

Assuring a safer America through
effective public safety communications



SAFECOM is a communications program of the Department of Homeland Security. SAFECOM provides research, development, testing and evaluation, guidance, tools, and templates on interoperable communications-related issues to local, tribal, state, and Federal emergency response agencies

Mission

The tragic events of 9/11 clarified the critical importance of effective emergency responder communication systems. The lack of emergency response interoperability is a long-standing, complex, and costly problem with many impediments to overcome. **Interoperability is the ability of emergency response agencies to talk to one another via radio communication systems—to exchange voice and/or data with one another on demand, in real time, when needed and when authorized.**

While several government programs have made great strides in addressing this issue, much of this work has been disconnected, fragmented, and often conflicting. In an effort to coordinate the various federal initiatives, the SAFECOM program was established by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and approved by the President's Management Council (PMC) as a high priority E-Gov initiative. More specifically, SAFECOM is a communications program within the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC) that provides research, development, testing and evaluation, guidance, tools, and templates on communications-related issues to local, tribal, state, and Federal emergency response agencies working to improve emergency response through more effective and efficient interoperable wireless communications.

Statement of Requirements (SoR)

SAFECOM released the first-ever Statement of Requirements (SoR) for public safety communications interoperability in April 2004. This statement defines future requirements for crucial voice and data communications in day-to-day, task force, and mutual aid operations. The National Institute of Justice's CommTech Program (formerly AGILE) partnered with SAFECOM in formulating and releasing the requirements. In April 2006, SAFECOM released an updated version of the SoR with refinements based on input from the emergency response community.

With the SoR, the Nation's 60,000 emergency response agencies – for the first time – have a **document that serves as a first step toward establishing base-level communications and interoperability standards for all emergency response agencies.**

The SoR is currently a two-volume set. Volume I explains the *qualitative* requirements and identifies the applications and services critical for public safety communications. Volume II describes the *quantitative* requirements and provides detailed quality of service methods of measurement for the applications and services identified in Volume I, along with network parameters to specify the minimum acceptable performance of public safety communications systems carrying these services.

SoR Volume I, Version 1.2 is intended to encourage and facilitate communications industry efforts to align research and development with emergency responder needs. It includes a description of the "system of systems" concept that is central to SAFECOM's efforts to advance emergency response wireless interoperability. **This approach, which is based on interface standards, gives emergency response agencies the flexibility to select equipment that best meets their unique technical requirements and budget constraints, and allows systems owned and operated by different emergency response agencies to communicate without having to purchase equipment from the same manufacturer.**