Frequently Asked Questions

This page contains a comprehensive list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) that pertain not only to the NCS but also to the various services and programs that we offer.

FAQ Index

▸ National Communications System (NCS) FAQ
▸ National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee (NSTAC) FAQ
▸ National Communications System Committee of Principals (COP) FAQ
▸ National Communications System Issuance System FAQ
▸ National Coordinating Center for Telecommunications (NCC) FAQ
▸ Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS)
▸ Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) Program
▸ Wireless Priority Service (WPS)
▸ SHAred RESources (SHARES) High Frequency Radio Program
▸ NCS Priority Telecommunications Service Center
▸ Emergency Support Function #2 Training Conferences
▸ NCS Augmentee Program
▸ Network Design and Analysis Capability (NDAC)
▸ Advanced Technologies Group (ATG)
▸ Telecommunications Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center

---

National Communications System (NCS) FAQ

▸ What is the mission of the National Communications System (NCS)?
▸ What is the current structure of the NCS?
▸ Who is the Executive Agent?
▸ Who is the Manager?
▸ Who is the Deputy Manager?
▸ Who is the Director of the National Communications System?
▸ Where does the NCS reside organizationally within the Department of Homeland Security?
▸ What are National Security and Emergency Preparedness (NS/EP) communications?
▸ Describe the link between Government and industry. What roles and relationships does each have in the NCS?

What is the mission of the National Communications System (NCS)?
The mission of the NCS is to assist the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, the Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Office of Management and Budget, in the coordination of the planning for and provisioning of national security and emergency preparedness communications for the Federal Government under all circumstances, including crisis or emergency, attack, recovery and reconstitution.

NCS FAQ Index   FAQ Index

What is the current structure of the NCS?
On April 3, 1984, President Ronald Reagan signed Executive Order (E.O.) 12472 which defined the NCS' national security and emergency preparedness (NS/EP) capabilities and superseded President Kennedy's original 1963 memorandum that established the NCS. The NCS expanded from its original six members to an interagency group of 24 Federal departments and agencies, and began coordinating and planning NS/EP telecommunications to support crises and disasters. The NCS membership currently stands at 24 members, with the addition of the Office of the Director for National Intelligence (ODNI) in September 2007.

NCS FAQ Index   FAQ Index

Who is the Executive Agent?
Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano serves as the Executive Agent of the National Communications System. The Secretary of Homeland Security assumed duties of the Executive Agent on March 1, 2003 when sponsorship of the NCS transferred from the Defense Department to the Department of Homeland Security.

NCS FAQ Index   FAQ Index

Who is the Manager?
Rear Admiral Michael A. Brown, the Acting Assistant Secretary for Cybersecurity and Communications (CS&C) in the National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD) for the Department of Homeland Security, is the

Manager of the NCS.

Who is the Deputy Manager?
Mr. James Madon is the NCS Deputy Manager. Mr. Madon is also the Director of the NCS.

Who is the Director of the National Communications System?
Mr. James Madon is the Director of the NCS. He is responsible for the day-to-day policy, technical, and programmatic oversight of all Federal government-wide activities in national security and emergency preparedness communications. Mr. Madon also serves as the Deputy Manager of the NCS.

Where does the NCS reside organizationally within the Department of Homeland Security?
In March 2003, the NCS was placed under the Assistant Secretary for Infrastructure Protection, part of the Under Secretary for Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection (IAIP) Directorate. Following the implementation of the Secretary of Homeland Security's "Second Stage Review" in the fall of 2005, the NCS and National Cyber Security Division (NCSD) moved under the Assistant Secretary for Cyber Security and Telecommunications – part of the Preparedness Directorate. On April 1, 2007, the NCS, along with NCSD and the newly formed Office of Emergency Communications, became part of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Cyber Security and Communications, within the DHS National Protection and Programs Directorate.

What are National Security and Emergency Preparedness (NS/EP) communications ?
NS/EP communications services which are used to maintain a state of readiness or to respond to and manage any event or crisis (local, national, or international) that causes or could cause injury or harm to the population, damage to or loss of property, or degrades or threatens the national security or emergency preparedness posture of the United States.

Describe the link between Government and industry. What roles and relationships does each have in the NCS?
The NCS Committee of Principals (COP) -- and its working body, the Council of Representatives (COR) – represents the member organizations of the NCS. The COP -- formed as a result of Executive Order 12472, provides advice and recommendations through the NCS to the National Security Council on NS/EP telecommunications and its ties to other critical infrastructures. The NCS also participates in industry-Government planning through its work with the President's National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee (NSTAC), the Network Security Information Exchanges (NSIEs), the NCS' National Coordinating Center (NCC), with its Communications Information Sharing and Analysis Center (Comm-ISAC), as well as through the Communications Sector Coordinating Council and Government Communications Coordinating Council.

National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee (NSTAC) FAQ

- What is the National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee (NSTAC)?
- What is the purpose of NSTAC?
- How often does the NSTAC meet?
- Who can be NSTAC members?
- Who currently serves as Chair and Vice Chair of the NSTAC?
- Which companies are currently represented on NSTAC?
- Who or what does the NSTAC principal represent?
- Who is the Designated Federal Official (DFO) for NSTAC and what is the DFO's role?
- What is the Industry Executive Subcommittee (IES)?
- May the IES provide advice to the Government?
- What is the role of the NCS in regards to the NSTAC, the IES and other subcommittees?
- Must the NSTAC, the IES and other subcommittee meetings be open to the public?
- Who may have access to the records of the NSTAC?

What is the National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee (NSTAC)?
The National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee is a committee composed of up to 30 presidentially appointed industry leaders (usually chief executive officers) representing various elements of the telecommunications industry. The NSTAC advises the President on national security telecommunications matters. Executive Order 12382, signed on September 12, 1982, established the NSTAC and the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) governs its operations. In its advisory role to the President, the NSTAC provides industry-based analysis and recommendations on a wide range of policy and technical issues related to telecommunications, information systems, information assurance, infrastructure protection and other NS/EP concerns.

What is the purpose of NSTAC?
The NSTAC provides industry-based analysis and recommendations to the President and the executive branch regarding policy and enhancements to national security and emergency preparedness (NS/EP)

communications.

How often does the NSTAC meet?
The NSTAC conducts face-to-face meetings annually in May to report on its activities and provide recommendations to the President. In addition, the NSTAC membership conducts quarterly meetings via conference calls to discuss ongoing work and potential issues between principals and senior government leaders.

Who can be NSTAC members?
Executive Order 12382 provides for no more than 30 NSTAC members who "shall have particular knowledge and expertise in the field of telecommunications and represent elements of the Nation's telecommunications industry." In addition to the criteria set out in the Executive Order, the FACA requires "balanced" membership. As applied to NSTAC that means not all 30 members should come from the same segment of the telecommunications industry or be from large companies. Only the President may appoint or terminate a member. Any member may resign. .

Who currently serves as Chair and Vice Chair of the NSTAC?
Edward Mueller, Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of Qwest Communications, is the NSTAC Chair. President Bush appointed Mr. Mueller as NSTAC Chair in April 2008.. John Stankey, Group President of Telecom Operations for AT&T, is the NSTAC vice chair.

Which companies are currently represented on NSTAC?
As of November 1, 2008, the following companies are represented on the President's NSTAC:

- AT&T
- Bank of America
- Boeing
- CSC
- Harris Corporation
- Intelsat
- Juniper Networks
- Lockheed Martin
- Microsoft
- Motorola
- National Cable and Telecommunications Association (NCTA)
- Nortel Networks
- Qwest Communications
- Raytheon
- Rockwell Collins
- Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC)
- Telcordia Technologies
- Teledesic
- Tyco Electronics
- United States Telecom Association (USTelecom)
- Verizon Communications
- VeriSign

Who or what does the NSTAC principal represent?
The principal represents the member company. If the President appointed a member to provide advice as an individual, the Government would consider the member as a "Special Government Employee" and subject to the conflict of interest statues. NSTAC members are classified as "representatives." If a principal leaves the company, the company may nominate a new principal for the President's consideration. The former principal does not take the NSTAC membership to his or her new company. Two NSTAC companies that merge may have only one NSTAC principal to represent the surviving company.

Who is the Designated Federal Official (DFO) for NSTAC and what is the DFO's role?
The FACA requires that each Federal advisory committee have what is called a Designated Federal Official. For NSTAC, the DFO is the NCS Manager. The DFO attends or chairs, and adjourns each meeting. No committee meeting may be held in the absence of the DFO or without his advance approval. There is a difference in the duties of the DFO of the NSTAC, a Presidential Federal advisory committee, and non-presidential Federal advisory committees. FACA does not require that the DFO of a presidential advisory committee approve the meeting agenda.

What is the Industry Executive Subcommittee (IES)?
Executive Order 12382 authorizes the NSTAC to establish subcommittees. The NSTAC Principals, in accordance with its committee by-laws, established the IES. The purpose of the IES is to assist the NSTAC on

matters concerning procedures, plans, and policies for the telecommunication and information systems that support national security and emergency preparedness. The IES may establish working group, task forces, and ad-hoc groups to address pertinent issues. Each member of the NSTAC may appoint one member of the IES and an alternate.

May the IES provide advice to the Government?
No. The IES is not a Federal advisory committee. Should it appear to be giving advice, it could become an unauthorized de facto Federal advisory committee. IES members may be polled individually for their opinions and the responses consolidated by the Government. However, the result of the poll of individual IES members does not constitute a formal NSTAC endorsement of a product and should not be represented as such. Only matters voted upon by NSTAC Principals represent NSTAC products

What is the role of the NCS in regards to the NSTAC, the IES and other subcommittees?
Executive Order 12382 assigns the NCS the role of providing staff support and technical assistance to the NSTAC, and therefore the IES and other subcommittees. The NCS Manager is the Designated Federal Official of the NSTAC. The NSTAC bylaws name the NCS Deputy Manager as the non-voting IES Chair. Since the IES is not an advisory committee, the Deputy Manager is not a formal Designated Federal Official.

Must the NSTAC, the IES and other subcommittee meetings be open to the public?
The purpose of the FACA was to allow the public to be aware of the advice its Federal Government was getting and who was giving it. Federal advisory committee meetings are generally required to be open to the public. However, the FACA does contain a national security exception to the general rule and it is on that basis that NSTAC closes most its meetings. IES and other subcommittee meetings are not subject to the openness requirements of the FACA since they are not Federal advisory committees.

Who may have access to the records of the NSTAC?
The FACA established the public's right to be kept informed with respect to the number, purpose, membership, activities and cost of Federal advisory committees. The Federal Register publishes notices of meetings. Unless the meeting is closed for national security reasons, interested persons are permitted to attend. FACA requires that "…the records, reports, transcripts, minutes, appendixes, working papers, drafts, studies, agenda, or other documents which were made available to or prepared for or by each advisory committee shall be available for public inspection." For NSTAC purposes, this means the material presented by the IES to the NSTAC itself, not any subcommittee material, be made available. The NSTAC fulfills this responsibility by posting the reports on its website. Again, a national security exemption may be applied. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) does not apply to the NSTAC since it is not a Federal "agency" subject to that act. Material in the physical possession of the NCS, in its role as the provider of support and assistance to the NSTAC can be deemed NSTAC material and not releasable under FOIA.

National Communications System Committee of Principals (COP) FAQ

What is the Committee of Principals (COP)?
The NCS Committee of Principals (COP) is a Presidentially designated interagency group that provides advice and recommendations on national security and emergency preparedness telecommunications to the Executive Office of the President. High-level Government officials representing Federal operational, policy, regulatory, and enforcement organizations compose the COP. Its diverse representation across 24 Federal departments and agencies embraces the full spectrum of Federal telecommunications assets and responsibilities. As an interagency group, it serves as a forum for members to review, evaluate, and present views and recommendations on current or prospective NCS programs to the Manager, NCS, the Executive Agent (the Secretary of Homeland Security), and the Executive Office of the President (EOP).

What Federal Organizations Maintain Seats on the Committee of Principals

- The Department of State
- The Department of Defense
- The Department of Treasury
- The Department of Justice
- The Department of Commerce
- The Department of Interior

- The Department of Energy
- The Department of Agriculture
- The Department of Health and Human Services
- The Department of Transportation
- The Department of Veterans Affairs
- The Department of Homeland Security
- The Office of the Director for National Intelligence
- The Joint Staff (DOD element)
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (DHS element)
- The National Security Agency (DOD element)
- The Central Intelligence Agency
- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (DOC element)
- The Federal Reserve Board
- The General Services Administration
- The Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- The Federal Communications Commission
- The United States Postal Service

Who chairs the COP?
The Manager of the National Communications System chairs the Committee of Principals.

What are the responsibilities of each COP representative?
The COP member is responsible for providing the position of their parent organization on policy, technical, and programmatic NS/EP telecommunications issues. Principals ensure that written reports, comments, and recommendations are made available to the Committee through the Executive Secretary (the NCS Deputy Manager). Principals also participate as members of subordinate groups, as required, and provide guidance and direction to their respective organizations' representatives

What is the Council of Representatives (COR)?
The Committee of Principals bylaws formally established the Council of Representatives (COR). The COR is a permanent subordinate group which participates in NCS activities. Each department and agency provides a representative to the Council of Representatives (COR). The Office of the Manager, NCS, provides support to the COP, COR, and their subgroups.

How often does the COP meet? What is a COP meeting like?
The COP meets a minimum of twice annually. At these meetings, the COP receives a series of reports, which are designed for action or information. The Committee is asked to recommend forwarding a report or issuance to the Executive Office of the President. It is by the COP's consensus and direction that the majority of the programs and activities of the NCS take place. The COP bylaws outline these procedures.

How is the COR tasked?
As the working group of the COP, the COR meets as needed to address issues put before it by the COP. COR members may also propose initiatives from various sources, for forwarding to the COP. For example, the Executive Office of the President or the Homeland Security Council may task the COP to investigate a specific area and produce recommendations for action. The Committee, in turn, often tasks the COR to study that area and provide a report within a specific period of time. The COR may convene a subcommittee to fulfill the COP's request. As another example, the OMNCS may present or initiate a new program for consideration by the COR and the COP. Alternatively, an NCS member organization may present a briefing for NCS consideration.

Does the COP have subcommittees?
As needed, the COP or COR establishes working groups or implementation teams to address specific issues and technical matters. These subordinate working bodies play an important role in the NCS and its evaluation and deployment of NS/EP communications programs.

National Communications System Issuance System FAQ

- ▶ What is an Issuance?
- ▶ What are the various types of Issuances?
- ▶ Who issues the Issuances?
- ▶ Under what authority are Issuances created?
- ▶ To whom are Issuances applicable?
- ▶ Do Issuances expire or can they be amended?

What is an Issuance?
An Issuance is a reference document that implements, establishes, guides, describes or explains organizational responsibilities, authorities, policies, and/or procedures.

What are the various types of Issuances?
There are six types of issuances:

- **Directive** - Establish and implement organizational responsibilities, authorities, policies, and procedures of a continuing nature.

- **Circular** - Promulgate subject matter either pending incorporation into a NCS directive or requiring a one-time action.

- **Manual** - Provide a detailed description, explanation or procedural or technical guidance concerning matter addressed in directives or circulars

- **Handbook** - Provide a detailed description, explanation or procedural or technical guidance concerning matter addressed in directives, circulars or manuals.

- **Notice** - Promulgate immediate subject matter, usually informational, and either pending incorporation into an NCS manual or of transitional interest.

- **Office of the Manager NCS (OMNCS) Office Order** - Implement and provide procedural guidance supplementary to NCS and other directives, manuals, or authority, and outline managerial requirements

Who issues the Issuances?
Directives are issued by the Director, Office of Science and Technology and/or Director, Office of Management and Budget, both of which are part of the Executive Office of the President (EOP). Prior to issuance, the proposed text of the directive is considered by the Committee of Principals (COP), the Executive Agent, NCS, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

Circulars are issued and approved by the Director, Office of Science and Technology and/or Director, Office of Management and Budget, both of which are part of the Executive Office of the President (EOP). Prior to issuance, the proposed text of the circular is considered by the Committee of Principals (COP), the Executive Agent, NCS, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

Manuals are issued by the NCS Manager and are submitted for approval before the COP, Executive Agent, NCS. EOP review may also occur if requested pursuant to paragraph 9e of NCS Directive 1-1.

Handbooks are issued by the NCS Manager and are not considered before the COP, the Executive Agent, NCS, or the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

Notices are issued by the NCS Manager and are not considered before the COP, the Executive Agent, NCS, or the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

Office of the Manager, NCS (OMNCS) Office Orders are issued by the NCS Manager and are not considered before the COP, the Executive Agent, NCS, or the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

Under what authority are Issuances created?
Directives are issued under the authority of Executive Order No. 12472, "Assignment of National Security and Emergency Preparedness Telecommunications Functions," April 3, 1984, Vol. 49, No. 67, Federal Register 13471 (1984), (amended by Executive Order 13286 of 28 February 2003); and NCS Directive 1-1, "National Communications System (NCS) Issuance System," November 30, 1987.

To whom are Issuances applicable?
Directives, Circular, and Manuals are considered binding on the Executive Agent, NCS; Manager, NCS; NCS Committee of Principals and member organizations; and other affected Executive entities.

Handbooks and Notices are considered non-binding. They are not required to be submitted for a formal approval and therefore are not considered binding.

OMNCS Office Orders are only binding on OMNCS internal operations, administration, and personnel.

Do Issuances expire or can they be amended?
Directives remain in effect until superseded or cancelled.

Circulars expire after whichever of the following occurs first

- it is incorporated into a directive
- one year from the date of promulgation, or
- at a specified time period

- at a specified time period

Manuals remain in effect until superseded or cancelled.

Handbooks remain in effect until superseded or cancelled

Notices expire after whichever of the following occurs first,

- it is incorporated into a handbook
- one year from the date of dissemination, or
- at a specified time period

OMNCS Office Orders remain in effect until superseded or cancelled.

Types of NCS Issuances*

Type	Duration	Use	Text Approved/ Considered by	Issued by	Binding or Nonbinding
Directive	Remains in effect until super ceded or cancelled	To establish and implement organizational responsibilities, authorities, policies, and procedures of a continuing nature	COP, EA, APNSA	EOP	Binding
Circular	Expires after: a. Incorporation into a directive, b. One year from date of promulgation, or c. A specified time period	To promulgate subject matter either pending incorporation into a NCS directive or requiring one-time action.	COP, EA, APNSA	EOP	Binding
Manual	Remains in effect until super ceded or cancelled	To provide detailed description, explanation or procedural or technical guidance concerning matters addressing in directives or circulars.	COP, EA, EOP**	NCS MGR	Binding
Handbook	Remains in effect until super ceded or cancelled	Remains in effect until super ceded or cancelled To provide detailed description, explanation or procedural or technical guidance concerning matters addressing in directives, circulars or manuals	-----	NCS MGR	Nonbinding
Notice	Expires after: a. Incorporation into a manual, b. One year from date of promulgation, or c. A specified time period	To promulgate immediate subject matter, usually informational, and either pending incorporation into a NCS manual or of transitional interest	-----	NCS MGR	Nonbinding
OMNCS Office Order	Remains in effect until super ceded or cancelled	To implement and provide procedural guidance supplementary to NCS and other directives, manuals, or authority, and outline managerial require	-----	NCS MGR	Binding on OMNCS internal operations, administration and personnel

Legend: APNSA (Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs); COP (NCS Committee of Principals); EA (Executive Agent, NCS); EOP (Executive Office of the President); NCS MGR (NCS Manager)

* The abbreviated descriptions shown above are subject to the more detailed provisions of NCS Directive 1-1
** EOP review will only occur when requested pursuant to paragraph 9e of NCS Directive 1-1

National Coordinating Center for Telecommunications (NCC) FAQ

▶ What is the National Coordinating Center for Telecommunications (NCC)?
▶ Who is the Manager of the NCC?
▶ Is the NCC a joint effort between the Government and industry?
▶ How many industry members belong to the NCC?
▶ What type of liaison exists between the telecommunications industry and Government representatives in the NCC?
▶ Is there any coordination between the NCC and other similar coordinating centers?
▶ Is the information received in the NCC available to the community at large?

What is the National Coordinating Center for Telecommunications (NCC)?
The National Coordinating Center for Communications is an Industry-Government operations center, established in 1984. The NCC mission is to assist in the initiation of national coordination, restoration, and reconstitution of national security/emergency preparedness (NS/EP) communications service or facilities under all conditions, crises or emergencies. Full and part-time communications industry and Government representatives support the NCC and serve as liaisons with their parent companies or organizations. The cooperation fostered between the communications industry and the Government in the NCC provides an operational focal point for all Government/industry NS/EP communications response across the spectrum of emergencies.

NCC FAQ Index   FAQ Index

Who is the Manager of the NCC?
The Manager of the NCC is Mr. John O'Connor.

NCC FAQ Index   FAQ Index

Is the NCC a joint effort between the Government and industry?
Yes, the NCC is a joint collaborative effort between government and industry. In addition to the NCS, there are nine federal participants (as of 11/10/2008) - Department of State, Department of Defense, Department of Commerce, Department of Energy, HITRAC, Federal Communications Commission, Federal Emergency Management Agency (part of the Department of Homeland Security), Federal Reserve Board, and the General Services Administration.

NCC FAQ Index   FAQ Index

How many industry members belong to the NCC?
There are 51 industry members belonging to the NCC(as of 11/10/2008) – Alcatel·Lucent, Americom, Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials – International, Inc. (APCO International), Arrowhead Global Solutions, Artel, Inc., AT&T, Avici Systems, Inc., Boeing, Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association (CTIA), Cisco Systems, Cincinnati Bell, Comcast Cable, COMPTEL, Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC), Cox Communications, EDS, Eutelsat America, Global Crossing, Globalstar, Inmarsat, Intelsat, Internap, Intrado, Juniper Networks, Level 3 Communications, Lockheed Martin, Mobile Satellite Ventures, Motorola, National Association of Broadcasters, New Skies, Nortel Networks, Northrop Grumman, PAETEC, Qualcomm, Qwest Communications, Raytheon, Satellite Industry Association (SIA), SAVVIS, Inc., Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), Sprint-Nextel, Telecom Industry Association (TIA), T-Mobile, Time Warner, United States Telecom Association (USTelecom), USA Mobility, VeriSign, Verizon, Verizon Business, and Verizon Wireless.

NCC FAQ Index   FAQ Index

What type of liaison exists between the telecommunications industry and Government representatives in the NCC?
The communications industry and the Government staff work together to coordinate support to national security and emergency preparedness issues and to prevent and mitigate impact on the national communications infrastructure.

NCC FAQ Index   FAQ Index

Is there any coordination between the NCC and other similar coordinating centers?
Yes, the NCC coordinates with Federal departments and agencies, and communications companies

NCC FAQ Index   FAQ Index

Is the information received in the NCC available to the community at large?
Information is normally sensitive or proprietary, and not releasable to the public

NCC FAQ Index   FAQ Index

Is the FCC represented in the NCC?
The FCC is one of several Federal partners to the NCC that participate in weekly meetings, and supports the NCC in the event of an emergency.

NCC FAQ Index   FAQ Index

Is there information available on the NCC and the National Communications System?
Information on the NCC is available through its Web Site at http://www.ncs.gov/ncc/

NCC FAQ Index   FAQ Index

Do the major telecommunications companies in the U.S. provide status reports at a regular frequency to the NCC?
Except for regulated reports to the FCC, all reports to the Government, or to other industry, are voluntary. During periods of crisis, NCC industry representatives work closely with the Government to provide updates on telecommunications provisioning and restoration and other issues. Daily voluntary sharing of information occurs within the Telecom-ISAC function of the NCC.

Will the general public be able to call the NCC for information about their telecommunications service?
No. The public should contact their telecommunication providers for problems. Although the NCC will be monitoring potential problems, it is the responsibility of the telecommunications companies to speak about their areas of responsibilities and to interface with their customers. The NCC does not speak on behalf of the telecommunications companies.

Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) FAQ

The Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) list of Frequently Asked Questions is maintained by the GETS Management Team on the GETS website.

Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) Program FAQ

The Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) list of Frequently Asked Questions is maintained by the TSP Management Team on the TSP website.

Wireless Priority Service (WPS) FAQ

The Wireless Priority Service (WPS) list of Frequently Asked Questions is maintained by the WPS Management Team on the WPS website.

SHAred RESources (SHARES) High Frequency Radio Program FAQ

▶ What is the mission and purpose of the SHARES Program?
▶ What is the make-up of the SHARES network?
▶ How does the SHARES program service the Federal Government community?
▶ Who is responsible for the SHARES program? Who manages the everyday operations of SHARES?

What is the mission and purpose of the SHARES Program?
SHARES combines existing high frequency (HF) assets from 99 Federal, state, and industry organizations into a single emergency voice and data message handling network, supporting national security and emergency preparedness (NS/EP) when normal communications are destroyed or unavailable.

What is the make-up of the SHARES network?
As of July 2007, the SHARES network consists of 1,343 HF radio stations, representing 99 Federal, State, and industry resource contributors. There are SHARES stations situated in every state and at 17 overseas locations. Nearly 200 emergency planning and response personnel also participate in SHARES. Over 150 HF frequencies are earmarked for use in SHARES. The NCS also has the ability, if needed, to communicate via non-government emergency radio groups such as SATERN, Maritime Mobile Service Net, REACT, INTERCON, Radio Rescue Net and the Hurricane Watch Net. The National Communication System publishes SHARES HF Radio Bulletin's, to periodically keep members updated on program activities that can be accessed at http://www.ncs.gov/n3/shares.

How does the SHARES program service the Federal Government community?
SHARES provides the Federal community a forum for addressing issues affecting HF radio interoperability. The SHARES HF Interoperability Working Group (IWG), established as a permanent standing committee under the NCS Council of Representatives, is responsible for providing guidance and direction for the SHARES radio network and for fostering interoperability of Federal HF radio systems through examination of regulatory, procedural, and technical issues. The SHARES HF Interoperability Working Group currently consists of 110 members, representing 107 separate participating organizations.

Who is responsible for the SHARES program? Who manages the everyday operations of SHARES?
Overall support for the SHARES HF Radio Program is the responsibility of the Manager, National Communications System. The Chief, Critical Infrastructure Protection Division, Office of the Manager, NCS, is responsible for administering the SHARES program. The Manager, National Coordinating Center for Telecommunications, is responsible for day-to-day operations of SHARES.

NCS Priority Telecommunications Service Center FAQ

▶ What is the purpose of the NCS Priority Telecommunications Service Center?
▶ What organization in Department of Homeland Security implements the Service Center?
▶ What NCS programs and services are administered by the Service Center?
▶ How do NCS customers contact the Service Center?
▶ Can I utilize the Service Center using the worldwide web?
▶ How are the processes of the Service Center being implemented?
▶ Who do I contact for further information on OSSS?

What is the purpose of the NCS Priority Telecommunications Service Center?
The purpose of the Service Center is to enable National Communications System (NCS) customers to acquire information on NCS priority communications services, programs, and operations from a single source by consolidating user support, operational, subscription, and help-desk services

What organization in Department of Homeland Security implements the Service Center?
Within the DHS, Cyber Security & Communications Division, National Protection and Programs, the NCS Technology and Programs Division provides NS/EP priority telecommunications services to Federal, State, local, and tribal governments, industry, and other authorized NS/EP organizations.

What NCS programs and services are administered by the Service Center?
The Service Center administers user and operational support for the following programs:

- **Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS)** - The Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) provides NS/EP personnel emergency access and priority processing in the local and long distance segments of the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN). Its intended use is in an emergency or crisis situation during which the probability of completing a call over normal or other alternate telecommunication means has significantly decreased
- **Wireless Priority Service (WPS)** - The Wireless Priority Service (WPS) provides a means for NS/EP telecommunications users to obtain priority access to available wireless radio channels when necessary to initiate emergency calls.
- **Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) Program** - The Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) Program is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program, managed and operated by the NCS that provides for priority provisioning and restoration of critical NS/EP communications assets/circuits. Critical NS/EP circuits are defined as those that are critical to maintaining a state of readiness for, responding to, or managing telecommunications during an event or crisis that could cause harm to the population, damage property, or threaten the security of the United States.
- **SHAred RESources (SHARES) High Frequency (HF) Radio Program** - SHARES provides a single, interagency emergency message handling system by bringing together existing HF radio resources of Federal, state and industry organizations when normal communications are destroyed or unavailable for the transmission of national security and emergency preparedness information. .

How do NCS customers contact the Service Center?
The Service Center has created a virtual call center, which provides a single number for all NCS customers to call for priority communications services. The Service Center may be contacted by calling 1-866-NCS-CALL [2255], or in the metro Washington, D.C. area at (703)-760-CALL [2255]. This call center provides one centralized access point with multiple selections for the various NCS NS/EP priority telecommunications services.

Can I utilize the Service Center using the worldwide web?
The NCS implemented a consolidated web-based approach for NS/EP priority communications services using a web portal to streamline the application process for access to the NCS programs. The NCS home page will act as the portal and will provide top-level information on the various priority communications services available. Users will then be automatically linked to the appropriate web pages for specific services. NS/EP program, service, and operational information can be obtained via the NCS homepage at http://www.ncs.gov.

How are the processes of the Service Center being implemented?
The architecture used for consolidation of the technical/information processes for all NCS priority telecommunications services/programs administration will utilize web-based technology and a web-based information delivery service. Partitions or other security measures have been established to protect more sensitive information as required.

Who do I contact for further information?
Additional information may be obtained by contacting the NCS Priority Telecommunications Service Center: Telephone: 1-866-NCS-CALL [2255], or in the metro Washington, D.C. area at (703)-760-CALL [2255]; Fax: [(703)-607-4984]; or Website - http://www.ncs.gov.

Emergency Support Function #2 Training Conferences FAQ

▶ What is the role of the National Communications System within the National Response Plan?
▶ What are the ESF #2 Training Conferences?
▶ What is the purpose of the ESF #2 Training Conference?
▶ Who is eligible to attend the ESF #2 Training Conference?

What is the role of the National Communications System within the National Response Plan?
The National Communications System (NCS) is designated as the Primary Agency for implementation of Emergency Support Function (ESF) #2 (Communications) Annex of the *National Response Plan*. ESF #2 supports the restoration of the public communications infrastructure and ensures the provision of Federal communications support to response efforts during Incidents of National Significance. In this role, the NCS ensures that our Nation's communications infrastructure can respond throughout any crisis or emergency condition. The ESF #2 missions are executed by the Emergency Communications Teams (National and Field) (ECT-N and ECT-F) in response to any communications infrastructure crisis or emergency condition. The readiness level of the team is sustained by the semi-annual ESF #2 Training Conferences.

What are the ESF #2 Training Conferences?
The semi-annual ESF #2 Training Conference consist of a myriad of training topics and exercises which are used to educate, exercise and assess the Emergency Communications Team personnel at all proficiency levels. These training conferences ensure that the ECT-N and ECT-F teams are staffed with diverse skills sets that enable successful performance of the ESF #2 missions.

What is the purpose of the ESF #2 Training Conferences?
The conferences provide an opportunity to train and develop the Emergency Communications Team members with diverse, functional telecommunications responder skills, such as, telecommunications management, telephony engineering, spectrum analysis/ management, resource acquisition, and administration. Additionally, the conferences build upon these skills sets by reinforcing classroom instruction with a scenario-driven emergency response exercise. The exercise is designed to replicate the activation, deployment, response and recovery, and deactivation processes that are required for ESF #2 operations during an Incident of National Significance. The exercise phase of the training will:

- Incorporate lessons learned from previous conferences, previous national or regional disasters/emergencies, and other ESF #2 deployments
- Improve on traditional methods for effective communications coordination prior to and immediately following a major disaster

The training agenda for future conferences will include topics, such as, network management, non-terrestrial telecommunications networks, restoration of Land Mobile Radio (LMR) networks, Public Safety Access Point operations, the Stafford Act, the acquisition process, Joint Field Office operations, and state and local government Emergency Operations Center operations. The training will combine classroom lectures with team exercises and off-site tours of government and commercial communications facilities and equipment.

Who is eligible to attend the ESF #2 Training Conferences?
This unique training opportunity is offered to the volunteers from the ESF #2 Support Agencies and the member agencies of the National Communications System. The training provides a forum for educational interaction and team building relationships among the Federal partner agencies and the State and local emergency management officials, tribal officials, and private sector partners. All costs to attend the training events are the responsibility of the attendee's parent agency.

NCS Augmentee Program FAQ

▶ What is the Augmentee Program?
▶ What is the IMA Mission?
▶ Who is an Individual Mobilization Augmentee?
▶ Who sponsors the IMA Program?
▶ What experience is needed?
▶ What training is needed?

What is the Augmentee Program?
The National Communications System (NCS) Drilling Individual Mobilization Augmentee (DIMA) Unit was established in 1988 to provide a cadre of skilled US Army Reserve officers to augment the NCS' emergency response capabilities during an Incident of National Significance, as defined in the *National Response Framework*

What is the IMA Mission?

The NCS IMA Unit provides trained personnel to coordinate the restoration and provisioning of emergency communications services in response to a federal mobilization for an Incident of National Significance (such as natural or man-made disasters, civil crises, and National Security Special Events like the State of the Union address, and presidential inaugurations. The IMA officers become members of the Emergency Support Function #2 (ESF #2) Emergency Communication Teams that are activated to provide communications support for the emergency response operation. The IMA officers may be deployed for duty at the NCS headquarters, FEMA's National and Regional Response Coordination Centers, a state Emergency Operations Center, or a federal Joint Field Office.

Who is an Individual Mobilization Augmentee?
The members of the NCS IMA Unit are US Army Reserve officers (typically Lieutenant Colonels and Colonels) with military and/or civilian training and experience in communications planning and operations; information system planning and operations; and management of an Operations Center. The NCS IMA Unit is based in Arlington, VA; however, the assigned personnel are geographically dispersed throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. Each officer conducts an individualized training program to maintain skill proficiency and participates in NCS-sponsored training events to maintain readiness for operational deployments.

Who sponsors the IMA Program?
The Department of the Army / US Army Reserve sponsors the DIMA program in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security / National Communications System. The US Army Reserve Human Resources Command (St. Louis, MO) assigns officers to the Unit in response to staffing requests submitted by the NCS.

What experience is needed?
The IMA officers are normally US Army Signal Corps field grade officers with staff officer experience and organizational skills that are adaptable to an Operations Center environment. Successful IMAs are self-starters who can work with little or no supervision, have strong communications skills (verbal and written), and training/experience in the fields of communications and information system planning and operations.

To be fully functional in their assigned positions within the Emergency Communications Teams, the IMAs must obtain experience in or knowledge of the following:

- National security and emergency preparedness (NS/EP) telecommunications procedures
- Emergency preparedness and response operating procedures
- Communications planning and operations in support of the National Response Plan
- NCS organization, functions, authorities, and intergovernmental relationships
- Application of Telecommunications Service Priority for the restoration and provisioning of commercial telecommunications services
- Use of automated resources to manage and track NS/EP actions, and prepare accurate, timely reports to summarize emergency operations.

What training is needed?
IMAs assigned to the NCS IMA Unit will attend an initial orientation at the NCS headquarters in Arlington, VA. The orientation will address the organization and mission of the NCS, and the priority telecommunications programs that are provided to ensure the availability of communications services during an emergency. Each IMA will also develop an individualized Inactive Duty Training (IDT) program that may consist of distance learning courses sponsored by the FEMA Emergency Management Institute or other training institutions. The IDT program for each IMA is funded for forty-eight 4-hour Battle Assemblies ("drills") each fiscal year.

In addition, as reservists, the IMAs will complete an Annual Training (AT) assignment that encompasses a 2-week period each fiscal year. The Annual Training assignments provide an opportunity to ensure the IMAs receive training or exposure to the duties they will be assigned during an actual deployment.

Network Design and Analysis Capability (NDAC) FAQ

What is the NDAC?
The Network Design and Analysis Capability (NDAC) is a modeling and analysis suite of tools designed to view the public switched network (PSN) [including the public switched telephone network (PSTN), Internet Protocol (IP) and next generation packet networks, and wireless, satellite and cable infrastructures] under various stress conditions. Software resources include the telecommunications databases, tools, and models used to assess network performance, perform modeling and simulation, and visualize network topologies. The NCS continuously refines and expands the NDAC's analysis capabilities through algorithm development, software updates, the acquisition of new data sets, and application module development.

Why was the NDAC developed?
NCS originally developed the NDAC because of heavy NS/EP reliance on the PSTN. It was designed to detect and help mitigate damage caused by accident or attack and to assist in network reconstitution efforts. With the advent of the Internet and subsequent Federal dependence on its infrastructure, the NDAC underwent extensive refurbishment to enable an adjunct Internet Analysis Capability (IAC). The IAC draws from a mix of open source, third-party, and proprietary tools and datasets and is used to visualize network topologies, assess network performance, and identify and assess risks to the Internet's logical networks or physical assets. The entire suite comprising the NDAC works to model natural and man-made disruptions to the PSN and enables the NCS to perform vendor independent analyses, develop models and methodologies to identify vulnerabilities and congestion, identify critical infrastructures' dependence on telecommunications, and identify network effectiveness solutions.

What features does the NDAC support?

- Infrastructure Mapping Tool: provides telecommunications infrastructure analyses with geographic information system (GIS) capabilities for incident management, decision support, and status tracking
- Internet Analysis Tool: provides analysis capabilities to assess Internet infrastructure and performance including, but not limited to, connectivity and congestion; part of larger Internet Analysis Capability (IAC), which incorporates COTS products to enhance analyses

What are some examples of specific tools that the NDAC provides?

- NS/EP communications planning
- Custom modeling/simulation studies under a variety of conditions
- PSN dependability and access analyses
- Examine effect of new technologies on the PSTN and Internet infrastructures
- Laboratory test bed perspectives on network performance resulting from emerging technologies
- Flexibility to customize network architectures and routing schemes, introduce new carrier network data, and emulate the effects of emerging technologies

What are some examples of current studies using the NDAC?

- Priority Services in Next Generation Networks (NGN) Study - provide timely quantitative analyses of specific NGN GETS Industry Requirements issues; develop and exercise models that track longer term industry capabilities; test the effectiveness (performance, security, availability) of candidate NS/EP protocol and technology enhancements through prototype development and experiments; integrate prototyping capability and modeling team activities to support GETS program requirements
- Internet Analysis Study - characterize the Internet connectivity and infrastructure across government and corporate institutional assets; determine what events or incidents could disrupt or deny Internet services to critical facilities; perform vulnerability assessments on networks belonging to critical government and corporate facilities

---

Advanced Technologies Group (ATG) FAQ

What is the Advanced Technologies Group (ATG) and what is its mission?
The ATG is a team under the Technologies and Programs Branch of the National Communications System. Their mission is to look at technologies across the board that could have an impact on the source and use of telecommunications resources by the Federal Government in periods of stress and national crisis.

What work does the ATG do?
The ATG works on: Telecommunication Electromagnetic Disruptive Effects (TEDE), Satellite Communications (SATCOM), NCS Directive 3-10, Continuity of Communications Architecture (CCA), Emergency Communications (EC) initiatives, and ad hoc technical analysis for upper management on matters that affect Government policy.

What is TEDE?
Telecommunication Electromagnetic Disruptive Effects (TEDE) refers to the disruptive effects that an electromagnetic source could have on a telecommunications system or device. The sources of these effects include Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP), Magneto Hydro Dynamic (MHD), High Power Microwave (HPM), High Altitude Electromagnetic Pulse (HEMP), Directed Energy Systems (DES), Coronal Mass Ejections (CME), and Atmospheric Lightning.

The Federal Code of Regulations (C.F.R.), Title 5, part 215 assigns the Executive Agent of the National Communications System as the Federal Government's focal point for EMP technical data and studies concerning telecommunications.

What is SATCOM?
SATCOM work within the ATG refers to the study of vulnerabilities to natural or manmade events on the space, terrestrial, or control systems of satellite communications. These events have the potential to disrupt key communications supporting NS/EP.

What is NCS Directive 3-10?
The NCS developed NCS Directive 3-10 in coordination with the Office of Science & Technology Policy (OSTP), the Committee of Principals, and other department and agencies of the Federal Government. This directive describes the Minimum Requirements for Continuity Communications enabling departments and agencies to execute their mission essential functions. The NCS also developed engineering implementation guidance to assist in this effort.

What is CCA?
Continuity of Communications Architecture (CCA) is an ongoing project that will represent a system of systems interconnecting the minimum communications described in NCS Directive 3-10.

What is EC?
Under Emergency Communications (EC), the ATG participates in interagency efforts such as the identification of early warning communications for the nation and activities in compliance with the Warning, Alert, and Response Network (WARN) Act. EC also supports communications-based detection system pilots such as RED CELL.

What is RED CELL?
Red cell is a pilot program that uses the cellular communications infrastructure to provide an early detection system for Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) attacks.

What type of ad hoc studies does the ATG do?
The ATG tackles a wide variety of projects supporting the identification and mitigation of NS/EP communications system or support system (i.e., terrestrial, wireless, or space-based systems) vulnerabilities. They identify aspects of systems that may influence Government-wide policy and often participate on NSTAC or COP working groups, such as the Communications Dependency on Electrical Power (CDEP) working group.

Communications Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center FAQ

- What is the mission of the COMM ISAC?
- What are the operational goals of the COMM ISAC?
- What criteria must companies meet for membership in the ISAC?
- Who are the members of the COMM ISAC?
- How is information shared among the COMM ISAC members
- Is there a watch function to support the COMM ISAC?

What is the mission of the COMM ISAC?
The COMM ISAC mission is to facilitate voluntary collaboration and information sharing among Government and industry in support of Executive Order 12472 and the national critical infrastructure protection goals; to gather information on vulnerabilities, threats, intrusions, and anomalies from multiple sources and perform analysis with the goal of averting or mitigating impact upon the telecommunications infrastructure. The scope of the COMM ISAC's mission is all hazards, which include natural and man-made disasters and physical and cyber attacks.

What are the operational goals of the Telecom-ISAC?
COMM ISAC Operational Goals:

- Be an honest and impartial information broker
- Facilitate voluntary collaboration to support both Government and industry information sharing

requirements
- Foster working liaisons with external sources and liaison partners
- Add value - provide information not available elsewhere, filter appropriately, perform high quality analysis
- Ensure protection of information and the rights of data owners

COMM ISAC FAQ Index   FAQ Index

What criteria must companies meet for membership in the ISAC?
Membership is open to companies that provide communications or network services, equipment or software to the communications and information sector and to select professional associations or companies with participation/presence in the communications and information sector. Currently, the COMM ISAC membership consists of forty-five companies and six associations that together represent the majority of the communications infrastructure.

COMM ISAC FAQ Index   FAQ Index

Who are the members of the COMM ISAC?
Participating Industry Members: Alcatel·Lucent, Americom, Arrowhead Global Solutions, Artel, Inc., AT&T, Avici Systems, Inc., Boeing, Cisco Systems, Cincinnati Bell, Comcast Cable, COMPTEL, Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC), Cox Communications, EDS, Eutelsat America, Global Crossing, Globalstar, Inmarsat, Intelsat, Internap, Intrado, Juniper Networks, Level 3 Communications, Lockheed Martin, Mobile Satellite Ventures, Motorola, New Skies, Nortel Networks, Northrop Grumman, PAETEC, Qualcomm, Qwest Communications, Raytheon, SAVVIS, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), Sprint-Nextel, T-Mobile, TW Telecom, USA Mobility, VeriSign, Verizon, Verizon Business, and Verizon Wireless.

Six Industry Associations: Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials - International, Inc. (APCO International), Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association (CTIA), National Association of Broadcasters, Satellite Industry Association (SIA), Telecom Industry Association (TIA), and the United States Telecom Association (USTA).

COMM ISAC FAQ Index   FAQ Index

How is information shared among the COMM ISAC members?
All information received from NCC COMM ISAC members and liaison partners is deemed sensitive and proprietary, whether or not it is specifically marked as such. Only the originator of information may approve its release to anyone or any entity. The information owner retains its rights regardless of the location of the information within the NCC COMM ISAC facility.

COMM ISAC FAQ Index   FAQ Index

Is there a watch function to support the COMM ISAC?
The NCS operates the on-site continuous* COMM ISAC watch and analysis operation (WAO). The WAO consists of senior analysts closely integrated with the Government NCC operations staff and industry representatives from COMM ISAC member companies. The COMM ISAC watch and analysis operation serves a dual function as the operational arm of the COMM ISAC and as one of The Department of Homeland Security's Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection watch and analysis centers.

COMM ISAC FAQ Index   FAQ Index

Questions or comments concerning this site? Please contact the webmaster.

Privacy Policy