

Georgia Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP)

Executive Summary

Introductory Note:

The Georgia Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP) was submitted to the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in December 2007, where it was approved. This executive summary presents the SCIP as it was originally submitted, along with minor changes made at the suggestion of DHS. Changes have been made to the SCIP, however, that have not yet been incorporated into the official document. For example, the state is currently in the process of hiring a full-time Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC). This person will be the main point of contact at the state for interoperable communications issues. Another change is to the governance of the Georgia Interoperability Network (GIN). The duties of the TFRAG, which are the GIN executive committee mentioned in the SCIP, have been assumed by the Homeland Security Task Force (HSTF) Communications Sub-committee, which also acts as the state's Interoperability Committee. These changes, along with any others that are made, will be included in the next submitted version of the SCIP.

Summary

The State of Georgia has been working towards a common goal of interoperable communications for public safety since 1999. The Georgia Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP) captures this effort, and also puts in place the roadmap for the future. This plan addresses how the State will allocate investments for interoperability and support the interoperability efforts of local and regional agencies and jurisdictions. All agencies and jurisdictions will be able to use this plan as a reference when determining what resources they should procure and how their interoperable communications plans should be structured.

The timeframe for this plan covers through the end of the State's Fiscal Year 2009, which ends June 30, 2009. The plan will be refined on a yearly basis by the Homeland Security Task Force (HSTF) Communications Sub-committee for submittal to the Director of OHS-GEMA for approval. The scope of the plan is described by three criteria:

1. **Completion and use of the Georgia Interoperability Network (GIN)**

The GIN statewide gateway system that is being implemented throughout the state provides a seamless connection between radios in all public safety spectra, including the reallocated spectrum. As systems in all spectrum bands are installed by agencies or jurisdictions, the GIN immediately provides a portal into the state's interoperability network. Therefore, the planning, coordination, acquisition, deployment, and training on interoperability begin with the existing GIN framework.

The GIN project is currently in the implementation phase. By the end of 2007, 105 sites will be installed and in the operations and maintenance phase. All counties will be installed and in the

operations and maintenance phase by July 2009. The operations and maintenance phase will be ongoing until such time as the systems is phased out and replaced by newer technology. This, however, will not be for many years.

When completed, the GIN Statewide Communications System will provide a level 4 gateway interoperable communications system for first responders throughout the State of Georgia. It will make use of the existing land mobile radio (LMR) radio frequency (RF) infrastructure. As such, the project will not increase RF coverage, channel capacity or eliminate technology obsolescence in existing RF equipment. Interoperability will be achieved through the overlay additions to the existing RF infrastructure of the following components: Internet Protocol (IP) network backbone, IP network components and Mobile Communication Units (MCUs). The IP network backbone is a secure Multi Protocol Label Switching (MPLS) network.

The system provides the following functionality for its State of Georgia users:

- a) Interoperable communications for first responders at the local level;
- b) Interoperability with neighboring agencies with overlapping radio frequency coverage;
- c) Dispatch back-up capability with other agencies for continuity of operations;
- d) Dispatch conferencing with other departments and agencies;
- e) Interoperable communications statewide in major events;

Additionally, selective interstate interoperability for first responders has been achieved or is planned for the states of Alabama, Tennessee, South Carolina and Florida.

The GIN has its own governance structure for its operations. The Georgia State Patrol acts as the system administrator and is responsible for system maintenance. The TFRAG acts as the oversight committee for the system and is composed of representatives from local and state agencies and jurisdictions. There are two working groups that answer to the TFRAG: The Operations Working Group (responsible for SOPs, training, exercise, and usage) and the Technical Working Group (responsible for the technology aspects of the system).

2. **Encourage the development and expansion of standards-based, regional radio systems using the Atlanta Urban Area Security Initiative as a model**

The Atlanta UASI group has been successful in creating a model for implementing a cooperatively-owned regional radio system. They have also integrated this system with other county-owned systems. The State of Georgia sees this model of multi-jurisdictional radio systems tying in with other (multi-)jurisdictional radio systems as the best way to upgrade LMR systems across the state. This "bottom-up" approach will ensure that each jurisdiction is able to obtain the technologies that best meet their local needs while also ensuring that interoperability is inherent in the solution.

3. **Continue to use the All-Hazards Councils to obtain local input and participation in the plan**

By leveraging the existing All Hazards Council structure, the state will ensure that all entities are represented and able to participate in the preparation and maintenance of the SCIP. The councils meet regularly to discuss region public safety concerns, and the SCIP will ensure that interoperability remains at the forefront of those concerns.

The All Hazards Councils will act as the interface between the local users community and the HSTF Communications Sub-committee. As agencies or jurisdictions have questions regarding interoperability, they will first bring the question to their regional All Hazards Council. If further clarification is needed, the question will be sent to the HSTF Communications Sub-committee for consideration. For example, a county could use this process in the purchase of a new radio system. While the state cannot mandate how a jurisdiction can spend their own funds, the state will provide assistance to ensure the jurisdiction is able to obtain the interoperability they desire.

Methodology

Cross-jurisdiction and cross-disciplinary participation is obtained in two ways during this process:

1. The HSTF Communications Sub-committee is comprised of members from various disciplines and jurisdictions.
2. The All-Hazards Councils are comprised of representatives from every local jurisdiction in the state. This is a forum where anyone can provide their input to the State.

Participation will be sustained through the HSTF Communications Sub-committee and the All Hazards Councils. These are already established groups with regular participation. The only Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) currently in existence is the one for the Atlanta UASI. Therefore, this TICP will be the model for any other TICP created in the state.

Strategy

Full implementation of the Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan will provide users around the state with two key tools:

1. The Georgia Interoperability Network (GIN) will provide a technological baseline for all users in the state. This will guarantee a minimum level of interoperability that will allow individual jurisdictions and agencies, as well as regional groups, to implement the communications technologies that best meet their needs, while not isolating them from their mutual aid partners.
2. A cooperative support framework will be in place to make interoperability easier to consider in future communications endeavors, both technical and operational. The HSTF Communications Sub-committee, in conjunction with the All Hazards Councils, will create the template, frameworks, and procedures to assist in the following areas:

- a. Technical assistance to ensure interoperability of new systems, with the hope that these systems will one day grow into a statewide network of systems.
- b. Standard operating procedure creation at the state, regional, and local levels.
- c. Assistance in the integration of interoperable communications into training and exercise efforts.

By enabling the end users rather than dictating a certain way of doing things, the state will ensure that local public safety personnel have the support necessary to respond to their local needs in the best way possible for their situation. This common framework will ensure consistency across the state and make seamless cooperation between multiple agencies and jurisdictions possible.

The mission of the HSTF Communications Sub-committee is to enable individual agencies and jurisdictions to address interoperability on a local and regional basis in ways that best meet their unique needs. The Committee, either itself or through subcommittees formed in cooperation with the All Hazards Councils, will create the frameworks to enable local, regional, and statewide interoperability. The frameworks will include both documentation (such as templates for SOPs) and processes (such as technical advice for interoperable communications purchases).

The goals and objectives for this plan include:

1. Complete GIN project.
2. Continue to promote standards-based regional radios systems.
3. Develop statewide interoperability SOPs and tactical plans.
4. Provide framework for development of regional interoperability SOPs and tactical plans.
5. Promote the programming and use of statewide and national interoperability frequencies by all agencies.
6. Integrate interoperability training into current curriculum, particularly for dispatchers.
7. Improve stockpiles of communications equipment and infrastructure replacement capabilities.
8. Continue to integrate interoperability into the training and exercise programs throughout the state.

Interoperability with neighboring states is crucial for mutual aid events. Georgia has already had discussions with all five bordering states, or jurisdictions in those states, about connecting them to the GIN.

Georgia has a number of transit system, bus services and passenger rail systems. In the case of local transit system, interoperability is the responsibility of the local government. However, the GIN provides a way to connect the two communications systems together if they are not already interoperable. Once the local public safety is able to communicate with the transit system, the GIN enables the transit system to interoperate on a statewide basis.

Data interoperability will be obtained through public-private partnerships. Determining the details of these partnerships will be one of the primary responsibilities of the HSTF Communications Sub-committee. Additionally, the HSTF Communications Sub-committee, in conjunction with the full

Homeland Security Task Force, will set up sub-committees to investigate other areas of data interoperability, including common platforms and applications. These applications include: GIS data, criminal background information, and situational awareness information during a crisis situation.

Georgia already has solutions underway or in place that encourage and utilize data interoperability including: GTVC, EMNet, GCIC, GTIP, Rapid ID, DA/Page, 700 MHz.

Ensuring NIMS compliance will be the responsibility of the HSTF Communications Sub-committee. The NIMS compliance of the current plan can be seen in its focus on getting the communication to the incident commander.

The major goals for the State's interoperability efforts are as follows:

1. Complete the build-out of the Georgia Interoperability Network to provide the entire state with a baseline of interoperability, allowing individual agencies and jurisdictions to implement new and cutting edge communications technologies to best meet their needs, while at the same time allowing them to communicate with their mutual aid partners.
2. Complete the CASM survey of statewide communications capabilities and continue with maintenance.
3. Continue to grow regional radio systems to provide seamless interoperability, with the vision that these systems will one day grow into a statewide network of systems.
4. Integrate interoperability into state-provided training.
5. Encourage the development and documentation of SOPs at the regional and state levels.
6. Continue to ensure the involvement of agencies from all levels: city, county, state, and private. The existing successful model of the All Hazards Council will be leveraged to minimize the disruption to current operations.