



Statewide Interoperability Coordinators 2014 Success Stories

Each year brings a variety of new accomplishments and activities from the Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWIC) community. In 2014, the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) collaborated with SWICs on emergency communications projects and initiatives detailed in the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC) Strategic Plan. SWICs continually aim to leverage new technologies, implement best practices, and build their State's emergency communications portfolios through planning, training, and governance. The following paragraphs are a sample of SWIC achievements.

Delaware

In 2014, Delaware's SWIC became heavily involved in certifying new Communications Unit Leaders (COMLs) and Communications Technicians (COMTs), and led the implementation of a standard reprogramming template for all agencies, enabling maximum interoperability. Additionally, Delaware's SWIC worked closely with the Maryland SWIC on cross-border programming for Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services units, which is now utilized on a daily basis. Delaware routinely reviews all radio and communications equipment in the State to ensure interoperability is achieved in a financially-responsible manner. The Office of the SWIC has saved the State thousands of dollars by identifying and correcting errors within contracts, which has resulted in Delaware's school districts purchasing high-quality radios at a lower cost. ■

Florida

The State of Florida, in coordination with the SWIC, successfully utilized the Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans (SCIP) Governance model to establish the State and Local Implementation Grant Program Technical Work Group. Use of this model allowed for effective and efficient participation and information exchange. The State also participated in several OEC Technical Assistance (TA) Program offerings, one of which utilized the updated SCIP format to include Broadband in Florida's communications planning. The draft SCIP has been submitted to the State governing bodies and is pending formal adoption. This new format streamlines the State's ability to accurately track and report progress on an annual basis. ■

Illinois

The Illinois SWIC is dedicated to managing interoperability projects and creating a comprehensive communications strategy for the State. The SWIC oversees alternating biennial updates to the State SCIP and Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TCIP) as well as maintaining 102 county TICPs. The SWIC spearheaded an initiative to place a dedicated communications slot in the State Incident Response Center to ensure communications remain interoperable during responses.

Indiana

The Indiana SWIC has had many recent successes, but one of which has been to develop of a strong Communications Unit (COMU) program. Working within the State governance structure, the SWIC delivered several COML, COMT, and Auxiliary Communications (AUXCOMM) classes in the last few years. Today, more than 100 public safety professionals have taken the COML courses; 43 have taken COMT courses; and 49 have taken AUXCOMM courses. Indiana held a COML Exercise last summer, which almost doubled the number of qualified COMLs in the State. Several additional COMU classes are scheduled this year, including a COMU exercise this fall. ■



COML Training. Photo Courtesy of the U.S. First Responders Association

Iowa

Iowa has two governance bodies relating to public safety communications: an E9-1-1 Communications Council and the Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board (ISICSB), established by legislation in 2007. Previously, Iowa's SWIC facilitated annual updates to Iowa's SCIP by the ISICSB to reflect changes in land-mobile radio (LMR). In recent years, this update has also included elements of public safety broadband. In order to prepare for Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG 9-1-1) in Iowa and FirstNet's deployment of the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN), Iowa's SWIC facilitated the Nation's first joint ISICSB/E9-1-1 SCIP Workshop. This event resulted in a single, unified public safety communications vision for Iowa and a more closely-coordinated working relationship between the two groups on issues relating to the development of a comprehensive communications system in Iowa that incorporates LMR, NG 9-1-1 and NPSBN. ■

Louisiana

The Louisiana Office of the SWIC has had great success leveraging the advantages provided by its statewide Louisiana Wireless Interoperability Network (LWIN) Project 25 (P25) radio network. LWIN's 95 percent State coverage and more than 74,000 users make it an invaluable tool for emergency communications and interoperability. One recent example is the direct interoperability it provides National Weather Service (NWS) offices serving Louisiana's State and local emergency management officials.

The Office of the SWIC, in conjunction with State and local emergency management agencies, has helped to plan and execute communications procedures to allow direct communications between the NWS offices and local Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs). This collaboration provides instant real-time, two-way information sharing as opposed to the standard Emergency Alert System broadcast or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association broadcasts that only provide pre-recorded information from NWS to the EOCs. In addition, Louisiana has coordinated and installed an audio bridge connection between LWIN and the Mississippi Statewide Wireless Interoperability Network to allow the parishes in northeast Louisiana the same communications with NWS Jackson as parishes served by the NWS offices physically within the coverage footprint of the LWIN system. ■

Montana

Montana's Governor signed an Executive Order, effective October 1, 2013, that extends the Statewide Interoperability Governing Body (SIGB) past its initial expiration date and extensively added to Montana's governance structure. The Executive Order directs the SIGB to provide advice on public safety communications issues, such as LMR and the creation of the NPSBN, and adds more broadband stakeholders to the Board's membership. In addition to expanding the SIGB, Montana appointed a new SWIC and FirstNet State Point of Contact. The SIGB used its orders and assistance from OEC to draft a new SCIP, including information on Broadband, which was adopted in June 2014. ■



Hot shot fire crew working on Mt. Charleston. Photo Courtesy of 8 News Now

Nevada

The Nevada Office of the SWIC oversaw the implementation of The Nevada Core Systems network of 16 interoperable talk groups. This venture established an inter-local agreement between participating systems throughout the State. As a result, common channel designations, procedures, and programming instructions have been set for the five largest public-safety radio systems in the State, covering over 95% of the population. Users anywhere within range of their home system may communicate directly with users on partner systems. This project complements a growing network of VHF-to-800 MHz cross band repeaters, strategically located throughout the State, providing interoperability between many rural users (typically on VHF) and State and urban mutual aid (on 800 MHz). This communications coordination and the expertise of COML and COMT trained responders is credited with minimizing the loss of life and damage to property caused by the Carpenter 1 Fire, one of the worst wildfires to impact Nevada in decades. ■

New Hampshire

Over the past several months, New Hampshire has adopted a formalized Charter and a Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) to oversee and provide recommendations on advances in communications interoperability as well address the implementation of the NPSBN by FirstNet. In March 2014, the State completed an OEC TA offering on Broadband Overview and Education, which allows New Hampshire to embrace the next generation of communications. ■

North Dakota

In 2010, a gap study was performed and identified the need for 12 additional towers. A previous tower was added in Wales, and the State purchased necessary licenses to build towers at Peer Creek, Hannaford, Marmarth, and Esmond locations. The North Dakota Office of the SWIC is overseeing the deployment of a new communications system that will be used by counties to notify residents of significant events. Deployment and training on the system is expected to begin in the Fall of 2014. ■

Oklahoma

Oklahoma is one of the only States in the Nation to implement a statewide COML and COMT Credentialing Program. The Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security, in conjunction with the SIGB and the SWIC, built the program from the ground up. At present, there are nine certified COMLs and five certified COMTs available to serve during incidents and at planned events across the State. The refined skill and unparalleled dedication of these individuals were called upon in the aftermath of the EF5 tornado that tore through the city of Moore, Oklahoma on May 20th, 2013. Critical communications systems were damaged and overloaded as a large number of first responders poured into the affected area, highlighting the need for the leadership and expertise Oklahoma's COMU personnel brings to the table. Two state-certified COMTs were among the first to arrive on the scene to assess the infrastructure damage, while the lead COML issued out cache radios, requested additional resources, and drafted the ICS-205 Communications Plan. The experience and knowledge of the COMU played an enormous role in the success of the communications response to this event, and proved, once again, to be an invaluable asset to a State prone to major natural disasters. While interoperability remains a challenge in the State of Oklahoma, the State's public safety community is fortunate to have the resources of well-trained and highly-qualified communications specialists in times of need. For more information on Oklahoma's COML/COMT Program, visit the Oklahoma Interoperable Communications website at www.ioc.ok.gov. ■

Tennessee

The Tennessee office of the SWIC oversaw the development of the Tennessee Advanced Communications Network (TACN) in East Tennessee. Plans and funding have been put in place for additional deployment in the rest of the state. TACN is a Project 25 capable system that will replace Tennessee's current system, built in the 1970s. To complement TACN, Tennessee has organized communications strike teams, capable of responding to incidents as needed. COML training for responders has also been reflected in the high percentage of communications plans for responses and events. ■

Contribute Success Stories

If you would like to contribute stories highlighting recent success in your State to be included in future editions of this document, please contact NCSWICGovernance.

Wisconsin

The Wisconsin SIEC has statutory authority to advise the State Departments of Justice and Military Affairs on allocating funds, including those available for homeland security, for the purpose of achieving a statewide public safety interoperable communication system. As a result, the Wisconsin SWIC has a voting seat on the Wisconsin Homeland Security Funding Advisory Council, which recommends annual spending of homeland security funds to the Adjutant General. Having the SWIC on the council has enabled Wisconsin to provide millions of dollars towards interoperable communications funding over the past decade. Additionally, in Federal fiscal year 2014, 22 percent of the available funding went directly to interoperable communications programs. ■

Texas

The Texas Office of the SWIC has accomplished several initiatives over the last year. The 2013 Texas Department of Public Safety Report on Interoperable Communications to the Texas Legislature has been completed, and is posted on the [TxDPS website](http://TxDPS.com). More than 80 system owners, managers, and users attended the first annual Trunked System Owners meeting. The meeting supported a range of session topics, such as adopting a Statewide Radio ID plan that will be incorporated into the Texas Statewide Interoperability Channel Plan and developing Interoperability Talk Groups, encryption, and system key management.

Outreach and education remain priorities for the Texas Office of the SWIC. For instance; the office has presented at 20 conferences and has made 22,406 contacts with potential users. Texas concluded the first of 24 Regional Broadband Planning meetings to be held in each Council of Government's area. The Texas Office of the SWIC also met with one of three Tribal Nations in the State, with two more scheduled. Because of the importance of training and preparation, and the great size of Texas, a priority has been placed on ensuring local jurisdictions' capabilities. The SWIC's training team has developed a train-the-trainer course entitled, "Creating a Radio Usage and Interoperability Training Program," with the goal of providing participants with an overview of the minimal components necessary to establish and provide initial and sustained training in the fundamentals of radio equipment use associated with their particular jurisdiction. ■