

NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM
701 South Court House Road
Arlington, Virginia 22204-2198

NCS DIRECTIVE 4-3

TECHNOLOGY AND STANDARDS

Interoperability of Telecommunications in Support of National
Security and Emergency Preparedness (NS/EP)

1. Purpose. This Directive establishes the policy by which the National Communications System (NCS) supports national security and emergency preparedness (NS/EP) objectives by seeking to ensure the interoperability of NS/EP telecommunications assets among Federal Government departments, agencies, or entities, and other affected Executive entities.
2. Applicability. This Directive is binding upon the Executive Agent, NCS; Manager, NCS; NCS Committee of Principals and member organizations; and other affected Executive entities.
3. Authority. This directive is issued pursuant to Executive Order No. 12472 (E.O. 12472) "Assignment of National Security and Emergency Preparedness Telecommunications Functions," April 3, 1984; Volume 49, No. 67 Federal Register 13471, and NCS Directive 1-1, "National Communications System (NCS) Issuance System," November 30, 1987.
4. References:
 - a. Executive Order 12472 (E.O. 12472) "Assignment of National Security and Emergency Preparedness Telecommunications Functions," April 3, 1984; Volume 49, No. 67 Federal Register 13471.
 - b. Executive Order 12656 (E.O. 12656) "Assignment of Emergency Preparedness Responsibilities," November 18, 1988; Volume 53, No. 288 Federal Register 47491.
 - c. NCS Directive 2-1, "National Security Emergency Preparedness (NS/EP) Telecommunications Planning Process."
 - d. NCS Directive 3-1, "Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) System for National Security Emergency Preparedness (NSEP)."
 - e. NCS Directive 4-1, "Federal Telecommunications Standards Program," February 21, 1991.

f. White House Memorandum, Subject: "National Communications System Interoperability (E.O. 12472)," January 9, 1989.

5. Cancellation/Supersession. Initial publication.

6. Definitions. Terms used in this directive are defined in Appendix A.

7. Policy.

a. The National Communications System (NCS) will use the National telecommunications infrastructure for the national security and emergency preparedness needs of the President and the Federal departments, agencies, or entities and other Executive entities, that support the national security leadership and is consistent with other national telecommunications policies to the maximum extent possible.

b. A National telecommunications infrastructure is available that is based on commercial standards, practices, and network operations.

8. Responsibilities.

a. The Executive Agent, NCS Shall:

(1) Ensure NCS compliance with reference (a) for the interoperability of telecommunications assets for NS/EP purposes.

(2) Consider and approve other issuances to ensure the interoperability of telecommunications assets for NS/EP purposes.

(3) Review and provide comments regarding telecommunications interoperability concepts, plans, procedures, processes, and policies, for NS/EP purposes, to the Executive Office of the President.

b. The Manager, NCS Shall:

(1) In coordination with the NCS Committee of Principals and the Executive Agent, NCS, develop plans, procedures, standards, and processes for minimizing or removing impediments to the interoperability of government-owned and commercially-provided telecommunications assets for NS/EP purposes.

(2) In coordination with the NCS Committee of Principals, develop a process by which NCS member organizations ensure that requisite intra- and interagency telecommunications assets are interoperable for NS/EP purposes.

(3) Assist NCS member organizations in implementing the developed interoperability plans, procedures, standards, and processes developed for telecommunications assets for NS/EP purposes.

c. The NCS Committee of Principals Shall:

(1) In coordination with the Manager, NCS, develop a process by which the NCS member organizations will ensure the interoperability of requisite intra- and interagency telecommunications assets for NS/EP purposes.

(2) Review and provide comments regarding the interoperability of NS/EP telecommunications assets, concepts, plans, procedures, standards, and processes affecting NS/EP activities, to the Executive Agent, NCS.

(3) Consider other issuances for the interoperability of telecommunications assets for NS/EP purposes.

d. The NCS Member Organizations Shall:

(1) Ensure that adequate intra- and interagency NS/EP telecommunications interoperability exists to enable the performance of assigned NS/EP functions.

(2) Implement, with the assistance of the Manager, NCS, plans, procedures, standards, and processes developed for telecommunications assets for NS/EP purposes.

9. Authorizing Provision. NCS manuals, handbooks, and notices implementing this directive are authorized.

10. Effective Date. This directive is effective immediately.

11. Expiration Date. This directive will remain in effect until superseded or canceled.

1 Appendix:
Definitions

Director
Office of Science and Technology Policy
Date:

Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Date:

Summary of changes: Initial issuance.

APPENDIX: Definitions

Definitions have been derived from Federal Standard 1037B.

Interoperability. 1. The ability of systems, units, or forces to provide services to and accept services from other systems, units, or forces and to use the services so exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together. 2. The condition achieved among communications-electronics systems or items of communications-electronics equipment when information or services can be exchanged directly and satisfactorily between them and/or their users. The degree of interoperability should be defined when referring to specific cases. 3. The ability to exchange data in a prescribed manner and the processing of such data to extract intelligible information that can be used to control/coordinate operations.

National Communications System. 1. The organization established by Section 1(a) of Executive Order No. 12472 to assist the President, the National Security Council, the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, in the discharge of their national security emergency preparedness telecommunications functions. The NCS consists of both the telecommunications assets of the entities represented on the NCS Committee of Principals and an administrative structure consisting of the Executive Agent, the NCS Committee of Principals, and the Manager. 2. The telecommunications system that results from the technical and operational integration of the separate telecommunications systems of the several Executive branch departments and agencies having a significant telecommunications capability.

NS/EP Telecommunications. Telecommunications services that 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 degrade or threaten the national security /or emergency preparedness posture of the United States.

System. 1. Any organized assembly of resources and procedures united and regulated by interaction or interdependence to accomplish a set of specific functions. 2. A collection of personnel, equipment, and methods organized to accomplish a set of specific functions.