency response must use these shared principles to drive partnerships between all levels of government, to design systems, to forge agreements, and to allocate resources with confidence and concurrence.

- In service of this vision, at the ERC Meeting in June, we collaboratively developed a set of 12 guiding principles and initiatives and high-priority actions for the Plan based on four subject areas. These include *Leadership & Coordination*; *System Design & Interconnects*; *Standards & Certification*; and *Standardization & Accreditation*.
- The principles and actions agreed upon at the ERC Meeting are not just words; they are agreements that will shape the public safety community’s approach to strengthen interoperability nationwide.
- Although we know there is much work to be done, this is the correct path forward to a “system-of-systems.”
- Together, we can make a real difference in protecting our Nation and securing the homeland.

Closing

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- Thank you for your time and attention to this effort, and to our larger mission of improving emergency preparedness and response through effective and efficient interoperable communications.
- If there are other leaders or groups to whom you think I should speak, please let me know.