



Homeland
Security

Fact Sheet

National Communications System

Purpose: The National Communications System (NCS), part of the Department of Homeland Security's Preparedness Directorate, consists of 24 Federal member departments and agencies and is responsible for ensuring the availability of a viable national security and emergency preparedness (NS/EP) communications infrastructure.

Member Organizations: Department of State, Department of the Treasury, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, Department of the Interior, United States Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Transportation, Department of Energy, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Director for National Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, The Joint Staff, General Services Administration, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, National Security Agency, United States Postal Service, Federal Reserve Board, Federal Communications Commission.

Background: On August 21, 1963, President John F. Kennedy signed a Presidential Memorandum establishing the NCS and defining its mission. The memorandum describes a single, unified NCS formed by "linking together, improving, and extending, on an evolutionary basis, the communications facilities and components of the various Federal agencies...to provide necessary communications for the Federal Government under all conditions ranging from a normal situation to national emergencies and international crisis, including nuclear attack." The NCS moved to the Department of Homeland Security from the Department of Defense on March 1, 2003.

In April 1984, Executive Order 12472, *Assignment of National Security and Emergency Preparedness Telecommunications Functions*, formally changed the NCS mission. The order changed the focus from planning and coordinating a single, unified Government communications system to assisting the Executive Office of the President in exercising wartime and non-wartime emergency communications responsibilities and in coordinating the planning and provisioning of NS/EP communications for the Federal Government under all circumstances.

To successfully fulfill its mission, the NCS fosters interagency cooperation through the NCS Committee of Principals (COP)/Council of Representatives (COR) and serves as a focal point for joint industry and Government NS/EP communications coordination and planning. In partnership with the NCS, the President's National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee (NSTAC) provides industry advice and expertise to the President on matters related to NS/EP communications.

Highlights:

- For nearly 45 years, the NCS has nurtured, promoted, and achieved both interagency cooperation and partnership between the Federal Government and the communications industry.
- In 1984 the National Coordinating Center was activated to assist industry and Government in the initiation, coordination, restoration, and reconstitution of NS/EP communications.
- The NCS coordinates emergency communications following natural disasters (Hurricanes Katrina and Rita), wartime efforts (Operation Desert Storm), acts of terrorism (September 11, 2001 attacks), potential hazards (Year 2000 conversion), and humanitarian aid efforts (Operations Provide Hope and Provide Comfort).

Additional information may be obtained by contacting the NCS Program Manager for Communications.

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