

The Communications Sector Partnership with Government

The Communications Sector has a long history of cooperation within its membership and with federal government with respect to national security and emergency preparedness. This history distinguishes the Communications Sector from most other critical sectors identified in the National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP). The sector personifies cooperation and trusted relationships that have resulted in the delivery of critical services when emergencies and disasters occur. This strong bond exists largely because of three organizations that have been created in response to earlier threats to the nation's critical infrastructure. Collectively, these organizations, in concert with the National Communications System (www.ncs.gov) which serves as the Sector Specific Agency for the Communications Sector, provide the *policy, planning and operations* framework necessary to address the nation's communications priorities.

Policy - The National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee (NSTAC) The NSTAC (www.ncs.gov/nstac/nstac.html) was created in 1982 by Executive Order 12382. It provides a highly successful example of how industry helps direct government decisions around national security and emergency preparedness communications (NS/EP). NSTAC is comprised of up to 30 chief executives from major telecommunications companies, network service providers, information technology, finance, and aerospace companies. Through a deliberative process, they provide the President with recommendations intended to assure vital telecommunications links through any event or crisis, and to help the U.S. Government maintain a reliable, secure, and resilient national communications posture. Key areas of NSTAC focus include: strengthening national security; enhancing cyber security; maintaining the global communications infrastructure; assuring communications for disaster response; and, addressing critical infrastructure interdependencies. Recent reports to the President addressed the physical security of core networks, Internet Protocol-based priority services, and the reliance of commercial communications on the global positioning system.

Planning - Communications Sector Coordinating Council (C-SCC) The C-SCC (www.commscc.org) was chartered in calendar year 2005. It was established to help coordinate initiatives to improve the physical and cyber security of sector assets; to ease the flow of information within the sector, across sectors and with designated Federal agencies; and to address issues related to response and recovery following an incident or event. The 40 members of the C-SCC broadly represent the sector and include cable, commercial and public broadcasters, information service providers, satellite, undersea cable, utility telecom providers, service integrators, equipment vendors, and wireless and wireline owners and operators and their respective trade associations. In 2006, the C-SCC completed its Sector Specific Plan (SSP) which identified high-level, nationally critical architecture elements. In 2008, the C-SCC completed its work on the National Sector Risk Assessment (NSRA) as prescribed by the National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP). Its other activities have included the development of a Communications Pandemic Influenza Planning Guideline for owners and operators as well as a webinar on the topic, the advancement of access and credentialing solutions and the implementation of emergency wireless protocols. The C-SCC and IT Sector Coordinating Councils maintain close coordination on a range of policy and operational initiatives.

Operations - National Coordinating Center for Telecommunications (NCC) Communications Information Sharing and Analysis Center (C-ISAC) In 1982, federal government and telecommunications industry officials identified the need for a joint mechanism to coordinate the initiation and restoration of national security and emergency preparedness telecommunications services. In 1984, Executive Order 12472 created the NCC (www.ncs.gov). This organization's unique industry - government partnership advances collaboration on operational issues on a 24 X 7 basis and coordinates NS/EP responses in times of crisis. Since 2000, the NCC's Communications Information Sharing and Analysis Center (C-ISAC), comprised of 51 industry member companies, has facilitated the exchange of information among government and industry participants regarding vulnerabilities, threats, intrusions and anomalies affecting the telecommunications infrastructure. Weekly meetings of industry and government members are held to share threat and incident information. During emergencies, daily or more frequent meetings are held with industry and government members involved with the response effort. Recent events requiring NCC C-ISAC involvement include the 2009 Presidential Inauguration, the 2008 undersea cable disruptions and the 2008 hurricane season, among others.