

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) announces the release of the Formal Agreement and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Template Suite and Reference Library. These resources provide great value to the emergency response community, helping to guide the effective and efficient development of formal agreements and SOPs among interoperable communications stakeholders. The Template Suite and Reference Library also assist the Nation in meeting its interoperable communications milestones as outlined in the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP). In particular, their release satisfies NECP Milestones 1.1.1 and 3.3.41, which state,

“DHS will establish a central repository of model formal agreements (i.e., Memoranda of Agreement [MOA], Memoranda of Understanding [MOU], and Mission Assignments) and information that will enhance interstate and intrastate coordination.”

“DHS identifies and refines model SOPs for emergency communications during specific types of incidents and all-hazards response (beyond tactical communications).”

The Formal Agreement and SOP Template Suite, which is available on the National Interoperability Information eXchange website at www.niix.org and the SAFECOM website at <http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/tools/templatesuite>, includes guidance documents for the creation of a:

- Charter
- Executive Order
- State to Local MOU
- Local to Local MOU
- System-to-System Console Patch SOP
- Mobile Gateway SOP
- Shared Channel SOP
- Shared System SOP
- Radio Cache SOP

Each guidance document is divided into two parts. Part I highlights sample language, reference formal agreements/SOPs, and “Questions to Consider” when creating a formal agreement or SOP. Part II provides a template with “blanks” and customizable pre-populated language that stakeholders can tailor to meet the needs of their formal agreement or SOP.

The Formal Agreement and SOP Reference Library, which is only available at www.niix.org, contains over two hundred formal agreement and SOP examples provided by public safety stakeholders from across the country. When using the Template Suite to construct a formal agreement or SOP, emergency responders are encouraged to leverage the real-world examples contained within the Reference Library as these resources are most effective when used in conjunction with one another. When referencing these examples, stakeholders should recognize that inclusion in the Reference Library does not constitute an official endorsement on the part of DHS.

In announcing the release of the Template Suite and Reference Library, I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the vital role the emergency response community played in shaping their development. All documents contained in the Reference Library were collected earlier this year from stakeholders responding to OEC’s nationwide solicitation of formal agreements and SOPs relating to communications interoperability. Working groups comprised of stakeholders vetted each of the Template Suite’s nine guidance documents. And the Reference Library would not be accessible online without the help of the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council (NPSTC), who recognized that this important resource would be beneficial to the emergency responders who visit their NIIX website.

The Formal Agreement and SOP Template Suite and Reference Library are a testament to the importance OEC places on producing materials that are stakeholder-driven. This engagement with the emergency response community makes me confident that you will find the Formal Agreement and SOP Template Suite and Reference Library valuable. If, however, you should have any feedback to offer concerning either the Template Suite or Reference Library, please do not hesitate to contact OEC at OEC@hq.dhs.gov.