



# 2020 Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C St., SW  
Washington, DC 20472

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# NATIONAL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE

The Calendar Year (CY) 2020 Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report highlights RECCWG activities and accomplishments in improving emergency communications operability and interoperability.

In compliance with Title XVIII, Section 1805, of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act of 2007 (Public Law 109-295),<sup>1</sup> each RECCWG is required to report annually on the status of operable and interoperable emergency communications initiatives. The RECCWG membership develops the regional reports, with support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional Emergency Communications Coordinators (RECC) and FEMA Disaster Emergency Communications Division (DECD). The regional reports are compiled in this document along with this National Executive Summary. This is the thirteenth annual report developed and submitted through this process.

The CY 2020 RECCWG Annual Report is distributed to the Director of the Emergency Communications Division (ECD) of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce.

### BACKGROUND

Congress directed the establishment of RECCWGs in each of FEMA's 10 Regions as emergency communications planning and coordinating bodies. The first three Statutory Duties illustrated in Table 1-1 are aligned with accomplishments and priorities listed in each regional report. The fourth Statutory Duty is fulfilled annually by the completion of this report.

**Table 1-1: RECCWG Duties**

RECCWG Statutory Duties (DHS Appropriations Act of 2007)	
1.	Assess the survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP)
2.	Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multiagency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements
3.	Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-109publ295/html/PLAW-109publ295.htm>

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#### **RECCWG Statutory Duties (DHS Appropriations Act of 2007)**

4. Report annually to the relevant Regional Administrator, the Director for Emergency Communications, the Chairman of the FCC, and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce on the status of the Regions in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks

RECCWGs are member-driven organizations that collaboratively assess and address the emergency communications needs of the first responder and emergency management stakeholder communities. They serve as key forums to enhance the survivability, sustainability, operability, and interoperability of emergency communications across the Whole Community. RECCWG participants represent an active and diverse group of stakeholders from state, local, Tribal, and territorial public safety organizations, as well as representatives from federal departments and agencies and private sector partners that share responsibility for coordinating interoperable emergency communications.

Through a mix of semi-annual meetings and monthly or quarterly webinars and teleconferences, RECCWGs focus on challenges and opportunities unique to each region and share information nationally through monthly National Co-chair calls that focus on topics of multiregional or national interest.

The remaining sections of this summary provide a national perspective of the RECCWG program by highlighting the key RECCWG member accomplishments and priorities cited across individual Regional 2020 RECCWG Annual Reports as noted in Table 1-2.

**Table 1-2: Summary of RECCWG 2020 Accomplishments and 2021 Priorities**

#### **CY 2020 Accomplishments**

- Collaborated to identify best practices for COVID-19 Alternate Care Facility (ACF) and testing site communications support
- Facilitated situational awareness and coordination during real-world events, sharing of lessons learned post event, and cross-regional collaboration
- Increased visibility and understanding of mutual-aid assistance capabilities through support efforts for hurricanes and wildfires while evolving new methodologies in a pandemic environment
- Used innovative methods and technologies to improve interoperability and operability via remote meetings and web-based collaboration tools
- Advanced Auxiliary Communications (AuxComm) support initiatives
- Supported the development of regional communications plans

#### **CY 2021 Priorities**

- Continue to accurately capture current capabilities in states, territories, and Tribal Nations
- Share best practices for remote training and response activities under COVID-19 restrictions
- Increase transparency with federal and private sector partners
- Promote cross-state, multiregional, and national partners' sponsored events
- Increase mutual aid assistance capabilities

- Expand land mobile radio (LMR) and broadband interoperability across state, regional, territorial, and international borders
- Continue recruitment of Whole Community members into the RECCWG

## 2. CY 2020 OVERVIEW

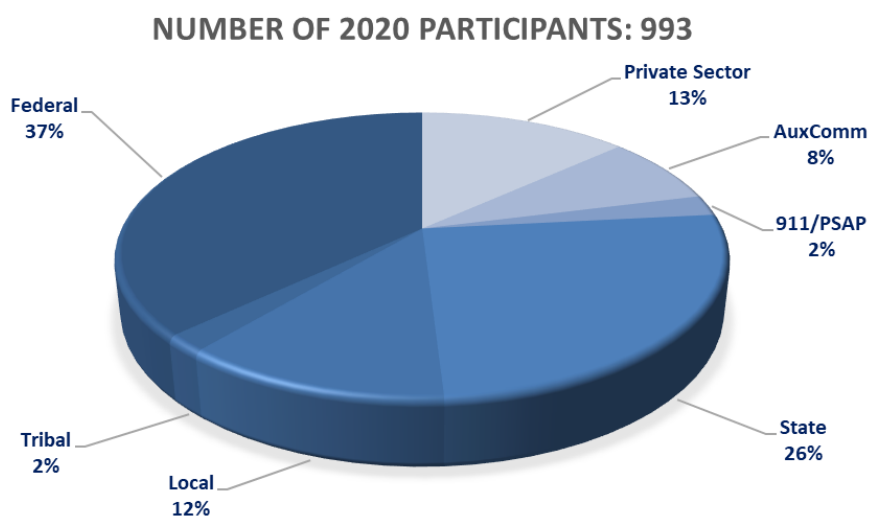
This unprecedented year for disasters began with tornadoes across the southeastern part of the country and the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic that claimed the lives of more than half a million Americans and severely impacted the economy. CY 2020 grew even more deadly with severe weather across the country, a derecho in the Midwest, several hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, and the most devastating wildfire season the western United States has yet experienced.

The value of cross-border collaboration was never more evident than during the 2020 disaster season. For the first time in history, FEMA supported a nationwide response involving every state and territory under an active federal emergency disaster declaration. No two regions or states have the same emergency response plans, operational capabilities, infrastructure, or resources;

therefore, each has a unique set of response requirements. As timely information distribution has become increasingly critical, the RECCWGs leverage pre-existing relationships with peers through networks that have been cultivated over 13 years since the program began.

In response to COVID-19, RECCWGs quickly identified the need to organize, collaborate,

and ensure rapid dissemination of information to their members. In several RECCWGs, this was accomplished through the establishment of biweekly national information sharing meetings, frequent regional coordination meetings, and development of COVID-19-specific web-based



**Figure 2-1: RECCWG Members and Partners**

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The RECCWG program grew by 121 participants in 2020, an increase of 13 percent over 2019.

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portals for emergency communications documents, points of contact, lessons learned, and best practice documents. Concurrent with national COVID-19 response efforts, natural disasters occurred in multiple states; many practices initially developed to deal with the pandemic were quickly leveraged to aid in other disaster responses. Examples given in this report are a testament to the strength of RECCWG relationships and their influence over resilient and interoperable public safety communications across the country.

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Nine of the 10 Regions have established RECCWGs to meet the original vision described in the DHS Appropriations Act of 2007, to assess the survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of emergency communications systems and coordinate RECCWG activities with federal, state, local, Tribal, and territorial responders and private industry partners. Figure 2-1 depicts the breakdown of the 993 RECCWG participants across the nine RECCWGs in 2020 and illustrates how they have embraced the Whole Community concept to strengthen preparedness and response. The number of CY 2020 communications and public safety personnel represents a 13-percent increase, with 121 additional participants over the CY 2019 participation total.

Region 2 members have elected not to establish a formal RECCWG or engage with updates to Annexes to their Regional Emergency Communications Plan. Region 2 continues to work toward interoperability and planning through state and territorial coordination bodies rather than establish a RECCWG. Please refer to the Region 2 Annual Report for a detailed account of CY 2020 activities.

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### 3. CY 2020 RECCWG ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RECCWGs continued to mature through increased opportunities for inter-regional and national coordination. In addition to regionwide efforts described in the 10 RECCWG Annual Reports, the National RECCWG Co-Chairs group, which consists of one member selected by each RECCWG to lead its efforts, holds regular teleconferences to share solutions and best practices for addressing common challenges, and to identify opportunities and priorities for cross-regional collaboration. The following sections detail key accomplishments that highlight overall RECCWG progress in CY 2020.

#### **ACCOMPLISHMENT 1: COLLABORATED TO IDENTIFY BEST PRACTICES FOR COVID-19 ACF AND TESTING SITE COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT**

RECCWGs focused on continued efforts to develop and enhance awareness of communications considerations for the ongoing buildouts of COVID-19 support infrastructure. They held frequent briefings where state, federal, local, Tribal, and territorial public safety personnel could voice contemporary concerns and report on the status of communications systems and personnel supporting the pandemic response. Highlights of their efforts are noted below.

##### **Alternate Care Facilities**

ACFs were established across the country to enable healthcare workers to provide medical care for the surge of patients diagnosed with COVID-19. They included locations that were converted (e.g., schools and stadiums) as well as mobile field hospitals. ACFs required enhanced internal communications for medical staff as well as network resources capable of securely delivering patient information and critical metadata from ACFs to state and federal health agencies. In every region, RECCWGs convened state emergency managers and Emergency Support Function 2 (ESF-2) staff with federal entities, which helped develop a common operating picture in each region.

##### **COVID-19 Testing Sites**

In the early stages of the pandemic when no vaccine was available, diagnostic testing was crucial to containing the spread of the virus. As COVID-19 tests became more readily available, mobile testing sites were set up in areas that could handle large volumes of vehicular traffic, which presented challenges for transferring test data and handling surges in the use of mobile devices. Through their daily and weekly briefings, RECCWG members shared valuable information on avoiding communications pitfalls while learning about resources available to their agencies through emerging federal initiatives. In addition, telecommunications industry partners were invited to brief RECCWG members on communications resources their respective companies could offer, in many cases at no cost, to public safety entities.

#### **ACCOMPLISHMENT 2: FACILITATED SITUATIONAL AWARENESS AND COORDINATION DURING REAL-WORLD EVENTS, SHARING OF LESSONS LEARNED POST EVENT, AND CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION**

##### **Situational Awareness and Disaster Coordination**

The nation experienced 104 major disaster declarations in 2020. RECCWG members provided communications support to response efforts during federally declared disasters as well as to local



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emergencies across the nation. Lessons learned from disasters in recent years helped them better prepare their areas of responsibility for future large-scale disasters. Although unable to meet in person for nearly the entire year, RECCWG members maintained close communication with each other through virtual meeting platforms. In most Regions, they held regular monthly meetings in addition to the data collection and situational awareness calls members participated in to address pandemic response needs. Key systems, such as statewide LMR networks, commercial cellular networks, and 911 services were monitored closely for surges in traffic and other network failures that could affect public safety. As the virus continued to spread, inter-regional information sharing on travel restrictions, access control, and permitting issues became vital to agencies responsible for restoring infrastructure and deploying personnel across state borders.

## **Sharing of Lessons Learned**

### ***Flying Repeaters***

Continuing RECCWG relationships and members' early pandemic response efforts helped bolster preparedness efforts for the natural disasters that would make 2020 an increasingly challenging year. Hurricane Laura caused more than \$19 billion in damage across Florida, Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Arkansas, and produced tornadoes, flooding, and agricultural damage in multiple areas. Private industry partners deployed airborne assets for the first time for response operations in Louisiana. The Region 6 RECCWG members realized the value in their working relationships with the FCC, in part because of the swift response in retrieving a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) waiver for their industry partners to support responder communications using a repeater on an unmanned aerial system (UAS). The FAA requirements and procedures were shared during the RECCWG Co-Chairs' national teleconference and subsequently leveraged by Region 10 in its response to the western wildfires.

### ***Do-Not-Cut Messaging***

The wildfires in Region 10 and hurricanes in Regions 4 and 6 presented challenges in coordinating debris removal, power restoration, and communications efforts across multiple jurisdictions. In many instances, debris removal and restoration crews were inadvertently cutting telecommunications lines while trying to repair power. "Do-not-cut" messaging quickly became a critical component to restoration efforts. Region 10 shared its outreach efforts and do-not-cut signage template with southeastern regions and nationally through the RECCWG forum.

### ***911 Centers***

Public safety telecommunicators answer 911 calls and dispatch police, fire, and emergency medical system (EMS) personnel; their ability to maintain operations is critical to every United States resident. In 2020, public safety answering points (PSAP) across the country were threatened by COVID-19, which had already caused other buildings to shut down for decontamination or containment procedures. The innovative solutions that emerged from the local level, including remote dispatch capabilities, alternating active PSAP sites, backup staffing and facility plans, and developing schedules and work arrangements that allowed for greater distancing, became invaluable to public safety telecommunicators nationwide. Many of these solutions, which were shared by RECCWG members with their counterparts in other regions of the country, have helped develop more comprehensive contingency plans for PSAPs, which have become best practices helping standardize 911 procedures in the "new normal."

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### ***Nashville Bombing***

PSAPs rely on shared infrastructure to route voice and data traffic between callers, call takers, and responders. When a bomb exploded on Christmas morning in Nashville's Second Avenue Commercial District, a major carrier's network hub was destroyed. It disrupted PSAP operations in Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, and Georgia. The far-reaching effects of losing a single switching center were not fully understood until several hours after the blast. PSAP operators quickly found solutions to restore lifesaving 911 services in most areas. Lessons they learned and shared with counterparts nationally, such as carrier diversity, redundancy with central offices, and the value of Centralized Automatic Message Accounting (CAMA) trunked copper lines, will continue to educate PSAP operators nationwide to mitigate similar outcomes in the future.

### **Cross-Regional Collaboration**

In each region, RECCWGs have expanded and expedited the deployment of communications assets and personnel through their collective knowledge, relationships, and wide-ranging experience. Below are examples of the cross-regional activities noted in their 2020 RECCWG Annual Reports.

#### ***Region 1***

- Leveraged virtual communications capabilities to enhance response during pandemic and disaster response efforts.
- Maine signed a communications memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Nova Scotia.
- RECCWG partners coordinated to address the regional COVID-19 pandemic response.

#### ***Region 2***

- Participated in preparedness efforts including training, technical assistance, and exercises to advance emergency communication capabilities.
- Increased coordination with bordering FEMA regions. Region 2 completed a joint planning venture several years in the making between partners from a variety of agencies and echelons of government from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut.
- Advanced the integration of the Region 2 RECCWG with established state and regional working groups.
- Continued to develop and promote the availability and utilization of cross-border communications interoperability platforms.

#### ***Region 3***

- Virginia Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) team supported Oregon with a request for Communications Unit Leaders (COML), Communications Unit Technicians (COMT), and Information Technology Service Unit Leaders (ITSL) during wildfires.
- Delaware and Maryland worked together to examine time-division multiple access (TDMA) radio needs of bordering jurisdictions.
- Pennsylvania joined Maryland's computer-aided dispatch (CAD)-to-CAD pilot program meetings.

#### ***Region 4***

- Assessed contingency and emergency modes of communication between the Region's state emergency operations centers (EOC).

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- Mississippi and Georgia's National Guard personnel participated in the Patriot South Exercise, with significant communications injects throughout the scenario.
  - The RECCWG held a Virtual Communications Exercise, which resulted in state to state to Region 4's Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) communications from five different modes, including LMR, FEMA National Radio System (FNARS) high frequency (HF) radio (voice and email), satellite, and the Emergency Alert Systems (EAS).

#### ***Region 5***

- Held monthly AuxComm subcommittee meetings and biweekly net check-ins with all Region 5 states.
- Provided a robust multijurisdictional forum for awareness and lessons learned shared during early pandemic response operations.
- Participated in Black Swan communications exercise.

#### ***Region 6***

- Conducted a virtual plenary session with state, local, and Tribal members; private industry; and federal partners and discussed regional initiatives, lessons learned from 2020 hurricanes, and long-term RECCWG objectives.
- Coordinated multiagency emergency communication networks during natural disasters.

#### ***Region 7***

- Coordinated with private industry and federal partners on communications for pandemic and disaster responses.
- Developed regional support services through AuxComm, governance and policy, and training and exercise sub-working groups.
- Conducted a RECCWG virtual plenary.

#### ***Region 8***

- Enhanced RECCWG and first responder communications during the wildfire season.
- Established a weekly regional AuxComm on-air check-in and meeting.
- Worked to improve state and cross-border communications.
- Facilitated Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) knowledge and acceptance throughout the region.

#### ***Region 9***

- Responded to wildland fires and rolling utility blackouts.
- Completed California's Emergency Communications Annex update.
- Established situational awareness virtual "rooms" for disaster operations.

#### ***Region 10***

- Conducted RECCWG exercises to assess communications operability and interoperability and develop ESF-2 capabilities and processes regionwide.
- Completed Alaska's Emergency Communications Annex update.
- Leveraged RECCWG member support to identify resources for cross-state assistance.

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### **ACCOMPLISHMENT 3: INCREASED VISIBILITY AND UNDERSTANDING OF MUTUAL-AID ASSISTANCE CAPABILITIES THROUGH SUPPORT EFFORTS FOR HURRICANES AND WILDFIRES WHILE EVOLVING NEW METHODOLOGIES IN A PANDEMIC ENVIRONMENT**

The Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) is the nation's state-to-state mutual aid system. It is often the most viable, flexible, and rapid means of bringing in required resources following a disaster. Traditionally, EMAC resources have not been aimed specifically at supporting

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Relationships built through more than a decade of RECCWG activities and engagement enabled a more rapid and effective response through mutual awareness of each other's capabilities and needs in times of disaster.

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communications assets and personnel to re-establish communications links in impacted areas. RECCWG members realize that interoperable communications is a vital piece of the response effort and have made significant progress in shaping future EMAC considerations between cosignatory agencies. Across the nation, RECCWG members continue to develop relationships between their respective jurisdictions and disciplines. They propagate awareness of cross-border communications assistance capabilities and seek resources to fill communications gaps on behalf of their counterparts who were experiencing disasters in other Regions.

#### **Hurricanes**

Multiple hurricanes and storms in 2020, particularly in the Gulf States, caused extensive damage and communications disruptions. During Hurricane Laura, Delta, and Zeta, Region 6 RECCWG members, through their individual state emergency management offices, came together to assist the affected states. They offered support and mutual aid to their neighboring jurisdictions and began developing region-specific initiatives to help further enhance coordination efforts in the future. Discussions within the RECCWG paved the way for collaborative processes and resource coordination between responders, debris removal crews, telecommunications providers, and the energy sector. Relationships built over more than a decade of RECCWG activities and engagement enabled rapid and effective response through mutual awareness of each other's capabilities and needs in times of disaster.

#### **Wildland Fires**

During the western wildfires, regional communications resources, including National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) radio caches, were depleted. The State of Oregon also needed additional, trained communications personnel, such as COML, for its wildfire response. The Region 10 RECCWG helped communicate a request for aid for specific communications resources, mobile communications vehicles, COML, COMT, and ITSL. Requests for assistance were disseminated by RECCWG members to their counterparts across the country; once resources were identified, Oregon worked through EMAC to bring the needed resources into the State to support response and recovery efforts.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENT 4: USED INNOVATIVE METHODS AND TECHNOLOGIES TO IMPROVE INTEROPERABILITY AND OPERABILITY VIA REMOTE MEETINGS AND WEB-BASED COLLABORATION TOOLS**

In response to pandemic restrictions, several RECCWGs developed Adobe Connect pages that served as a "one-stop shop" for situational awareness, document and link sharing, message posting, and other functions tailored to regional needs. Initially, the links were intended to be

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temporary and incident-specific, but some RECCWGs decided to keep them active indefinitely so that members had an open platform for keeping abreast of regional activities. Both temporary and longer-term Adobe Connect pages are now considered a best practice for sharing non-sensitive information, most notably by Oregon members who used them during the 2020 wildfire season.

For Sensitive but Unclassified information, Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) sites were developed for all 10 RECCWGs. HSIN offers a higher level of security than Adobe Connect, where users must be nominated and verified by site managers. All RECCWG members are encouraged to use this resource. HSIN pages contain regional event calendars, training opportunities, contact information, and several other benefits to RECCWG members.

To ease the burdens of COVID-19 restrictions, RECCWG members became proficient in several virtual tools, including Zoom, Adobe Connect, and Microsoft Teams. The virtual formats, while not a perfect substitute for in-person meetings, have allowed for increased cross-regional participation in RECCWG events.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENT 5: ADVANCED AUXCOMM SUPPORT INITIATIVES**

AuxComm volunteers have been vital to recovery efforts for many years. Their participation in the RECCWG increased in 2020 by nearly 80 percent over 2019, thanks in part to a renewed commitment by several RECCWGs to welcome AuxComm talents and expertise during the year. For example, the Region 5 RECCWG's outreach efforts to the AuxComm community quickly earned new participation from its member states, by groups representing the Military Auxiliary Radio System (MARS), Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES), and other groups. The AuxComm subcommittee appointed a new chair who works closely with these volunteers and with the RECCWG's Training and Exercise subcommittee to identify, promote, and develop AuxComm resources across the region. In addition, the AuxComm subcommittee created a Region 5 social media website devoted to AuxComm activities such as monthly HF and digital nets, which have gained participation by members in all six of its states. Similarly, the Region 8 RECCWG's AuxComm subcommittee established a weekly meeting on the HF spectrum that includes participants from around the Region. This subcommittee used these meetings to discuss issues and to test equipment in various areas of the electromagnetic spectrum. RECCWGs promoted the AuxComm community members' dedication to volunteerism and their unique skill sets, which earned them a "seat at the table" in planning efforts, exercises, and real-world deployments.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENT 6: SUPPORTED THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PLANS**

Communications plans are used at all levels of government to document and provide awareness of the various modes of communication that can be used during emergencies. Because the RECCWGs have a membership base that consists of state, local, Tribal, and territorial communicators, they provide a valuable source of information for each other and for the federal government's understanding of communications being used in various Regions. In 2020, RECCWG members helped develop several communications plans, increasing situational awareness in their jurisdictions.



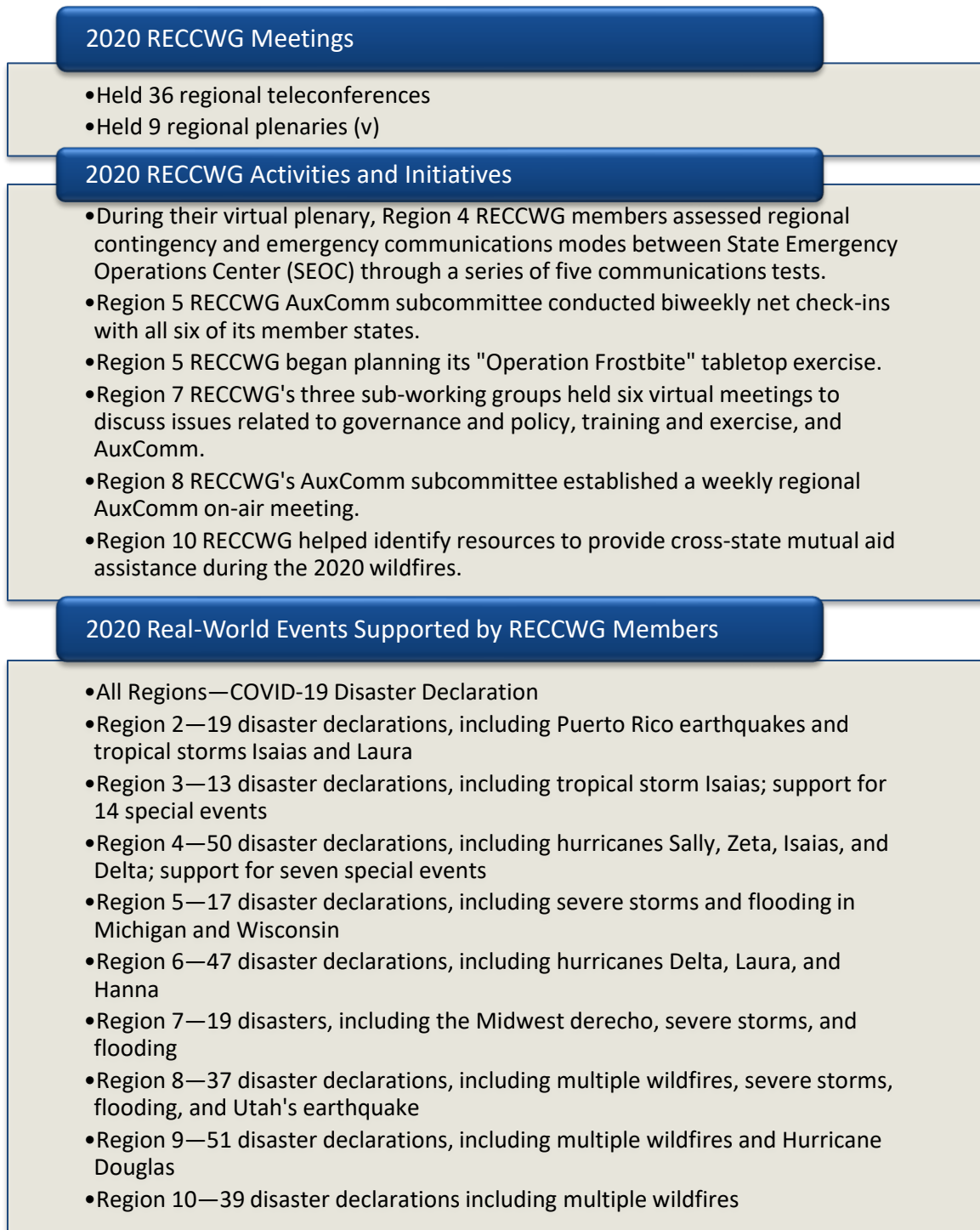
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Regional Emergency Communications Plans (RECP) provide insight for federal responders into communications systems and regional operating procedures during emergencies. Each state's unique communications landscape is captured in its Emergency Communications Annex to the RECP. RECCWGs in regions 8, 9, and 10 assisted FEMA in developing the annexes for Montana, California, and Alaska in 2020. All 10 RECPs were updated in a new format, customized to include emerging technologies and procedures developed by all 56 states and territories, as well as engagement with Tribal authorities.

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## 4. CY 2020 RECCWG ACTIVITIES

This section, including Figure 4-1, presents a snapshot of RECCWG events. These events are described in further detail throughout this summary and within the Regional Annual Reports that follow.

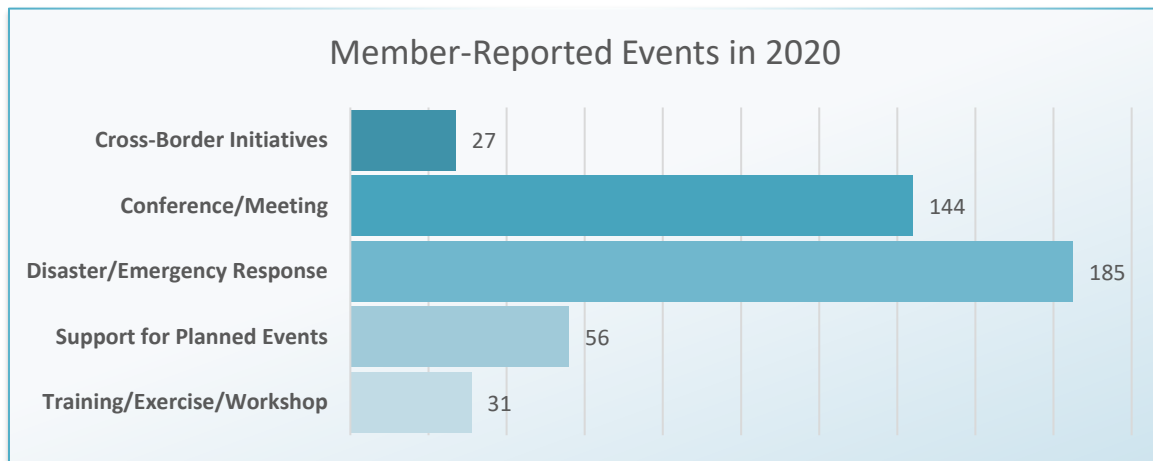


**Figure 4-1: 2020 RECCWG Activities**

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## CY 2020 SUMMARY OF MEMBER-REPORTED EVENTS

RECCWG partners across the United States enhanced emergency communications through response to real-world events, disasters, exercises, conferences, training events, and workshops. Figure 4-2 provides a summary of the 443 emergency communications events reported by RECCWG members throughout the year. Additional details are provided in each RECCWG Report.



**Figure 4-2: Member-Reported Events**

## 5. CROSS-STATE AND CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION HIGHLIGHTS

The following list of activities highlights occurrences of RECCWG members from multiple states or regions working together to coordinate emergency communications strategies, collaborate on ideas, conduct training, or respond to real-world events. Figure 5-1 is a brief illustration of highlights from each region. For additional details, please refer to their respective annual reports.

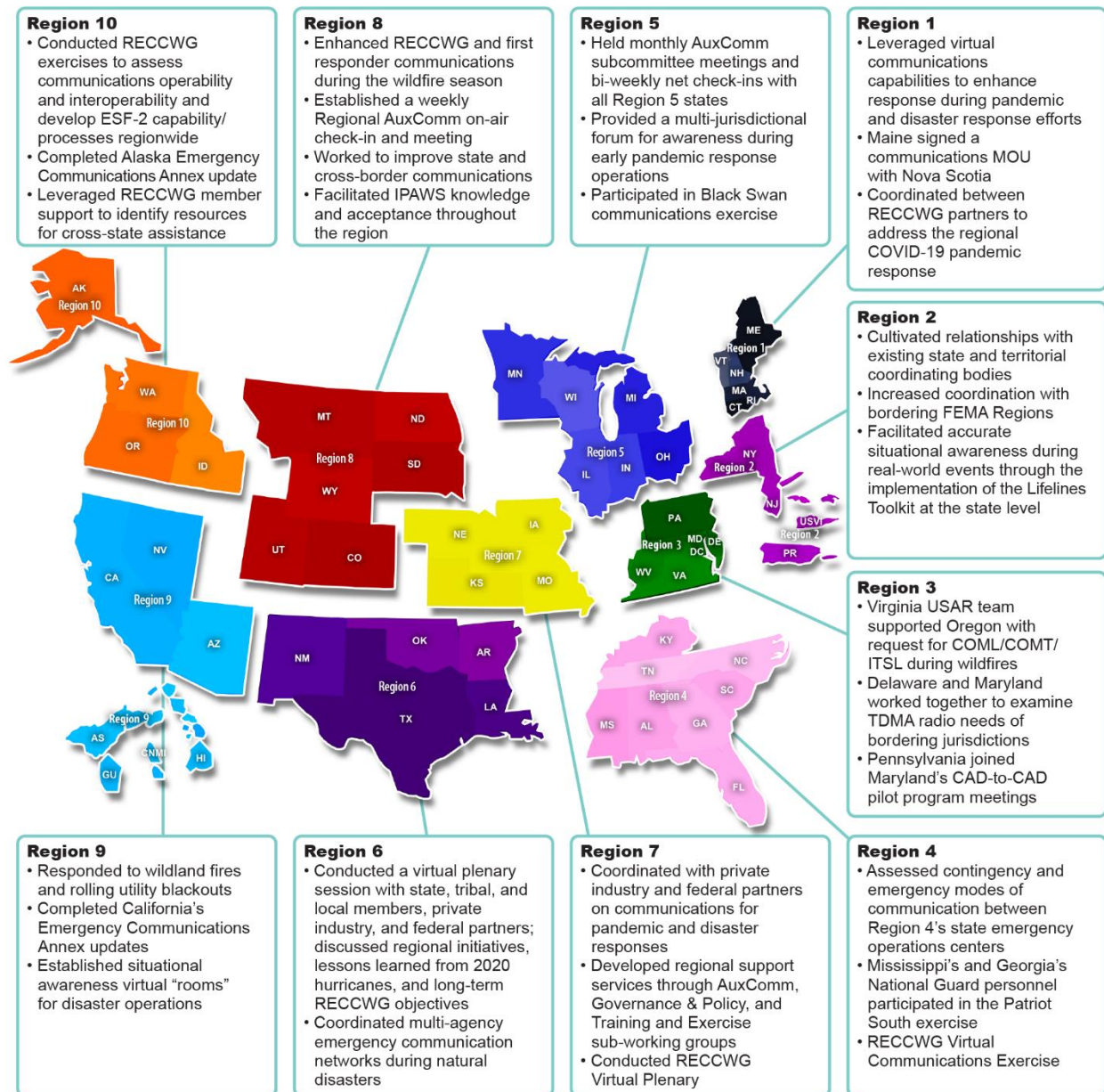


Figure 5-1: 2020 RECCWG Cross-State and Cross-Regional Collaboration

### Region 1—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

- Leveraged virtual communications capabilities to enhance response during pandemic and disaster response efforts.

- 
- Maine signed a communications MOU with Nova Scotia.
  - RECCWG partners coordinated to address the regional COVID-19 pandemic response.

#### **Region 2—New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, United States Virgin Islands**

- Participated in preparedness efforts including training, technical assistance, and exercises, to advance emergency communication capabilities.
- Increased coordination with bordering FEMA regions.
- Advanced the integration of the Region 2 RECCWG with established state and regional working groups.
- Continued to develop and promote the availability and utilization of cross-border communications interoperability platforms.

#### **Region 3—District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia**

- Virginia US&R team supported Oregon with request for COML, COMT, and ITSL during fires.
- Delaware and Maryland worked together to examine TDMA radio needs of bordering jurisdictions.
- Pennsylvania joined Maryland's CAD-to-CAD pilot program meetings.

#### **Region 4—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee**

- Assessed contingency and emergency modes of communication between Region 4's state EOCs.
- Held Mississippi and Georgia's National Guards' Patriot South exercise.
- Held RECCWG virtual communications exercise.

#### **Region 5—Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin**

- Held monthly AuxComm subcommittee meetings and biweekly net check-ins with all Region 5 states.
- Provided a multijurisdictional forum for awareness during early pandemic response operations.
- Participated in Black Swan communications exercise.

#### **Region 6—Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas**

- Conducted a virtual plenary session with state, Tribal, and local members; private industry; and federal partners. Discussed regional initiatives, lessons learned from 2020 hurricanes, and long-term RECCWG objectives.
- Coordinated multiagency emergency communication networks during natural disasters.

#### **Region 7—Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska**

- Coordinated with private industry and federal partners on communications for pandemic and disaster responses.
- Developed regional support services through AuxComm, governance and policy, and training and exercise sub-working groups.



- 
- Conducted RECCWG virtual plenary.

#### **Region 8—Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming**

- Enhanced RECCWG and first responder communications during the wildfire season
- Established a weekly regional AuxComm on-air check-in and meeting
- Worked to improve state and cross-border communications
- Facilitated IPAWS knowledge and acceptance throughout the region

#### **Region 9—American Samoa, Arizona, California, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawaii, Nevada**

- Responded to wildland fires and rolling utility blackouts.
- Completed California Emergency Communications Annex update.
- Established situational awareness virtual “rooms” for disaster operations.

#### **Region 10—Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington**

- Conducted Region RECCWG exercises to assess communications operability and interoperability and develop ESF-2 capability and processes regionwide.
- Completed Alaska Emergency Communications Annex update.
- Leveraged RECCWG member support to identify resources for cross-state assistance.

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## 6. CY 2021 RECCWG PRIORITIES

RECCWG members identified six priorities for 2021, listed in Table 6-1 and described below. Regions may have additional priorities as noted in their regional reports.

**Table 6-1: 2021 RECCWG Priorities**

CY 2021 Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to accurately capture current capabilities in states, territories, and Tribal Nations</li><li>• Share best practices for remote training and response activities under COVID-19 restrictions</li><li>• Increase transparency with federal and private sector partners</li><li>• Promote cross-state, multiregional, and national partners' sponsored events</li><li>• Increase mutual aid assistance capabilities</li><li>• Expand LMR and broadband interoperability across state, regional, territorial, and international borders</li></ul>

### **PRIORITY 1: CONTINUE TO ACCURATELY CAPTURE CURRENT CAPABILITIES IN STATES, TERRITORIES, AND TRIBAL NATIONS**

RECCWG members will continue to provide information to RECPs and State Communications Annexes as well as regional handbooks, contact matrices, and interoperability guides, to provide an operational picture of the communications landscape to responders, identify potential needs, and increase engagement across all jurisdictions.

- As the basis for the 10 RECPs, each of the 56 state and territory Communications Annexes is instrumental in improving federal response and advantageous to states, commonwealths, territories, and Tribal Nations.
- The RECCWG Co-chairs promote awareness of the Annex development process, disseminate progress updates, and assist in garnering acceptance for the efforts by states in their respective regions.
- States will continue to control access and use of their State Communications Annex information and can continue to use RECCWGs as a forum to share insights and information.
- Annex data is systematically entered in FEMA enterprise geographic information systems and shared with the partner State, enabling easier verification, updates, access, and manipulation of data to support preparedness and response.
- National Co-chairs developed consensus to explore developing a standardized RECCWG Interoperability Matrix with regional information that can be rolled up to a national matrix.

### **PRIORITY 2: SHARE BEST PRACTICES FOR REMOTE TRAINING AND RESPONSE ACTIVITIES UNDER COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS**

RECCWGs developed an array of virtual tools to aid in “black sky” situations as well as “blue sky” planning and training efforts. Best practices will continue to evolve and will be captured by RECCWG members to share across all regions.

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## Virtual Meeting Platforms

RECCWG members increased their proficiency with a variety of virtual meeting tools in 2020 because they could not meet in person for most of the year. Whether hosting a meeting or joining as a participant, most people have experienced a “learning curve” associated with each platform. Lessons were also learned in selecting the appropriate tools, functionality, and controls, based on security requirements and bandwidth limitations for various types of meetings. Members will share successes and challenges in adapting to the virtual meeting format as web-based meeting tools continue to evolve.

## Adobe Connect

The functionality of Adobe Connect pages satisfied the need to share non-secure information that could be posted for long periods of time with minimal maintenance. RECCWG pages can be designed with added security controls, or as they were more commonly used in 2020, as a place where anyone with the link could enter the “room” and take advantage of Region-specific information and links posted there. RECCWG members will continue to promote the use of this type of open platform for situational awareness and sharing of regional communications events and documentation.

## HSIN

HSIN is DHS’ official system for sharing information between federal, state, local, Tribal, territorial, international, and private sector partners. Although RECCWGs in several regions began using HSIN more extensively in 2020, it has not been fully adopted in all regions. The level of security it offers RECCWG members makes HSIN an ideal choice for posting after-action reports, standard operating guides, training events and conferences, and other RECCWG-sponsored activities that are not open to the public.

## **PRIORITY 3: INCREASE TRANSPARENCY WITH FEDERAL AND PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERS**

### **Work with FCC and ESF 2 partners to refine sharing process and formatting of Disaster Incident Reporting System (DIRS) reporting**

Multiple state members raised the issue of visibility and access to data from FCC’s DIRS report. As a voluntary reporting method used by the telecommunications industry, DIRS provides in-depth outage information that is often proprietary in nature. FCC has an obligation to protect this information or risk private sector service providers refusing to give access to it. FCC expressed willingness in late 2020 to expand transparency and work closer with states to advise them of critical infrastructure that is impacted during a disaster. FCC is an active member in the RECCWG structure, which also includes private sector partners and state emergency communications leaders. Hence, RECCWGs are ideal forums to expand discussion on access to the type of information states need during response, while also finding ways to protect the proprietary nature of the data. Resolving this issue is in the interest of all parties and will be a topic of discussion in RECCWG calls and meetings in 2021.

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## Primary and Backup Routing

The loss of a single switching center due to the Christmas Day explosion in Nashville, Tennessee, disrupted 911 services in four states, prompting PSAP and EOC managers to reexamine their network traffic and routing dependencies. Having visibility on possible points of failure and available secondary paths for data is critical to decision making during emergencies as well as for developing contingency plans. RECCWG members must work with their private industry partners to establish more resilient communications pathways for emergency networks without compromising carriers' proprietary rights or market strategies.

## **PRIORITY 4: PROMOTE CROSS-STATE, MULTIREGIONAL, AND NATIONAL PARTNERS' SPONSORED EVENTS**

Several RECCWGs have taken the initiative to reach out to neighboring Regions to offer communications support and resources, invitations to conferences and training events, and participation in sub-working group efforts. Their collaborative posture will be strengthened in 2021 through continued evolution of interoperability solutions, outreach, multiregional participation in large-scale exercises, and the RECCWGs' aptitude to absorb best practices based on the outcomes of national events and other grassroots endeavors.

## Sub-Working Groups

RECCWG sub-working groups offer members from multiple jurisdictions a focused forum for examining regional issues. They share the results of their work with their respective RECCWG, which, in turn, can elevate issues to the national level through the monthly RECCWG Co-Chairs teleconference. Currently, RECCWGs have varying types of sub-working group organizations and participation. Moving forward, it will benefit every region to hear about the successes, challenges, and benefits of creating focus groups for subject areas, such as AuxComm, WebEOC, cross-state interoperability or governance, to help other RECCWGs develop similar programs tailored to their respective Regions.

## Exercises

Many events planned in 2020, including communications exercises, were canceled when pandemic restrictions were implemented. RECCWG members continued to look for opportunities to test their equipment and procedures. The CY 2021 will bring new opportunities for virtual events such as the Region 5 RECCWG's planned "Operation Frostbite," and potentially to conduct larger, in-person events like the multiregional RECCWG plenary and exercise that was postponed in 2020 because of COVID-19 safety measures. As annual events, such as Wisconsin's Statewide Interoperable Mobile Communications (SIMCOM) and the Central States Communications Exercise resume planning, RECCWGs in those regions will make the announcements to their counterparts to solicit support and boost participation in those events.

## Conferences, Seminars, and Webinars

Through their newsletters, monthly briefings, webpages, and message boards, RECCWGs have consistently promoted emergency communications and public safety-related opportunities to learn. They will continue this tradition in 2021 as public safety event information is released.

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## **PRIORITY 5: INCREASE MUTUAL AID ASSISTANCE CAPABILITIES**

Prior to requesting federal assistance during a disaster, a state may request emergency communications equipment and personnel from neighboring states through EMAC. Congress ratified this compact, which has become law in all states in the United States and territories. To fully leverage the agreement, it is vital that all states be aware of the available assets in adjacent states. RECCWGs will promote collaboration between emergency communications and EMAC Coordinators and develop actionable mission ready packages (MRP) and protocols for Communication Assets Survey and Mapping tools.

RECCWG members have also opened discussions regarding aerial assets that can be used to extend radio coverage around disaster zones. Successes and challenges of state and local agencies will be reported by RECCWG members and shared via the HSIN RECCWG National pages, the RECCWG Newsletter, and during National Co-Chairs calls, to help shape national conversations about the implications for EMAC and aerial communications support.

## **PRIORITY 6: EXPAND LMR AND BROADBAND INTEROPERABILITY ACROSS STATE, REGIONAL, TERRITORIAL, AND INTERNATIONAL BORDERS**

Emergency management officials are aware of the many features the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) has to offer, such as video and high-speed data transfer, and continue to implement the NPSBN's usage across their jurisdictions. State, local, Tribal and territorial emergency management officials also recognize the need for robust mission-critical LMR radio communications and continue to invest in these systems as well. One of the most powerful features of the RECCWG program is its ability to reach across boundaries in support of LMR and radio interoperability programs and provide a voice for state, local, and Tribal and territorial agencies whose LMR systems provide life-saving communications every day. The future of public safety emergency communications will require a blend of broadband and LMR to provide the necessary capabilities to meet requirements of first responders during catastrophic-level incidents. Each RECCWG will continue to examine the physical, financial, technical, and administrative barriers to interoperability between LMR networks; work to incorporate emerging technology including the NPSBN; and seek collaborative solutions from their national counterparts.



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## 7. LOOKING AHEAD

RECCWG efforts to facilitate and formalize cross-regional and national information and resource sharing events in 2021 will add momentum to the program and improve emergency communications interoperability. The RECCWGs will continue their regional and national outreach and coordination with tribal entities, the 911 community, amateur radio and non-governmental organizations, private industry, and other Whole Community partners to improve emergency communications interoperability.

RECCWGs will continue to seek resources and funding in 2021 to meet regional and national objectives and enrich the organizations whose members volunteer their time and expertise to continue to build on past successes.

The following RECCWG Annual Reports from each region provide regional insights into CY 2020 RECCWG accomplishments as well as 2021 priorities, opportunities, and challenges.

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## Appendix A: Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
<b>ACF</b>	Alternate Care Facility
<b>ARES</b>	Amateur Radio Emergency Service
<b>AuxComm</b>	Auxiliary Communications
<b>CAD</b>	Computer-Aided Dispatch
<b>CAMA</b>	Centralized Automatic Message Accounting
<b>CISA</b>	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
<b>COML</b>	Communications Unit Leaders
<b>COMT</b>	Communications Unit Technicians
<b>CY</b>	Calendar Year
<b>DECD</b>	(FEMA) Disaster Emergency Communications Division
<b>DHS</b>	Department of Homeland Security
<b>DIRS</b>	Disaster Incident Reporting System
<b>EAS</b>	Emergency Alert System
<b>ECD</b>	Emergency Communications Division (of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency)
<b>EMAC</b>	Emergency Management Assistance Compact
<b>EMS</b>	Emergency Medical System
<b>EOC</b>	Emergency Operations Center
<b>ESF-2</b>	Emergency Support Function 2
<b>FCC</b>	Federal Communications Commission
<b>FEMA</b>	Federal Emergency Management Agency
<b>FNARS</b>	FEMA National Radio System
<b>HF</b>	High Frequency (radio frequency)
<b>HSIN</b>	Homeland Security Information Network
<b>IPAWS</b>	Integrated Public Alert and Warning System
<b>ITSL</b>	Information Technology Service Unit Leaders
<b>LMR</b>	Land Mobile Radio
<b>MARS</b>	Military Auxiliary Radio System
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MRP</b>	Mission Ready Package
<b>NECP</b>	National Emergency Communications Plan
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization

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Acronym	Definition
<b>NIFC</b>	National Interagency Fire Center
<b>NPSBN</b>	Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network
<b>PSAP</b>	Public Safety Answering Point
<b>RACES</b>	Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service
<b>RECC</b>	Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator
<b>RECCWG</b>	Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group
<b>RECP</b>	Regional Emergency Communications Plans
<b>RF</b>	Radio Frequency
<b>RRCC</b>	Regional Response Coordination Center
<b>SEOC</b>	State Emergency Operations Center
<b>SIMCOM</b>	State Interoperable Mobile Communications
<b>TDMA</b>	Time-Division Multiple Access
<b>UAS</b>	Unmanned Aerial Systems
<b>US&amp;R</b>	Urban Search and Rescue

## REGION 1

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U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
FEMA Region 1  
J.W. McCormack POCB, Room 442  
Boston, MA 02109-4595

**FEMA**

DATE: May 24, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn  
Assistant Administrator  
Response Directorate

FROM: Paul F. Ford **PAUL F FORD** Digitally signed by PAUL F FORD  
Date: 2021.06.04 13:53:32 -04'00'  
Acting Regional Administrator

SUBJECT: FEMA Region 1 Regional Emergency Communications  
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by 6 U.S.C. § 575, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region 1 RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined RECCWG Annual Report for calendar year (CY) 2020, which will be distributed to the Director of the Emergency Communications Division (ECD) of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.
- Coordinate the establishment of federal, state, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region 1 RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for federal, state, local, tribal agencies, and the Whole Community to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region as shown through activities in this report. The Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole of Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Enclosed: Region 1 CY 2020 RECCWG Annual Report



# Region 1 RECCWG 2020 Annual Report

May 2021

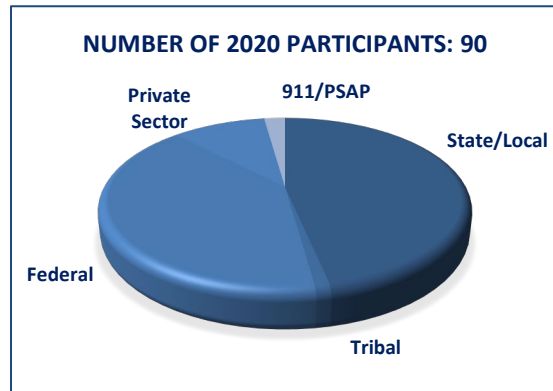


## REGION 1 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP



### CY 2020 OVERVIEW

Composed of the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont, the Region 1 Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) worked diligently throughout 2020 alongside its federal and private sector partners, and a host



*Figure 1: 2020 RECCWG Participation*

of enthusiastic professionals who lent their time and expertise to advance communications interoperability across the region. The notable growth in participation is attributed to the RECCWG's goal of representing the whole community. In 2020, the RECCWG made significant progress in interoperability coordination during an active year for emergencies that included the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The RECCWG quickly met unforeseen pandemic procedures by adapting to the "new normal" environment with increased virtual engagement. They added new partners from

the private sector and increased representation by the 911/ Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) industry, the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), and the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet). RECCWG participation in 2020 is shown in **Figure 1**.

All Region 1 states received major disaster declarations for COVID-19 in 2020. Additionally, the Passamaquoddy, and Narragansett Indian Tribes in Maine and Rhode Island also had COVID-19 disaster declarations. Region 1 was hit hard during the early months of COVID-19, the RECCWG swiftly adjusted to the changing environment and prioritized communications. For example, the RECCWG examined continuity and redundancy of alternate locations for Emergency Operations Centers (EOC) and 911/PSAP facilities and shared COVID-19 state guidelines and procedures vital to response efforts. In addition to the pandemic, Connecticut and Vermont received disaster declarations for Hurricane Isaias, severe storm, and flooding in 2020. In addition to natural disasters and COVID-19 response, RECCWG members responded to and reported on numerous incidents and planned events that required interoperability among field personnel, command centers, volunteer organizations, and local agencies. Each event posed a unique set of challenges that responders and officials, many of whom are members of the RECCWG, were able to solve and learn from, thanks in part to close collaboration with their peers in the region and across the country. The virtual nature of response activities resulting from COVID-19 restrictions created an opportunity for expanded collaboration to responders and partners who are not normally present during conventional response methods.

**Region 1 RECCWG states responded to 19 Disasters in 2020: COVID-19 and weather related disasters.**

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*RECCWG members utilized their pre-existing relationships and awareness of their neighbor's capabilities to effectively learn from each other's experiencing is dealing with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) distribution; communications support for COVID testing facilities and Alternate Care Facilities; and best practices for PSAP/911 staffing and continuity planning.*

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In addition, the RECCWG held a teleconference in 2020 with more than 50 participants and presenters from several public safety sectors and emergency management disciplines. Region 1's interactions discussed lessons learned from recent emergencies in the region, build partnerships across the states, share best practices, and plan for regional and statewide events. As a diverse yet cohesive team, the RECCWG tackled many new challenges to interoperability in the region as the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) evolves and next-generation 911 (NG911) initiatives progressed. The year's events also underscored the criticality of well-functioning and universally compatible alert and warning systems, especially during the COVID-19 "new normal". Highlights of the RECCWG's accomplishments in 2020 are documented in this report and serve as examples of the advancements made within Region 1 and through the RECCWG program nationally. Similarly, priorities for 2021 have been set to leverage the extensive professional experience, comprehensive conversations and research, and close collaboration among member agencies within the region. Plans to hold two face-to-face plenaries including a joint Regional Interagency Steering Committee (RISC)/RECCWG meeting had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 and will be evaluated in 2021.

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

For additional information regarding the Region 1 RECCWG, please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region 1 Emergency Communications Coordinator Program Lead, John Robinson, at [[john.robinsonjr@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:john.robinsonjr@fema.dhs.gov)] or [C: 508-498-0013].

**Table 1: RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2020**

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
<b>RECCWG LEADERSHIP</b>	
Paul Ford	Acting FEMA Region 1 Administrator
Melissa Nazzaro	RECCWG Co-Chair/Massachusetts SWIC
Jarrett Devine	FEMA Region 1 RECC
John Robinson	FEMA Region 1, RECCWG Program Lead
<b>CONNECTICUT (CT) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
John Gustafson	Connecticut Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS)
William Hackett	Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)/Director, Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP)/DEMHS
Frank Kiernan	Director of Operations, Southwestern Regional Communications Center
Michael Kowalczyk	Support Services Technician, Town of South Windsor
Keith Victor	Communications System Manager/Communications Unit Leader (COML) and Communications Technician (COMT) Instructor, Town of West Hartford
George Vitone	Lieutenant, Darien Police Department
Dan Warzoha	Emergency Management Director, Greenwich
Scott Wright	DESPP
<b>MAINE (ME) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Steven Emond	Maine Emergency Management
Tom Higgins	Bangor Fire Department
Kathy Knight	Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems (EMHS)
Steven Mallory	SWIC/Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)
Mike Smith	Maine 911
Darren Woods	Emergency Management Director, Aroostook County
<b>MASSACHUSETTS (MA) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Andrew Bagdonas	Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency
Matt Barstow	Massachusetts State Police Director of Communications
Mark Cady	Lieutenant, City of Worcester Fire Department
David W. Clemons	Operations Section Chief, Massachusetts Department of Fire Services (DFS)
Melissa Nazzaro	SWIC/Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS)
Alex Chadis Newton	Massachusetts Fire
Gerald Reardon	Cambridge Fire Department (Retired), SAFECOM Executive Board
Jon Ruda	Communications Manager, MEMA
Dave Spinosa	Essex Sheriff's Department
John Surette	Senior Radio Technician, Boston Police Department
<b>NEW HAMPSHIRE (NH) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Pete DeNutte	New Hampshire Interoperability

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
Art Durette	NH EMA
Alyson Fava	NH DOS
John T. Stevens	SWIC/New Hampshire Department of Safety
David Rivers	New Hampshire 911
John Wynne	New Hampshire Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM)
<b>RHODE ISLAND (RI) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Joe Delgiudice	Radio Engineer, Public Safety Communications, City of Providence
Brian Glancy	Rhode Island Interoperable Communications Committee
Thomas Guthlein	SWIC/Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA)
Christopher McGrath	RIEMA
James McLaughlin	RIEMA
Keith Michaud	RIAC Police
Alexander Potts	Communications Technician, RIEMA
Helen Ricci	RI Airport PD
Gil Woodside	Communications Supervisor, RIEMA
<b>VERMONT (VT) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Chief Al Barber	Hinesburg Fire Department
Brett Larose	Vermont Emergency Management
Terry LaValley	SWIC/FirstNet Single Point of Contact (SPOC)
<b>TRIBAL REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Nelson Andrews	Mashapee Wampanoag Tribe
<b>FEDERAL PARTNERS</b>	
Dave Adsit	FEMA OCIO, Spectrum Coordination
Tom Butrym	Radio Frequency Technician, Maynard Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS)
Walker Canfield	General Services Administration (GSA)
Robert Clair	Transportation Security Administration (TSA)
Philip Dow	TSA
Emmanuel Domkam	Engineer, Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
John Driscoll	TSA
Mark Dyberg	Information Technology (IT) Manager, Maynard MERS
Michael Eaton	Telecommunications Manager, Maynard MERS
Grant Fournier	Telecommunications Specialist, FEMA Region 1
Mark Gallagher	Response Division Director, FEMA Region 1
Scott Hansen	Chief, Communications Integration Branch (CIB), FEMA DEC
Peter Koutrouba	Chief, Maynard MERS
Larry Lavigne	Maynard MERS
John Lombardo	Communications, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
John MacClean	DHS CISA NCC, Regional Coordinator
Marty McLain	Regional Coordinator, Office of Emergency Communications (OEC)

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
Vern Mosley	CISA PAR
Tracey Murdock	FirstNet
Robert O'Sullivan	FEMA R1
Timothy Perrier	FCC
Mike Pettis	Communications, FBI
Tom Quigley	Communications Support, United States Coast Guard (USCG) Boston
Robert Reinke, Jr	Telecommunications Specialist, FEMA Region 1
Michael Schmidt	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF)
David Schafer	United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACoE)
T.J Swenson	FEMA Region 1 Operations Integration Branch
Chris Tuttle	OEC Coordinator, Region 2
Michael Varney	Regional Coordinator, FirstNet
Keith Vetreno	United States Department of Interior (DOI)
John Warren	CISA PSA
Leonard Willette	Operations Manager, Maynard MERS
PRIVATE INDUSTRY PARTNERS	
Lisa Benincasa	Principal Consultant for New England, ATT/FirstNet
Rob Boice	System Performance Director, Verizon
Nieama Booker	Verizon
Rodney Cooper	T-Mobile
Eric Hagan	Public Sector Account Executive, Sprint
Calvin Jackson	Verizon
Denis Lenehan	Principal Consultant, ATT/FirstNet
Kevin McCormick	Public Sector, Sprint
Brook Thomson	VP External Affairs, ATT/FirstNet
EMERITUS REPRESENTATIVES	
Michael Manning	Vermont State Police (Retired)
Paul Zito	Connecticut State Police (Retired)

## CY 2020 RECCWG ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND 2021 PRIORITIES

**Statutory Duty 1:** Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

The Region 1 RECCWG made vast strides towards improving local, state, and regional communications systems in 2020, as detailed below.

### ➤ **Accomplishment 1: Assessed communications posture and utilized virtual platforms during pandemic response**

State Emergency Operations Centers (SEOC) and the FEMA Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) were activated in support of United States Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) for over 200 days because of the COVID-19 pandemic response effort. Most of the engagement and support between RECCWG members were virtual. Pre-existing

relationships and working knowledge of neighboring state capabilities were vital this year, without current communications capabilities we would not have been able to respond as well as we have in this environment.

RECCWG members worked with each other to share challenges and best practices for dealing with staffing of PSAPS/911 Centers to ensure adequate staffing should COVID-19 impact some of their personnel. For example, reduced staffing levels to prevent large scale outbreaks and gaps in coverage or remote capability to keep large staffs separated. Shared awareness for options to mitigate loss of staff due to COVID-19, helped to improve the resiliency of staff, and ensured 911 coverage throughout New England with minimal impact from the pandemic.

### ➤ **Accomplishment 2: Assisted RECCWG partners with transitions to remote operations while maintaining communications continuity, interoperability, and efficiency**

The RECCWG assisted partners with the transition to remote operations in 2020 by developing protocols and plans for remote activation of SEOC's including plans for communications continuity for remote teams. FEMA Region 1 and its state partners successfully transitioned to remote disaster operations while maintaining communications continuity, interoperability, and efficiency.

### ➤ **Priority 1: Promote and participate in FEMA National Radio System (FNARS) Regional monthly testing to improve reliability of system components and find sources of grants/income to provide qualified operators in the states**

FEMA Region 1 staff continued to coordinate with state points of contact for FNARS to assist them in ensuring the equipment is operable and maintained. Once technical services are coordinated, the region will work towards identifying grant funding or other potential funding sources to ensure that states will be able to staff their FNARS equipment with competent operators to conduct testing in accordance with the national standards. The RECCWG will explore the development of a White Paper to describe the need for grants to train and fund radio staff in State Operations Centers. The FEMA's FNARS office is in the midst of executing a maintenance and upgrade program once COVID-19 travel restrictions have been lifted.



➤ **Priority 2: Formalize and increase RECCWG representation of several core participant disciplines**

Region 1 RECCWG members and partners actively coordinate with several disciplines across the region that are not yet represented in the working group. Specifically, Tribal nations, amateur radio operators, and Civil Air Patrol (CAP). Region 1 is home to nine federally recognized tribes. The capabilities of Tribal emergency managers, law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical services personnel to communicate on tribal lands is a critical piece of their public safety mission. In Addition, amateur radio volunteers and CAP units have proven to be resilient when other forms of communication have failed. They are often called upon in an ad hoc fashion during major response operations and planned events. By working to identify potential candidates for RECCWG membership within their respective states, RECCWG members will expand their efforts in 2021 to extend RECCWG resources and gain representation by the Region’s tribal nations, amateur radio community, and CAP partners.

**Statutory Duty 2:**

Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment #2: Leveraged existing communications capabilities to enhance response during pandemic and disaster response efforts.**

State, local, Tribal and Federal partners leveraged existing communications capabilities effectively and robustly during the pandemic response which thankfully did not impact a significant amount of communications critical infrastructure. It did however change the way response and support teams operated though operations were not drastically impacted due in large part to situational awareness and the RECCWG’s planning for worst case scenarios. FEMA Region 1 established an alternate RRCC in New Hampshire as a backup to the primary facility in Maynard, Massachusetts. Staff members from the region’s state emergency operations centers and federal partners collaborated to ensure a seamless transition for communications modes should the move be required. States

worked with Region 1 to establish Primary, Alternate, Contingency and Emergency (PACE) modes of communications were available in both FEMA locations to ensure clear situational awareness would exist if a move to the COOP site was required.

➤ **Priority 3: Create and deliver a PACE Roadshow for each of the member states to familiarize members with technical details of communications paths available in the region and determine available resources for use in the region**

RECCWG members will complete participation in the development of PACE protocols for each state and tribe to reliably communicate with FEMA during times of catastrophic disaster response operations. Staff from FEMA Region 1 created a Regional Response Communications document that serves to identify each mode of communications within the PACE plan specific to each state. The Region will work with state communications staff to schedule face to face visits when COVID-



19 travel restrictions have been lifted for exercising available communications options while exploring alternative and emergency modes of communications for future use.

➤ **Priority 4: Continue discussions with Federal partners regarding the loss of T-Band spectrum for major metropolitan areas in New England and nationwide.**

Several major metropolitan areas, including Boston, continue to utilize T-Band spectrum for their public safety communications. The major users of T-band have been actively working with Congressional leaders and federal agencies to stop the T-Band auction or delay it until a funding source can be found to purchase new equipment and devices to replace current T-Band equipment and infrastructure. Region 1 RECCWG members seek to continue their engagement effort with the FCC, NTIA, SAFECOM, National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators and the Incident Communications Advisory Council (ICAC) to change the decision on a T-Band auction.

**Statutory Duty 3:**

Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

➤ **Accomplishment #3: Coordinated collaboration between RECCWG partners to address the regional COVID-19 pandemic response**

Region 1 created a spreadsheet of social distancing guidelines and travel restrictions in the states for essential workers and ESF 2 personnel to utilize during an emergency in the region. Close collaboration between Region 1 RECCWG members enabled smooth and reliable response communications in New England throughout the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic response. Rapidly changing restrictions and varying policies that changed from state to state in somewhat limited area made travel and mutual aid restrictive and difficult to manage. Open lines of communications and use of pre-existing relationships between members resulted in no instances of communications failures

or degradation for the response.

➤ **Priority 5: Continue to refine, test and operationalize the New England Incident Response (IR) Land Mobile Radio (LMR) Network**

Region 1 stakeholders will continue to refine, test, and operationalize the New England IR LMR network. FEMA Region 1, through the RECCWG, will assist states in working to establish necessary Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) for each State and licenses for local users. Standard Operating Procedures for utilizing the IR Channels will be coordinated throughout New England. RECCWG members and federal partners will conduct trials to exercise the capability and update internal plans and procedures to incorporate the programming of LMR resources for use in future incident response operations or large scale planned events.

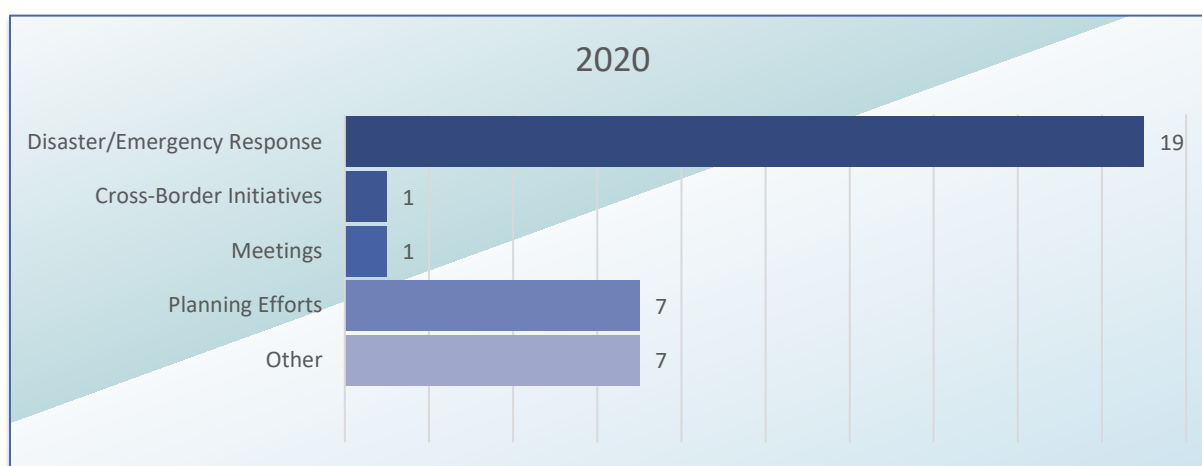
➤ **Priority 6: Update New England Interoperability Matrix**

RECCWG members created the New England Interoperability Matrix in 2014 to establish a method for establishing interoperable communications throughout Region 1. The Matrix uses VHF low and high band, UHF, and 700/800 MHz national interoperability channels in key locations across New England to provide an organized network for conventional interoperability with

national mutual aid and interoperability channels. Members have expressed an interest in updating the matrix to reflect new technologies and updated equipment in each of the New England states. Members hope to update the Matrix in CY-2021. This initiative was delayed due to COVID-19 response activities and limitations on opportunities for engagement with RECCWG members in 2020.

### CY 2020 REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

Partners in every Region 1 state enhanced their emergency communications through their efforts this year. COVID-19 reshaped the way business was conducted and changed the focus of many conversations around public safety and emergency communications. The pandemic caused the cancellation of many large-scale events, exercises, conferences, and cross-state and cross-regional events. Nevertheless, RECCWG members adapted to the new normal and continued to improve their communications systems, collective knowledge base, and peer networks across the country. **Figure 3** provides a summary of these events and efforts in Region 1 that were sponsored by the RECCWG or its members.



**Figure 3: 2020 Regional Events**

**Table 2** lists incident responses, planning activities, trainings, exercises, briefings, coordination efforts, and other events sponsored or hosted by a state where awareness, participation, and/or information sharing were coordinated through the Region 1 RECCWG.

**Table 2. Regional Coordinating Activities**

REGION 1		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
Disaster/Emergency Response	March 2020	Connecticut COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4500-CT) Connecticut COVID-19 (EM-3439-CT) Maine COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4522-ME) Maine COVID-19 (EM-3444-ME) Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point COVID-19 (EM-3498-ME) Massachusetts COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4496-MA) Massachusetts COVID-19 (EM-3438-MA)

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

REGION 1		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
		Massachusetts COVID-19 (EM-3484-MA) Massachusetts COVID-19 (EM-3497-MA) New Hampshire COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4516-NH) New Hampshire COVID-19 (EM-3445-NH) Rhode Island COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4505-RI) Rhode Island COVID-19 (EM-3440-RI) Narragansett Indian Tribe COVID-19 (EM-3515-RI) Vermont COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4532-VT) Vermont COVID-19 (EM-3437-VT)
	8/6/2020	Connecticut Tropical Storm Isaias (EM-3535-CT)
	1/17/2020	Vermont Severe Storm and Flooding (DR-4474-VT)
	Spring 2020	Rhode Island deployed their National Guard for civil disturbances, resulting in rapid training for the Guard on the state's LMR capabilities. The National Guard coordinated well with the local law enforcement during the short period of time.
Cross-Border Initiatives		Maine signed an MOU with Nova Scotia, which enabled direct communications with Augusta and continue to build a working relationship with Canada. Planned a multi-national exercise on the cove plane crash with Canada which was delayed because of COVID-19. Maine officials are working with Canada to reschedule in 2021. Modified the 1952 Treaty which enables closer and more effective coordination across international border.
Teleconferences and Meetings (incl. virtual)	9/29/2020	Discussions and briefings regarding developments, challenges, and efforts in Emergency Management Communications in Region 1 states. States also briefed on COVID-19 lessons learned, current state guidelines, and future RECCWG planning. Outcomes: States met for the first time in 2020, began planning for the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021. Identified possible workshop topics for upcoming coordination meetings.
Communications Planning Efforts		COMEX: Black Swan ARRL/National Guard multi-state communications exercise
	September 30-October 6, 2020	Massachusetts updated the MA Interoperability Field Guide (MIFOG)
	March 2020	Massachusetts updated their SCIP
	June 2020	Massachusetts IR MOU was signed with the Department of Interior.
	August 2020	Massachusetts began establishment of communications LMR training program with state stakeholders in the Commonwealth. The 4-part training program will be created for academies and eventually senior leadership
	March 2020	Rhode Island Inoperability Communications Committee (ICC) approved SCIP Update
	October 2020	Vermont updated their SCIP
	May 2020	Connecticut established programming guidelines for their radios which allowed close coordination with emergency management

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

REGION 1		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
		directors in their respective areas. During COVID-19 and civil disturbances, when communications became difficult, the State was able to operate using organic statewide channels.
Other (e.g., communications innovations, technology refresh, statewide system upgrades)	Spring 2020	New Hampshire FirstNet Data Communications working group met quarterly
	Quarterly 2020	NH State Wireless Interoperability Executive Committee (SWIEC) establishing radio reprogramming guidelines and directed reprogramming
	Various 2020	NH FirstNet Data Communications Working Group hosted a FirstNet Summit with leadership and AT&T
	October 14, 2020	NH FirstNet Data Communications Working Group held a workshop for public safety agencies
	Nov 12, 2020.	NH State Police coordinated with FirstNet on a pilot program. which offers 40 Sonim phones supplied to certain departments with four phases of about 20 to 30 days. After the initial phase, phones will be redistributed to a different unit within the department including command staff. The purpose of the pilot program is to have a better understanding of coverage in the state. NetMotion is collecting the coverage analytics for the program.
	2020	Vermont is in the planning phase to upgrade and expand LMR systems in the state.

## REGION 2

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U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
FEMA Region II  
26 Federal Plaza  
New York, NY 10278

# FEMA

DATE: June 09, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn  
Assistant Administrator  
Response Directorate

FROM: Thomas J. Fargione  
Regional Administrator (A) 

SUBJECT: FEMA Region II Regional Emergency Communications  
Coordination Working Group Annual Report

As required by Title XVIII, Section 1805 of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The annual report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in Title XVIII.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region II RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined calendar year (CY) 2020 RECCWG Annual Report that will be distributed to the Director for the Office of Emergency Communications, the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce. The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan;
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements;
- Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The annual report reflects the accomplishments of the Region II RECCWG and details how the group's efforts satisfied the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final

attached report is wholly representative of the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG provides as a venue for Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region. The accompanying annual report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Enclosed: Region II summary for the CY 2020 RECCWG Annual Report



### REGION II

#### REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP (RECCWG)

#### CY 2020 OVERVIEW

Comprised of the States of New Jersey and New York, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the Territory of the Virgin Islands, the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group worked diligently throughout 2020 alongside its State, Local, Tribal, Territorial, Federal and private sector partners, auxiliary communications volunteers, and a host of enthusiastic professionals to advance communications interoperability across the Region. New response missions, ongoing long-term recovery operations, scheduled events, trainings, exercises and other initiatives collectively bolstered relationships across the Working Group while increasing capabilities of member organizations. Entities took on new roles and responsibilities during the response to the COVID-19 Pandemic as many routine, day to day activities were paused with new priorities emerging including lifesaving and life sustaining missions.

Region II received declarations for Emergency Declarations and Major Disaster Declarations in all states as a result of the pandemic, earthquakes, and severe weather while numerous other disasters in all states remain open and active requiring continued support. The majority of large-scale special events that regularly occur in all states necessitating coordination and interoperable communications amongst responders from multiple agencies and across all levels of government were cancelled or postponed amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. However, Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group members responded to numerous incidents that required interoperability among field personnel, command centers, volunteer organizations, and local agencies. Each incident posed a unique set of challenges that responders and officials, many of whom are members of the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group. Additionally, it should be noted that members were assigned with a variety of different roles and responsibilities responding to the pandemic, some related to communications and others supporting other realms of operations, however, collectively, were able to solve and learn from, thanks in part to close collaboration with their peers in the region and across the country based upon preestablished relationships ties to the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group.

As a diverse yet cohesive team, the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group tackled many new challenges to interoperability in the region as new initiatives progressed across all levels of government. The year's events also underscored the criticality of well-functioning and universally compatible alert and warning systems to ensure swift, reliable, and effective communications could occur without notice. The technological advances of 2020, to include a drastic and sudden shift in the private and public sectors to a new "virtual standard of operations" made it clear the collective expertise of communications professionals as a singular body is increasingly effective in shaping the future of interoperability among systems, both technologically and legislatively.

## 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

Highlights of the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group accomplishments in 2020 are documented in this report and serve as examples of the advancements made within Region II and through the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group program nationally. Similarly, priorities for 2021 have been set to leverage the extensive professional experience, comprehensive conversations and research, and close collaboration among member agencies within the region.

For additional information regarding the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group, please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator, Bryan Krane, at [Bryan.Krane@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Bryan.Krane@fema.dhs.gov) or (540) 532-0997.

*Table 1: RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2020*

Name	Role or Agency
RECCWG Leadership	
Thomas Von Essen	RECCWG Chair/FEMA Region II Regional Administrator (RA)
Vacant - Pending Appointment	RECCWG Co-Chair
Bryan Krane	Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), FEMA Region II
New Jersey (NJ) Representatives	
John Miller	SWIC/New Jersey Office of Information Technology
Christopher Campbell	New Jersey State Police
Craig Reiner	New Jersey Office of Technology
Andy Schwartz	New Jersey Transit
Ed Velez	New Jersey Transit
State (NY) Representatives	
Michael Sprague	SWIC/New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
Bradley Becker	New York State Police
Peter Bojmal	New York City Emergency Management
Anthony Catalanato	City of New York Fire Department
Brett Chellis	New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
Matt Delaney	New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
Toby Dusha	New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
David Fields	City of New York Fire Department
Larissa Guedko	New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
Steve Harte	City of New York Fire Department
PJ Higgitt	New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services

## 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
John Howard	City of New York Police Department
Henry Jackson	New York City Emergency Management
Laura Stockstill	New York City Emergency Management
Paul Lucido	City of New York Police Department
Michael O'Neil	New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene
Gilbert Saez	New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
Luis Valcarel	New York State Courts
Puerto Rico (PR) Representatives	
Felix Garcia	SWIC/Puerto Rico Emergency Management Agency
Waldo Acavado	Puerto Rico Telecommunications Board
Virgin Islands (USVI) Representatives	
David Parris	SWIC/Virgin Islands Bureau of Information Technology
Adelle Williams	Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency
Tribal Representatives	
Mike Gates	Seneca Nation
Clint Halfgun	Cayuga Nation
Darwin Hill	Tonawanda Band of Seneca
Beverly Jensen	Shinnecock Nation
Art John	Seneca Nation
Edward Koorse	Seneca Nation
Neil Patterson, Jr.	Tuscarora Nation
Terry Winslow	Oneida Nation
Federal Partners	
Josh Green	Federal Emergency Management Agency
David Cucchi	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Luis Torres-Colon	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Christopher Tuttle	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
Jeremy Johnson	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
Peter Kim	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
Murad Raheem	United States Department of Health and Human Services
Andrew Chen	United States Department of Health and Human Services
Peter Koutrouba	FEMA Mobile Emergency Response Support - Maynard
Lawrence Lavigne	FEMA Mobile Emergency Response Support - Maynard
Derek Vieira	FEMA Mobile Emergency Response Support - Maynard
David Adsit	Federal Emergency Management Agency – Office of Chief Information Officer
Kenneth Link	Department of Justice
Brian Falvey	United States Secret Service
Mark Grabow	United States Secret Service

Name	Role or Agency
Run Li	Defense Coordinating Element
Scott Jackson	National Telecommunications and Information Administration
Roberto Mussenden	Federal Communications Commission
Eric Panketh	Federal Communications Commission
Anthony Ruiz	United States Customs & Border Protection
Gaetano Rumore	General Services Administration
Luis Salazar	Federal Communications Commission
Michael Schmidt	United States Department of Justice
Donald Shanly	Federal Bureau of Investigation
Steve Veader	National Telecommunications and Information Administration

### CY 2020 RECCWG ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).**

- **Accomplishment 1: Continue to cultivate relationships with existing state and territorial coordinating bodies and hold at least one Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group meeting in New York or New Jersey and in Puerto Rico or Virgin Islands.**

During 2020, Region II Regional Emergency Communications Working Group members continued to cultivate relationships through area, state, and local interoperability working groups and real-world responses. Members participated in their respective working groups as they are the quintessential forums for interoperability in the local geographic areas. Most of the meetings were held virtually due to the ongoing pandemic amid increasing health and safety concerns. These working groups included the New Jersey Regional Communications Working Group and the New York Statewide Communications Working Group, both with multiple smaller regional sub committees. Additional forums members engaged in included the New York City Interoperable Communications Committee comprised of representatives from the Tri-State area, the New York Statewide Citizen Alerting Working Group, the Caribbean Area Interoperable Communications Regional Working Group, and the Canada United States Interoperable Communications Working Group. Relationships forged and strengthened through these settings have been paramount to the success of recent response operations across all divisions of Region II.

The Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group anticipated to be hosted with the Regional Interagency Steering Committee and Regional Advisory Committee meetings were cancelled in 2020. The ongoing responses to the pandemic, inability to safely gather while protecting our workforces and limited availability of staff to support a Plenary session were the primary reasons for this cancellation. It is anticipated that the next event

comprising all three bodies will be hosted in 2021 with the goal to include sessions in New Jersey/New York and Puerto Rico/Virgin Islands, dependent on the safe ability to congregate.

The Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group's Rally in the New York City area was also cancelled due to the pandemic. This event, expected to be held semiannually, requires extensive planning and commitments from resources for participation. Agencies enacted strict travel requirements, most not permitting travel beyond state borders or outside of specific mileage zones, would not have permitted the resources to be on site. Additionally, many of the communications assets were deployed to support real-world events to include command and control functions for the pandemic at Emergency Operations Centers, testing sites, emergency field hospitals and other locations. This event will be rescheduled for 2022 when it is anticipated that travel will be permitted, and personnel will be available to plan, support, and attend.

The Region II Regional Communications Coordination Working Group will endeavor to host in person engagements in 2021 when safe to do so in coordination with other similar Regional events and will continue to host virtual sessions with members in the interim to cultivate relationships, provide training, share best practices and plan for future response scenarios.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Members participated in preparedness efforts including training, technical assistance, and exercises to advance emergency communication capabilities to be executed during incidents and events.**

Throughout the course of 2020, nearly all routine and non-emergency activities were paused due to COVID-19. Not only were gatherings unsafe and banned in most locations, but the majority of personnel were assigned to support response operations. Subsequently preparedness efforts routinely conducted by members from various components of the Region II Regional Communications Coordination Working Group to increase individual, agency level and whole community capabilities were limited. Most formal training was not permitted and although programs began to prepare for virtual deliveries, courses needed to be updated, platforms established, and trainers instructed on delivery methods so therefore opportunities were limited. In Puerto Rico, however, in person deliveries were hosted for personnel to include on the Incident Command System, Emergency Operations Center Operations, situational awareness reporting, planning and a variety of other topics. Additionally, informal training occurred through presentations, discussions, and mentoring engagements to increase professional knowledge, build relationships, and enhance capabilities, with the majority via online platforms. It should be noted and recognized as a best practice that training on topics beyond communications has proven invaluable for communications sector responders to have a greater understanding of the relationship of their role and associated responsibilities to that of others executing different missions.

Technical assistance, both formal and informal, continued to be delivered to Region II states in 2020 in support of communications missions albeit primarily virtually. Federal agencies provided funding and personnel to increase capabilities in specific mission sets as requested by State level officials through yearly technical assistance programs. Additionally, technical assistance

continues to be provided to Commonwealth and Territorial partners to rebuild and enhance infrastructure post Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Subject matter experts deploy regularly to engage directly with key stakeholders to work towards delivering new capabilities as outlined in Senior Leadership guiding documents as well as projects requested by the States. Examples include the building of mobile emergency operations center vehicles, the development of new land mobile radio networks, the establishment of a data center, the design of new Public Safety Answering Points and the creation of new alert and warning systems to notify the public in the event of a pending or just occurred emergency. Furthermore, subject matter experts reviewed deliberate plans, provided input and restructured documents to correlate into a defined planning hierarchy to assist in preparing for future response operations. Although many of these are long term projects, they highlight the importance of relationships and the cooperative efforts of Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group members to reach common goals, often outside of their home area of operations.

Preparedness efforts will remain a priority in 2021 and it is anticipated that activities will continue virtually, whenever feasible and practical, and will resume in person when gathering, travel and other restrictions are lifted.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Conduct an assessment to document baseline communications interoperability capabilities in all Region II states to identify best practices for interoperability, coordination and communication during future responses involving multiple jurisdictions and levels of government.**

Due to the limited availability of personnel and other implications of the pandemic, a concerted and collaborative State, Tribal, Territorial, Local and Federal effort to identify, validate and document communication capabilities at all levels was not able to be executed in 2020. It is expected that this initiative will be conducted in 2021, pending the availability of State and Federal partners, the ability to travel and eased pandemic related restrictions. Components to be assessed include land mobile radio, satellite communications, internet-based technologies, terrestrial services, and other capabilities in use and / or available to first responder agencies organically. Through a shared understanding of capabilities, more effective response plans can be developed. Additionally, the intent is to develop more efficient processes for the sharing of best practices across all levels of government and beyond jurisdictional boundaries to include areas for sustainment and areas for improvement for execution during periods of preparedness, response, and recovery.

In 2021, the conducting of an assessment to document baseline communications interoperability across the Region will remain a priority with activities to be conducted to be determined based upon limitations associated with the pandemic in effect and the availability of critical communication personnel to support this initiative.

**Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of**

terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

- **Accomplishment 4: Continue and increase coordination with bordering FEMA Regions I, III, and IV through expanded use of emergency management and public safety mutual aid agreements, exercise participation and participation in each other RECCWG meetings and forums.**

With the close geographic boundaries that New York and New Jersey share with neighboring Region I, II and III Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group members, it has been identified that increasing engagement and interaction with those partner entities would be a natural and efficient use of valuable time and resources. The Region I, II and III Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups bring valuable experience in dealing with recent disasters and high-profile events while Region II has recently learned numerous lessons learned from Hurricanes Sandy, Irma and Maria and its own numerous high-level events such as New Year's Day celebrations, United Nations General Assembly meetings and major sporting events. Likewise, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico are still recovering from an unprecedented hurricane season in which numerous resources from Gulf Coast states deployed to assist in response and recovery operations. During 2019 planning was underway for a joint Plenary Session in 2020 to include multiple Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups from across the country to build relationships, share best practices and develop opportunities for future coordination. However, this large-scale meeting was cancelled due to the pandemic to include limitations on gatherings and limited availability of personnel. It is anticipated that a similar event will be scheduled once safe to do so and the pandemic is declared over by the appropriate officials.

In 2021, developing relationships with states in adjacent regions and entities nearby will remain a priority to increase support capabilities, expand available resource pools and potentially decrease response times for future events and incidents.

- **Accomplishment 5: Planning and implementation of integrated emergency communications innovations**

The 2020 Calendar Year was a successful year in Region II as it relates to the rollout of new communications initiatives for use during steady state and to support future responses. Subsequent to lessons learned from Hurricanes Irma and Maria, it was evident that additional capabilities need to be acquired for use during the immediate response operations phases before, during and after an incident occurs. Satellite voice, satellite radio, satellite data, land mobile radio and internet-based platforms were subsequently installed in several locations in Region II. Furthermore, the requirement to be able operate virtually thrusts the emergency communications community into a process to rapidly identify, source, and roll out new options for steady state and response scenarios.

To support the requirement for a potential surge in land mobile radio requirements, additional caches of equipment were developed and staged in critical locations in Region II. VHF and UHF radio devices, primarily for use on interoperability channels, were secured and are now available



for immediate use post incident impact. During 2020 caches were loaned to Puerto Rico to aid in earthquake and tropical storm response operations and for coordination with Federal responders. Additional equipment is available should similar occurrences arise during future responses.

As evident during the 2017 Hurricane Season and documented in the 2019 Annual Report, a reliable platform for efficient push to talk communications across wide areas is required in the immediate aftermath of a catastrophic incident. The utilization of Mobile Satellite Radio technology proved effective and has since become a best practice across Region II. Devices have been installed at all Region II Steady State Facilities including the Regional Watch Center and the Regional Response Coordination Center to ensure communications with field level personnel. To date, equipment has been installed in Emergency Operations Centers in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands with the roll out anticipated to possibly continue in 2021 to New Jersey and New York locations. Numerous transportable kits are available for immediate deployment in the days preceding an incident or immediately thereafter. The overall intent upon completion of the deployment plan for the Region II Mobile Satellite Radio Network is for all primary Federal and State initial Emergency Operation Centers to possess the ability to communicate with command and control units in the field responding to the disaster. This equipment proved highly valuable during response operations to the earthquakes in Puerto Rico in addition to the tropical storms that impacted Region II. Regular testing continued throughout hurricane season and will resume in 2021 at sites where services are available. Furthermore, Region II intends to procure additional mobile satellite radio equipment to be staged for future response operations when required in any of its states during scenarios where communications are impacted or alternative mediums to coordinate are required.

With restrictions effected across the Region in 2020 due to the pandemic, government offices were only able to operate with limited numbers of personnel in person and many facilities were required to be closed. Subsequently, it became quickly evident that a new method of conducting business needed to be identified to permit effective and efficient coordination via virtual means. The Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group members quickly identified, sourced, and rolled out options in support of their respective entities to ensure required capabilities were delivered, continuity of operations and continuity of government. A variety of platforms became the norm including MSTeams, Zoom and Adobe Connect, while others were leveraged for mission specific requirements. The quick and dedicated work conducted by the communications sector along with the sharing of lessons learned proved invaluable as the majority of government employees transitioned to a telework type program with limited impacts to essential services. It is anticipated that this will remain the primary means of engagement in 2021 as the COVID-19 pandemic continues with long term plans unknown at the time of this report.

The Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group endeavors to remain at the forefront of emergency communications and posturing properly for future incidents and events will remain a priority in 2021. Research may be conducted on new technologies, planning executed with membership organizations and the private sector, equipment tested for capabilities and budgeting for future purchases all to occur in the next calendar year. Region II is prone to a variety of natural hazards as well as the high potential

for technological incidents or man-made attacks and therefore will continue to identify, socialize, and utilize integrated emergency communications innovations.

➤ **Accomplishment 6: Advance the integration of the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group with established State and Regional level Working Groups for increased efficiency in coordination.**

Over the past several years, the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group has established an effective means of communications with stakeholders through a combination of dedicated Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group events and by leveraging meetings, conferences and other similar engagements hosted by partner entities. It was documented in the 2019 Yearly Report that in 2020, in addition to the annual Plenary Session in Puerto Rico/Virgin Islands or New Jersey/New York, a Communications Rally would be hosted by the members of the working group. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this event was cancelled due to operational requirements, travel restrictions and mandates on gatherings.

This will remain a priority for 2021 and dependent on the aforementioned factors, the Region II Regional Communications Coordination Working Group will strive to schedule a Public Safety Communications Rally, similar to what was hosted in 2018, in addition to the Plenary Session. This will provide an additional opportunity for increased coordination amongst those in the communications industry and other critical infrastructure sectors.

**Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.**

➤ **Accomplishment 7: Implement and share best practices and lessons learned from After Action Reports (AARs) and Quick Look Reports (QLRs) written following response operations across the Region.**

It is imperative that lessons learned are examined so there can be a path towards implementing mechanisms to address issues by updating plans, policies and operational strategies that account for the latest feedback from the field. While exercises are an important step to prepare for disasters, they cannot fully simulate the personnel dynamics, expansive infrastructure damage, resource limitations, capability deficits, coordination difficulties and logistical impediments that often occur during catastrophic disasters.

The 2020 Calendar Year brought new and unexpected challenges to the emergency communications community. The sudden transition from in person engagement to virtual sessions became an overnight requirement across all levels of government and nearly all mission areas. Health and safety was paramount, however, equally important was ensuring the continued availability of critical services including telecommunications. Furthermore, with the move to virtual meetings, learning and other sessions, the reliance increased on telecommunications drastically to include services, equipment, and technical support.

The Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group members led the charge to ensure government staff had the capabilities required to perform their duties in support of their respective agency's mission essential functions. Lessons were learned by all involved with subsequent sharing across a variety of formal and informal channels. Members coordinated frequently through established relationships to identify courses of action, determine best methods for execution and to plan for future operations in the virtual world, an arena new for many in the emergency communications field.

It is expected that in 2021, formal Quick Look Reports (QLRs) and After-Action Reports (AARs) will be released as it relates to communications during the pandemic to include support provided to critical life saving and life sustaining response operations. The Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group will work to ensure a priority is evident by all for the active sharing of lessons learned, both areas for improvement and areas of sustainment, across disciplines, echelons of government and beyond borders. It is anticipated that when travel restrictions are rescinded, gathering limits are repealed and it is safe for congregating, Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups members will deliver formal and informal training sessions through various forums to offer insight through the sharing of lessons learned at both Region II and joint Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups Plenary Sessions with other Regions.

➤ **Accomplishment 8: Facilitate accurate situational awareness and effective coordination during real-world events through the implementation of the Lifelines Toolkit at the State level.**

The establishment of a common operating picture and the sharing of situational awareness is a known requirement for the successful response to an event or incident. Effective processes begin with training efforts during steady state, lead to the refinement of processes followed by the exercising of capabilities and eventual real-world execution. In 2020 all of these steps were completed beginning with training that was provided to State partners on the FEMA Lifelines initiative in all Region II states. This reporting and operations mechanism is intended to aid in situational awareness sharing, increase operational coordination and to better inform Senior Leadership to support critical decision making. Training during steady state was delivered from Federal to State personnel in both formal and informal deliveries across New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands to increase alignment with the new FEMA program. Senior Leadership Briefings, Coordination Calls and Situation Reporting in these three States are now more closely aligned with the Federal Interagency process thus providing greater visibility and increased ease in information sharing. Additionally, real-world coordination during the pandemic between the FEMA Incident Management Assistance – Advance teams deployed to all States were focused on lifelines and reporting through this structure. Reports were due daily to the Regional Response Coordination Center along with often multiple briefings daily centered on situational awareness to inform leadership to aid in the decision-making process. This resulted in effective and efficient Federal support to state requirements to include lifesaving and life sustaining actions in response to the pandemic. Furthermore, during responses to the earthquakes and tropical storms in 2020, the doctrinally established lifeline processes were executed and proved invaluable to mission

success. Lessons learned continue to be documented and shared, however, with agencies utilizing similar reporting platforms, quick looks indicate that these areas for sustainment and improvement can be more effectively reviewed, analyzed and adapted, as appropriate, to enhance capabilities for future responses beyond those which occurred in 2020.

Reporting of situational awareness quickly and accurately through a structure mechanism will remain a priority of the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group in 2021. Trainings will continue virtually and in person, as safe and appropriate, to further enhance the capabilities of membership organizations as it relates to this critically important task. Lessons learned from previous real-world scenarios and exercise evolutions will be examined and shared accordingly to afford the greatest positive impacts to preparedness for future responses.

➤ **Accomplishment 9: Continue to develop and promote the availability and utilization of cross border communications interoperability platforms during steady state through planning, training, and exercising initiatives for use during the response to real world incidents and events.**

It was anticipated that in partnership with members from other Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups, in 2020 increased collaboration would occur through scheduled trainings and exercises. Additionally, a multi-Regional Plenary session was scheduled to bring leadership and partner agencies together from various entities across the country. The intent was that, and continues to be when the aforementioned are coupled together with the sharing of information virtually beyond borders between meetings, an increase in awareness should occur on capabilities of other States to be leveraged during response and recovery operations to include those to save lives, property and the environment. This includes cross border communications interoperability, the sharing of limited yet high demand resources to be allocated during large scale responses and the ability to provide seamless support to meet day to day surge requirements, as required by State, Tribal, Territorial, Local and Federal agencies. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, all formal, in person cross border engagements were cancelled because of travel restrictions, ongoing high priority mission requirements for personnel and limitations on social gatherings.

Cross border communications interoperability planning and executing will remain a priority for Calendar Year 2021 with in person engagements expected to resume when safe and appropriate. The Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group may look to engage virtually with other similar entities in the interim when personnel become available and are released from emerging response missions. The Region II body will engage and provide support to this initiative and looks forward to the resumption of coordination efforts for this critical priority in the next year.

### **REGION II RECCWG CY 2020 ACTIVITIES**

The table below lists trainings, exercises, briefings, subcommittee activities, and other events hosted or promoted by the Region II RECCWG.

## 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/ nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions / Topics and Outcomes
Monthly	National RECCWG Co-Chairs Calls	10 RECCWG Co-Chairs, FEMA DEC Staff and RECCs	Topics of interest and concern on interoperability, governance, technology, and procedures of national interest. Sharing of information on ongoing initiatives in each RECCWG as well as lessons learned and after-action reports (AAR) from exercises and real-world events.  <i>*Held virtually as most in person activities cancelled due to the pandemic*</i>
Quarterly	New Jersey Regional Communications Working Group	New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania State Agencies New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania Local Agencies Federal Agencies FEMA Region II Other RECCWG Members	Meetings of various agencies to discuss frequency usage, interoperability, training, interference, system development, funding, cross jurisdictional projects, and other communications related matters.  <i>*Held virtually as most in person activities cancelled due to the pandemic*</i>
Quarterly	New York Statewide Communications Working Group	New York, New Jersey, Connecticut State Agencies New York, New Jersey, Connecticut Local Agencies Federal Agencies FEMA Region II Other RECCWG Members	Meetings of various agencies to discuss frequency usage, interoperability, training, interference, system development, funding, cross jurisdictional projects, and other communications related matters.  <i>*Held virtually as most in person activities cancelled due to the pandemic*</i>
Quarterly	New York Statewide Citizen Alerting Working Group	New York, New Jersey, Connecticut State Agencies New York, New Jersey, Connecticut Local Agencies Federal Agencies FEMA Region II Other RECCWG Members	Meetings of various agencies to discuss emergency notification processes, systems, and technologies across New York State.  <i>*Held virtually as most in person activities cancelled due to the pandemic*</i>
Quarterly	NYC Interoperable Communications Committee Working Groups	New York City Agencies New York, New Jersey, Connecticut State Agencies New York, New Jersey, Connecticut Local Agencies	Meetings of various agencies to discuss frequency usage, interoperability, training, interference, system development, funding, cross jurisdictional projects, and other communications related matters.

## 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/ nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions / Topics and Outcomes
		Federal Agencies FEMA Region II Other RECCWG Members	<i>*Held virtually as most in person activities cancelled due to the pandemic*</i>
Quarterly	Canada – United States Interoperable Communications Regional Working Group	Canadian Agencies State Agencies Federal Agencies FEMA Region II Other RECCWG Members	Meetings of various agencies to discuss frequency usage, interoperability, training, interference, system development, funding, cross jurisdictional projects, and other communications related matters.  <i>*Postponed due to the pandemic*</i>
Quarterly	Caribbean Area Interoperable Communications Regional Working Group	Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands Commonwealth/Territorial Agencies Federal Agencies FEMA Region II Other RECCWG Members	Meetings of various agencies to discuss frequency usage, interoperability, training, interference, system development, funding, cross jurisdictional projects, and other communications related matters.  <i>*Postponed due to the pandemic*</i>
Calendar Year 2020	Regional Incident Management and Incident Support Trainings and Exercises	Puerto Rico Commonwealth Agencies Federal Agencies FEMA Region II Other RECCWG Members	Series of planned exercises and trainings of Puerto Rico emergency responders including RECCWG members in San Juan along with their Federal counterparts focused in incident management and incident support activities. Primary goals were to prepare Commonwealth and Federal personnel to respond to a future Hurricane impacting the Commonwealth. Communications was a prevalent topic throughout the series of activities due to expected impacts during future storms as evident during the recent real-world impacts realized in the Caribbean.
Calendar Year 2020	Regional Incident Management and Incident Support Exercise with Emergency Communications Workshop	Virgin Islands Territorial Agencies Federal Agencies FEMA Region II Other RECCWG Members	Series of planned exercises and trainings of Virgin Islands emergency responders including RECCWG members along with their Federal counterparts focused in incident management activities. Primary goals were to prepare Territorial and Federal personnel to respond to a future Hurricane impacting the Territory. Communications was a prevalent topic throughout the series of activities due to expected impacts during future storms as evident during the recent real-world impacts realized in the Caribbean.
Calendar Year 2020	Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group Plenary Session	New Jersey, New York State Agencies New Jersey, New York Local Agencies Federal Agencies	Planned event to include the membership of New Jersey and New York RECCWG agencies at a location in the New York City area. A series of communications centric briefings were to be delivered followed by the Region II Regional Interagency Steering Committee Conference on a variety of emergency management topics. Opportunity existed for networking of personnel



## 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/ nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions / Topics and Outcomes
		FEMA Region II Other RECCWG Members	across all disciplines and all agencies in attendance as well as with the private sector. <i>*Cancelled due to the pandemic*</i>
Calendar Year 2020	Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group Plenary Session	Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands State Agencies Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands Local Agencies Federal Agencies FEMA Region II Other RECCWG Members	Planned event to include the membership of Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands RECCWG agencies at a location in the Caribbean. A series of communications centric briefings were to be delivered followed by the Region II Regional Interagency Steering Committee Conference on a variety of emergency management topics. Opportunity existed for networking of personnel across all disciplines and all agencies in attendance as well as with the private sector. <i>*Cancelled due to the pandemic*</i>

### CY2020 CROSS-STATE AND CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The following table lists Region II activities in which multiple states or regions worked together to coordinate strategies, collaborate on ideas, conduct training, or respond to real-world events.

*Table 2: State Events*

Title/Heading	Description	Outcomes
2020 Puerto Rico Training and Exercising	Deployment of personnel from multiple agencies and levels of government to deliver training and facilitate exercises for responders in Puerto Rico to increase operational response capabilities.	Provided basic and advanced training followed by the opportunity to exercise new skill sets to career and volunteer emergency management professionals, to include those in the Emergency Support Function #2 community, who will support future response operations.
2020 Virgin Islands Training and Exercising	Deployment of personnel from multiple agencies and levels of government to deliver training and facilitate exercises for responders in the Virgin Islands to increase operational response capabilities.	Provided basic and advanced training followed by the opportunity to exercise new skill sets to career and volunteer emergency management professionals, to include those in the Emergency Support Function #2 community, who will support future response operations.
2020 New York State Communications Symposium	Annual New York State Communications Symposium attended by communications personnel from State, Tribal, Local and Federal Agencies from within New York State and beyond.	Provided an opportunity for Emergency Support Function #2 and other emergency management and public safety professionals to network,



## 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

Title/Heading	Description	Outcomes
		collaborate, train and plan for future response requirements.  <i>*Scheduled but cancelled due to the pandemic*</i>
2020 New Jersey Emergency Preparedness Conference	Annual New Jersey Emergency Preparedness Conference attended by emergency management personnel from State, Tribal, Local and Federal Agencies from within New Jersey State and beyond.	Provided basic and advanced training followed by the opportunity to exercise new skill sets to career and volunteer emergency management professionals, to include those in the Emergency Support Function #2 community, who will support future response operations.  <i>*Scheduled but cancelled due to the pandemic*</i>
2020 ESF #02 National Summit	Annual Federal ESF 2 Summit attended by communications personnel from State, Tribal, Local and Federal Agencies as well as private sector industry from across the country.	Provided an opportunity for Emergency Support Function #2 and other emergency management and public safety professionals to network, collaborate, train and plan for future response requirements.  <i>*Scheduled but cancelled due to the pandemic*</i>
2020 Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator Summit	Annual Federal Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator Summit attended by Federal communications personnel from across the Department of Homeland Security representing all Regions.	Provided an opportunity for Emergency Support Function #2 and other emergency management and public safety professionals to network, collaborate, train and plan for future response requirements.  <i>*Held virtually due to the pandemic*</i>
2020 Virgin Islands All Hazards Planning Conference	Annual Virgin Islands Planning Conference attended by emergency management personnel from Territorial, Local and Federal Agencies from within the Virgin Islands and beyond to include Department of Defense personnel representing multiple disciplines and National Guard Leadership from partner states.	Provided an opportunity for Emergency Support Function #2 and other emergency management and public safety professionals to network, collaborate, train and plan for future response requirements.
2020 FEMA Planners' Workshop	Annual Federal Planners' Workshop attended by operational and crisis action planners from across all Regions as well as available Regional Emergency Communications Coordinators.	Provided an opportunity for Planners, Emergency Support Function #2 and other emergency management and public safety professionals to network, collaborate, train and plan for future response requirements.  <i>*Scheduled but cancelled due to the pandemic*</i>

### CY 2020 STATE ACTIVITIES

The table below lists trainings, exercises, briefings, real-life response incidents, and other events sponsored or hosted by a state where awareness, participation, and/or information sharing were coordinated through the Region II RECCWG.

*Table 3. State Activities*

State	Event Type	Title	Date	Event Description and Outcome
Puerto Rico	Real World Event	Earthquakes	January, 2020	<p>Emergency Declaration declared on January 7, 2020 for Earthquakes (FEMA-3426-EM-PR).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
Puerto Rico	Real World Event	Earthquakes	January, 2020	<p>Major Declaration declared on January 16, 2020 for Earthquakes (FEMA-4473-DR-PR).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
New Jersey	Real World Event	COVID-19 Pandemic	January, 2020	<p>Emergency Declaration declared on March 13, 2020 for the COVID-19 Pandemic (FEMA-3451-EM-NJ).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
New York	Real World Event	COVID-19 Pandemic	January, 2020	<p>Emergency Declaration declared on March 13, 2020 for the COVID-19 Pandemic (FEMA-3434-EM-NY).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>

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State	Event Type	Title	Date	Event Description and Outcome
Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe	Real World Event	COVID-19 Pandemic	January, 2020	<p>Emergency Declaration declared on March 13, 2020 for the COVID-19 Pandemic (FEMA-3504-EM).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
Oneida Indian Nation	Real World Event	COVID-19 Pandemic	January, 2020	<p>Emergency Declaration declared on March 13, 2020 for the COVID-19 Pandemic (FEMA-3557-EM).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
Puerto Rico	Real World Event	COVID-19 Pandemic	January, 2020	<p>Emergency Declaration declared on March 13, 2020 for the COVID-19 Pandemic (FEMA-3452-EM-PR).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
Virgin Islands	Real World Event	COVID-19 Pandemic	January, 2020	<p>Emergency Declaration declared on March 13, 2020 for the COVID-19 Pandemic (FEMA-3433-EM-VI).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
New York	Real World Event	COVID-19 Pandemic	January, 2020	<p>Major Declaration declared on March 20, 2020 for the COVID-19 Pandemic (FEMA-4480-DR-NY).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
New Jersey	Real World Event	COVID-19 Pandemic	January, 2020	<p>Major Declaration declared on March 25, 2020 for the COVID-19 Pandemic (FEMA-4488-DR-NJ).</p>

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State	Event Type	Title	Date	Event Description and Outcome
				<p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
Puerto Rico	Real World Event	COVID-19 Pandemic	January, 2020	<p>Major Declaration declared on March 27, 2020 for the COVID-19 Pandemic (FEMA-4493-DR-PR).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
Virgin Islands	Real World Event	COVID-19 Pandemic	January, 2020	<p>Major Declaration declared on April 2, 2020 for the COVID-19 Pandemic (FEMA-4513-DR-VI).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
New York	Planned Conference	2020 New York State Communications Symposium	April 2020	<p>Hosting of annual New York State Communications Symposium attended by communications personnel from State, Tribal, Local and Federal Agencies from within New York State and beyond.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p> <p>*Scheduled but cancelled due to the pandemic*</p>
New Jersey	Planned Conference	2020 New Jersey Emergency Preparedness Conference	May 2020	<p>Hosting of annual New Jersey Emergency Preparedness Conference attended by emergency management personnel from State, Tribal, Local and Federal Agencies from within New Jersey State and beyond.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p> <p>*Scheduled but cancelled due to the pandemic*</p>
New York/New Jersey	Planned Special Event	Memorial Day Celebration	May 2020	<p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p>

## 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

State	Event Type	Title	Date	Event Description and Outcome
				<p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p> <p><i>*Most in person activities cancelled due to the pandemic*</i></p>
New York/New Jersey	Planned Special Event	Independence Day Celebration	July 2020	<p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p> <p><i>*Most in person activities cancelled due to the pandemic*</i></p>
Virgin Islands	Real World Event	Potential Tropical Cyclone Nine	July, 2020	<p>Emergency Declaration declared on July 29, 2020 for potential Tropical Storm (FEMA-3531-DR-VI).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
Puerto Rico	Real World Event	Potential Tropical Cyclone Nine	July, 2020	<p>Emergency Declaration declared on July 29, 2020 for potential Tropical Storm (FEMA-3532-DR-PR).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
Puerto Rico	Real World Event	Tropical Storm Laura	July, 2020	<p>Emergency Declaration declared on August 22, 2020 for Tropical Storm (FEMA-3537-EM-PR).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
Puerto Rico	Real World Event	Tropical Storm Isaias	August, 2020	<p>Major Declaration declared on September 9, 2020 for Tropical Storm (FEMA-4560-DR-PR).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p>

## 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

State	Event Type	Title	Date	Event Description and Outcome
				Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.
New York	Real World Event	Tropical Storm Isaias	August, 2020	<p>Major Declaration declared on October 2, 2020 for Tropical Storm (FEMA-4567-DR-NY).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
Puerto Rico	Real World Event	Severe Storm and Flooding	September, 2020	<p>Major Declaration declared on November 5, 2020 for Severe Storm and Flooding (FEMA-4571-DR-PR).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
New Jersey	Real World Event	Tropical Storm Isaias	August, 2020	<p>Major Declaration declared on December 11, 2020 for Tropical Storm (FEMA-4574-DR-NJ).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
New York/New Jersey	Planned Special Event	Labor Day Celebration	September 2020	<p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p> <p><i>*Most in person activities cancelled due to the pandemic*</i></p>
New York/New Jersey	Planned Special Event	73 <sup>rd</sup> United Nations General Assembly	September 2020	<p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p> <p><i>*Most in person activities cancelled due to the pandemic*</i></p>

## 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

State	Event Type	Title	Date	Event Description and Outcome
New York/New Jersey	Planned Special Event	Thanksgiving Day Celebration	November 2020	<p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p> <p><i>*Most in person activities cancelled due to the pandemic*</i></p>
New York/New Jersey	Planned Special Event	New Year's Eve Celebration	December 2020	<p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p> <p><i>*Most in person activities cancelled due to the pandemic*</i></p>
<i>Activities Continued from 2017</i>				
Puerto Rico	Real-life Event	Hurricane Irma	September 2017	<p>Emergency Declaration followed by Major Disaster Declaration declared on September 5, 2017 for Hurricane Irma (FEMA-3384-EM-PR, FEMA-4336-DR-PR).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan and long-term recovery planning.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
Virgin Islands	Real-life Event	Hurricane Irma	September 2017	<p>Emergency Declaration followed by Major Disaster Declaration declared on September 7, 2017 for Hurricane Irma (FEMA-3383-EM-VI, FEMA-4335-DR-VI).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan and long-term recovery planning.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>
Puerto Rico	Real-life Event	Hurricane Maria	September 2017	<p>Emergency Declaration followed by Major Disaster Declaration declared on September 20, 2017 for Hurricane Maria (FEMA-3381-EM-PR, FEMA-4339-DR-PR).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan and long-term recovery planning.</p>



## 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

State	Event Type	Title	Date	Event Description and Outcome
				Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.
Virgin Islands	Real-life Event	Hurricane Maria	September 2017	<p>Emergency Declaration followed by Major Disaster Declaration declared on September 20, 2017 for Hurricane Maria (FEMA-3390-EM-VI, FEMA-4339-DR-VI).</p> <p>Successful deployment and employment of integrated communication plan and long-term recovery planning.</p> <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor.</p>

### REGION II RECCWG CY 2020 PRIORITIES

Provide a brief explanation of what follows. There may be remaining gaps related to the achievements that were explained above, ongoing challenges from the previous year(s), or other issues that the RECCWG will target in the next calendar year.

**Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).**

- **Priority 1: Continue to cultivate relationships with existing State, Tribal, Territorial, Local and Federal coordinating bodies and hold at least one Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group meeting in New York or New Jersey and in Puerto Rico or Virgin Islands.**

It is understood that continued collaboration through in person venues is critical to the establishment and maintenance of long-term relationships. Although cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic, Region II will endeavor to host a Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group Plenary session together with stakeholders from local, state, tribal, territorial, Federal and private sector entities in coordination with the Regional Interagency Steering Committee and Regional Advisory Committee yearly meetings. In the event the aforementioned cannot be held in person due to restrictions, limitations and mandates associated with COVID-19, virtual opportunities for engagement may be explored.

- **Priority 2: Effect preparedness efforts including training, technical assistance, and exercises to advance emergency communication capabilities to be executed during incidents and events.**

Of critical importance to successful response operations is preparedness before an incident occurs as defined under the National Preparedness Goal, promulgated in the National Incident Management System series of doctrinal documents, and delivered through associated trainings. Collectively, the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group recognizes the importance of prevention, protecting, mitigating, responding, and recovering from all hazards incidents. The foundation for success relies on preparedness and efforts in 2021 will be concentrated on training, exercising and technical assistance in the field of emergency communications to ensure that mission essential functions and other critical capabilities can be executed and are available, when required. It is widely recognized that degraded communications severely hampers or can even halt response and recovery operations, therefore, members must be trained appropriately and provided the needed resources during pre-incident activities through planning, organizing, equipping, training, and exercising.

- **Priority 3: Conduct an assessment to document baseline communications interoperability capabilities in all Region II states to identify best practices for interoperability, coordination and communication during future responses involving multiple jurisdictions and levels of government.**

Through a collaborative State, Tribal, Territorial, Local and Federal effort, activities related to identifying, validating, and documenting communication capabilities at all levels of government across Region II will be conducted in 2021. Components to be assessed include land mobile radio, satellite communications, internet-based technologies, terrestrial services, and other capabilities in use and / or available organically to first responder agencies or other critical mission essential entities. Through a shared understanding of capabilities, more effective response plans can be developed in future years at all echelons. Concurrently, the intent in 2021 is to develop more efficient processes for the sharing of best practices across all levels of government and beyond jurisdictional boundaries to include areas of sustainment and areas for improvement for execution during periods of preparedness, response and recovery as it relates to interoperability, communications and coordination.

**Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.**

- **Priority 4: Continue and increase coordination with bordering FEMA Regions I, III, IV and V through expanded use of emergency management and public safety mutual aid agreements, exercise participation and participation in each other RECCWG meetings and forums.**

The easternmost Regions of the United States, as identified by FEMA, are each vastly different in many ways, however, share common threats and hazards as well as unique intertwined relationships and interdependencies. Regions I, III and IV each face significant threats of Tropical Storms and Hurricanes each season in addition to other similar weather hazards. Region V is the designated “back up Region” for Region II and all five Regions are home to major metropolitan areas with densely populated neighborhoods. Consequently, in addition to adjacent geographic

borders, it will be mutually beneficial for the Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups to partner together for meetings, symposiums, trainings, and exercises in 2021. Similarly, to Calendar Year 2020, it is expected that a multi-Regional Plenary Session will be planned, however, details and execution are dependent on COVID-19 limitations as well as the ability for member entities to participate based upon operational availability. It is through cross border coordination that the emergency communications missions will expand beyond a single Region and promote increased knowledge, skills, and abilities of first responders in the communications sector to support future response requirements.

➤ **Priority 5: Planning and implementation of integrated emergency communications innovations**

The technological aspects of emergency communications continues to expand and rapidly evolve each and every year. For example, during the pandemic specifically, as the workforce transitioned from office settings to virtual platforms in early 2020, new emergency communications requirements arose which members of the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group needed to investigate and address within a very short time suspense. Furthermore, as proven during recent disasters, more reliance is being placed on caches and readily available emergency communications equipment to ensure that government entities are not late to need and can support critical life saving and life sustaining operations in the immediate wake of an incident or during an event. In 2021, based upon lessons learned in previous years including throughout the pandemic and other response scenarios, Region II will endeavor to identify new technologies to be shared across the membership for procurement, as possible, and future use during real world, exercise and testing scenarios. Planning for the implementation of new technologies in future years and for the expansion of current technologies may include, but is not limited to cellular, microwave, land mobile radio and satellite platforms. The Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group remains at the forefront of the technology spear with services, equipment, supplies and personnel ready to respond at a moment's notice to provide command and control, contingency or continuity communications capabilities within the Region and beyond its borders. The intent for 2021 will be to continue the aforementioned and ensure that all partnering entities are kept abreast of currently available and emerging innovations to support Local, State, Tribal, Territorial, and Federal response requirements.

➤ **Priority 6: Advance the integration of the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group with established State and Regional level Working Groups for increased efficiency in coordination.**

The Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group has established an effective means of communications with stakeholders through a combination of dedicated Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group events and by leveraging meetings, conferences and other similar engagements hosted by partner entities. Recently and generally, primarily due to ongoing response and recovery operations, one Plenary session has been scheduled yearly, however, it is anticipated that an additional event, a Public Safety Communications Rally, similar to what was hosted in 2018, will be planned for execution

in 2022 provided restrictions related to the pandemic have been released. This will provide an additional opportunity for increased coordination throughout 2021 during the planning stages and in 2022 when hosted amongst those in the communications industry and other critical infrastructure sectors. Continued engagements will occur, as scheduled, through State and Regional level events to ensure effective and efficient synchronization amongst members of the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group from State, Tribal, Territorial, Local and Federal entities as well as the private sector.

**Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.**

➤ **Priority 7: Implement and share best practices and lessons learned from After Action Reports (AARs) and Quick Look Reports (QLRs) written following response operations across the Region.**

A critical component of the preparedness cycle is to identify lessons learned to include areas for improvement and areas of sustainment to best posture for future scenarios impacting an area, mission set or critical infrastructure sector. FEMA Region II has established a robust after action and reporting process in cooperation with FEMA Headquarters to not only identify lessons learned but also document them accordingly for sharing with applicable entities. Similarly, State, Local, Tribal and Territorial entities, as well as other Federal agencies, often have their own independent continuous improvement processes. The lessons learned, for example, from the 2017 Hurricane Season in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands have resulted in numerous advances in the field of emergency communications in Region II highlighting the importance of these initiatives. Briefings have occurred at Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group member organization hosted events and transformed the way some entities prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. The lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, although still being collected at the time of this report, once shared will likely yield additional valuable impacts to the various response communities in not only emergency communications but emergency management as a whole. The Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group will make a concerted effort in Calendar Year 2021 to share After Action Reports (AARs) and Quick Look Reports (QLRs) virtually and through in person briefings to the greatest extent possible in furtherance of this endeavor. It is anticipated that recent events may likely set the stage for operations for years to come and the membership will be better postured for future incidents once having a greater understanding of areas of improvement and areas for sustainment as identified across the different disciplines, government echelons and geopolitical divisions of Region II and the rest of the country.

➤ **Priority 8: Facilitate accurate situational awareness and effective coordination during real-world events through the implementation of the Lifelines Toolkit at the State level.**

The lessons learned since the 2017 Hurricane Season to include the disasters impacting all Region II states in the subsequent years including tropical storms, earthquakes, snow storms and the pandemic highlight the importance of the sharing of accurate situational awareness before,

during and after an incident. Situational awareness is critical to inform Senior Leadership to aid in decision making and also provides the foundation for the allocation of resources to execute tactical level operations. As the Lifelines Toolkit continues to expand and evolve, FEMA Region II will provide additional training to all applicable entities for use by their respective agencies during response scenarios. Furthermore, as the requirements increase for reporting, data usage will likely as well, thus necessitating additional bandwidth availability potentially during periods of surge usage or diminished capabilities due to incident impacts. Calendar Year 2020 has not only clearly demonstrated the importance of the sharing of information quickly, effectively, and efficiently through virtual platforms but has also proven the importance of accuracy, timeliness, and relevancy in reporting during response situations requiring emergent life saving measures. Subsequently, members of the Region II Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group will examine different terrestrial, land mobile radio and satellite technologies available to support the emerging requirements and test new platforms, as possible, for feasibility in real world scenarios. Furthermore, the Working Group will look to expand internal situational awareness sharing capabilities in 2021 through the establishment of a virtual platform available to all member organizations to read, review and post not only situational awareness but also lessons learned, new technologies and upcoming events.

➤ **Priority 9: Continue to develop and promote the availability and utilization of cross border communications interoperability platforms during steady state through planning, training, and exercising initiatives for use during the response to real world incidents and events.**

In partnership with members from other Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups, pending the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions, limitations, and mandates, in 2021 it is anticipated that increased collaboration will occur through scheduled trainings and exercises. It is expected, additionally, that a multi-Regional Plenary session will also be scheduled to bring leadership and partner agencies together from various entities across the country. When the aforementioned are coupled together with the sharing of information virtually beyond borders between meetings, an increase in awareness will likely occur on capabilities of other States to be leveraged during response and recovery operations to include those to save lives, property and the environment. This includes cross border communications interoperability, the sharing of high value yet limited resources to be allocated during large scale responses and the ability to provide seamless support to meet day to day surge requirements, as required by State, Tribal, Territorial, Local and Federal agencies.

## REGION 3

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**FEMA**

April 19, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn  
Assistant Administrator  
Response Directorate

FROM: Janice P. Barlow   
Regional Administrator (Acting)  
FEMA Region III

SUBJECT: FEMA Region 3 Regional Emergency Communications  
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by 6 U.S.C. § 575, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region 3 RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined RECCWG Annual Report for calendar year (CY) 2020, which will be distributed to the Director of the Emergency Communications Division (ECD) of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.
- Coordinate the establishment of federal, state, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.



Damon Penn  
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The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region's 10 RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

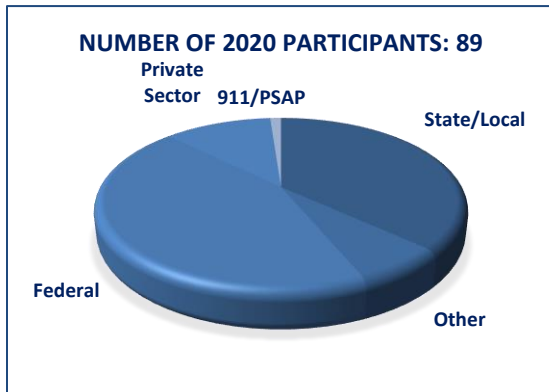
I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for federal, state, local, tribal agencies, and the Whole Community to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region as shown through activities in this report. The Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole of Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Enclosed: Region 3 CY 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

## REGION 3 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP

### CY 2020 OVERVIEW

Region 3's Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG), in spite of the challenges presented in 2020 by the COVID-19 international health pandemic, continues to strengthen relationships across the region and to expand interoperability



*Figure 1: 2020 RECCWG Participation*

coordination within each of the six member states. Composed of the states of Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia, the Region 3 Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) worked diligently throughout 2020 alongside its federal and private sector partners, auxiliary communications (AuxComm) volunteers, and a host of enthusiastic professionals who lent their time and expertise to advance communications interoperability across the region. The need to adapt to the unique challenges imposed by COVID-19

within the region resulted in increased innovation for new online collaboration tools, virtual learning environments, and the continued growth and expansion of existing voice and data tools. A participation increase rate of 56% in 2020 over 2019 is attributed to the RECCWG's progress in their goal of representing the whole community. They added new partners from the private sector and increased representation by Primary Service Answering Points representatives and 911 Program Managers, AuxComm, and the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet). RECCWG participation in 2020 is shown in **Figure 1**.

In addition to the national response to the COVID-19 resulting in seven Major Disaster Declarations, and six Emergency Declarations in Region 3's six states from COVID-19 response, it also experienced effects from Tropical Storm Isaias. Despite a reduced ability to travel and collaborate in-person due to national pandemic response, RECCWG members responded to and reported on numerous incidents and planned events that required interoperability among field personnel, command centers, volunteer organizations, and local agencies. Every event posed a unique set of challenges that responders and officials (many of whom are members of the RECCWG) were able to solve and learn from, thanks in part to close collaboration with their peers in the region and across the country.

**Region 3 states and Tribal nations received seven Major Disaster Declarations, and six Emergency Declarations, in 2020.**

As a diverse yet cohesive team, the RECCWG tackled many new challenges to interoperability in the region as the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) continued to increase Band-14 coverage and next-generation 911 (NG911) initiatives progressed. The year's events also underscored the criticality of well-functioning and universally compatible alert and warning systems, especially in light of natural disaster and the COVID-19 pandemic response. The technological advances of 2020 made it clear the collective expertise of communications professionals as a singular body is increasingly effective in shaping the future of interoperability among systems, both technologically and legislatively. During 2020, an updated version of the RECCWG Charter was signed and distributed to the membership. Highlights of the RECCWG's accomplishments in 2020 are documented in this report and serve as examples of the advancements made within Region 3 and through the RECCWG program nationally. Similarly, priorities for 2021 have been set to leverage the extensive professional experience, comprehensive conversations and research, and close collaboration among member agencies within the region.

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*The RECCWG provided a forum for members to share communications infrastructure maintenance experiences, which contributed to cost savings for multiple member jurisdictions.*

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For additional information regarding the Region 3 RECCWG, please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region 3 Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), Phil Workman, at [philip.workmanjr@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:philip.workmanjr@fema.dhs.gov) or 215-140-2783.

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

**Table 1: RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2020**

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
<b>RECCWG LEADERSHIP</b>	
MaryAnn Tierney	RECCWG Chair, FEMA Region 3 Administrator
Phil Workman	FEMA Region 3 RECC
Thomas Crabbs	RECCWG Co-Chair, Virginia Interoperability Program Manager
<b>DELAWARE REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Eric Wagner	DivComm, FirstNet SPOC
LTC Garland Pennington	Delaware Air National Guard (DEARNG)
LTC Joseph Cooke	Delaware Air National Guard (DEARNG)
Vacant	SWIC, Delaware State Division of Communications (DivComm)
Tom Kadunce	DivComm
<b>DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Alexandria Tepper	DCHSEMA NCR Watch Office
Charlie Guddemi	DCHSEMA, SWIC
Col. Jonathan Ebbert	District of Columbia National Guard
<b>MARYLAND REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Bud Frank	MD SWIC
Gary Zamerski	Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), Local Liaison Program Supervisor & Emergency Communications Coordinator
Jack Markey	Division of Emergency Management, Frederick County
Matt Houck	Montgomery County
Ross Coates	Chairman, Maryland Emergency Communications Committee
Scott Roper	Executive Director, Maryland 9-1-1 Board
<b>PENNSYLVANIA REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
David Holl	Lower Allen Township, Director of Public Safety
Maj. Victor Yartz	PA National Guard, Acting Deputy G6 / DCSIM & 2IBCT S-6
Mark Wrightstone	PA SWIC
Susan Singer	PEMA Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS) Coordinator
Tim Baldwin	County of Lancaster PA 911, Deputy Director
<b>VIRGINIA REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Charlie Locke	Interoperability Coordinator, Fairfax County, VA
David Mulholland	Administrator, Arlington County VA Emergency Communications Center
Harry Knepp	VDEM
Lt. Col Mark Widener	JFHQ-VA J6/Knowledge Management Officer
Michael Keefe	VDEM Operations Division
Michael Pittman	VA National Guard
VACANT	VA SWIC
<b>WEST VIRGINIA REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
David Neal	West Virginia SWIC

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
G.E. McCabe	Director, WV Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM)
MSG Daniel Kirby	WVNG
R.C. Faulk	West Virginia Statewide Interoperable Radio Network (SIRN) West Virginia Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management, Asst. SWIC
Sonny Jordan	Harrison-Taylor Emergency Communications
Steve Vititoe	Cabell County EMS, Director of Logistics
FEDERAL PARTNERS	
Bill Bishop	FEMA MERS Frederick
Bill Segarra	DEA – Saint Louis, MO
Brian Luu	FCC
Bruce Belt	ECD Sector Coordinator (MD, PA, DE)
Bruce Fitzgerald	First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet)
Craig Johnson	FEMA ONCRC
Dave Adsit	FEMA Spectrum Manager
Philip M. Workman Jr.	FEMA Region 3 Regional Emergency Communication Coordinator
Eric Main	DEC Group Supervisor
Harry Knepp	Frederick MERS
Henry Penafiel	FEMA MERS Frederick
J. Miller	Frederick MERS
Jackie Wagner	FEMA MERS Frederick
Janice Barlow	FEMA Region 3 Deputy Administrator
Jim Miller	FEMA MERS Frederick
Joe Husnay	Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
John Latek	DEC Group Supervisor
John MacLean	DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)
Justin Cain	FCC
Karen McCurdy	FEMA Region 3, Defense Coordinating Element (DCE)
Kelly Wolslayer	FEMA Region 3 Response Division Director
Lori Stone	First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet)
Mark O'Hanlon	Region 3 Operational Planning and Response Branch Chief
Marty McLain	DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Emergency Communications Division (ECD)
Mike Varney	FirstNet, Northeast Area Director
Nelson Torres	FEMA ONCRC
Nicole Ugarte	First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet)
Pat Casey	FEMA, Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) Frederick, Chief
Patrick Kiser	FEMA MERS Frederick, RF Manager
Scott Jackson	National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
Steven Long	DHS CISA ECD
Tom Gagnon	ECD Sector Coordinator (VA, WV, DC)

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
Vernon Mosley	DHS
Wes Rogers	FEMA
PRIVATE INDUSTRY PARTNERS	
Andrew Ayers	Client Partner, Connected Solutions, Verizon
Andrew Fusco	Verizon Response Team
Bob Galvin	Mutualink
David Haddad	T-Mobile
Bill Eaton	Mutualink
Mark Anderko	Mutualink
Nieama Booker	Client Partner, Mobility, Verizon
Robert Holgate	FirstNet
Rodney Cooper	Sprint Emergency Response Team
Tetoya Gibson	Verizon
OTHER PARTICIPANTS	
Harriet Rennie-Brown	Executive Director, National Association of State 911 Administrators (NASNA)
David LeGault	<i>(Agency Unknown)</i>
Don Bowers	<i>(Agency Unknown)</i>
Sonya Richmond	<i>(Agency Unknown)</i>
Mike Molnia	FEMA DEC Support Team
Brent Rydel	FEMA DEC Support Team
Gregory Bearce	FEMA DEC Support Team

## CY 2020 RECCWG ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND 2021 PRIORITIES

As evidenced during 2020's challenges with COVID-19 and other natural disasters, the Region 3 RECCWG has become both an essential body of knowledge and a platform for action. This forum for Region 3 members has become especially vital during a time that calls for widespread virtual participation and remote collaboration. The accomplishments listed below illustrate a cross-section of the many strides that Region 3 members have made in 2020 in fulfilling their duties as prescribed by the NECP.

### ➤ **Accomplishment 1: Responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in a multi-faceted approach across jurisdictions and regions – COVID-19 Virtual Working Environment**

The COVID-19 pandemic touched every aspect of life in the United States and led to an unprecedented period of response that is expected to last until at least 2021. Remote working became the new normal for nearly the entire United States to protect employees from potential exposure to COVID-19. The RECCWG in Region 3 excelled in adapting to telework and virtual coordination. In transitioning to a largely virtual environment, Region 3 continued to coordinate meetings and participate in cross-regional response efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19. All states and territories under Region 3 coordinated with ESF-2 partners during targeted meetings to assess the regional status of communications, such as statewide land-mobile radio

**Statutory Duty 1:** Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

systems, 911 system loads and telecommunicator staff health and wellbeing, and impending communications needs for rapid buildouts of alternate care facilities and COVID-19 testing sites.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Continued improvements to continuity and resilient communications across Region 3**

The FEMA National Radio System (FNARS) is a FEMA-owned, nationwide, high frequency (HF), Automatic Link Establishment radio network that provides users with contingency voice, chat, and phone patch communications. FNARS also enables real-time situational awareness directly from disaster areas to improve decision making during

continuity events. FNARS units have been installed in state emergency operations centers (EOC), as well as in each Federal Regional Center and Regional Office, as backup communications when traditional means have been degraded.

Understanding the importance of survivable backup communications systems that function independently of terrestrial infrastructure, Region 3 RECCWG members have focused on FNARS proficiency, operability, and testing. Member states participated in regional tests at least once per month in 2020, thereby ensuring this valuable backup resource is always ready.

Region 3 Disaster Emergency Communications participated in a joint effort with Region 3 Information Technology Branch in moving the Hawkeye Satellite to the Delaware Valley Information Center in South Philadelphia to promote greater testing, training, and familiarization by DEC\IT in the event of a COOP incident.

➤ **Priority 1: Accurately capture communications capabilities and procedures in Region 3's states, commonwealths, and the District of Columbia**

RECCWG members have maintained their momentum in actively reporting on technology upgrades and other changes in the operational and political landscapes of their respective states and localities. Although the many changes are well documented in meeting summaries and reports, it is also important that FEMA and other response agencies have a clear picture of communications operations in each State and in Region 3 as a whole. Communications officials in State, local, and Tribal agencies, many of whom are also RECCWG members, will be instrumental in updating the Region 3 Emergency Communications Plan through their participation in State Communications Annex updates. In 2020, the District of Columbia completed their State Communications Annex.



**Statutory Duty 2:**

Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

**Accomplishment 3: Guided Wireless Service provider developments and implemented emerging technology to improve communications capabilities in Region 3**

RECCWG members guided the implementation of new technologies throughout the year, including the continued use and adoption of FirstNet services and devices. RECCWG members shared their experiences and lessons learned from events across the region to aid in incorporating emerging practices using Wireless provider tools and technology into state and local disaster response policy, plans, and procedures. Representatives from FirstNet/AT&T, the FirstNet Authority, T-Mobile and Verizon regularly participate in the Region's monthly RECCWG teleconferences, giving members an opportunity to share their perspective on contemporary issues such as policy and governance, local control, system technical capabilities, coverage, and priority and preemption on the

network.

Specific FirstNet capabilities available to Region 3 include the first 55-foot aerostat (blimp) which can remain airborne for two weeks at 1,000 foot altitude and provide large coverage footprint. Additionally, the FirstNet fleet now has 76 Band 14 deployable vehicles. Creation of the FirstNet Network Status Tools allows real-time status of towers, repair schedule, and estimated restoration time. New High-Power User Equipment (HPUE) devices are being tested by manufacturers, which transmit up to six times the power of standard devices permitting increased ability to penetrate buildings walls while using Band 14. Finally, FirstNet has continued to improve coverage in all states throughout 2020 within Region 3 with the construction/addition of additional LTE towers, on both commercial bands as well as Band 14.

➤ **Priority 2: Promote awareness of the importance of the SWIC position**

As a central coordination point for each State's interoperability efforts, SWICs are responsible for working with State, local, Tribal, and Federal agencies to implement a strategy that ensures all responding entities can communicate with each other during a disaster. In Region 3 and across the country, SWIC-related duties have been dispersed among several public safety officials. It is critical that cabinet-level officials in each state and commonwealth understand the increasingly important role that SWICs must fill to meet the public safety needs of a technology-based population. With the continued support from other influential bodies such as the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC) and National Governors Association (NGA), the RECCWG will promote the SWIC role through collaborative outreach in 2021.

**Statutory Duty 3:**

Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

**➤ Accomplishment 4: Remote solutions for Primary Service Access Points (PSAPs) 911 – PSAP involvement - NASNA**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Arlington County experienced reductions to their onsite staff availability due to social distancing measures. To continue their mission-critical operations, the Emergency Communications Center (ECC) implemented teleworking capability through the use of a virtual private network (VPN), laptops, and additional monitors to allow for remote call handling and Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD). These setups are capable of operation anywhere within Virginia's borders.

Arlington County Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management Administrator Dave Mulholland is in discussions with public television stations to utilize their

facilities as alternative PSAP buildings during emergencies; these locations already have significant infrastructure and redundant communication capabilities that make them prime locations for alternative PSAPs. FirstNet equipment is also being considered as an alternate dispatch mechanism.

**➤ Accomplishment 5: Cost Savings to member jurisdictions through information and common experience sharing**

A jurisdiction in the National Capitol Region was looking for solutions to upgrade their remote dispatch capabilities. However, the quotes they received from vendors were higher than anticipated, based on known market prices. They brought their concerns to the RECCWG and were able to have conversations with RECCWG members who had recently procured similar solutions for their jurisdictions. These discussions with neighboring jurisdictions also helped the original jurisdiction identify additional elements of their procurement to address with the vendors.

These actions helped the jurisdiction achieve significant cost savings on their procurement, as well as the solution the jurisdiction needed to meet their needs.

**➤ Priority 3: Continue to develop regional interoperability solutions**

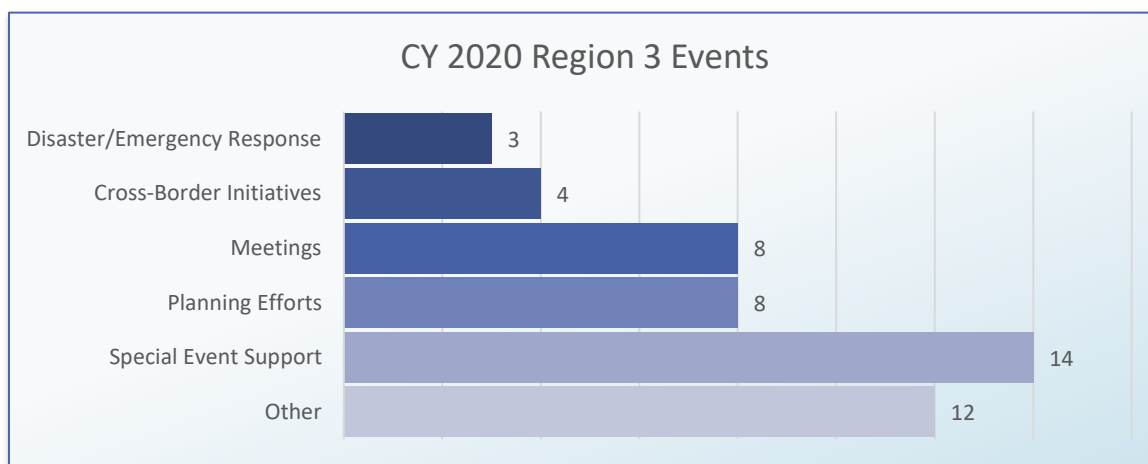
Region 3 states continue to use Motorola's WAVE, Radio over Internet Protocol (RoIP) solution. Through a server located in Frederick, Maryland, the system allows users in each jurisdiction to use their phones or other IP-enabled devices as push-to-talk devices in a talk group, across jurisdictional boundaries, and outside the range of traditional local mobile radio (LMR) systems. The technology is interoperable across multiple platforms, and a regional Concept of Operations (CONOPS) exists. Each Region 3 jurisdiction is in various stages of adopting the technology, which can be used in an incident to link command and control entities across the region. Mutualink is another interoperability platform that is being adopted through exercises and daily operations in the Region, to bridge communications networks and share radio, voice, text, video, and data files as well as telephone systems in a secure environment. It enables real-time video streaming between disparate users and Long-Term Evolution (LTE)-to-LMR interoperability. FEMA Region 3

and Mutualink are developing a CONOPS for the platform. WAVE and Mutualink are just two of several interoperability solutions that are being developed across Region 3 through collaborative efforts of RECCWG members, who will continue to bring firsthand experience to state, regional, and national efforts to close communication gaps among first responders.

Region 3 has been working with Mutualink to build out the Emergency Communication platform within Region 3 as well as promote its use throughout FEMA. Region 3 participates in monthly testing and training of system. The system has been approved with an Authority to Operate (ATO) by NCP Division and future projects and use cases are being developed. Mutualink provides multimedia collaboration capability as well as ability to control gateway devices. Available platforms include: Secure Appliance IWS (Interoperability Workstation) Linux, Windows and MAC OSX Edge Clients Smartphone & Tablet Edge Clients (iOS and Android) Browser-based Edge Client (Chrome) Functions also accessible via Mutualink API/SDK.

### CY 2020 REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

Partners across Region 3 enhanced emergency communications through their support of real-world events and disaster response; attendance at training courses, workshops, and conferences; and their efforts to create and participate in exercise scenarios aimed at closing the gaps in communication across the region. **Figure 3** provides a summary of these events and **Table 2** lists the details of each event.



**Figure 3: 2020 Regional Events**

RECCWG members facilitated or participated in more than 50 communications-related activities throughout the year. **Table 2** lists the details of each event reported by state representatives, including trainings, exercises, briefings, responses to incidents, and other events. These events were sponsored or hosted by a state or one of its localities whose Region 3 RECCWG members coordinated awareness, participation, and information-sharing regarding the event.

Table 2. Regional Coordinating Activities

REGION 3		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
Disaster/Emergency Response	02/2020	COVID-19 affects entire nation, including Region 3
	09/04/2020	Statewide weather event resulted in over 7,000 busy signals, under review as of 8/19
	09/10/2020	<b>Maryland</b> – Flooding in St. Mary and Calvert counties
Cross-Border Initiatives	08/2020	<b>Maryland</b> is moving forward with a new CAD-to-CAD pilot program – <b>Pennsylvania</b> submitted representatives to the planning meetings
	09/2020	<b>Virginia</b> USAR team supported <b>Oregon</b> with their request for additional COML/COMTT/ITSL during fires in the state
	09/2020	<b>FEMA Spectrum</b> began supporting <b>MERS</b> and <b>USAR</b> in the field
	10/2020	<b>Delaware</b> and <b>Maryland</b> working to figure out what TDMA radio needs exist at the border regions
Teleconferences and Meetings	01/15/2020	January Region 3 RECCWG Teleconference
	04/15/2020	April Region 3 RECCWG Teleconference
	05/20/2020	May Region 3 RECCWG Teleconference
	07/15/2020	July Region 3 RECCWG Teleconference
	08/19/2020	August Region 3 RECCWG Teleconference
	09/16/2020	September Region 3 RECCWG Teleconference
	10/21/2020	October Region 3 RECCWG Teleconference
	11/05/2020	November Region 3 RECCWG Plenary Teleconference
Communications Coordination Efforts	01/18/2020	<b>District of Columbia</b> , Women's March
	01/20/2020	<b>Virginia</b> VCDL Lobby Day – Richmond, VA
	03/28/2020	<b>District of Columbia</b> , "I Have a Dream" speech commemoration event with crowd of 20,000-30,000 people
	03/2020-04/2020	<b>District of Columbia</b> , Cherry Blossom Festival
	04/2020	Communications planning efforts for testing sites in Washington, DC
	05/2020	State of <b>Pennsylvania</b> and <b>FRNA</b> coordinated event planning efforts for World's End Ultramarathon
	06/2020	<b>District of Columbia</b> , The June 6th demonstrations, following George Floyd's death, required significant federal response (15 agencies). CISA ECD provided surge COML support
	07/4/2020	<b>District of Columbia</b> , a satellite COLT was stationed at fire facility for of 4th of July events; Verizon assisted with equipment tuning. 33 <sup>rd</sup> Civil Support Team deployed mesh network downtown, which served as a good template for January 2021 Inauguration. The District's NCR radio cache was deployed; NCR radios were supplied by nearby county cache
	07/2020	<b>District of Columbia</b> , A funeral for Rep. John Lewis was held in the District which required additional communications resources
	07/2020	<b>Virginia</b> coordinating with the GOP regarding the RNC

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

REGION 3		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
	07/2020	<b>Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware</b> SWICs coordinated with CISA ECD for RFI responses regarding Technical Assistance events
	07/2020	ESF-2 Spectrum Coordination meetings leading up to impending hurricane season
	07/2020	NTIA aided in coordination activities leading up to both the RNC and DNC
	08/28/2020	<b>District of Columbia</b> , March on Washington
	08/20/2020 – 08/28/2020	<b>District of Columbia</b> , “Walk the Walk” event
	09/29/2020	<b>District of Columbia</b> , Ruth Bader Ginsburg funeral
	10/2020	<b>District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia</b> working together regarding 2021 Presidential Inauguration planning – also with 10 DC subcommittees; USSS has 28 active committees preparing for the event
Statewide System Upgrades	Ongoing	<b>Delaware</b> Technology Refresh Project – Year 4 (of 8); this includes updating all microwave infrastructure and dispatch consoles
	05/2020	<b>Maryland</b> established new talk groups on Maryland FIRST network to increase interoperability among counties. Three regional zones can be used statewide for major events. This expansion will not only allow for greater interoperability amongst public safety partners, but will allow for more specific types of use as the zones are geared towards planned event, incident response and law enforcement operations.
	05/2020	<b>Maryland</b> purchased equipment for 24-hour emergency operations staff to support operations/work from home
	Ongoing	<b>Pennsylvania</b> continues build-out of existing P25 radio network – anticipated finish is mid 2021
	Ongoing	<b>Maryland</b> PSAP ESInet system upgrade
	09/2020	<b>Maryland</b> moved forward with a statewide upgrade project in northern Maryland counties and around the NCR
	10/2020	<b>Virginia</b> beginning statewide radio system upgrade – completion date anticipated in 2023 or 2024
Training/Workshops/Exercises	12/2020	<b>West Virginia</b> completed upgrade to Motorola 7.18/GTR platform. Phase 1 of 2 TDMA upgrades underway. Phase 2 to begin in early 2021.
	08/2020	CISA ECD worked with the <b>District of Columbia</b> to create a Tactical Dispatch webinar
	10/1/2020	<b>District of Columbia</b> , CISA 5G educational webinar (Washington, DC)
	10/28/2020	<b>District of Columbia</b> , Interoperability Summit with 570 registered participants from 36 states, DC, and USVI (Washington, DC)
	10/19-23/2020	<b>District of Columbia</b> , ECD COML Training – Virtual (Washington, DC)

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

REGION 3		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
	Multiple	<b>Maryland</b> continued with its monthly Amateur Radio communications exercises, holding seven (7) exercises for CY 2020. While most EOC buildings were closed to non-employees, many of the volunteer amateur radio operators were able to communicate from home or in a vehicle to demonstrate redundant, back up communications capabilities.
	09/2020	<b>Mutualink</b> begins offering monthly IGS Training sessions
Interoperability Updates	11/2020	<b>Mutualink</b> software is in the <b>AT&amp;T FirstNet</b> Application Catalog and also usable on <b>Verizon</b> phones
	05/20/2020	<b>Virginia</b> The City of Alexandria, VA used FirstNet to set up 911 remote call taking during pandemic
	10/2020	<b>Virginia</b> COMLINC interoperability solution went online in Virginia
	04/2020	<b>T-Mobile</b> and <b>Sprint</b> merger
	11/2020	<b>T-Mobile</b> announced that they will be creating a first responder-oriented cellular service to compete with AT&T and Verizon
Additional State Accomplishments	2020	<p><b>Maryland</b> Accomplishments: The Maryland Joint Operations Center (MJOC) located within the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) upgraded and expanded its technical capabilities for the agency's 24/7 watch center staff for remote operations.</p> <p>Like many entities across the world, working remotely and having access to day to day, in-building solutions off-site became paramount. To be able to prepare for and respond to the public health emergency COVID-19, organizations must plan for and respond to any potential staffing shortages that could be caused by a large percentage of potentially exposed personnel or even the potential shut down of its primary location due to room or equipment contamination.</p> <p>Through the purchase of additional laptops, hotspots, upgraded building telephone system(s) and cell phones, the agency was able to equip it's 24/7 staff for remote call taking via VoIP softphone solution, radio monitoring and dispatch of staff and allied partners via the use of portable dispatch consoles. These upgrades not only allowed for continued telephone and radio communications performed by the staff, it also increased their capabilities for Public Alert and Warning to ensure the continued safety of the citizens of Maryland.</p>
		<p><b>Pennsylvania</b> Accomplishments: Completed P25 buildout and will be bringing agencies on over the next 6 months. For Inauguration, worked with law enforcement agencies for security at state capitol</p> <p>All law enforcement in the state are on P25 network. Communications were well-practiced and executed smoothly, including aerial video.</p>

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

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REGION 3		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
	2020	<p><b>Delaware</b> Accomplishments: Upgrading Statewide system from FDMA to TDMA. No issues reported with upgrade. Commercial partners have been supportive. Received funding from state legislature for 1,000 portable radios (TDMA-capable) for state and municipal public safety agencies. System will be full TDMA in 2024.</p> <p>Communications through the election and Inauguration were busy but stable. Expect to support communications for President Biden when he travels to Delaware.</p>



## REGION 4

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U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
FEMA Region IV  
3005 Chamblee Tucker Road  
Atlanta, GA 30341

**FEMA**

June 22, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn  
Assistant Administrator  
Response Directorate

FROM: Gracia B. Szczech   
Regional Administrator

SUBJECT: FEMA Region IV Regional Emergency Communications  
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by 6 U.S.C. § 575, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments in meeting each of its statutory duties.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region IV RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined calendar year (CY) 2020 RECCWG Annual Report that will be distributed to the Director of the Emergency Communications Division (ECD) of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP)
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements
- Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region IV RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no substantive modifications were made by

the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for Federal, State, local, Tribal agencies, and the Whole Community to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region as shown through activities in this report. The accompanying Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole of Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

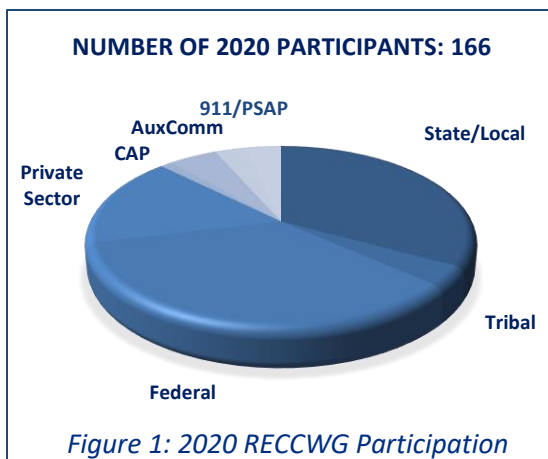
Attachment: Region IV CY 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

REGION 4 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP



CY 2020 OVERVIEW

Composed of representatives from the Tribal Nations and States of Alabama, Florida, Georgia,



Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee, the Region 4 Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) worked diligently throughout 2020 alongside its federal and private sector partners, auxiliary communications (AuxComm) volunteers, and a host of enthusiastic professionals who lent their time and expertise to advance communications interoperability across the region. The notable growth in participation is attributed to the RECCWG's goal of representing the whole community. They added new partners from the private sector and

AuxComm groups, as well as, increased federal representation by including members from the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) and the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet). RECCWG participation in 2020 is shown in Figure 1.

Region 4 States and Tribal Nations had an unprecedented year in disaster response and special event support. Known to be one of the most active regions in the nation, Region 4 was put to the test in 2020. Thankfully the relationships cultivated and strengthened over a decade of meeting, collaborating, exercising, training, and responding to real-world events together, paved the way for the RECCWG to successfully respond to the events this calendar year. Early in the year, Region 4 provided communications support for the Inauguration of Mississippi's new Governor and Super Bowl LIV in Miami. In March 2020, COVID-19, a worldwide pandemic, hit changing the way emergency communications agencies and providers conducted business and responded to incidents. Then 2020 rounded out the year with the most active Atlantic hurricane season on record, with 28 named storms, 11 of which made landfall in the contiguous United States. Seven of those 11 storms made landfall in Region 4 and are listed in Table 1 below.

*Table 1: 2020 Named Storms Making Landfall in Region 4*

STORM	DATE	AFFECTED STATES
Hurricane Isaias	8/3/2020	Florida and North Carolina
Hurricane Marco	8/23/2020	Mississippi
Hurricane Laura	8/23/2020	Mississippi
Hurricane Sally	9/14/2020	Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi
Hurricane Delta	10/7/2020	Mississippi
Hurricane Zeta	10/27/2020	Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia
Hurricane Eta	11/7/2020	Florida and North Carolina

All eight states in Region 4 experienced major disasters in 2020, ranging from wildfires and tornadoes to flooding causing landslides and mudslides. The resilience of the Region 4 RECCWG was put to the test with the added challenge of responding to an unprecedented number of natural disasters during a global pandemic. COVID-19 changed the emergency communications landscape in a way that forced the RECCWG to reconsider options for communications and meeting the needs of regional critical infrastructure. Beginning in March 2020, RECCWG monthly meetings and plenaries were held virtually utilizing Adobe Connect to maintain the forum for exchanging ideas and sharing lessons learned.

Region 4 RECCWG States  
and Tribal Nations  
received 50 disaster  
declarations in 2020

The technological advances of 2020 made it clear the collective expertise of communications professionals as a singular body is increasingly effective in shaping the future of interoperability among systems, both technologically and legislatively. Highlights of the RECCWG's accomplishments in 2020 are documented in this report and serve as examples of the advancements made within Region 4 and through the RECCWG program nationally. Similarly, priorities for 2021 have been set to leverage the extensive professional

experience, comprehensive conversations and research, and close collaboration among member agencies within the region.

For additional information regarding the Region 4 RECCWG, please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region 4 Emergency Communications Coordinator - (RECC), Donnie Monette at [donnie.monette@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:donnie.monette@fema.dhs.gov), 770-220-5361, or 404-938-7961.

**Table 2: RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2020**

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
<b>RECCWG LEADERSHIP</b>	
Garcia B. Szczech	RECCWG Chair, FEMA Region IV Administrator
Dent Guynes	RECCWG Co-Chair, Mississippi Wireless Communications Commission (WCC)
Edwin Whitworth	RECCWG Vice Co-Chair/GA Georgia Emergency management Agency (GEMA) Emergency Support Function (ESF)-2
Donnie Monette	FEMA Region 4 RECC
<b>ALABAMA (AL) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
George Grabryan Jr.	Director, Florence-Lauderdale County Emergency Management Agency (EMA)/9-1-1
Jeb Hargrove	Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)/Communications Director/ Information Technology (IT) Section Chief, Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA)
Sheldon Hutcherson	Disaster Emergency Communications Unit Leader, ESF-2, AEMA
Bill Mayfield	University of Alabama Health System, Emergency Preparedness Manager
Westly Martin	Telecommunications Specialist, AEMA
Greg Sarratt	Southeast Division, American Radio Relay League (ARRL)
<b>FLORIDA (FL) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Laura Leigh Avery	Orange County Fire Rescue, Chief
Benjamin Bass	SWIC/Telecommunications Coordinator, Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM)
Bobby Brown	City of Fort Lauderdale - Telecommunications Coordinator
Cindy Cast	Radio Systems Manager, Miami Dade County
Greg Holcomb	Lake County Public Safety/9-1-1 Coordinator - Division Manager
Robert Little	IT, FDEM
Jennifer Moreen	State of Florida DMS
John Mulhall	State of Florida DMS
Rick Palm	Florida ARRL
Hank Stephens	State of Florida - Department of Management Services (DMS) - Division of Telecommunications (DIVTEL)– ESF-2
Robin Terrill	ARRL Emergency Coordinator, Broward County
Todd J. Yori	State of Florida - DMS - DIVTEL Engineer IV, ESF-2 Emergency Coordinating Officer
<b>GEORGIA (GA) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Jason Donley	Cherokee County Sheriff's Office – Lieutenant
Robert "Bob" Johnston	Amateur Radio Emergency Service / Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (ARES /RACES) Emergency Coordinator, Cherokee County
Johnathan Jones	GEMA - Emergency Communications Field Coordinator

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
Michael Nix	SWIC, Executive Director of the Georgia Emergency Communications Authority
Greg Smith	GEMA – State Warning Officer
Kelly Towe	Georgia Forestry Service – Land Mobile Radio Communications Manager
Chris Woodard	Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms - Atlanta Division
<b>KENTUCKY (KY) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
David Barker	Communications Directorate J6 - Kentucky National Guard
Andrew Bertl	Kentucky FEMA Integration Team (FIT)
Drew Chandler	Kentucky Dept. For Public Health IT/Communication Manager
Cecil Dennis	Emergency Coordinator - Kentucky Amateur Radio Emergency Services
James Duke	Ohio County Emergency Management Service - Communications Administrator
Brandon Marshall	Kentucky State Police
Derek Nesselrode	SWIC/Chief Engineer, Kentucky State Police (KSP)
Barry Sanford	KSP Communications
<b>MISSISSIPPI (MS) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Gil Bailey	Deputy Director, Harrison County Emergency Communications
Scott Davis	Director, Communications Branch, Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)
Shane Gerard	Director, Warren County 9-1-1
Bobby Graves	AuxComm - KB5HAV   Hurricane Watch Net - National Hurricane Center
Dent Guynes	Deputy SWIC / Mississippi Wireless Communication Commission (MS WCC) - Systems Administrator
Vicki Helfrich	SWIC/MS WCC
Donald Loper	Mississippi Highway Patrol, Department of Public Safety
<b>NORTH CAROLINA (NC) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Jason Boggs	Deputy Fire Marshal, Catawba County Emergency Services
David Coviello, Jr	Bandys Fire Department - Firefighter & Emergency Management Technician (EMT); North Carolina AuxComm
Red Grasso	North Carolina Dept of Information Technologies FirstTech Program Director
Greg Hauser	SWIC, North Carolina Emergency Management ESF-2 Lead
Jonathan Horn	Charlotte Fire Department - Communications Superintendent
Mike Montague	ESF-2, Information Technology, North Carolina Division of Emergency Management (NCEM)
Dominick Nutter	Emergency Communications Director, Raleigh-Wake County 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP)
<b>SOUTH CAROLINA (SC) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Derrec Becker	Public Information Director, South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD)
Randy Childress	South Carolina Department of Administration
Dennison Coomer	Coordinator, Public Safety and Emergency Communications, South Carolina Department of Administration (SCDA)
George Crouch	SCDA - CIO SC Wireless Communications & Interoperability Manager
Matthew Littleton	Captain, Easley Fire Department



## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
Roger Mull	South Carolina AuxComm
Bob Steadman	SWIC/Chief Information Officer (CIO), South Carolina Division of State Information Technology
Gabe Turner	Communications Manager, SCEMD
Richard Weaver	Spectrum Manager, South Carolina
<b>TENNESSEE (TN) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Jody Clinard	Radio System Manager, Nashville Metro Radio Communications
Ehrin Ehler	Tennessee FirstNet Coordinator
Randy Gowler	Tennessee Department of Health - Communications Coordinator
Mike Gregory	Director, Emergency Management Services, University of Tennessee
Jesse Griggs	Gibson County Kenton City Hall - Communications Planner / Fire Commissioner / Region 39 700/800 MHz Planning Committee
Mike Harris	Deputy SWIC, ESF-2 Manager, Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) - Communications Section Manager
Randy Hicks	Tennessee Dept. of Corrections - Communications Program Coordinator
Arnold Hooper	SWIC/Director, Wireless Communications, Tennessee Department of Public Safety and Homeland Security
John Moyers	Telecommunications Manager, EMS, Tennessee Department of Health
Patrick Rollins	Director of Mobile Communications Services - City of Chattanooga, Systems Manager & Regional Interoperability Coordinator TN Valley Regional Communications Systems
Charles Shannon	Administrator, Operations and Communications, TEMA
Jim Snyder	Knoxville-Knox County EMA - Auxiliary Communications Coordinator
Howard Thompson	Germantown Fire Department
Steve Waterman	TEMA - COMU, CISA SHARES Winlink Administrator
<b>TRIBAL REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Kara Howard	Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI)
Jeff Kozdron	Public Safety Communications Engineer, Seminole Tribe of Florida (STOF)
Chris McGhee	Training Officer, Poarch Creek Indians
April Sells	Fire/EMA Director, Poarch Creek Indians
Chris Simpson	Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MSCI)
Atreyu Queen	Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI)
<b>FEDERAL PARTNERS</b>	
Desi Alexander	Audio Visual (AV) Communications Technician, Center for Disease Control (CDC)
Dave Adsit	FEMA Spectrum Management
Karl Arriola	FEMA Region 5 RECC
Noel Gniada-Banford	FEMA Region 4, Branch Chief, Operations Integration Branch
Joshua Black	Deployable Communications Support Force Officer, United States Coast Guard (USCG)
Calvin Bowditch	National Communications Center (NCC)
Jan Chilson	Director, Emergency Management, SW FLANT Kings Bay Naval Base
Paul Coburn	Agent/Coordinator, Project Roll Call, Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
Eric K. Conklin	Department of Justice (DOJ)

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
Chris Essid	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)
Eric Flannery	FirstNet, Kentucky
Billy Freeman	FirstNet, Liaison to Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee
Mike Foster	FEMA Region 7 RECC
Crystal Greene	Information Technology Operations, FEMA Region 4
Margaret Gutierrez	FirstNet, Regional Tribal Liaison
Mathew Hall	Disaster Emergency Communications (DEC), FEMA
Scott Hansen	DEC, FEMA HQ
Gail Heard	Army Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
Doug Howard	ESF-2, Network Services Division, General Services Administration (GSA)
Joe Husnay	FCC
Scott Jackson	National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
John Hunt	FirstNet
Joel Katz	Deputy Chief of Staff, A6 Communications, Southeastern Regional Civil Air Patrol (CAP)
Al Knerr	FCC
William Langley	Telecommunications Specialist, CDC
Keith LaPlant	Telecommunications Specialist, 7 <sup>th</sup> District, USCG
John Latek	DEC, FEMA Headquarters (HQ)
Jason Lee	General Service Administration (GSA)
Eric Main	DEC, FEMA HQ
John MacLean	Region 4 Rep, National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center (NCCIC)
Ross Merlin	Program Manager, Shared Resources (SHARES)
Pam Montanari	Southeast Coordinator (FL, GA, NC, SC), Emergency Communications Division (ECD)
Chuck Murph	Region 4 Lead, FirstNet
Greg Paquette	Telecommunications Manager, Thomasville Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS)
Marty Pittinger	FEMA HQ OCFO
Gerald Risner	FirstNet, Liaison to GA, NC, SC
Jo Robichaud	Telecommunications Specialist, FEMA Region 4 DEC
Elisa Roper	Tribal Liaison, FEMA Region 4
Glen Sachtleben	FEMA Region 4 Deputy for Response Division
Frederick Scalers	FirstNet, South Carolina
Aislynn Turner	FirstNet, Georgia
Chris White	DEC, Region 10
Charles Williams	AL FIT FEMA
Phil Workman	RECC, FEMA Region 3
PRIVATE INDUSTRY PARTNERS	
Jay Blessing	T-Mobile
Nieama Booker	Verizon Wireless

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
Joseph Bowmaster	Verizon Crisis Response Team (VCRT), Verizon Wireless
Harriet Rennie Brown	National 9-1-1
Rodney Cooper	Sprint
Robert Gordon	AT&T
Jake Hayes	Verizon
John Larregui	Verizon Wireless
Kenny Mack	AT&T
Greg Martin	Verizon Wireless
Tony Patino	T-Mobile
Kathy Randolph	Verizon Wireless
Jeremy Ray	Western Carolina Communications Systems
Gerald Risner	FirstNet
Stephen Roccia	Verizon Wireless
Charlene Ruple	Market Sales Coordinator, Southern Linc Wireless
Eletha Smith	Verizon Wireless
Vondrelle Smith	Verizon Wireless
Earl Struble	Verizon Wireless
John Szejda	Verizon
Matt Wood	Tactical Operations, CISCO
GUEST PARTICIPANTS	
David Addad	T-Mobile
Mike Cassidy	T-Mobile
Dallas Clements	Tennessee
Phil Conaley	T-Mobile
Carlos Eldridge	T-Mobile
Joe Galvin	Illinois, Central U.S. Earthquake Consortium (CUSEC)
Jim Gulsby	FEMA MERS
Jeremy Johnson	CISA
Gwen Keenan	Florida FIT
Al Kenyon	Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS)
Robert Komoroski	AT&T
Christine Massengale	Tennessee
Rick Palm	AARL Florida
Paul Reid	National Headquarters, CAP
William Smith	Tennessee
Pam Wallace	IPAWS
Jim Wilkinson	CUSEC

## CY 2020 RECCWG ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND 2021 PRIORITIES

Partners in every Region 4 State and four Tribal Nations enhanced emergency communications through their efforts during an unprecedented response year. COVID-19 reshaped the way business was conducted and changed the focus of many conversations around public safety, emergency communications, and incident response. The pandemic caused the cancellation of many large-scale events, trainings, exercises, and conferences, as well as cross-state and cross-regional events. Not only did Region 4 respond under pandemic constraints to an unprecedented year of tornados and hurricanes, they did so in an Election year. But because of the extensive network of relationships cultivated through years of conferences, trainings, exercises, and collaboration, Region 4 provided the support its members needed to successfully restore communications. RECCWG members adapted to create the new normal for emergency response during a worldwide pandemic and continued to utilize and improve their communications systems, collective knowledge base, and peer networks across the region and nation.

### **Statutory Duty 1:**

Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

### ➤ **Accomplishment 1: Assessed contingency and emergency modes of communications between Region 4 State Emergency Operations Centers**

During the virtual plenary session, Region 4 States assessed their regional interoperable contingency and emergency communications modes between their State Emergency Operations Centers (SEOCs). A series of five tests were conducted testing interoperability with regional Statewide LMR systems; the National Alert and Warning System (NAWAS); Department of Homeland Security's (DHS's) Shared Resources (SHARES) HF network; FEMA's National Radio System (FNARS), also an HF network; and their mobile satellite (MSAT)

capabilities utilizing the Satellite Mutual Aid Radio Talkgroup (SMART), a satellite two-way radio network managed by the Department of Justice (DOJ).

### ➤ **Accomplishment 2: Facilitated cross-functional cooperation during a highly active hurricane season between Essential Support Function (ESF)-2 and ESF-12 (telecommunications and energy sectors) during response and recovery activities**

The rich dynamic between telecommunications (ESF-2) and power (ESF-12) throughout Region 4 allowed these states to remain resilient during this tumultuous year and hurricane season. These two emergency support functions are crucial in the aftermath of a disaster for restoring communications and power capabilities. Utilizing lessons learned from previous hurricane seasons, the Region 4 RECCWG coordinated the creation of an ESF-2/ESF-12 taskforce to mitigate additional cutting of communications fibers and lines during restoration efforts. The RECCWG also assisted with coordinating access and fuel letters for ESF-2 and ESF-12 and commercial industry partners.

Establishing this telecommunication and energy partnership prior to Hurricane Season, truly prepared FEMA Region 4 for sustainment of life during threatening disasters. This industry relationship allowed us to work together for successful outcomes to ensure public safety communications were maintained and reducing loss of life.

➤ **Priority 1: Continue to promote proficiency and advancement with emergency communications and alert and warning systems**

RECCWG members are actively contributing to working groups that focus on Amateur Radio, FNARS, and the Integrated Public Alert and Warnings System (IPAWS). Through close cooperation and proactive awareness for radio testing and participation in exercises, the RECCWG works together to identify technical and procedural actions that can be taken to improve performance of these three modes of communications. FEMA Region 4 also ensures regional and national dissemination of reporting on the status of IPAWS Collaborative Operating Group (COG) applications, monthly FNARS testing results, and amateur radio testing. The region successfully transmitted an IPAWS alert and warning using an automated process in WinLink. The RECCWG continues to work on perfecting and educating the process.

➤ **Priority 2: Promote collaboration and coordination between emergency support functions by recruiting additional private industry sector representatives**

The successful preparation and response from an unprecedented number of hurricanes this year was largely due to the coordination between telecommunications professionals and the power restoration industries. Maintaining this relationship between emergency communications and power must remain a priority for the Region 4 RECCWG moving forward. It is crucial for ESF-2 and ESF-12 to increase their involvement in the RECCWG to share best practices for maintaining or restoring power to critical communications infrastructure during a disaster. This ongoing relationship will ensure a more coordinated response in future hurricane seasons.

Partnership with ESF-12 allowed data sharing for projected power outages that was most likely to occur in the path of the storm. These outage projections helped telecommunication industry to make informed decisions for restoration post landfall. This allowed industry to maintain life sustaining communications in the disaster areas.

**Statutory Duty 2:**

Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Increased overall awareness and support for UAS activity and increased reliance on drone imagery for damage assessments of communications critical infrastructure**

The Region 4 RECCWG participated in the FEMA R4 Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Working Group developing UAS capabilities with state partners and coordinating operations through Remote Sensing Cells (RSC). Deployment of remote UAS for incident response increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, as fewer manned arial assessment teams were asked to deploy. A damage desktop assessment tool is currently in development furthering the need for UAS technology and pilots.

The Region 4 RSC partnered with federal, state and local UAS entities, whose pilots are members of the state Unmanned

Aircraft Systems (UAS) Working Group that are leveraged during major events, to provide imagery and video used for situational awareness and RSC assessment products. These UAS

working group members were active during the COVID-19 pandemic, but had fewer mission requests as conditions did not allow for their deployment. The RSC is also developing a desktop damage assessment tool that will incorporate satellite, manned and unmanned aircraft, as well as crowd sourced imagery to create dashboards that will graphically display a combined view of the disaster impacts.

➤ **Priority 3: Plan and execute a multi-region Plenary in 2021**

Region 4 RECCWG initiated planning for a multi-regional RECCWG plenary in the Spring of 2020. This event would have enabled communications experts from around the nation to share best practices and challenges with members from other FEMA regions. The meeting was cancelled because of travel restrictions imposed in response to COVID-19. The RECCWG anticipates rescheduling in 2021, if travel restrictions are lifted.

**Statutory Duty 3:**

Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

➤ **Accomplishment 4: RECCWG disseminated access letters and “Do Not Cut” guidance to industry responders for restoration and credentialing purposes**

Each state in Region 4 has a unique method of credentialing crew members that are deployed to incidents during disaster response. This year, with the combination of an unprecedented hurricane season and a global pandemic during an Election year, demonstrated the importance of the RECCWG spanning multiple industry sectors. The COVID-19 pandemic led to stricter restrictions on travel and created more delays for private industry beginning large-scale disaster response projects after a natural disaster. The RECCWG was responsible for distributing access letters to the different industry agencies, resulting in a more streamlined process of

delivering disaster response professionals to areas hit by a natural disaster and to begin the rebuilding and recovery process.

➤ **Accomplishment 5: Used emerging technology to combat workplace restrictions**

The success of emergency communications relies upon new innovations in technology to streamline the delivery of messages. With the demands of COVID-19 posing travel restrictions and work-from-home orders, the RECCWG utilized existing technologies and created new innovations to accomplish appropriate disaster response, particularly during the 2020 hurricane season. Georgia utilized virtual town halls and online surveys to gauge interest and participation on Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) and geographic information system (GIS) mapping. Additionally, using GIS for COVID-19 contact tracing further advanced the design of the necessary data storage and security to optimize future NG911 capabilities. Hurricane Isaias prompted South Carolina to focus primarily on its virtual EOC response through information sharing, situational awareness, and interoperability. The virtual team collaborated with a few onsite EOC personnel to effectively respond and deploy resources as needed.

Several trends for remote workforce issues were identified during RECCWG calls. A common issue that came out of nationwide telework requirements was broadband bandwidth challenges due

to workforce migration away from offices. Telecommunication networks faced high demand from their customers' mass move to virtual work and school environments, highlighting the need for additional bandwidth. On a positive note, forcing engagement to mostly remote calls and video conferencing resulted in greater participation by team members and partners located further away from standard in-person meeting locations. Remote conferencing enabled greater participation from participants who normally struggle to make meetings far from where they operate, as well as other FEMA regions' RECCWG members across the nation.

During disasters, RECCWG members adopted and demonstrated the value of collaboration and chat application with Bridge4PS. The Bridge 4 Public Safety application is an advancement in communication methods used during Hurricane Laura response efforts that impacted parts of Region 4. Bridge4PS application provided a common platform for information sharing between federal, state, and local responders especially for response teams who were deployed out of state.

➤ **Priority 4: Explore establishment of a modified Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) process for communications resources between states and Tribes in the region**

Region 4 states created a Strategic Interstate Communications Resource Allocation Plan (SIC-RAP) in 2012 to document status of communications resources from each Region 4 state, interested Tribes within Region 4, as well as Louisiana, and Arkansas. This document served as an awareness tool to inform states on resources that may be available via EMAC from nearby states and tribes. The information was partially updated in 2015.

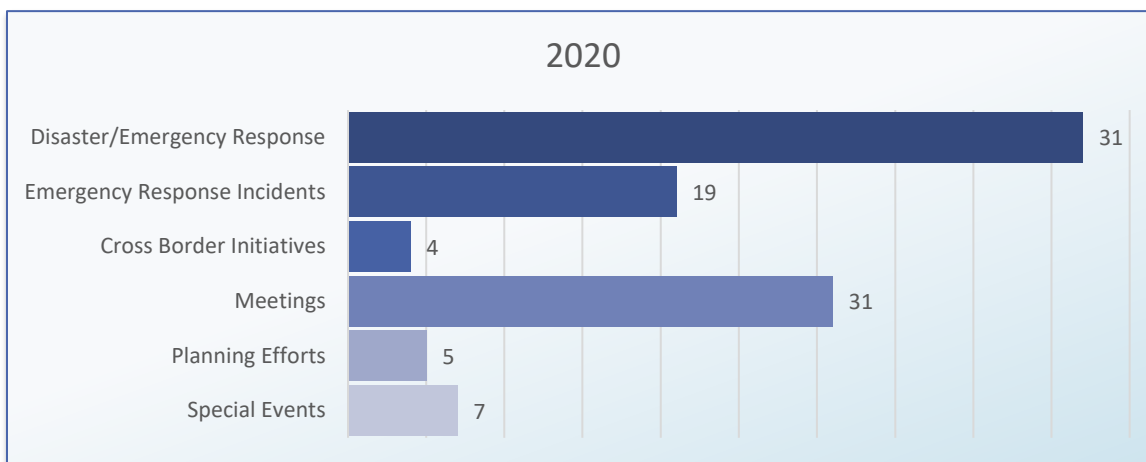
The data in the SIC-RAP has become stale. Discussions between regional communications leaders regarding an effort to update SIC-RAP data resulted in a decision to explore another course of action. They decided to create their own internal processes for communications related EMAC requests. Once the states have come together to create this process, the Region 4 RECCWG will conduct an EMAC tabletop exercise in a future RECCWG Plenary to validate and refine the proposed process.

### **CY 2020 REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION ACTIVITIES**

The Region 4 RECCWG had a busy and productive year. They held eleven monthly teleconferences, 19 ESF-2 calls with state/federal and private sector partners for hurricane response, and one virtual plenary session that included discussions and briefings regarding developments, challenges, and efforts in emergency communications in Region 4 states. Also, information regarding COVID-19 and the multiple hurricane responses was shared in these Region 4 RECCWG meetings. While many events, trainings, and meetings were cancelled, Region 4 hosted seven special events and responded to a great number of major disaster events, emergency response incidents and wildfire incidents receiving 50 disaster declarations for the region.



**Figure 3** provides a summary of these events and **Table 3** lists the details of each event.



**Figure 3: 2020 Regional Events**

**Table 3** lists incident responses, planning activities, trainings, exercises, briefings, coordination efforts, and other events sponsored or hosted by a state where awareness, participation, and/or information sharing were coordinated through the Region 4 RECCWG.

**Table 3. Regional Coordinating Activities**

REGION 4		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
Disaster Declarations/Emergency Response	01/10-11/2020	MS Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-Line Winds, & Flooding (DR-4478-MS)
	01/20/2020	COVID-19 Declarations: AL (EM-3472-AL) & (DR-4503-AL); Poach Band of Creek Indians (EM-3528-AL); FL (EM-3432-FL) & (DR-4486-FL); Seminole Tribe of FL (EM-3468-FL) & (DR-4545-FL); GA (EM-3464-GA) & (DR-4501-GA); KY (EM-3469-KY) & (DR-4497-KY); MS (EM-3474-MS) & (DR-4528-MS); NC (EM-3471-NC) & (DR-4487-NC); SC (EM-3470-SC) & (DR-4492-SC); TN (EM-3473-TN) & (DR-4514-TN)
	02/03-29/2020	KY Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, & Mudslides (DR-4540-KY)
	02/05/2020-03/06/2020	AL Severe Storms & Flooding (DR-4546-AL)
	02/06-13/2020	SC Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-Line Winds, & Flooding (DR-4479-SC)
	02/06-19/2020	NC Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-Line Winds, & Flooding (DR-4543-NC)
	02/10-18/2020	MS Severe Storms, Flooding, & Mudslides (DR-4538-MS)
	03/03/2020	TN Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-Line Winds, & Flooding (DR-4476-TN)

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

REGION 4		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
	04/12-13/2020	AL/MS/SC/TN Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-Line Winds, & Flooding (DR-4555-AL), (DR-4536-MS), (DR-4542-SC), (DR-4541-TN)
	04/19/2020	AL Severe Storms, Straight-Line Winds, & Tornadoes (DR-4554-AL)
	04/22-23/2020	MS Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-Line Winds, & Flooding (DR-4551-MS)
	05/03-04/2020	TN Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-Line Winds, & Flooding (DR-4550-TN)
	05/06/2020-06/02/2020	FL Mussett Bayou Fire (FM-5308-FL)
	05/06/2020-06/05/2020	FL 5-Mile Swamp Fire (FM-5307-FL)
	05/13/2020-06/2/2020	FL 36 <sup>th</sup> Avenue Fire (FM-5309-FL)
	07/31/2020	FL/NC Hurricane Isaias (EM-3533-FL), (EM-3534-NC), (DR-4568-NC)
	08/23/2020	MS Hurricane Marco & Tropical Storm Laura (EM-3539-MS)
	09/14/2020	AL/FL/MS Hurricane Sally (DR-4563-AL), (EM-3545-AL), (DR-4564-FL), (EM-3546-FL), (EM-3544-MS)
	10/07/2020	MS Hurricane Delta (EM-3548-MS)
	10/27/2020	MS Hurricane Zeta (DR-4573-AL), (EM-3550-MS), (DR-4576-MS)
	11/07/2020	FL Hurricane Eta (EM-3551-FL)
	12/25/2020	TN Christmas Day Explosion (EM-3552-TN)
Cross-Border Initiatives	01/03/2020	MS Penitentiary Riots
	02/01/2020	MS/GA National Guard's Patriot South Exercise at Camp Shelby Combat Readiness Training Center
	08/09/2020	NC Sparta Earthquake
	08/18-19/2020	RECCWG Virtual Communications Exercise (held in conjunction with the virtual plenary session)
Teleconferences and Meetings (incl. virtual)	Multiple Dates	Eleven monthly teleconferences utilizing Adobe Connect attended by multiple RECCWG member representatives which have discussions and briefings regarding developments, challenges, and efforts in Emergency Management Communications in Region IV states
	08/18-19/2020	RECCWG Virtual Plenary Session
Communications Planning Efforts	03/01/2020	FL Full Scale Oil Spill Exercise - Cancelled
	03/09-12/2020	SC Phoenix Dawn Terrorism and Communications Planning Exercise
	04/10/2020	AL Communications Week Training - Cancelled
	04/28-30/2020	Five Region Joint RECCWG Plenary In-Person Meeting (Cancelled due to COVID travel restrictions)

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**2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT**

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REGION 4		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
	05/01/2020	GA Mobile Communications Vehicle (MCV) Interoperability Exercise (Cancelled due to COVID restrictions)
Special Event Support	01/14/2020	MS Inauguration of Governor
	02/02/2020	FL Super Bowl LIV
	05/01-07/01/2020	TN Civil Unrest
	08/24-27/2020	NC Republican National Convention
	09/01-11/01/2020	Election 2020: Early Voting
	09/05/2020	KY Kentucky Derby
	11/03/2020	Election Day

## REGION 5

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U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
FEMA Region 5  
536 South Clark Street  
Chicago, IL 60605

# FEMA

DATE: May 20, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn  
Assistant Administrator  
Response Directorate

FROM: Kevin M. Sligh, Sr.  
Acting Regional Administrator

For Kevin M. Sligh, Sr.  
MAUREEN P  
CUNNINGHAM  
Digitally signed by MAUREEN P  
CUNNINGHAM  
Date: 2021.05.25 19:23:52  
+05'00'

SUBJECT: FEMA Region 5 Regional Emergency Communications  
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) 2020 Annual Report

As required by 6 U.S.C. § 575, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region 5 RECCWG with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined RECCWG Annual Report for calendar year (CY) 2020, which will be distributed to the Director of the Emergency Communications Division (ECD) of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.
- Coordinate the establishment of federal, state, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region 5 RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

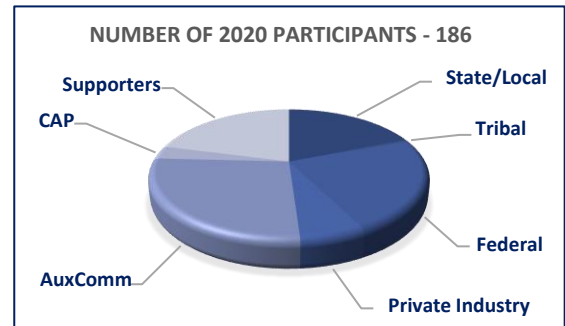
I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for federal, state, local, tribal agencies, and the Whole Community to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region as shown through activities in this report. The Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole of Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Enclosed: Region 5 CY 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

## REGION 5 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP

### CY 2020 OVERVIEW

Composed of members from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin, the Region 5 Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) worked diligently throughout 2020 alongside its federal and private sector partners, auxiliary communications (AuxComm) volunteers, and a host of enthusiastic professionals who contributed their time and expertise to advance communications interoperability across the region. A 127-percent growth in participation, from 82 to 186 participants, is attributed to the RECCWG's goal of representing the whole community. The RECCWG added a new category, "Supporters," who represent many FEMA internal employees. The difference from Federal and Supporters category is unique within a criterion. The criteria encompass the inclusivity of FEMA professionals stemming from IT-Technology, Operations, Response Planning, Training, and Watch Office divisions. By the inclusion of specific individuals who attend RECCWG meetings and other events, foster a well-balanced product of critical incident management principles through a broader educational process continuum, by complimenting RECCWG operations derived from Region 5 Chicago's, IL office. Although the Federal category denotes other partnerships from Federal government agencies. In addition to other categories, which includes AuxComm, Civil Air Patrol (CAP), private industry, state/local, and Federally recognized tribal organizations. RECCWG participation in 2020 is displayed in Error! Reference source not found..



**Figure 1: RECCWG Participation**

States and Tribal Nations in Region 5 received a total of 17 disaster declarations in 2020.

Region 5 experienced major disasters in all its states because of severe storms and the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to responding to natural disasters, RECCWG members responded to and reported on numerous incidents and planned events that required interoperability among field personnel, command centers, volunteer organizations, and local agencies. Each event posed a unique set of challenges that responders and officials, many of whom are members of the RECCWG, were able to solve and learn from. Close collaboration from the RECCWG between regional peers and emergency communications experts across the country enabled successful communications during response.

As a diverse yet cohesive team, the RECCWG tackled many new challenges to interoperability in the region as the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) and next-generation 911

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*The RECCWG increased membership, developed focus groups, and gained record participation in 2020 through its virtual outreach and collaborative planning initiatives.*

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(NG911) initiatives progressed. The year's events also underscored the criticality of well-functioning and universally compatible alert and warning systems. The technological advances of 2020 made clear that the collective expertise of communications professionals as a singular body is increasingly effective in shaping the future of interoperability among systems, both technologically and legislatively.

Highlights of the RECCWG's accomplishments in 2020 are documented in this report and serve as examples of the advancements made within Region 5 and through the RECCWG program nationally. Similarly, priorities for 2021 have been set to leverage the extensive professional experience, comprehensive conversations and research, and close collaboration among member agencies within the Region.

For additional information regarding the Region 5 RECCWG, please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region 5 Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), Karl Arriola, at [karl.arriola@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:karl.arriola@fema.dhs.gov) or 312-408-4418. **Table 1** lists the names and roles of RECCWG members in 2020.

**Table 1: RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2020**

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
RECCWG LEADERSHIP	
James K. Joseph	RECCWG Chair, FEMA Region 5 Administrator
Brad Stoddard	Region 5 RECCWG Co-Chair, Michigan Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)
John Dooley	Region 5 RECCWG Vice-Chair, Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Emergency Communications Network (DPS, ECN), IPAWS Program Manager
Karl Arriola	FEMA Region 5 RECC
ILLINOIS (IL) REPRESENTATIVES	
Cindy Barbera-Brelle	Coordinator, Illinois State 911
Aaron Bishop	Macoupin County, IL
Dan Casey	Deputy Director, Public Safety Information Technology (PSIT), Chicago Office of Emergency Management and Communications (OEMC)
John Cheney	Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA)
Paul Maplethorpe	Chief Emeritus, Greater Round Lake Fire Protection District
Brandon Oxley	Illinois Department of Transportation (DOT)
Bill Springer	FirstNet System Architect, Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System (ILEAS)
INDIANA (IN) REPRESENTATIVES	
John Asher	Field Support Manager, Indiana Integrated Public Safety Commission (IPSC)
Andi Baughn	Outreach Coordinator, Indiana IPSC
Tyler Clements	Field Services Coordinator, Indiana IPSC
Sally Fay	SWIC, Indiana IPSC
Lewis Hartman	Communications Manager, Indiana Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
Ed Reuter	Director, Indiana State 911
Michael Watkins	Training Manager, Indiana IPSC

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
<b>MICHIGAN (MI) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Bernard Alexander	Detroit Homeland Security and Emergency Management
Jaclyn Barcroft	Critical Incident Management System (CIMS) Administrator, Michigan State Police, Emergency Management & Homeland Security Division (MSP, EMHSD)
Pam Matelski	Michigan NPSBN (FirstNet)
Bryce Tracy	Coordinator, Mackinac County 911
<b>MINNESOTA (MN) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Melinda Miller	FirstNet Program Manager—Deputy SWIC, Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS), Emergency Communication Networks (ECN)
Dana Wahlberg	Director, Minnesota DPS, ECN
Brad Winger	Minnesota Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM), IPAWS
<b>OHIO (OH) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Brian Castner	Telecommunications Branch Supervisor, Ohio Emergency Management Agency (OEMA)
Dave Ford	Logistics & Communications Administrator, OEMA
Rob Jackson	Coordinator, State of Ohio 911
Rick Schmahl	Program Director and SWIC, Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS)
<b>WISCONSIN (WI) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Tom Czaja	Director and SWIC, Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs, Office of Emergency Communications (DMA, OEC)
Paul Hughes	Communications and Warning Officer, Wisconsin DMA, Emergency Management (EM)
Doug Lofreddo	Deputy Communications and Warning Officer, Wisconsin DMA, EM
Jennifer Lord	Radio Communication Specialist, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)
Gene Oldenburg	Land Mobile Radio (LMR) Program Manager, Wisconsin DMA, OEC
Josh Ripp	Wisconsin Interoperable System for Communications (WISCOM) Program Manager, Wisconsin DMA, OEC
Gary Timm	Broadcast Chair, Wisconsin Emergency Alert System (EAS)
Jim Westover	Spectrum Manager, Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT)
<b>TRIBAL REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Jim Zoss	Tribal Emergency Manager, Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi
<b>FEDERAL PARTNERS</b>	
David Adsit	Spectrum Manager, DHS FEMA
Noah Apata	FEMA Region 5 IMAT
Zach Baker	FEMA Region 5
Mark Beecroft	Telecommunications Manager, Denver MERS
Jason Blum	FEMA Region 5
Paul Casault	Telecommunications Specialist, FEMA Region 5
Troy Christensen	FEMA Region 5 Tribal Liaison
Tom Cross	Chief, Communications Management Branch, FEMA
Lemorris Graham	Branch Chief, FEMA Region 5 Watch Office

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
Scott Hansen	Chief (Acting), Communications Integration Branch (CIB), DHS FEMA Disaster Emergency Communications (DEC)
Dennis Huntley	Telecommunications Manager, DHS FEMA DEC Denver Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS),
Scott Jackson	National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
James Jarvis	Regional Coordinator, Emergency Communications Division (ECD), DHS, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)
Jessica Kaputa	Federal Communications Programs, CISA
Al Knerr	FCC
John McClain	Industry Liaison, DHS, National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD), Cybersecurity and Communications (CS&C), National Coordination Center (NCC)
Charles McCobb	Director, Continuity Communications Division, FEMA
Ross Merlin	DHS SHARed RESources (SHARES) Program Manager
Kristi Meyers	Ohio AT&T / FirstNet
Joe Miller	FEMA Region 5
John Peterson	DHS, ECD
Tim Pierce	Region5 Consultation/Outreach Lead, First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet)
Daniel Pratt	Chief Warrant Officer 2 (CWO2)/Communications Officer, DHS United States Coast Guard District 09
Paul Preusse	Response Division Director, DHS FEMA Region 5
Kyle Richardson	FirstNet
Daniel Roberts	Radio Frequency (RF) Communications Manager, DHS FEMA DEC Denver Mobile Emergency Resource Support (MERS)
Scott Stemmen	Regional Manager, General Services Administration (GSA), Emergency Support Function (ESF)-2
Jim Stromberg	CISA
Dennis White	Federal Communications Commission
Gus Wulfkuhle	OPB Chief, Response Division, DHS FEMA Region 5
<b>NATIONAL GUARD</b>	
LT Daniel E. Gilbert	Indiana National Guard
MSG Jeromie Golab	Michigan National Guard G6
David Owen	Minnesota National Guard
SFC Tom Simota	Michigan National Guard
LTC Don West	Indiana National Guard
<b>CIVIL AIR PATROL (CAP)</b>	
LTC. Jim Bartel	FEMA Region 5 Liaison, Illinois, CAP
1Lt. Troy Blair	Ohio, CAP
LTC Bill Carlson	Great Lakes Region Communications Director, CAP
LTC Richard King	Homeland Security Liaison, Great Lakes Region, CAP
LTC Ron MacCarthy	Assistant Director of Communications, Minnesota CAP
LTC Tom Myers	Director of Communications, Indiana, CAP

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
PRIVATE INDUSTRY PARTNERS	
Nieama Booker	Client Partner, Mobility, Verizon
Brian Buening	Verizon Wireless
Rodney Cooper	T-Mobile
Rick Cox	T-Mobile
Joel Daniels	Verizon Wireless
Bob Desiato	AT&T Wireless
Danielle Galloway	Verizon Wireless
Anthony Isla	Verizon Wireless
Don Matker	T-Mobile
Cathy Passmore	Verizon Wireless, Government
Tony Patino	T-Mobile
Earl Struble	Verizon Wireless
AUXCOMM PARTNERS	
Dan Anderson	Minnesota AuxComm
Fritz Bock	Illinois ARES
Mark Breckenridge	Michigan Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES)
Stan Broadway	Ohio AuxComm
Sonny Hirsch	Military Auxiliary Radio System (MARS), Region 5
Andrew LaVenture	Minnesota ARES
Ryc Lyden	Minnesota AuxComm
Mike Ostlund	Minnesota AuxComm
Gary Paschke	Indiana AuxComm
Jim Pitchford	Illinois RACES
Joe Reinemann	Minnesota ARES
Skip Sharpe	Wisconsin RACES
Max Schneider	Michigan ARES, Section Emergency Coordinator, R5 AuxComm Committee Chair
Steve Waterman	DHS SHARES
RECCWG PARTICIPANTS	
Angela Akers	Red Cross Communications Division
Chris Baker	FirstNet Public Services Division, Senior Public Safety Advisor WI
Stephan Barott	Air Force MARS
Robert Becker	Illinois CAP Lt Col COMMS
Nicholas A. Bosley	[affiliation unknown]
Christopher Brown	FirstNet Management Division
Brian Buening	Verizon Wireless Management
John Bush	CISA Protective Security Advisor for WI
John Chambers	FirstNet Management Division

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**2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT**

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NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
Jennifer Corrado	FirstNet Management Division
Paul English	Army NETCOM HF/LMR Net Manager
Jaimie Flowers	DHS Task Leader NWIC Pacific
Richard George	Air Force MARS and VA Medical Center HF Nets
Robert Gordon	FirstNet Public Services Division
Doug Harder	FirstNet Management Division
Sonny Hersh	MARS Region 5 Operations Officer
John Hunt	FirstNet Management Division
Mark Jensen	Army NETCOM HF/LMR Nets
Carrie Johnson	FirstNet Management Division
Lloyd Kimball	FEMA Integration Team (FIT), WA
Eric Main	FEMA DEC Group Supervisor
Tom Lorenz	Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Police
Thomas McHugh	Verizon Wireless Management
LT Scott McIntire	Coast Guard District 9 Cleveland, OH
Don Miller	Verizon Wireless Management
Thomas Myers	Indiana CAP Lt Col COMMS
Allison Pemberton	Verizon Wireless Management
Daniel J. Pratt	Coast Guard Auxiliary Communications Great Lakes
Brad Preiprzyk	FirstNet Management Division
John Roberts	AT&T Mobility Services Public Safety Solutions
John B. Roberts	FirstNet Management Division
Richell Slepetz	CISA Support Contractor
Harlan T. Squire	Science Applications International Corporation
Scott Stemmen	General Services Administration
Chris Stratimann	FirstNet Response Division
Michael Vannier	USCG Communications Office Sector Lake Michigan
Jon Rannells-Vehc	AT&T Management
Shomari Williams	Verizon Wireless Management
Shawn Wyant	Michigan CAP LT COMMS

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## CY 2020 RECCWG ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CY 2021 PRIORITIES

As evidenced through the year's events and acknowledged by federal, state, tribal, and municipal officials at all levels of government, telecommunications professionals, and public safety servants across the country, the Region 5 RECCWG has become both an essential body of knowledge and a platform for action. The accomplishments listed below illustrate a cross-section of the many strides the RECCWG has made in 2020 toward fulfilling its duties as prescribed by the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) and the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP). The RECCWG's exemplary achievements in 2020 have given way to new sets of challenges, and many of its long-term objectives are still underway. Listed along with their accomplishments below are the RECCWG's top priorities for CY 2021.

**Statutory Duty 1:** Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

➤ **Accomplishment 1: Developed secure and non-secure RECCWG web pages to assess and protect communications posture during the pandemic response**

Recognizing the importance of moving forward with communications assessment, proficiency, and testing despite a year of social distancing, the Region 5 RECCWG launched several initiatives to enhance its members' collective readiness posture.

The Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) is DHS' official system for sharing Sensitive but Unclassified (SBU) information between federal, state, local, territorial, tribal, international, and private sector partners. The RECCWG put

significant effort into developing its Region 5 RECCWG site, which provides a secure environment for members and partners to share information with their counterparts, such as RECCWG announcements, contact lists, training events and conferences, reports, best practice guides, and contact lists.

As the COVID-19 pandemic response intensified early in the year, the RECCWG recognized a need for forum to post non-sensitive, timely information that could be easily accessed with a common link. Adobe Connect was used successfully for this purpose. Setting up a webpage, or "room" for any type of large-scale response became a best practice for agencies across the country to maintain situational awareness among their counterparts.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Achieved regionwide participation in backup communications programs**

State emergency management agencies (EMAs) have access to high-frequency (HF) radio networks, whose physical stations have minimal power requirements and are independent of commercial communications networks, although maintaining equipment and user proficiency has been difficult in a pandemic environment when EMAs could not staff their operations centers physically. The RECCWG hosted information sessions on the FEMA National Radio System (FNARS), which provides resilient voice and messaging capabilities for contingency command and control communications; and the DHS Shared Resources (SHARES) program, which provides an additional means for users with a national security or emergency preparedness mission to

communicate when landline and cellular communications are unavailable by using existing HF amateur radio stations. The RECCWG provided support to member states and AuxComm volunteers as they developed these valuable programs throughout the year. The efforts of the RECCWG garnered 100-percent participation in FNARS monthly tests and several new volunteers for SHARES stations. These HF resources are essential to maintaining resilient and interoperable communications across the region.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Assessed public alerting capabilities that are independent of commercial infrastructure**

Several RECCWG members and partners participated in the 2020 Black Swan communications exercise, which was designed in part to address gaps in deploying resilient and interoperable alert-and-warning systems that are independent of the Internet. Sponsored by the Ohio Military Reserve and supported by AuxComm and other participants in Maryland, Tennessee, New Hampshire, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., the exercise proved that messages could be delivered intact from a point of origin to various local stations where they could reach the public. Messages created within the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) infrastructure were transmitted through the SHARES radio network using the Winlink global radio email system. The emails traversed this system using radio-only connections, without the need for the Internet or other terrestrial communication systems. The RECCWG has consistently promoted and participated in events such as Black Swan in their efforts to enhance resilient communications across the region.

**Statutory Duty 2:**

Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 4: Provided a multi-jurisdictional forum for awareness as pandemic realities unfolded**

The RECCWG was a central meeting point for state, local, and tribal public safety agencies in Region 5 to coordinate activities with federal and private sector partners during the initial phases of the pandemic response. Uncertainties regarding shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE), communications needs at testing sites and alternate care facilities (ACF), and concerns about the status of communications systems and the health of essential personnel began to materialize were all challenges addressed and overcome by the working group. RECCWG members representing their respective states' communications and 911 systems participated in a series of teleconferences during this critical phase, where they gained situational awareness of neighboring states' response actions and plans, federal

pandemic measures and updates, communications resources available to their respective agencies, and a more holistic perspective on the unprecedented nationwide response. Their collaborative efforts continued to support local agencies throughout the rest of the year's responses to natural disasters, economic crises, and civil unrest.



➤ **Priority 1: Develop and promote regional communications exercises**

Although many emergency preparedness exercises were cancelled across the country, RECCWG members have continued to promote communications-specific components to functional and tabletop exercises across the region. Traditionally, communications have not been a point of focus during large-scale exercises, but through RECCWG interactions and with the national-level support of the RECCWG Co-Chairs group, more emphasis is being placed on responders' ability to communicate within the disaster zone and back to their command centers. RECCWG members, volunteer groups such as CAP and AuxComm operators, and federal and private industry partners are working to regain momentum as pandemic restrictions are lifted, to exercise their primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency communications modes across the region in 2021. The RECCWG's Training and Exercise subcommittee began developing "Operation Frostbite," which will be a "tabletop" exercise to assess communications needs in the region during a simulated blizzard in all its states, to include stress on 911 systems, wireline and wireless system outages due to ice and loss of power, medical responses, and highway closures. Additionally, the RECCWG is planning a hybrid, functional-tabletop exercise in May that will be based on a large-scale flooding scenario. These events will prepare the RECCWG for its goal of developing a regional, full-scale communications exercise in the future.

**Statutory Duty 3:**

Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

➤ **Accomplishment 5: Developed relationships with amateur radio volunteers**

The RECCWG's outreach efforts to the AuxComm community quickly earned new participation from its member states, by groups representing the Military Auxiliary Radio System (MARS), Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES), and others. The AuxComm subcommittee appointed a new chair who works closely with these volunteers and with the RECCWG's Training and Exercise subcommittee to identify, promote, and develop AuxComm resources across the region. The Region 5 RECC, who is an experienced amateur radio operator, gave a well-received presentation on "jamming" of public safety radio systems and how to combat it, and provided a forum for other presenters, such as the SHARES government lead, to expand awareness and gain participation in regionwide and national

programs that greatly enhance emergency communications resilience for the public safety agencies they serve. Additionally, the AuxComm subcommittee's newly appointed Chair has created a Region 5 social media website via Yahoo Groups. The purpose of this personal non-FEMA government account is devoted to fostering activities such as monthly HF and digital nets. Only specific R5 AuxComm radio operators are granted access.

➤ **Priority 2: Increase representation by Tribal Nations in the RECCWG**

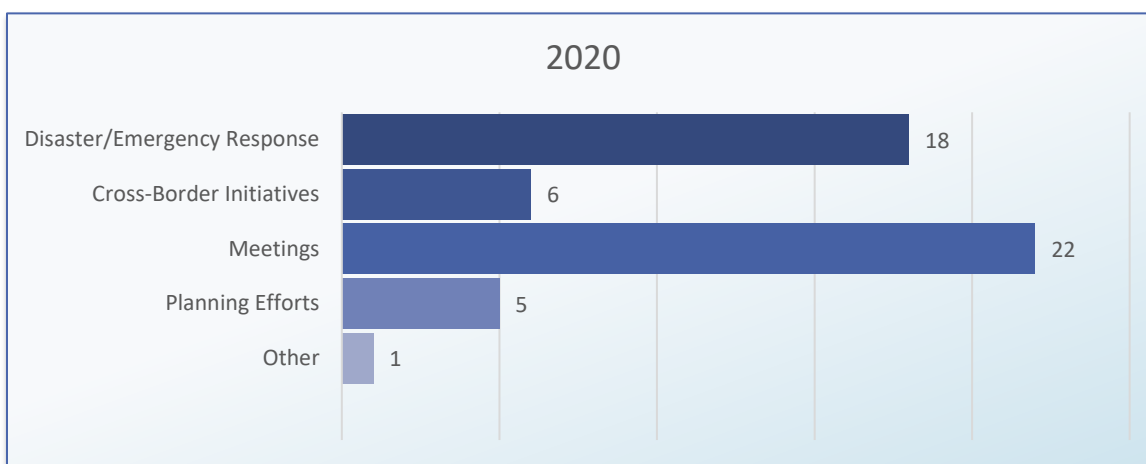
Region 5 is home to 34 federally recognized tribes. The capabilities of tribal emergency managers, law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical services personnel to communicate on tribal lands and with surrounding jurisdictions should be as boundless as the disasters inherent

in the region. Working with the Region 5 Tribal Liaison, the RECCWG conducted outreach that helped to welcome a new RECCWG member from the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi. By working to identify additional candidates for membership within their respective states, RECCWG members will continue their efforts in 2021 to extend RECCWG resources and gain representation by the region's tribal nations. Additionally, RECCWG relationships have proven useful in connecting Tribal members with federal partners, who are working with the region's tribes to develop a Region 5 Tribal Interoperability Guide which will help facilitate inter-tribal emergency communication. The guide is projected to be completed in 2021.

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## CY 2020 REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

Partners in every Region 5 state enhanced emergency communications through their efforts during an unprecedented year. COVID-19 reshaped the way business was conducted and changed the focus of many conversations around public safety and emergency communications. The pandemic caused the cancellation of many large-scale events, exercises, conferences, and cross-state and cross-regional events. Nevertheless, RECCWG members adapted to the “new normal” and continued to improve their communications systems, collective knowledge base, and peer networks across the country. **Figure 2** provides a summary of 2020 events and efforts in Region 5 that were sponsored by the RECCWG or its members. In addition, the “Other” category illustrated was created to account for communications related activities. This category was applicable to those activities associated with Indiana’s completion of their build-out concerning Emergency Information System Network (EISN), which involved a 5-year project. This single activity is an important endeavor and a recognized platform to complement their current emergency telecommunication programs. This is also identified as “Other” depicted in Table 2.



**Figure 2: 2020 Regional Events**

**Table 2** lists incident responses, planning activities, trainings, exercises, briefings, coordination efforts, and other events in Region 5 where awareness, participation, and information sharing were coordinated by RECCWG members.

**Table 2: Regional Coordinating Activities**

REGION5		
TYPE	DATE(S)	DESCRIPTION
Emergency Response / Disaster Declarations	1/10/2020	Wisconsin SEVERE WINTER STORM AND FLOODING (DR-4477-WI)
	1/20/2020	Illinois COVID-19 PANDEMIC (DR-4489-IL)
	1/20/2020	Illinois COVID-19 (EM-3435-IL)
	1/20/2020	Indiana COVID-19 (EM-3456-IN)
	1/20/2020	Ohio COVID-19 (EM-3457-OH)
	1/20/2020	Ohio COVID-19 PANDEMIC (DR-4507-OH)

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

REGION5		
TYPE	DATE(S)	DESCRIPTION
	1/20/2020	Michigan COVID-19 (EM-3455-MI)
	1/20/2020	Michigan COVID-19 PANDEMIC (DR-4494-MI)
	1/20/2020	Upper Sioux Community COVID-19 (EM-3503-MN)
	1/20/2020	Minnesota COVID-19 (EM-3453-MN)
	1/20/2020	Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community COVID-19 (EM-3508-MN)
	1/20/2020	Minnesota COVID-19 PANDEMIC (DR-4531-MN)
	1/20/2020	Wisconsin COVID-19 (EM-3454-WI)
	1/20/2020	Wisconsin COVID-19 PANDEMIC (DR-4520-WI)
	1/31/2020	Indiana COVID-19 PANDEMIC (DR-4515-IN)
	5/16/2020	Michigan SEVERE STORMS AND FLOODING (EM-3525-MI)
	5/16/2020	Michigan SEVERE STORMS AND FLOODING (DR-4547-MI)
	5/19/2020	Michigan dam breaches
Cross-Border Initiatives	Multiple dates	AuxComm subcommittee meets monthly and conducts bi-weekly net check-ins with all six states in Region 5
	10/26/2020	Black Swan communications exercise
Teleconferences and Meetings (incl. virtual)	Multiple dates	Fourteen virtual RECCWG meetings, including an October plenary attended by multiple state and regional representatives. Discussions included: federal and state updates, private industry reports, FirstNet updates, regional announcements, presentations by CISA, SHARES, and FNARS, 2020 hurricane and COVID-19 lessons learned, Region IV UAS Working Group presentation
	Multiple dates	Eight ESF-2 teleconferences provided a forum for members to interact with federal entities as the pandemic response began to materialize. It also allowed states to report on the status of their 911 and statewide radio systems, PPE distribution, travel restrictions, and communications needs for alternate care facility and COVID-19 testing site construction
Communications Planning Efforts	Multiple dates	Planning for a 3-day plenary with participants from regions 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 conducted by RECCWG members included coordination teleconferences, travel and lodging arrangements, stakeholder outreach, and agenda development. This event was cancelled due to COVID-19 but will be held in 2021 if pandemic conditions permit
	Multiple dates	RECCWG planning meetings for Operation Frostbite exercise to be held in February 2021
	September 2020	Developed Region 5 HSIN page as a secure repository for members and partners to share information cross-regionally, such as RECCWG announcements, contact lists, annual reports, best practice guides, and POC lists
Other	6/2020	Indiana completed its 5-year ESINet buildout

## REGION 6

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**FEMA**

May 28, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn  
Assistant Administrator  
Response Directorate

FROM: George A. Robinson **GEORGE A ROBINSON** Digitally signed by  
Regional Administrator **ROBINSON** GEORGE A ROBINSON  
Date: 2021.05.28  
17:08:29 -05'00'

SUBJECT: FEMA Region 6 Regional Emergency Communications  
Coordination Working Group Annual Report

As required by 6 U.S.C. § 575, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended.

The attached Annual Report, developed by the FEMA Region 6 RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined RECCWG Annual Report for calendar year (CY) 2020, which will be distributed to the Director of the Emergency Communications Division (ECD) of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The Annual Report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.
- Coordinate the establishment of federal, state, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region 6 RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report

as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for federal, state, local, tribal agencies, and the whole community to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region as shown through activities in this report. The Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this whole community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Enclosed: Region 6 CY 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

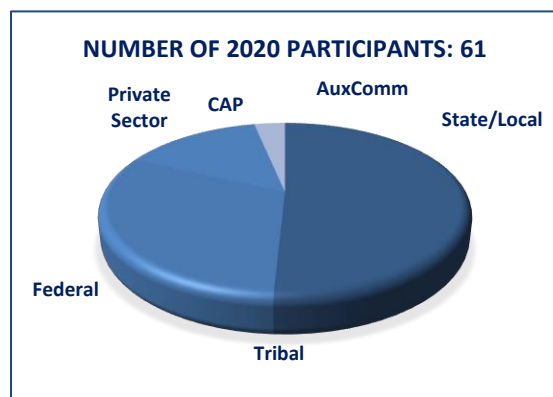


## REGION VI EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP



### CY 2020 OVERVIEW

Composed of the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas, the Region VI Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) worked diligently throughout 2020 alongside its federal and private sector partners, auxiliary communications (AuxComm) volunteers, and a host of passionate professionals who lent their time and



knowledge to improve communications interoperability across the region. Following several natural disasters, Region VI RECCWG saw notable growth in involvement which is attributed to the RECCWG's goal of encompassing the whole community. After experiencing the effects from this year's disaster season, the Region VI RECCWG promoted the increased representation in private industry and energy sector partners. **Figure 1** shows the breakdown of Region VI's RECCWG membership for 2020.

All states and several tribal nations in Region VI received major disaster declarations for COVID-19. Four Region VI states experienced storm impacts from eight named storms in 2020: Tropical

Storm Cristobal, Hurricane Hanna, Hurricane Laura, Hurricane Marco, Hurricane Sally, Tropical Storm Beta, Hurricane Delta, and Hurricane Zeta. In addition to natural disasters, RECCWG members responded to and reported on numerous incidents and planned events that required interoperability among field personnel, command centers, volunteer organizations, and local agencies. During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the RECCWG members also dealt with severe storms, flooding, hurricanes, and fires all in an election year. The RECCWG made significant progress in interoperability coordination during their numerous response efforts this past year by putting rubber to the road. Each event posed a new set of successes and challenges that responders and officials, many of whom are members of the RECCWG, were able to resolve and learn from, thanks in part to the many years the RECCWG have cultivated close cooperation with their partners in the region and across the country.

**Region VI RECCWG members supported communications during eight major disasters in 2020**

In addition, the RECCWG held five teleconferences in 2020, and a virtual plenary session with more than 35 participants and presenters from several public safety sectors and emergency management disciplines. These interactions discussed lessons learned from recent emergencies in the region, build partnerships across the states, share best practices, and plan for regional and statewide exercises, as well as other events. Documented in this report, are highlights of the RECCWG's accomplishments in 2020 that serve as an example of the improvements made within Region VI and through the RECCWG program nationally. Similarly, priorities for 2021 have been set to leverage the extensive professional experience, comprehensive conversations and research, and close collaboration among RECCWG member agencies within the region.

*In 2020, the RECCWG strengthened their relationship with its private industry partners while addressing regional emergency response gaps during power and communications restoration during the multiple disaster responses*

For additional information regarding the Region VI RECCWG, please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region VI Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), Joe Garcia, at [Joe.Garcia@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Joe.Garcia@fema.dhs.gov) or 940-898-5239, 940-465-4963.

**Table 1: RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2020**

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
RECCWG LEADERSHIP	
Tony Robinson	RECCWG Chair, FEMA Region VI Administrator
Wynn Brannin	RECCWG Co-Chair, New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
Joe Garcia	FEMA Region VI RECC
ARKANSAS (AR) REPRESENTATIVES	
Franklin Andrews	Arkansas Wireless Information Network
Penny Rubow	Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)/Director, Arkansas Wireless Information Network

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

Justin Vint	Director, Communications and Support Division, Arkansas Department of Emergency Management
Marshall Watson	Administrator, Public Safety, Benton County
<b>LOUISIANA (LA) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
George Brown	Section Chief, Communications/Information Technology (IT), Office of Homeland Security, City of New Orleans
Travis Johnson	Interoperability Program Manager, Governor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (GOHSEP)
Andress Knox	Regional Coordinator, Hospital Preparedness, Louisiana Region 7
<b>NEW MEXICO (NM) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Gary Surad	New Mexico Department of Homeland Security (DHS) & Emergency Manager (EM)
<b>OKLAHOMA (OK) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Nikki Cassingham	Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security/SWIC
Donald Lynch	Emergency Manager, Shawnee/Pottawatomie County
Jamie Ott	Director, Broken Arrow Emergency Management
Putnam Reiter	IT Officer, Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management (DEM)
Matt Stillwell	Director, Central Communications and Emergency Management, City of Edmond
<b>TEXAS (TX) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
David Abernathy	Texas Forest Service (Retired)
Lee Cooper	Section Manager, American Radio Relay League (ARRL), South Texas Section (Amateur Radio)
Steve Dyson	Radio Frequency/Technical Services Coordinator, Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Todd Early	SWIC/Assistant Chief, Infrastructure Operations Division, Texas DPS
Thomas Gonzalez	Communications Unit Manager, Texas DPS
Mike Hardwick	District Radio Manager, Texas DOT
COL Bill Heiser, II	Director, J6 Command & Control Communications, Texas Military Department
C.J. Holt	Radio Communications Manager, City of Dallas
Karla Jurrens	Deputy SWIC, Texas DPS
Kevin Lemon	Technical Operations Specialist, ESF-2 Lead, Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM)
1LT Jared Reinhardt	Chief of Emergency Communications, Texas Military Department
Gerald Richmond	Statewide Radio Coordinator, Texas Department of Transportation (DOT)
Mike Simpson	Program Services Manager, IT, Wireless Communications, City of Austin
Mike Simpson	Communications Coordinator/Radio Systems Manager, Palo Pinto County Emergency Management
Eddie Wilson	Director, Vehicle and Technical Services, Texas DPS
<b>FEDERAL PARTNERS</b>	
Dave Adsit	Spectrum Manager, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
Victor Camacho	Denton Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS)
Larry Clutts	Priority Telecommunications, Office of Emergency Communications (OEC)
Gerald "Jay" English	Regional Liaison, Region VI, National Communications System (NCS)

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

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Nicole Ugarte	FirstNet (AK, LA)
Scott Hansen	National RECCWG Chair
Scott Jackson	National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
Brian Kassa	FirstNet
Al Kenyon	Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)
J.R. Marshal	OSS2, New Orleans, United States Coast Guard (USCG)
John McClain	CISA, NCC Comms Liaison, covers Regions 1-4
Tim Perrier	Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
Thomas Randal	FirstNet (TX, OK, NM)
Harriet Rennie-Brown	Executive Director, National Association of State 9-1-1 Administrators (NASNA)
Juan Silva	FCC
Jacque Miller-Waring	Consultation Lead, FirstNet Region VI
Colleen Wright	Regional Coordinator, FEMA Region VI, OEC, Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
PRIVATE INDUSTRY PARTNERS	
Nancy Anderson	State of Texas, Sprint
Dave Bezzant	Sr. National Director, Government Mobility Solutions, T-Mobile
Nieama Booker	Verizon
Chris Desmond	Verizon Wireless
Paul Gilbert	Director of Emergency Management, Amateur Radio Relay League (ARRL)
Tony Graf	T-Mobile
Andrew Harris	Verizon
Nicole Hubert	Strategy and Operations, Sprint
Casey Muilenburg	Emergency Response Team (ERT), T-Mobile
Roger Jones	Red Cross

## CY 2020 RECCWG ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND 2021 PRIORITIES

The Region VI RECCWG made tremendous strides toward improving local, state, and regional communications systems in 2020, as detailed below.

**Statutory Duty 1:** Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

### ➤ **Accomplishment 1: Continued fostering and nurturing relationships with all Region VI public safety and private sector partners which have been integral during disasters**

In 2020, The Region VI RECCWG members assessed the survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of emergency communications systems while participating in multiple coordination efforts. Such as, teleconferences, a virtual plenary, and many disaster coordination meetings for the purpose of exchanging information and best practices that led to successful coordination of real-life incident response and recovery operations. Especially during this unprecedented year with the COVID-19 pandemic, preexisting relationships among members are a trusted asset during response and recovery operations. For example, when Louisiana and Texas suffered extensive damage and flooding following Hurricane Laura, Delta, and Zeta, RECCWG members from neighboring states

and regional partners supplied needed resources and personnel rapidly and effectively because of partnerships built during RECCWG activities.

### ➤ **Priority 1: Discuss and review regional emergency communication plans and update as needed**

After the 2020 disaster season, it has been evident that the COVID-19 “new normal” response environment has impacted regional and state emergency communications. Reviewing and updating communication plans to assess the survivability, sustainability, and interoperability gaps in state, local, territorial, and tribal planning efforts is a priority for Region VI in 2021.

### ➤ **Priority 2: Complete After-Action Reports (AAR) from CY 2020 Disaster Season**

Region VI states were particularly hard hit by severe storms and natural disasters and after this unprecedented year, the RECCWG is called upon to complete AAR’s from this year.

- The Gulf States are planning on completing various AAR’s based from CY 2020 hurricane and severe storm season.
- New Mexico is planning a real AAR tabletop event based on the Medio Fire that burned down 27 powerline poles across federal, tribal, and private land. The tabletop exercise is planning to cover the issues and lessons learned that they experienced during the response effort.

### ➤ **Priority 3: Formalize relationships with amateur radio organizations**

Amateur radio volunteers, whose willingness to assist during emergencies, and whose equipment has proven to be resilient when other forms of communication have failed, are often called upon in an ad hoc fashion during events. Region VI members, some of whom are Auxiliary



Communications (AuxComm) volunteers, have engaged their peers to promote additional RECCWG exercises and testing of auxiliary systems and emergency preparedness. Building upon Louisiana's first ever AuxComm Program Plan, RECCWG members will pursue a regionwide standard for AuxComm groups in state and local governments. The RECCWG will work to ensure that these valuable participants are incorporated into tests and exercises in their respective communities and strengthen the fabric of emergency communications planning within their jurisdictions.

**Statutory Duty 2:**

Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Coordinated multi-agency emergency communication networks during natural disasters**

The Gulf States were particularly hard hit by storms and hurricanes during 2020. The RECCWG evaluated the response to these events and identified region-specific initiatives to help further enhance coordination efforts in the future. During Hurricane Laura, Delta, and Zeta in 2020 RECCWG members, through their individual state emergency management offices, came together to assist the affected states. All states in Region VI offered support and mutual aid to their RECCWG partners. Discussion at the RECCWG paved the way for future collaborative processes for resource authorization and coordination between the region's states and federal responders. For example, Region VI organized state, federal and industry coordination calls that regularly occurred for multiple disaster response efforts. The close coordination

between Region VI states, private industry partners, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA) Emergency Communications Division (ECD) and FEMA were vital during this unparalleled year. RECCWG partners created general messaging to be distributed to the public to educate on debris removal, communication line identification, and no cut guidance that was vital during the restoration effort in Louisiana and Texas following Hurricane Laura.

➤ **Priority 4: Plan and participate in a multi-region plenary meeting and exercise in 2021**

The RECCWG leaned forward with its counterparts in the other FEMA Regions to plan a multi-regional plenary and communications exercise, which was scheduled for April 2020, but like many of the year's important events, it was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. Their goal was to expand engagement beyond the region, learn and share best practices, and build relationships with other states, regions, and tribal nations. The RECCWG continues to pursue this objective, to convene representatives from several agencies and disciplines that support public safety and hold a multi-region plenary that promotes professional networking, hosts presentations on contemporary issues, and exercises their communications platforms and proficiency.

**Statutory Duty 3:**

Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Revitalized relationships with federal/private partners and identified future priorities for natural disasters**

The Region VI RECCWG has expanded its participation and partnerships to include representatives from the telecommunications industry. These partnerships have improved trust and dialog with vendors and improved situational awareness of commercial system loads and outages during major events.

Federal and Industry representatives provided regular briefings on response capabilities they use to restore systems during disasters. The increased cooperation between the Region VI RECCWG and the federal and private partners has improved member awareness of communication capabilities, alternatives and provided a substantial increase in information

sharing on communications outages, enabling ESF-2 RECCWG partners to make informed decisions based on near real-time information. For example, after experiencing the severity of recent disasters in the region the RECCWG focused on involvement by the whole community. During Hurricane Laura private industry partners deployed airborne assets for the first time for response operations in Louisiana. The RECCWG quickly realized the value in the working relationships with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) because of the swift response retrieving a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) waiver without delays for the industry partners to utilize for the purpose of the airborne platform to support emergency communications.

➤ **Accomplishment 4: Coordination with election and polling facilities during disaster response**

The RECCWG strengthened their relationship with its private industry partners and were able to address emergency response gaps while working to restore power and communications throughout the region during the multiple disaster responses this year. Specifically, the Region VI RECCWG gathered election and polling facility locations from affected states during Hurricane Zeta. Through dedicated meetings, the RECCWG provided vital situational awareness information to communications partners that resulted in coverage testing and ensuring back up power at these locations. The communications partners utilized the RECCWG and prioritized certain facilities discussed during the coordination calls essential for restoration.

➤ **Accomplishment 5: Created and utilized virtual platforms to coordinate emergency communications during pandemic and disaster response efforts**

FEMA Region VI increased situational awareness resulting from the use of regularly scheduled teleconferences and information sharing via RECCWG ESF-2 coordination calls which resulted in rapid identification of requirements and suitable resources to fill temporary capabilities in incident areas until restoration efforts could be executed. Additionally, FEMA Region VI created an Adobe Connect page for the RECCWG to facilitate information sharing and resource management during the COVID-19 “new normal” environment. RECCWG members regularly discussed utilizing this page for updated information on COVID-19 documentation, guidelines,



etc. This practice has become so effective that individual states in the region are using the virtual dashboard platform process for state-level incidents as well. For example, the state of Louisiana is collaborating with Louisiana State University (LSU) to create an ArcGIS driven dashboard providing real time updates on response and recovery efforts. This has expanded regionally to include work with Iowa and Minnesota to merge dashboard capabilities. The RECCWG is also providing virtual opportunities for state, local, and tribal communications personnel to continue planning to offer training sessions during the COVID-19 environment. The close coordination and knowledge of the RECCWG's virtual applications and their capabilities once again highlight the value of pre-incident engagement and usage of these applications to provide disaster support.

➤ **Priority 5: Develop Region VI's established virtual communications platform for RECCWG members, private industry, federal, and Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster (VOAD) partners to share emergency communications news and activities in the region**

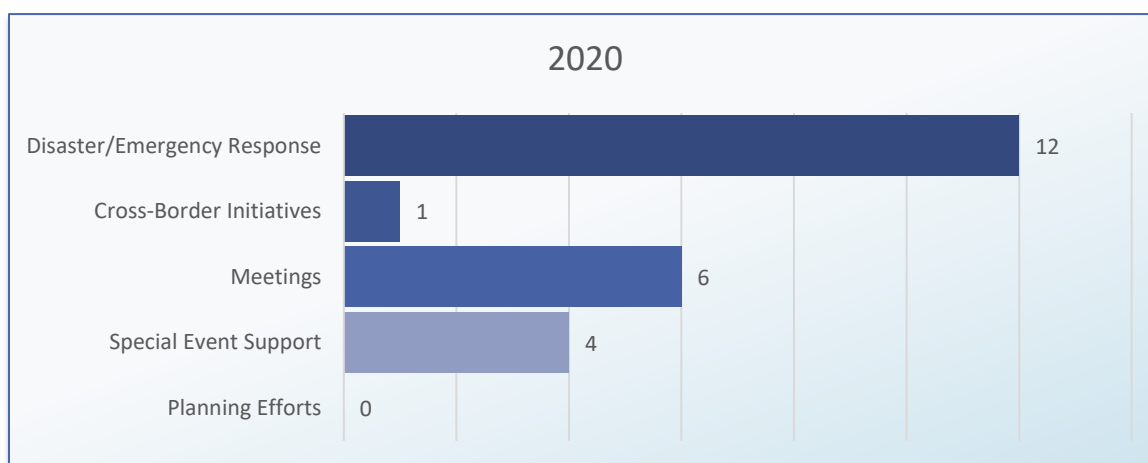
With limited federal funding for Whole Community engagement, the Region VI RECCWG is working to connect members by developing a portal where training schedules, communications exercises, real-world response data, federal guidance, and opportunities for multi-jurisdictional engagement can be propagated among emergency communications professionals. The platform will host RECCWG calendars, documents, links, discussion boards, and a collaboration space where public safety representatives can share incident information for operational awareness to communicate with their counterparts regionally and nationwide.

➤ **Priority 6: Increase RECCWG membership in these sectors: Tribal and energy sector partners**

Region VI is home to 44 federally recognized tribes. The capabilities of tribal emergency managers, law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical services personnel to communicate on tribal lands and with surrounding jurisdictions should be as boundless as the disasters inherent in the region. Additionally, after this year's disaster season Region VI's RECCWG recognized the importance of telecommunications and power provider partnerships during the restoration efforts. By working to identify potential candidates for memberships within their respective states, RECCWG members will continue their Tribal engagement efforts in 2021 through inclusion in FNARS testing, exercises, and RECCWG membership to extend RECCWG resources and gain representation by the Region's tribal nations, and energy sector partners.

### **CY 2020 REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION ACTIVITIES**

Partners in every Region VI state enhanced their emergency communications through their efforts during this year. COVID-19 reshaped the way business was conducted and changed the focus of many conversations around public safety and emergency communications. The Pandemic caused the cancellation of many large-scale events, exercises, conferences, and cross-state and cross-regional events. Nevertheless, RECCWG members adapted to the new normal and continued to improve their communications systems, collective knowledge base, and peer networks across the country. **Figure 2** provides a summary of these events and efforts in Region VI that were sponsored by the RECCWG or its members.



**Figure 2: 2020 Regional Events**

**Table 2** lists incident responses, planning activities, trainings, exercises, briefings, coordination efforts, and other events in Region VII where awareness, participation, and information sharing were coordinated by RECCWG members.

**Table 2: Regional Coordinating Activities**

REGION VI		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
Emergency Responses and Disaster Declarations	01/20/2020	Arkansas COVID-19 (EM-3461-AR); Arkansas COVID-19 PANDEMIC (DR-4518-AR)
	01/20/2020	Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana COVID-19 (EM-3522-LA); Louisiana COVID-19 (EM-3459-LA); Louisiana COVID-19 PANDEMIC (DR-4484-LA)
	01/20/2020	New Mexico Taos Pueblo COVID-19 (EM-3510-NM); New Mexico Pueblo of Picuris COVID-19 (EM-3500-NM); New Mexico Pueblo of Acoma COVID-19 (EM-3496-NM); New Mexico Sandia COVID-19 (EM-3520-NM); New Mexico Santa Clara Pueblo COVID-19 (EM-3485-NM); New Mexico COVID-19 (EM-3460-NM), (EM-3519-NM), (EM-3521-NM); New Mexico COVID-19 PANDEMIC (DR-4529-NM)
	01/20/2020	Oklahoma COVID-19 (EM-3517-OK), (EM-3462-OK); Oklahoma COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4530-OK); Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma COVID-19 (EM-3505-OK); Caddo Nation of Oklahoma COVID-19 (EM-3511-OK); Oklahoma Cherokee Nation COVID-19 (EM-3499-OK); Oklahoma The Osage Nation COVID-19 (EM-3514-OK); Oklahoma Muscogee (Creek) Nation COVID-19 (EM-3502-OK); Oklahoma Quapaw Nation COVID-19 (EM-3487-OK); Oklahoma The Chickasaw Nation COVID-19 (EM-3518-OK); Oklahoma Choctaw Nation COVID-19 (EM-3586-OK), (EM-3486-OK); Oklahoma Potawatomi Nation COVID-19; Oklahoma Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma COVID-19
	01/20/2020	Texas COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4485-TX); Texas COVID-19 (EM-3458-TX); Texas Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas COVID-19 (EM-3501-TX)

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

REGION VI		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
	03/7/2020	Oklahoma 412 Fire Complex (FM-5306-OK)
	03/28/2020	Arkansas Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Straight-line Winds (DR-4544-AR)
	04/12/2020	Arkansas Severe Storms and Straight-line winds (DR-4556-AR)
	06/05/2020	Louisiana Tropical Storm Cristobal (EM-3527-LA)
	07/25/2020	Texas Hurricane Hanna (EM-3530-TX)
	08/17/2020	New Mexico Medio Fire
	08/22/2020	Louisiana Tropical Storms Laura and Marco (EM-3538-LA)
	08/23/2020	Texas Tropical Storms Marco and Laura (EM-3540-TX)
	08/26/2020	Arkansas Hurricane Laura (EM-3541-AR)
	08/27/2020	Louisiana Hurricane Laura (DR-4559-LA)
	09/13/2020	Louisiana Hurricane Sally (EM-3543-LA)
	10/06/2020	Louisiana Hurricane Delta (EM-3547-LA), (DR-4570-LA)
	10/26/2020	Louisiana Tropical Storm Zeta (EM-3549-LA)
Cross-Border Initiatives	12/07/2020	Virtual Plenary Session
Teleconferences and Meetings (incl. virtual)	02/06/2020, 04/02/2020 (Cancelled), 06/04/2020, 08/06/2020, 12/03/2020, 12/07/2020	Four RECCWG Bi-Monthly Teleconference were discussions and briefings are held regarding developments, challenges, concerns and efforts in Emergency Management Communications in Region VI states. Outcomes: Members began planning for the 2020 year and shared resources on communication best practices and provided situational awareness on communication concerns.
	10/20-21/2020	Region VI Virtual Risk Conference on Emerging Communications Technology during Emergency Disasters
Communications Planning Efforts	TBD	Texas Coastal Band Regional Exercise
Special Events	05/06/2020	Global 5G Protest
	06/19/2020	Oklahoma Presidential Visit to Tulsa, OK
	09/01-11/01/2020	Election 2020: Early Voting
	11/03/2020	Election Day

## REGION 7

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**FEMA**

March 2, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR:     Damon Penn  
                            Assistant Administrator  
                            Response Directorate

FROM:                   Kathy Fields  
                            Acting Regional Administrator

SUBJECT:                FEMA Region 7 Regional Emergency Communications  
                            Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by 6 U.S.C. § 575, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region 7 RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined RECCWG Annual Report for calendar year (CY) 2020, which will be distributed to the Director of the Emergency Communications Division (ECD) of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.
- Coordinate the establishment of federal, state, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region 7 RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for federal, state, local, and tribal agencies, and the Whole Community to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the region as shown through activities in this report. The Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole of Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Sincerely,

**KATHY D  
FIELDS** Digitally signed by  
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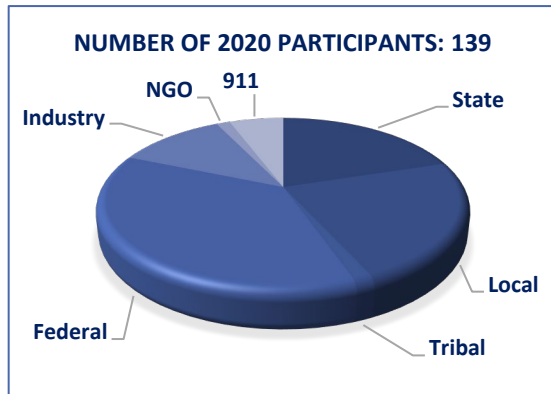
Kathy D. Fields  
Regional Administrator, Region VII (Acting)  
Federal Emergency Management Agency

Enclosed: Region 7 CY 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

## REGION 7 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP

### CY 2020 OVERVIEW

The Region 7 Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) includes public, private, and Whole Community stakeholders, shown in **Figure 1**, operating within Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. In 2020, the RECCWG continued to diversify its membership



*Figure 1: 2020 RECCWG Participation*

base and welcome new participants from local, state, and federal levels of government, as well as private sector entities from across the first responder and telecommunications industries. The RECCWG made significant progress in interoperability coordination during an active year for emergencies that included the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, severe storms, tornadoes, flooding, and the devastating Midwest derecho. The relationships made and information gathered from RECCWG meetings were used to ensure state and local communications systems were updated and

prepared not only for day-to-day communications but also for communications-intensive disaster operations.

In addition, the RECCWG held six teleconferences in calendar year (CY) 2020, and a virtual plenary session with more than 70 participants and presenters from several public safety sectors and emergency management disciplines. These meetings were leveraged to discuss lessons learned from recent emergencies in the region, build partnerships across states, share best practices, and plan for regional and statewide exercises and special events. Looking toward CY 2021, the RECCWG will continue its work to improve emergency communications capabilities and enhance coordination in the region.

States and Tribal Nations in Region 7 received a total of 20 disaster declarations in 2020.

*Although a planned 5-region plenary was cancelled due to pandemic response efforts, the RECCWG maintained close communication with its partners and took advantage of virtual platforms to welcome additional participants from multiple regions.*

For additional information regarding the Region 7 RECCWG, please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region 7 Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), Michael Foster, at [Michael.Foster@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Michael.Foster@fema.dhs.gov) or 816-283-7090. **Table 1** lists the CY 2020 members and their roles.



## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

*Table 1: RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2020*

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
<b>RECCWG LEADERSHIP</b>	
Paul Taylor	RECCWG Chair, FEMA Region 7 Administrator
Matthew May	RECCWG Co-Chair, Winnebago Nebraska Emergency Management Agency
Michael Foster	FEMA Region 7 Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC)
<b>IOWA (IA) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Tracey Bearden	Polk County EMA, 911 Coordinator
Melvina “Mel” Burton	Ringgold County Emergency Management & 911 Coordinator
Paul Cowley	Emergency Coordinator, District 1 ARES, Iowa
Dave Donovan	Scott County, EMA Director
Lorie Glover	Black Hawk County Emergency Management Agency (EMA), Coordinator
John Hawkinson	U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Flotilla 33-06 (Iowa)
Chris Maiers	Iowa Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), IDPS
Ben Montour	Civil Air Patrol, Iowa Wing, Assistant Communications Director
Keith Morgan	Story County EMA, Coordinator
Thomas Reis	ISICSB, Iowa RACES Officer
Marty Smith	Iowa Department of Health, Health Alert Network Program Coordinator
Curtis “Wally” Walser	Cedar Rapids Fire Department USAR Task Force 1, Manager
Dave Wilson	Johnson County EMA, Coordinator
<b>KANSAS (KS) REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Marie Athearn	Johnson County Emergency Management and Communications—Operations and Communications Services, Deputy Director
Doug Barlet	Linn County, Emergency Management Coordinator
Jason Bryant	Kansas Adjutant General’s Department—Kansas Office of Emergency Communications (KOEK), SWIC
Nelson E. Casteel	KCEM Operations Section Chief Ambulance Compliance Officer Shawnee County Emergency Management
Adam Chriss	Kansas Division of Emergency Management
Patrick Collins	Riley County
Scott Ekberg	KOEK, State 911 Liaison
Jimmy (JL) Ellis	Kansas Division of Emergency Management
Elora Forshee	Sedgwick County Emergency Communications, Director
Stephanie Goodman	Kansas Division of Emergency Management, Watch Officer
Stephen Harsha	Kansas Division of Emergency Management, Public Assistance
Mark Lahan	Kansas Wing Civil Air Patrol
Jim Leftwich	Kansas Adjutant General’s Department—KDEM, South Central Regional Coordinator
David Marshall	Kansas Criminal Justice Information Systems Committee, Director
Dustin Nichols	Shawnee County EMA, Director
Randy Roberts	Douglas County Sheriff’s Office—Emergency Communications (911), Director
John Tracy	Sumner County 911

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
Jeffrey Welshans	Kansas Adjutant General's Department—KDEM, Kansas City Metro/NE Regional Coordinator Missouri
MISSOURI (MO) REPRESENTATIVES	
Jonathan Ayres	Springfield-Greene County Office of Emergency Management (OEM), Network Systems Administrator
David Bagge	Missouri State EMA, Planner
Lori Bielawski	Missouri State Highway Patrol, Chief Operator
Dan Busse	Communications Specialist, Eureka Fire Protection District
Greg Carrell	Missouri Division of Fire, Acting State Fire Marshal
Corey Chaney	Missouri State Highway Patrol—Communications Division, Assistant Director
Bryan Courtney	Department of Public Safety—Missouri Interoperability Center, Director/SWIC
Mark Diedrich	Saint Louis County OEM, Director
John Elmore	Greene County EMA
Randy Foster	Green County Sheriff's Office
Matt Gabrian	St. Louis County Police Department, Office of Emergency Management, Communications Coordinator
Mike Hall	Marion County 911
Tara Hammer	Mercy Emergency Medical Services
Tom Hurley	Boone County OEM, Deputy Director
Brian Marler	St. Louis Area Regional Response System (STARRS)
Joe Moore	Missouri DOT, Traffic Communications Specialist
Phillip Pitts	Lebanon Rural Fire Protection District, Fire Chief
Corey Sloan	NTA EMS
David Sterman	Department of Public Safety—Missouri Interoperability Center, MOSWIN Radio Technician
Roger Strobe	Department of Public Safety—Missouri Interoperability Center, Deputy Director
Daniel Stumpf	St. Louis County Police Department
Michael Thayer	Missouri State EMA, Communications Officer
Eric Winebrenner	Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), Public Safety Director
Brad Ziegler	Eureka Fire Protection District
NEBRASKA (NE) REPRESENTATIVES	
James Davidsaver	Lincoln/Lancaster County EMA, Director
Troy Harris	Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Radio Communications Systems Coordinator
Mike Jeffries	OCIO-Public Safety Communications, IT Manager
Paul Johnson	Douglas County EMA, Director
Pam Kemper	Office of Chief Information Officer, Systems Coordinator for Nebraska Statewide Radio System
Sue Krogman	SWIC
Lynn Marshall	Sarpy County EMA, Director
Neil Miller	Buffalo County Sheriff's Office, Sheriff
Brandon Myers	Lincoln County EMA, Director

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
Tim Newman	Scottsbluff County EMA, Director
Dave Sankey	Nebraska Public Service Commission—Next Generation 911 (NG911), Director
Jayne Scofield	IT Administrator, State of Nebraska
Whitney Shipley	Douglas County EMA
David Sleeter	Douglas County Emergency Communications Center
Ed Toner	FirstNet SPOC
Robert Tubbs	Buffalo County 911, Lieutenant
Bob Wilhelm	OCIO, SLIGP Project Manager
TRIBAL REPRESENTATIVES	
Rhiannon Clausen	Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, Deputy Director of Tribal Affairs
MILITARY PARTNERS	
Rachel Albee	132D Wing Civil Engineering Squadron, Emergency Manager
Jan Behn	NENG, NE FHQ, J3
Dominik Chase	NE CERFP, OPS NCO
Marie Dautenhahn	MO J3 Joint Operations Center (JOC)
Skylar Dickey	KSANG 190th Air Refueling Wing, Emergency Manager
Ingrid Hawkins	MO ARNG
Robert Hedgepeth	IA ARNG, IAANG JPG
Kathleen Herrell	MOARNG, Missouri Cyber Team, Cyber Operations Chief
Josh Heward	IA ARNG, 132 Civil Engineering Squadron
Darin Huss	NE ARNG G3 Liaison
Scott Horne	KSANG 190TH Air Refueling, Emergency Manager
Paul Leoni	MO ARNG Region 7 HRF, OPS Officer
SSG Eric Mercer	MO ARNG
Thomas Rodrigo	NE ARNG, NE JISSC
Charles Schlieder	MOARNG, MOARNG TACOM
Kevin Vitale	MO ARNG, MO HRF J6
Scott Wolf	MO ARNG, HRF S6/KM Officer
FEDERAL PARTNERS	
David Adsit	FEMA Spectrum Manager
Victor Camacho	Denton MERS Telecom Manager
Mike Eaton	Denton MERS
Paul English	NETCOM-MARS, Program Manager
Scott Hansen	National RECCWG Coordinator
Larry Harkleroad	DEC Group Supervisor, FEMA
Scott Jackson	National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
Mark Jensen	NORAD- USNORTHCOM
Glen Johnson	Denton MERS- RF
Thomas Kai	USCG, C4IT Branch Chief, District 8

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
Jessica Kaputa	CISA-ECD
James Lundsted	Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Emergency Communications Division (ECD)
Eric Main	DEC Group Supervisor, FEMA
Brant Mitchell	NCC-MARC
Joe Husnay	Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Technical Operations
John McClain	CISA-NCC
Charles McCobb	Director, Continuity Communications Division, NCP, FEMA
Dale Moushon	DHS, Priority Telecommunications Services Area Representative (PAR)
Juan Silva	FCC
Nikki Shears	FCC (Denver)
Tim Perrier	FCC
David Teska	DHS, Regional Sector Outreach Coordinator (RSOC) Region 7
David Villyard	DHS, NCC NCCIC, Deputy Director
Dale Werle	FBI
Al Kenyon	FEMA IPAWS PMO
Kyle Richardson	FirstNet
Randy Kerr	FirstNet
Billy Freeman	FirstNet
Tracey Murdock	FirstNet
PRIVATE INDUSTRY PARTNERS	
Nieama Booker	Verizon, Client Partner
Rodney Cooper	T-Mobile
Beth Clay	Mutualink
John Deering	Plum Case, Director of IT
Robert Desiato	AT&T, NSEP Manager
Stephen Devine	AT&T, FirstNet Program Assistant Director
Jay English	APCO
David Haddad	T-Mobile
Aaron Hughes	Sprint, Public Sector Account Manager
John Larregui	Verizon Enterprise Solutions
Lee Martin	JPS Interop Solutions
Scott Gray	JPS Interop Solutions
Tony Patino	T-Mobile
Tim Russ	Harris Corp
Mark Anderko	Mutualink
Kevin Thompson	Mutualink, VP of Government Sales

## CY 2020 RECCWG ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND 2021 PRIORITIES

As evidenced through the year's events and acknowledged by federal, state, tribal, and municipal officials at all levels of government, telecommunications professionals, and public safety servants across the country, the Region 7 RECCWG has become both an essential body of knowledge and a platform for action. The accomplishments listed below illustrate a cross-section of the many strides the RECCWG has made in 2020 toward fulfilling its duties as prescribed by the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) and the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP). The RECCWG's exemplary achievements in 2020 have given way to new sets of challenges, and many of its long-term objectives are still underway. Listed along with their accomplishments below are the RECCWG's top priorities for CY 2021.

**Statutory Duty 1:** Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

➤ **Accomplishment 1: Leveraged virtual platforms to assess communications posture during pandemic and disaster responses**

The RECCWG swiftly met unexpected COVID-19 measures by adapting to the "new normal" with increased virtual engagement. Members from all four states in Region 7 coordinated with federal Emergency Support Function #2 (ESF-2) partners during targeted meetings to assess the regional status of communications, such as statewide land-mobile radio systems, 911 system loads and telecommunicator staff health and well-being, and impending communications needs for rapid buildouts of alternate care facilities and COVID-19 testing sites.

Response efforts in many areas were redoubled to meet the region's needs during several natural disasters, which included a devastating derecho, flooding, and severe storms in every

Region 7 state. RECCWG members continued to volunteer their time and expertise to attend bi-monthly meetings, share their lessons learned, and gain national perspective to help their respective agencies move forward during unprecedented times.

➤ **Priority 1: Coordinate with other regions on cross-border and national level preparedness efforts**

Exercises and training events in 2021 will test readiness and communications capabilities of public safety and agencies across the country. Region 7 RECCWG members will lean forward to support these events to better prepare their agencies and the citizens they are charged with protecting against disasters in the region. The RECCWG and its members' agencies continue to encourage participation in large-scale exercises, whether they be virtual or physical, and will make efforts to participate or hold concurrent simulations to assess and bolster the collective readiness posture within the region. Virtual events will include "tabletop" exercises that allow RECCWG partners to gather information on regional communications resources, such as AuxComm volunteers and equipment, that can be called upon during emergencies.

The RECCWG will continue using virtual meeting platforms such as Adobe Connect and Zoom as outreach and information sharing tools in support of its members' state, local, and tribal agencies.

**Statutory Duty 2:**

Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Coordinated with private industry and federal partners to enhance first responder communication during pandemic and disaster responses**

RECCWG members' ability to swiftly marshal resources from multiple sectors relies in part on pre-established relationships with federal partners, such as the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet); as well as telecommunications industry partners, many of whom have significant resources, such as emergency response teams and deployable equipment, that can be called upon during disasters.

Throughout the year, RECCWG members interacted with these partners, who provided emergency points of contact, briefings and updates on network restoration, and firsthand information

on resources available to response agencies. The partnerships created by the RECCWG have paid dividends that have proven to be invaluable during disaster response and recovery. For example, after the derecho that spawned tornadoes across parts of Iowa, federal partners quickly activated the Disaster Information Reporting System (DIRS), which allowed the FCC to begin gathering outage information from telecommunications carriers and provide it to the state. This helped the state make informed decisions on where to focus restoration efforts. Industry partners quickly deployed resources to restore networks that had been disabled by the storms. By working side-by-side with public safety agencies, federal and industry partners restored telecommunications services expeditiously. During the October virtual RECCWG plenary, they shared their unique perspectives and lessons learned from this event, allowing other states to learn more about how federal and commercial services can be leveraged during disasters.

➤ **Priority 2: Develop multi-state communications events**

With consecutive successes in its 2018 and 2019 joint RECCWG plenaries, the Region 7 RECCWG has proven to be a pioneer in its capacity to convene representatives from multiple states, regions, agencies, and disciplines, to participate in professional networking, topical presentations, and communications exercises. In 2019 and 2020, Region 7 RECCWG members carried out a multi-tiered planning effort for a joint plenary and communications exercise with Regions 3, 4, 5, and 6 that was to be held in April 2020, but was cancelled due to COVID-19. The RECCWG is still hopeful to hold this event when pandemic conditions improve, but in the interim will assess virtual, multi-regional training options for emergency response areas of focus, such as Community Lifelines.

**Statutory Duty 3:**

Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Continued to develop regional support services through sub-working group virtual meetings**

RECCWG sub-working groups have been instrumental in examining contemporary issues that have far-reaching implications for emergency communications across Region 7 and beyond. For example, the RECCWG's Governance and Policy sub-working group reported to the RECCWG on issues such as the impending government auction of T-band spectrum currently used by public safety agencies, FirstNet interoperability with other networks, and new 911 indoor location accuracy mandates. Additionally, the Training and Exercise sub-working group brings firsthand information to the RECCWG regarding upcoming cross-state and cross-regional events. During its 2020 meetings, the group set ambitious goals, such as developing a regional communication training catalog and planning a tabletop communications exercise

which will be held during the RECCWG's 2021 fall plenary. Finally, the AuxComm sub-working group is developing a regional AuxComm handbook with operational procedures and points of contact who can be called upon when traditional communications fail. These committees, composed of state, tribal, local, federal, and private industry members, held regular meetings in 2020. They leveraged the expertise of members to bring focused information to the Region 7 RECCWG and the greater body of public safety communicators across the country.

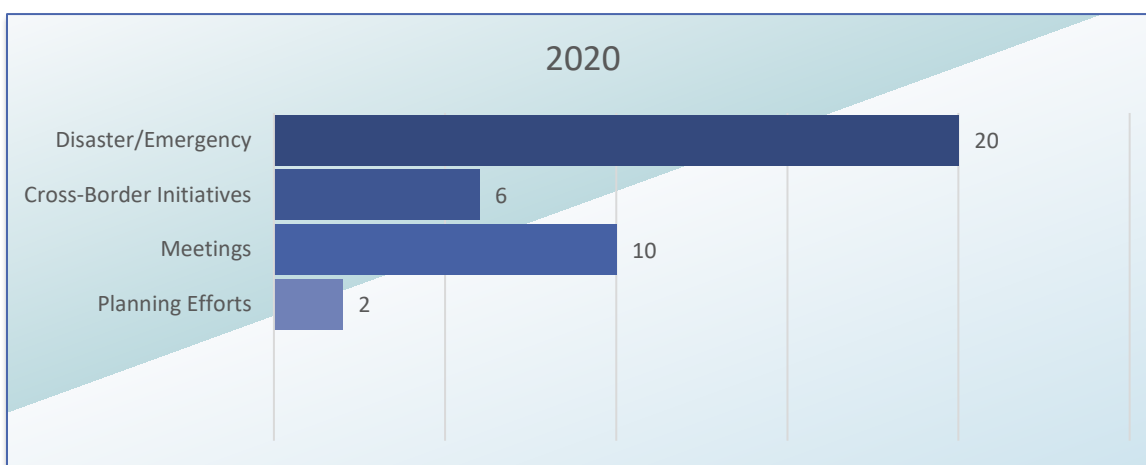
➤ **Priority 3: Coordinate the establishment of regional interoperability networks**

During emergency responses, traditional modes of interoperability between agencies, which often occur over local LMR and commercial cellular networks, may be destroyed or severely degraded. RECCWG members are considering several interoperability solutions, including an LMR network that would provide repeater coverage between state emergency operations centers and major metropolitan areas in Region 7. The network would use Federal Incident Response and regional operational frequencies and be connected by a comparator housed in Kansas City, Missouri. Internet Protocol (IP) links will connect the repeaters using Radio IP Communications Modules (RIC-M), which were designed for this type of application by DHS Science and Technology Directorate. During the anticipated three-year development of this network, RECCWG members support an interim solution to install an interoperable, regionwide, mobile satellite radio (MSAT) network that will provide critical links for communication between federal, state, and metropolitan emergency management agencies. Development of the regional LMR and MSAT interoperability networks will be dependent on the support, dedication, and collective expertise shared through the Region 7 RECCWG. The RECCWG plans to hold a full discussion based on regional disaster scenarios during its fall plenary, whereby each participating entity can brief the group on their projected response actions and available resources.



## CY 2020 REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

Partners in every Region 7 state enhanced emergency communications through their efforts during an unprecedented year. COVID-19 reshaped the way business was conducted and changed the focus of many conversations around public safety and emergency communications. The pandemic caused the cancellation of many large-scale events, exercises, conferences, and cross-state and cross-regional events. Nevertheless, RECCWG members adapted to the new normal and continued to improve their communications systems, collective knowledge base, and peer networks across the country. **Figure 2** provides a summary of 2020 events and efforts in Region 7 that were sponsored by the RECCWG or its members.



*Figure 2: 2020 Regional Events*

**Table 2** lists incident responses, planning activities, trainings, exercises, briefings, coordination efforts, and other events in Region 7 where awareness, participation, and information sharing were coordinated by RECCWG members.

*Table 2: Regional Event Details*

REGION 7		
TYPE	DATE(S)	DESCRIPTION
Disaster Declarations and Emergency Responses	1/20/2020	Iowa COVID-19 (EM-3480-IA)
	1/20/2020	Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa COVID-19 (EM-3524-IA)
	1/20/2020	Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska COVID-19 (EM-3491-KS)
	1/20/2020	Kickapoo Tribe COVID-19 (EM-3492-KS)
	1/20/2020	Kansas COVID-19 (EM-3481-KS)
	1/20/2020	Kansas COVID-19 (EM-3490-KS)
	1/20/2020	Kansas COVID-19 PANDEMIC (DR-4504-KS)
	1/20/2020	Missouri COVID-19 (EM-3482-MO)
	1/20/2020	Missouri COVID-19 PANDEMIC (DR-4490-MO)
	1/20/2020	Winnebago Tribe COVID-19 (EM-3489-NE)
	1/20/2020	Omaha Tribe of Nebraska COVID-19 (EM-3493-NE)

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

REGION 7		
TYPE	DATE(S)	DESCRIPTION
	1/20/2020	Nebraska COVID-19 (EM-3483-NE)
	1/20/2020	Santee Sioux Nation COVID-19 (EM-3523-NE)
	1/20/2020	Nebraska COVID-19 (EM-3488-NE)
	1/20/2020	Nebraska COVID-19 PANDEMIC (DR-4521-NE)
	3/17/2020	Iowa COVID-19 PANDEMIC (DR-4483-IA)
	5/3/2020	Missouri SEVERE STORMS, TORNADOES, STRAIGHT-LINE WINDS, AND FLOODING (DR-4552-MO)
	8/10/2020	Iowa SEVERE STORMS (DR-4557-IA)
	8/10/2020	Sac & Fox Tribe of The Mississippi of Iowa DERECHO MIDWEST
	8/10/2020	Sac & Fox Tribe of The Mississippi of Iowa DERECHO MIDWEST
Cross-Border Initiatives	9/22/2020	RECCWG Training & Exercise sub-working group virtual meeting. Federal, state, local members, and private industry partners discussed goals and objectives, HSIN website, and member updates
	9/23/2020	RECCWG AuxComm sub-working group virtual meeting. Federal, state, local members, and private industry partners discussed sub-working group goals, identifying resources, developing standards, AuxComm courses, FirstNet access for ARRL-trained personnel, and 60-meter band usage.
	9/24/2020	RECCWG Governance & Policy sub-working group virtual meeting. Federal, state, local members, private industry partners discussed NG911 funding bill, FirstNet interoperability, repeal of T-Band spectrum auction, 911 indoor location accuracy, 911 fee diversion, and 911/Wi-Fi public notice.
	10/20/2020 – 10/21/2020	RECCWG Virtual Plenary. State, tribal, and local members, private industry and federal partners discussed federal updates, lessons learned from 2020 hurricanes, RECCWG HSIN site, FirstNet Central, Mutualink and other private industry briefings, and long-term RECCWG objectives
	12/15/2020	AuxComm sub-working group virtual meeting. Federal, state, local members, and private industry partners discussed outreach initiatives, establishing a POC directory, alternate communications networks, goals and milestones
	12/16/2020	Training and Exercise sub-working group virtual meeting. Federal, state, local members, and private industry partners discussed goals and milestones, development of tabletop and AuxComm exercises
Teleconferences and Meetings (incl. virtual)	Multiple dates	Four virtual RECCWG meetings, including an October plenary attended by multiple state and regional representatives. Discussions included: federal and state updates, private industry reports, FirstNet updates, IPAWS briefing, regional announcements, 2020 hurricane and COVID-19 lessons learned, and multi-region plenary planning
	Multiple dates	Two ESF-2 teleconferences provided a forum for members to interact with federal entities as the pandemic response began to

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

REGION 7		
TYPE	DATE(S)	DESCRIPTION
		materialize. It also allowed states to report on the status of their 911 and statewide radio systems, PPE distribution, travel restrictions, and communications needs for alternate care facility and COVID-19 testing site construction.
Communications Planning Efforts	Multiple dates	Planning for a 3-day plenary with participants from regions III, IV, V, VI, and 7 conducted by RECCWG members included several coordination teleconferences, a site visit, travel and lodging arrangements, stakeholder outreach, and agenda development. This event was cancelled due to COVID-19 but will be held in 2022 if pandemic conditions permit.
	2020 (ongoing)	Continued developing Region 7 HSIN page as a secure repository for members and partners to share information cross-regionally, such as RECCWG announcements, contact lists, annual reports, best practice guides, and POC lists.

## REGION 8

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**FEMA**

DATE: March 19, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn  
Assistant Administrator  
Response Directorate

FROM: Nancy J. Dragani  
Acting Regional Administrator

**NANCY J  
DRAGANI**

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SUBJECT: FEMA Region 8 Regional Emergency Communications  
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

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The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region 8 RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined RECCWG Annual Report for calendar year (CY) 2020, which will be distributed to the Director of the Emergency Communications Division (ECD) of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

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- Coordinate the establishment of federal, state, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region 8 RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

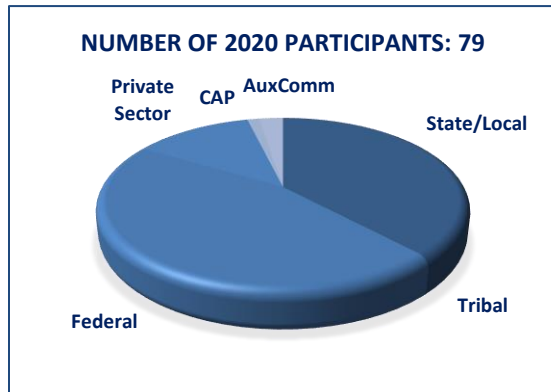
I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for federal, state, local, tribal agencies, and the Whole Community to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region as shown through activities in this report. The Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole of Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Enclosed: Region 8 CY 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

## REGION VIII EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP

### CY 2020 OVERVIEW

Composed of the States of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming, the Region VIII Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) worked diligently throughout 2020 alongside its federal and private sector partners, auxiliary



communications (AuxComm) volunteers, and a host of enthusiastic professionals who lent their time and expertise to advance communications interoperability across the region. RECCWG participation in 2020 is shown in **Figure 1**.

All Region VIII states received major disaster declarations for COVID-19, additionally, the

Wildland fires caused disaster declarations in four Region VIII states in 2020.

*Figure 1: 2020 RECCWG Participation*

Oglala Sioux Tribe, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate and the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribes in South Dakota also had disaster declarations for COVID-19. Four of Region VIII's six states had wildland fires and Utah received a disaster declaration for an earthquake just west of Salt Lake City. In addition to natural disasters, RECCWG members responded to and reported on numerous incidents and planned events that required interoperability among field personnel, command centers, volunteer organizations, and local agencies. The RECCWG made significant progress in interoperability coordination during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic along with wildfires, severe storms, flooding, and earthquakes.

In addition, the RECCWG held three teleconferences in 2020, and a virtual two-day plenary session with more than 50 participants and presenters from several public safety sectors and emergency management disciplines. These interactions were leveraged to discuss lessons learned from recent emergencies in the region, build partnerships across states, share best practices, and plan for regional and statewide exercises along with other events. Highlights of the RECCWG's accomplishments in 2020 are documented in this report and serve as examples of the advancements made within Region VIII and through the RECCWG program nationally. Similarly, priorities for 2021 have been set to leverage the extensive professional experience, comprehensive conversations, research, and close collaboration among member agencies within the region.

*The RECCWG maintained close communication with its partners and took advantage of virtual platforms to improve situational awareness during the multiple disasters in 2020.*



## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

For additional information regarding the Region VIII RECCWG, please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region VIII Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), Patricia Sarin, at [patricia.sarin@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:patricia.sarin@fema.dhs.gov) or 303-235-4649.

**Table 1: RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2020**

NAME	ROLE OR AGENCY
RECCWG LEADERSHIP	
Lee DePalo	RECCWG Chair, FEMA Region VIII Administrator
Nancy Dragani	Region VIII RECCWG Deputy Regional Administrator
Jeff Pierce	RECCWG Co-Chair, Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)/Engineering Administrator, South Dakota Bureau of Information and Telecommunications
Patricia Sarin	FEMA Region VIII RECC
COLORADO (CO) REPRESENTATIVES	
Emmitt Hurdelbrink	Colorado Department of Public Safety, Assistant Section Emergency Coordinator
Glen Klaich	SWIC, CO Office of Emergency Management
Jay Wilson	FEMA Liaison Officer, Colorado Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)
MONTANA (MT) REPRESENTATIVES	
Ed Tinsley	SWIC, Montana State Continuity and Emergency Management Office
NORTH DAKOTA (ND) REPRESENTATIVES	
Darin Anderson	SWIC /Public Safety Program Manager, ND IT
Dan Donlin	NDES Radio Director
Jason Horning	Program Manager, Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911), North Dakota Association of Counties (NDACo)
Karen Kempert	9-1-1 Coordinator/Emergency Manager, Cavalier County
Jennifer Moeller	Administrative Staff Officer 3, NDDDES
SOUTH DAKOTA (SD) REPRESENTATIVES	
Allan Miller	Planning Chief, S Dakota OEM
UTAH (UT) REPRESENTATIVES	
Richard Armstrong	Emergency Communications Services, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Welfare Services
Gordon Coles	SWIC, Utah Communications Authority (UCA)
Beth Todd	Fire Manager, Utah Valley Emergency Communication Center
Juan Villanueva	Communications Officer, Division of Emergency Management
Jerry Wellman	Civil Air Patrol, Utah Wing
WYOMING (WY) REPRESENTATIVES	
Russ Dalgarn	Converse County Emergency Manager
Jim Frank	Wyoming Office of Homeland Security
Mark Kelly	Wyoming Department of Transportation
Nathan Smolinsky	SWIC, Wyoming Department of Transportation Emergency Communications Program Manager
FEDERAL PARTNERS	
Tonya Aragon	FEMA Region VIII

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Chris Baker	FirstNet Senior Public Safety Advisor
Mark Beecoft	Denver MERS
Scott Carpenter	Regional Response & Preparedness Specialist, Western Region, NOAA/NWS
Dennis Fisher	Incident Support Branch Chief (ISB), FEMA Region VIII
Chris Foltz	NOAA, Emergency Response Specialist
Scott Hansen	Chief Communications Integration Branch (CIB), FEMA Disaster Emergency Communications Division National RECCWG Coordinator
Joe Husnay	Senior Adviser, FCC, Public Safety Homeland Security Bureau, Operations & Emergency Management Division
Scott Jackson	National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
Jeremy Johnson	CISA, Emergency Communications Division (ECD) /CISA
Kris Kerpa	FEMA Region 8 FIT, Montana
Nate Knapp	Region VIII Response Division Director
Mark McCallister	Liaison to NORAD & USNORTHCOM, CISA
Julie Malingowski	Meteorologist, National Weather Service Western Region
Kevin Moore	Operations Branch FEMA R8
Tracey Murdock	Region VIII Coordinator, First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet)
Steve Noel	Chief – West Sector /CISA
Daniel Roberts	Telecommunications Manager (RF), FEMA MERS Denver
Dorothy Savola	CISA Regional Outreach Coordinator
Nikki Shears	Senior Agent, Region III (Denver), Enforcement Bureau, Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
Brandon Smith	Telecommunications Specialist, Emergency Communications Division (ECD) /CISA
PRIVATE INDUSTRY PARTNERS	
Nieama Booker	Verizon Government Relations
Garrett Doyle	AT&T/FirstNet
Jared Hilzendeger	Colorado Verizon Response Team
Shannon Jenness	Verizon Government Accounts
Casey Muilenburg	Sprint Wireless

## **CY 2020 RECCWG ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND 2021 PRIORITIES**

The accomplishments below chronicle the achievements the Region VIII RECCWG accomplished to improve preparedness and emergency response communications capabilities in 2020.

**Statutory Duty 1:** Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

### ➤ **Accomplishment 1: Enhanced RECCWG and first responder communications during the wildfire season**

Region VIII states experience wildland fires every disaster season, however in 2020 four of the six states in Region VIII encountered the impacts that wildfires can have on public safety communications. The Region VIII RECCWG recognized the significance of the multi-jurisdictional response efforts, extensive coordination, and testing of interoperable communication systems across the region during the wildland fires. Subsequently, the RECCWG focused a large part of their two-day virtual plenary on the successes, challenges, and lessons learned during the wildfire season.

While RECCWG members have handled large scale disasters and numerous large wildfires in the past, they learned from firsthand accounts the dependencies and how complicated communications can be while the disaster is still active and moving somewhat unpredictively. The use of public safety Land Mobile Radio (LMR), satellite communications, major communications equipment, and coordination with the private sector brought to the forefront the complexity and cost of providing cutting edge communication in a complex and every changing environment where lives are at stake. As the RECCWG continues to meet in 2021 they will work to develop strategies to control the complex communications needs effectively and safely during a large and ongoing disaster. Additionally, they will develop contingency plans to provide alternate solutions to communications needs and determine best practices for the protection of communications assets in the region.

### ➤ **Accomplishment 2: Enhanced communications resiliency**

Wyoming worked with private vendors to establish secondary fuel allocations for their backup power on their sites. They also worked with public and private partners to install and share redundant backhaul on their critical sites. These best practice examples were shared with the other RECCWG members.

Providing redundancy for backup fuel sources helps ensure site integrity during power outages and leveraging the private sector to share WyoLink sites provides alternate backhaul that can be leveraged should the primary fail.

### ➤ **Priority 1: Review the communications impacts of wildland fires and long-term power outages and investigate mitigation strategies**

The large number of wildland fires throughout the west happening concurrently with repetitive hurricanes on the Gulf Coast stressed the caches of communications equipment for wildfires. During 2020, the RECCWG learned of the complex nature of the rapidly changing communications

requirements for wildland firefighting, which includes LMR, broadband, and satellite communications. Communications in wildland fire operations and other disasters depends heavily on electrical power, both commercial and generator based. The RECCWG will review wildfire communications requirements and communications dependence on commercial power to determine best practices to blend communications strategies and mitigate outages caused by power outages.

**Statutory Duty 2:**

Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Worked to improve emergency communication efforts during pandemic and disaster response**

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the entire United States and led a shift to the virtual environment when responding to disasters. The RECCWG teleconferences have promoted interoperability efforts. While continuing to discuss the interoperability issues relevant to the group, the RECCWG also discussed access control, travel restrictions, quarantine, and testing requirements, as well as best practices setting up alternate care facilities because of COVID-19. RECCWG partners established waivers that helped in getting staff into the states to do their work making the RECCWG a mechanism to support cross border response actions. In many Region VIII state's COVID-19 Alternate Care Sites (ACS) had many successes and many challenges with proper communications set up. A primary

example of flexibility in preparing for the challenges of the pandemic was displayed in Colorado. The state prepared for an alternate dispatch site to handle transports to and from the ACS, although they did not end up using the facility the coordination was seamless because of active RECCWG relationships.

Colorado's many ESF-2 partners worked diligently in the State's Emergency Operations Centers (SEOC) for the COVID-19 response effort, specifically Colorado RECCWG members provided daily and/or weekly Incident Action Plans for the Unified Command Center.

The State of Wyoming established "clean rooms" in the statewide dispatch center to provide a safe working environment for dispatchers who could not telework. This information was shared with the RECCWG to provide other members information that enabled them to maintain communications continuity throughout the pandemic.

RECCWG members continued providing information to update additional state and tribal annexes that support the RECP. For example, Montana completed the first completely virtual State Emergency Communication Annex development process in March of 2020 following travel restrictions brought on by the pandemic. The RECCWG was innovative in working together to find solutions to social distancing requirements during this unprecedented year. The solutions identified will be evaluated to determine their effectiveness when pandemic restrictions are removed and may change the way business is conducted and how disasters are responded to and managed in the future.

➤ **Accomplishment 4: Established a weekly Regional AuxComm on air check-in and meeting**

The RECCWG AuxComm sub-committee has established a weekly meeting on the High Frequency (HF) spectrum that includes participants from around the Region. The AuxComm sub-committee used these meetings to discuss issues and to test equipment and various areas of the spectrum. The meeting provides an on-air experience that allows the amateurs within the region to get acquainted, share ideas, and be better prepared to provide communications during times of disaster.

Moving forward, the AuxComm sub-committee will expand their communications, experiences, and testing into the adjoining regions.

➤ **Accomplishment 5: Worked to improve state and cross-border communications**

RECCWG member states have individually been adding sites to their LMR systems to enhance in-state coverage as well as improve coverage along state borders. The enhanced border coverage has led to further discussions of cross-state interoperability and channel sharing between the RECCWG. In 2020, North Dakota Statewide Interoperability Radio Network Project (SIRN) was well underway and will complete 50% of the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) console replacements by the end of the year. North Dakota also promoted cross-border communications by the utilization of Critical Connect for interoperability with neighboring states. Developed from discussions this year, South Dakota will also begin implementation of Critical Connect in 2021. Additionally, in preparation for a system upgrade in South Dakota the state continues to work on a common programming template that incorporates state and federal interoperability talk groups and channels. South Dakota continued their ongoing dialogue with North Dakota this year with the 700/800MHz coordination intended for interoperability between their borders. Similarly, Utah is coordinating with Colorado on interoperability channel gateways for talk groups across borders. Finally, Wyoming's WyoLink 6-year contract has been executed and intended to expand WyoLink by 16 Sites. The plan includes hardware and software upgrades to keep WyoLink current with technology and maintain a standards-based system to improve interoperability both across the state and with their adjoining states. They have also been working to establish an Inter-RF Subsystem Interface (ISSI) connection between WyoLink and Sublette County's interoperable LMR network. The improvement of state and cross-border communications will enhance interoperability in Region VIII and provide interoperability in adjoining counties across state lines for mutual aid.

Additionally, Mr. Jeff Pierce, the Region VIII Co-Chair, regularly attended and participated in the National Co-Chair's monthly teleconference to represent Region VIII's interests, keep abreast of national issues and work with the other Co-chairs to provide solutions to the Nation's operability and interoperability issues.

The RECCWG has brought the need for cross-border interoperability to the forefront. As state's plan for upgrading and replacing their LMR systems and the need for cross border interoperability with neighboring states leads to planning for interoperability between states as a basic requirement as well as discussions on the sharing of tower sites along state borders. Significant

cross-border interoperability solutions are currently being put into place and will benefit regional operations and communications during a multistate disaster.

➤ **Priority 2: Evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on RECCWG planning, training, exercises, and disaster response**

The 2020 Disaster season was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become evident that the emergency communications environment faces a “new normal”. The ability to plan, train, exercise, and respond to disasters had been heavily impacted by the pandemic required social distancing. Many planning, training, and exercise events were cancelled, and trends are developing to hold these events virtually. Also, many states have established quarantines for surge responders. The RECCWG will evaluate requirements for training and exercises as well as gather and publish quarantine requirements for surge responders.

The virtual solutions put in place to meet, coordinate, and train in a pandemic environment will provide alternative coordination options during times of disaster and may lead to virtual coordination of upcoming disasters with cost saving benefit. Regularly publishing quarantine requirements allow planners to be prepared to send surge responders without having them quarantine upon arrival. This will assist in shifting manpower from state to state during the upcoming wildfire season.

➤ **Priority 3: Improve, secure, and modernize the LMR systems in the region; update policy; and provide training to advance the effectiveness of communications systems**

Updating communications systems to standards based Project 25 (P25) networks will enhance interoperable communications across the region. Utah, Colorado, and other Region VIII states are modernizing their systems to ensure they are at the latest levels of technology. The modernization will also improve system security. This modernization will bring many of the states in Region VIII up to a true P25 standard and enhance cross border interoperability across the Region.

The statewide systems moving to true P25 standards in Region VIII will greatly aid cross-border communications between states. Some of the states are looking into adding inter subsystem interfaces which will be useful in providing interoperability across various frequency bands.

➤ **Priority 4: Improve disaster communications Regionwide by publishing standing amateur frequencies**

The AuxComm sub-committee will publish standing and alternate disaster frequencies across the Region for the various amateur bands. They will also establish procedures and network control for communications Regionwide and between Region’s states. This will enable Auxiliary Communications groups to immediately tune to specific frequencies to establish disaster communications. The policy and network control will ensure communications are effective and efficient.

**Statutory Duty 3:**

Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

**➤ Accomplishment 6: Facilitated IPAWS knowledge and acceptance throughout the region**

The Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) provides a unified alerting structure for accurate and timely reporting of emergencies which is used by municipalities across the nation. Currently, there are 159 alerting authorities in the six states of Region VIII. It is becoming increasingly important for users to stay abreast of all IPAWS developments on behalf of their respective jurisdictions so they can promote consistency and user proficiency in alerting systems. In light of the increasing possibility of cyber-based attacks during the COVID-19 “new normal”, public alert and warning systems, and citizens’ awareness of the systems, are more critical than ever. The Region VIII RECCWG members used IPAWS for statewide notifications related to COVID-19, i.e., stay-at-home orders, mask wearing requirement, and for information sharing to the

public. Additionally, the RECCWG hosted an IPAWS briefing discussing lessons learned, situational awareness and challenges that they dealt with this year.

Staying abreast of the latest IPAWS and WEA developments lets the members be prepared to provide targeted messages to their citizens and understand any limitations the system may have to enable them to make the correct decisions in alerting and informing the public.

**➤ Priority 5: Plan for historically known events and update systems to create interoperable communications across a broad spectrum of communications systems**

The member states are planning and preparing for historically known events such as spring flooding in North and South Dakota as well as wildland fires in all the states. Preparation includes pre-positioning of communications resources and coordination among the RECCWG members to prepare in advance to meet communications needs. North Dakota will integrate LTE devices into the statewide LMR network to facilitate interoperability with in-state public safety personnel and surge responders. Wyoming will evaluate options to integrate LMR/LTE connections (including FirstNet). Results of these projects will be shared with the RECCWG to establish best practices.

Advance planning for seasonal and recurring events provides the RECCWG and Region an opportunity to be prepared with equipment and manpower to mitigate communications challenges and stay prepared for any other disasters that may occur.

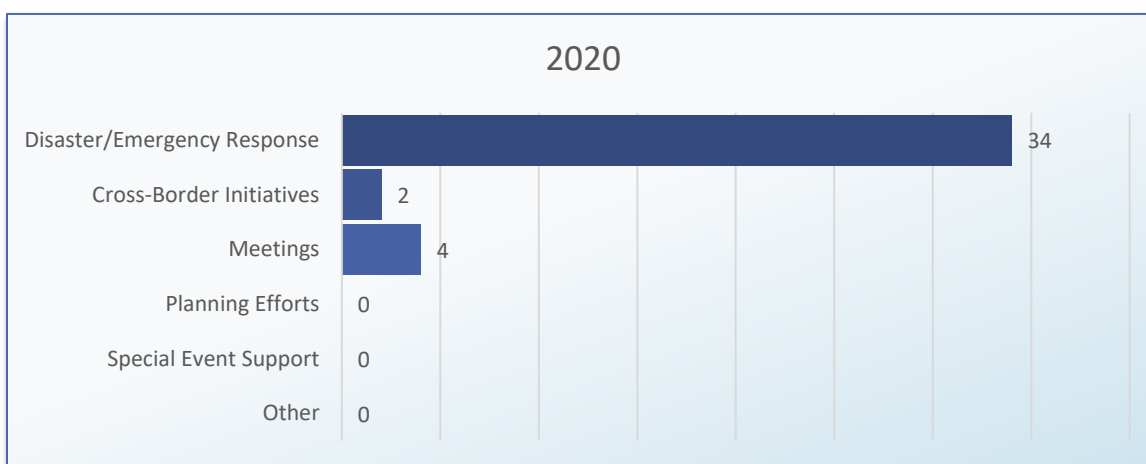
**➤ Priority 6: Increase representation by Tribal Nations in the RECCWG**

Region VIII is home to 29 federally recognized tribes. The capabilities of tribal emergency managers, law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical services personnel to communicate on tribal lands and with surrounding jurisdictions should be as boundless as the disasters inherent in the region. By working to identify potential candidates for membership within their respective states, RECCWG members will continue their efforts in 2021 to extend RECCWG resources and gain representation by the Region’s tribal nations.



## CY 2020 REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

Partners in every Region VIII states enhanced their emergency communications through their efforts during this unprecedented year. COVID-19 reshaped the way business was conducted and changed the focus of many conversations around public safety and emergency communications. The pandemic caused the cancellation of many large-scale events, exercises, conferences, and cross-state and cross-regional events. Nevertheless, RECCWG members adapted to the new normal and continued to improve their communications systems, collective knowledge base, and peer networks across the country. **Figure 3** provides a summary of these events and efforts in Region VIII that were sponsored by the RECCWG or its members.



**Figure 3: 2020 Regional Events**

**Table 2** lists incident responses, planning activities, trainings, exercises, briefings, coordination efforts, and other events in Region VIII where awareness, participation, and/or information sharing were coordinated by RECCWG members.

**Table 2. Regional Coordinating Activities**

REGION VIII		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
Disaster/Emergency Response	1/20/2020	Colorado COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4498-CO)
		Colorado COVID-19 (EM-3436-CO)
	8/10/2020	Colorado Grizzly Creek Fire (FM-5334-CO)
	8/19/2020	Colorado Pine Gulch Fire (FM-5335-CO)
	9/6/2020	Colorado Cameron Peak Fire (FM-5349-CO)
	10/12/2020	Colorado East Troublesome Fire (FM-5378-CO)
	10/17/2020	Colorado Calwood Fire (FM-5379-CO)
	1/20/2020	Montana Fort Peck Tribes COVID-19 (EM-3516-MT)
		Montana COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4508-MT)
		Montana Covid-19 (EM-3476-MT)

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REGION VIII		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
	8/2/2020	Montana Falling Star Fire (DR-4508-MT)
	9/2/2020	Montana Bobcat Fire (FM-5344-MT)
		Montana Huff Fire (FM-5343-MT)
	9/3/2020	Montana Snider/Rice Fire Complex (FM-5345-MT)
	9/5/2020	Montana Bridger Foothills Fire (FM-5346-MT)
	1/20/2020	North Dakota Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation COVID-19 (EM-3512-ND)
		North Dakota COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4509-ND)
		North Dakota COVID-19 (EM-3477-ND)
	4/1/2020	North Dakota Flooding (DR-4553-ND)
	6/29/2020	North Dakota Severe Storms and Flooding (DR-4565-ND)
	1/02/2020	South Dakota Oglala Sioux Tribe COVID-19 (EM-3513-SD)
		South Dakota COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4527-SD)
		South Dakota COVID-19 (EM-3475-SD)
		South Dakota Wahpeton Oyate COVID-19 (EM-3526-SD)
		South Dakota Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe COVID-19 PANDEMIC (EM-3536-SD)
	1/20/2020	Utah COVID-18 Pandemic (EM-3478-UT)
		Utah COVID-19 (DR-4525-UT)
	3/18/2020	Utah Earthquake and Aftershocks (DR-4548-UT)
	6/28/2020	Utah Canal Fire (FM-5317-UT)
		Utah Knolls Fire (FM-5318-UT)
	7/13/2020	Utah Veyo West Fire (FM-5321-UT)
	9/7/2020	Utah Ether Hollow Fire (FM-5353-UT)
	1/20/2020	Wyoming COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4535-WY)
		Wyoming COVID-19 (EM-3479-WY)
	9/5/2020	Wyoming 316 Fire (FM-5347-WY)
	9/26/2020	Wyoming Mullen Fire (FM-5375-WY)
Cross-Border Initiatives	2020	Idaho and Utah worked together to provide a repeater and interoperability between two states. Resulting in cross border mutual aid communications and interoperability between states in different FEMA regions (8 and 10).
Teleconferences and Meetings (incl. virtual)	02/20/2020	Discussions and briefings regarding developments, challenges, and efforts in communications in Region VIII states. Plans for the upcoming plenary.
	04/16/2020	Topical presentation on FirstNet response to COVID-19. Discussions and briefings regarding developments, unmet needs and efforts in communications in Region VIII states, with specific focus on COVID-19 efforts.
	10/21-22/2020	Discussions and briefing regarding developments, unmet needs and efforts in communications in Region VIII states, topical

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

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REGION VIII		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
		presentations on Region VIII specific events, presentations on emergency management organizations, commercial carriers.

## REGION 9

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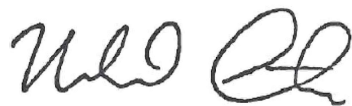


U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
FEMA Region 9  
1111 Broadway, Suite 1200  
Oakland, CA 94607

**FEMA**

DATE: June 11, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn  
Assistant Administrator  
Response Directorate

FROM: Robert J. Fenton, Jr.   
Regional Administrator

SUBJECT: FEMA Region 9 Regional Emergency Communications  
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by 6 U.S.C. § 575, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended.

The attached Annual Report, developed by the FEMA Region 9 RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined RECCWG Annual Report for calendar year (CY) 2020, which will be distributed to the Director of the Emergency Communications Division (ECD) of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The Annual Report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

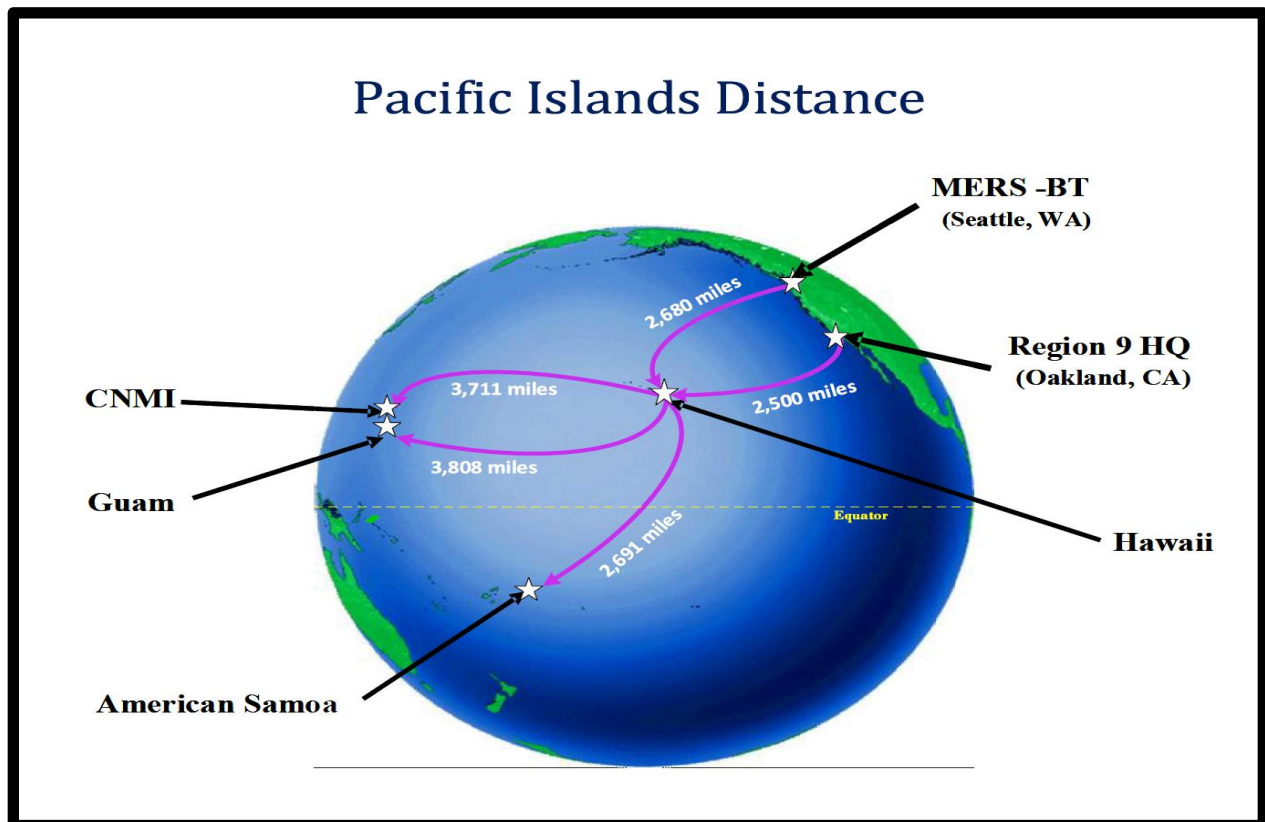
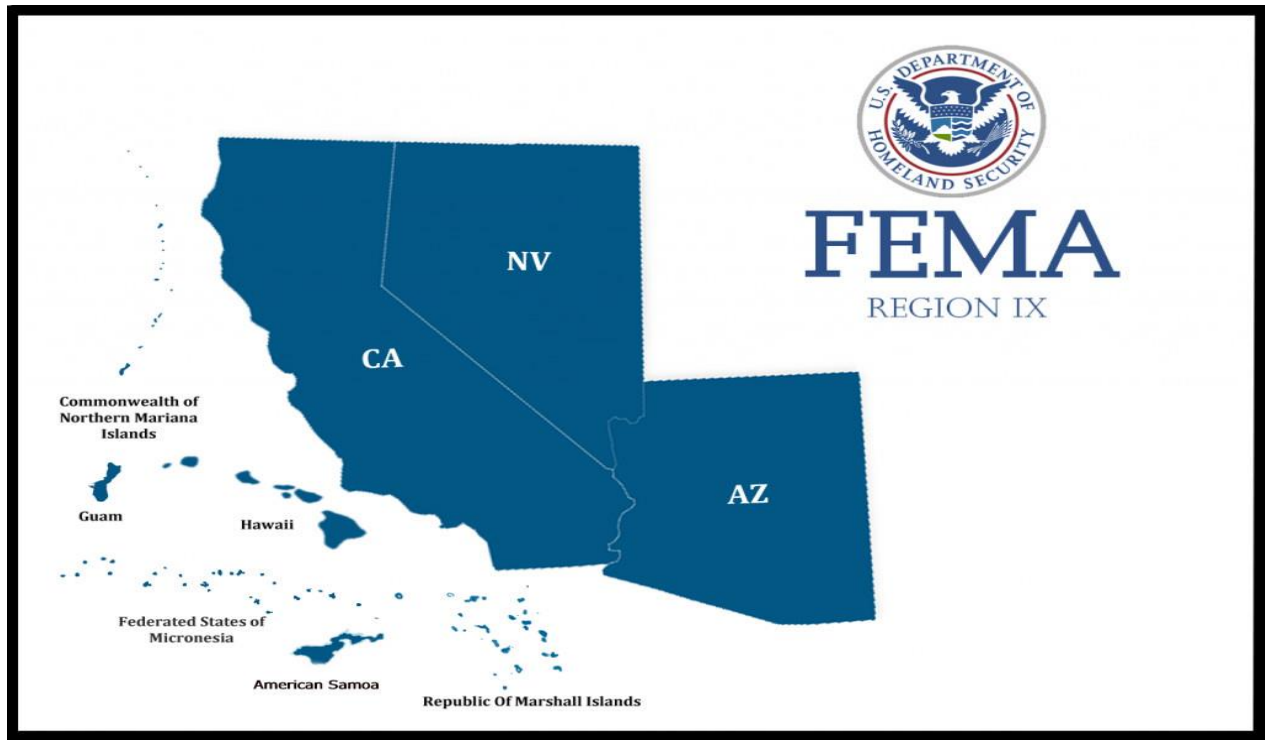
- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.
- Coordinate the establishment of federal, state, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region 9 RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for federal, state, local, tribal agencies, and the Whole Community to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region as shown through activities in this report. The Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole of Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Enclosed: Region 9 CY 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

REGION 9 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP





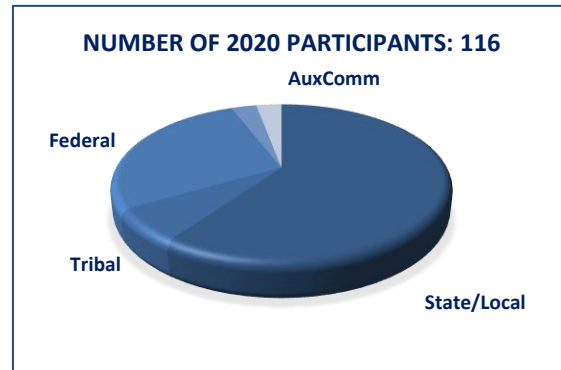
## CY 2020 OVERVIEW

The Region 9 RECCWG consists of Arizona, California, Hawaii, and Nevada; the territories of Guam and American Samoa; and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Figure 1 shows the RECCWG's public, private, and Whole Community stakeholder membership participation.

Wildfires and COVID-19 communications requirements brought increased cooperation between the public and private sector to meet communications needs.

Response to the COVID-19 pandemic dominated the disaster landscape in all the Region's states and territories in 2020. In addition, the continental United States (CONUS) portion of the region (California, Arizona, and Nevada) had wildland fires. During the past year, these states responded to

numerous fire incidents, with 32 rising to the level of Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAG). The OCONUS portion of the region, Hawaii and the territories, had two disasters, both in Hawaii, a hurricane and severe storms and flooding all in addition to its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



*Figure 1: 2019 RECCWG Participation*

The communication requirements needed for the COVID-19 pandemic and the wildfires throughout the region required the states and territories to work very closely with the private sector to provide the communications needed to support the operations. The unique communications requirements needed to support the operations required RECCWG members to develop, in coordination with the private sector, cutting edge solutions to meet the communications needs of remote fire operations centers, COVID-19 alternate care facilities, and testing centers. The RECCWG members shared best practices across the membership and are using these to plan for future operations when vaccine is available for distribution.

In addition, the RECCWG held six teleconferences and two virtual plenaries sessions during the 2020 calendar year (CY). Participants included state, local, tribal and territorial emergency managers, 911 leadership and other public safety officials along with many members of the private communications sector.

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*A key focus of Region 9 in 2020 was enhancing communications resilience. Communications managers emphasized the need to create a unified suite of public safety communications resources that link Next Generation 911 (NG911), First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet), Alert and Warning systems, and land mobile radio (LMR).*

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The efforts of the Region 9 RECCWG members, their participation in monthly teleconferences, and attendance at face-to-face meetings, members used the Region 9 RECCWG as an open forum to discuss and resolve communications obstacles in the region. As the RECCWG looks toward CY 2021, members will continue working to improve public/private sector coordination of emergency communications capabilities and coordination in the region.

For additional information regarding the Region 9 RECCWG, please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region 9 Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), David Benoit at [david.benoit@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:david.benoit@fema.dhs.gov) or 510-627-7268 or 510-289-0116.

**Table 1: RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2020**

Name	Role or Agency
<b>RECCWG Leadership</b>	
Robert Fenton	Region 9 Regional Administrator (RA)/RECCWG Chair, FEMA
Everett Kaneshige	Region 9 RECCWG Co-Chair/Hawaii Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)
David Benoit	Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC)
<b>American Samoa (AS) Representatives</b>	
Vinnie Atofau, Jr.	Manager, Territorial Emergency Management Coordinating Office, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) (SWIC)
Randall Fitison	Information Technology (IT) and Emergency Communications Coordinator
Peter Nomura	Land Mobile Radio (LMR) Coordinator, IT and Acting Chairman, Territorial Emergency Communications Committee
Karl Prendergast	Supervisor, American Samoa Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
<b>Arizona (AZ) Representatives</b>	
Paul Barbean	Information Services Group Chief, Arizona Department of Homeland Security (ADHS)
Dennis Bietry	Communications Supervisor, Arizona Division of Emergency Management
Nichole Fortson	Arizona DEMA
Matt Heckard	Program Manager, DEMA Radiological Emergency Preparedness
Morgan E Hoaglin	Deputy SWIC, Arizona Department of Public Safety
Jeremy Knoll	Wireless Systems Bureau Manager, Arizona Department of Public Safety/SWIC
Rich Kochanski	Battalion Chief, Mesa Fire and Medical Department
Lisa Meyerson	Manager, Enterprise Project Management Office, Arizona Department of Administration
Dave Roby	WebEOC Administrator, DEMA
Tim Singleton	Information Services Group, ADHS
Al West	Arizona Transportation Security Administration
<b>California (CA) Representatives</b>	
Mike Beckstrand	Inland Region Auxiliary Communications Service Officer, Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES)
Daniel Chui	Acting Coordinator, Agency California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System, San Francisco Police Department
Budge Currier	SWIC/911 Emergency Communications Branch, Public Safety Communications (PSC), CalOES
Timothy Donovan	Homeland Security Unit Supervisor, San Francisco Police Department

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

Name	Role or Agency
Jim Falls	Certified Engineering Geologist, Department of Conservation California Geological Survey
Ben Green	Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator, Tactical Communications, CalOES
Shelly Hutchens	Broadband Services Unit, Supervisor, CalOES
Kody Kerwin	Telecommunications Specialist, Contra Costa Fire Department
Leo Liberio	California Director, Air Force Military Auxiliary Radio System (AFMARS)
Ashley Lyons	Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator, MAR V Central Valley
Pat Mallon	Assistant Director, PSC, CalOES/Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for Public Safety Broadband, FirstNet
Dennis McCord	National Operations Officer, AFMARS
Josh Bozak	Chief of Tactical Communications, CalOES
Don Nelson	Humboldt County Communications Division
Hank O'Neill	Emergency Support Function (ESF) 2 Lead, Deputy Statewide Interoperability Coordinator, Chief, ECD, CalOES
Anthony Ravago	Chief, Pala Fire Department
Wendy Schleppie	California Department of Water Resources
Mikaela Stirling	Intern, California EOC
Scott Tillman	Region 9 Emergency Coordinator, AFMARS
Steve Weston	Communications Specialist, Tactical Communications Unit, Los Angeles Fire Department
Ralph Williams	Pasadena Fire Department
Jeff Yeagley	Communications Technician, San Francisco International Airport
<b>Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Representatives</b>	
Joey Dela Cruz	EOC Manager, Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM)
Eric Fleming David	Acting SWIC
Gerald Guerrero	Special Assistant, HSEM
Pedro DL Guerrero	Deputy Special Assistant, HSEM
Brien "BJ" Nicolas	Grants Manager, HSEM
Jermain Nataki	SWIC
Thomas F. Tudela	State Communication Specialist
<b>Guam (GU) Representatives</b>	
Frank L.G. Lujan, Jr	SWIC, CTO Office of Technology
P. Timothy Aguon	SPOC
Leigh Pereda	Program Manager, Guam Homeland Security; ESF-2
Lucia Perez	ESF-2
<b>Hawaii (HI) Representatives</b>	
Teresa Debebar	Land Mobile Radio Program Assistant, United States Army Pacific
David Hafner	Telecommunications Planner, Office of Enterprise Technology Services
Ryan Hiraе	Director, Telecommunications Branch, HI-EMA
Torrey Ho	Radio Technician, HI-EMA
Walter Pacheco	Communications Coordinator, Maui Police Department
<b>Nevada (NV) Representatives</b>	

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

Name	Role or Agency
Melissa Friend	SWIC/Division of Emergency Management/Homeland Security (DEMHS), Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Robert Plant	Former SWIC
Vince Puglia	Director, Radio Systems Bureau, Las Vegas Metro Police Department
Lonnie Richardson	Director, Information Technologies, City of Las Vegas
Tribal Representatives	
Terry Bohl	Director, Moapa Band of Paiutes, Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada (ITCN)
Gina Marotto	Acting Director, Intertribal Emergency Response Commission (Sparks, Nevada)
Mike Russ	Disaster Services Manager, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians (Highland, California)
Jim Stillwell	Tribal Representative, Arizona
Perry TwoFeathers Tripp	Inter-Tribal Council of California (ITCC)
Sandy Tripp	Tribal Liaison
Chris Poehlmann	Tribal Liaison
Sky Road Webb	Program Manager, ITCC
Private Industry Partners	
Jeff Casey	T- Mobile
Casey Muilenburg	T- Mobile
John Rosica	Army MARS/President, NVIS Communications LLC and Barrett Communications Consulting (California)
Federal Partners	
George Aldrich	IT Specialist, FEMA
Art Botterell	Senior Emergency Services Coordinator, AFMARS/CalOES
Ryan Brown	FEMA Region 9, FEMA Integration Team Lead, AZ
Bobby Cabino	Telecommunications Specialist, FEMA Pacific Area Office
Scott Carpenter	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Weather Service (NWS)
James Cho	FEMA Region 9, Response Division Director
Paul Coburn	Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
Glen Gorud	Chief, FEMA Mobile Emergency Response Support, Bothell
Scott Hansen	National RECCWG Coordinator, FEMA
David Hartshorn	San Francisco Office, District Director, FCC
Chris Hillis	Information Technology Disaster Resource Center, Co-Founder
Larry Klutz	ECD
Scott Jackson	Telecommunications Specialist, National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA)
Thomas Lawless	Regional Coordinator, Emergency Communications Division (ECD), DHS
Eric Main	Telecommunications Specialist, FEMA
Dennis McCord	National Operations Officer, AFMARS
Robert Mussenden	Attorney Advisor, Policy and Licensing Division, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, FCC
Bill Preiss	FEMA, National IMAT West

Name	Role or Agency
Nikki Shears	Senior Agent, Tiger Team (Denver), Enforcement Bureau, FCC
Eric Simmons	Spectrum Manager, USCG (Oakland, California)
Steve Simmons	AFMARS
Stephan Silen	Installation Director, MARS, Travis Air Force Base (AFB)
Randy Sutton	Communications Coordinator, FEMA Pacific Area Office (PAO).
Scott Sweigart	Telecommunications Manager, FEMA MERS Bothell
Tracy Haynes	FEMA Pacific Area Office (PAO)
Marcella Wise	IT Specialist (Network), FEMA PAO
Dan Wills	Regional Coordinator, ECD, DHS
Terry Yonamine	IT Specialist, FEMA PAO

## CY 2020 RECCWG ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND 2021 PRIORITIES

The Region 9 RECCWG made substantial improvements in 2020 to regional communications networks, maintained readiness through planned and unplanned events, and established new partnerships with public and private entities throughout the region.

**Statutory Duty 1:** Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

### ➤ Accomplishment 1: Updated State Emergency Communications Annexes

State Communications Annexes provide the basis for the Region's Emergency Communication's Plan and provide an in-depth snapshot of the state's emergency communications landscape. In 2020, in coordination with the RECCWG members, California updated its states communication annex. Updating and refreshing the annex provides the RECCWG with descriptions of the latest communications systems as well as a current list of the points of contact throughout the state. A RECCWG member served as the state point of contact to make necessary introductions to state and local communications

leaders who have vital plan information. The RECCWG member also guides the planning team by bringing communications issues that may need outside assistance, such as federal resources or Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) assets. In addition, state and tribal communications annexes regularly share communications capabilities and needs across the RECCWG to identify resources close to the incident that can be used through EMAC requests. The knowledge gained from the annex process led to better synchronization of communications restoration efforts between Region 9, MERS and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) communications infrastructure components as well as reduced over-extension of federal communications capabilities.

The updated annexes and the networking opportunities and processes that resulted from these updates have increased Region 9's ability to support stronger DEC and ESF-2 team formations. This has resulted in the formalization of a Region 9 DEC and ESF-2 Task Force that consists of

state, federal and commercial communications entities. The task force, which continues today, has been the primary venue for keeping all Region 9 communications subject matter experts updated during both the 2020 fires and COVID response efforts.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Updated Region 9 All-Hazards Plan Annex**

The FEMA Region 9 Catastrophic Incident Response in a Pandemic Environment plan serves as an annex to the Region 9 All-Hazards Plan (AHP) and contains the primary strategic, operational, and tactical frameworks for decision making during a response to a non-public health emergency in the continental United States and outside the continental United States jurisdictions during a global pandemic, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Region 9 RECCWG members served as the DEC Deliberate Future Operational Planner to identify potential impacts, potential actions, and COVID-19 specific limitations. RECCWG members also worked together to discuss potential actions for a series of pre-established pointed communication questions, such as, “Does your emergency operations center have enough information technology personnel and Virtual Private Network (VPN) bandwidth to support increased numbers of remote emergency responders? Is the increased use of mobile or internet bandwidth disrupting emergency communications?” Members evaluated the baseline broadband speed requirements for FEMA used applications and VPN software to support remote emergency responders in areas with limited bandwidth capabilities, such as American Samoa and the CNMI. This has led to further conversations on bandwidth prioritization and how-to better plan to meet overall bandwidth requirements.

To validate the AHP, the planning team conducted virtual tabletop exercise’s that simulated state-specific natural disasters in a COVID-19 environment for each of Region 9’s states and territories. A RECCWG member also served as a key player during the communications component for five virtual tabletop exercises. The RECCWG members guided the discussion by identifying potential communication challenges and operational coordination strategies in a virtual environment. The knowledge gained from the annex process provided state, local, Tribal and territorial (SLTT) participants with suggestions and recommended actions that could improve response efforts.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Responded to the Covid-19 pandemic in a multi-faceted approach across jurisdictions and regions**

The COVID-19 pandemic touched every aspect of life in the United States and has led to an unprecedented period of response that is expected to last until at least 2021. In transitioning to a largely virtual environment, Region 9 established an ADOBE Connect Situational Awareness Room for Emergency Support Function #2 (ESF-2) operations in the Region. The room has been frequented by RECCWG members and federal partners where it provided an open exchange of information to meet the communications challenges presented in establishing communications for the alternate care and testing centers being built out in each state. Additionally, the room and the concurrent RECCWG teleconferences provided an information exchange forum to share best practices, identify emerging communications trends and develop solutions early when issues were identified. The situational awareness room was used to deconflict ESF-2 assignments and as an exchange for information regarding responder travel restrictions. For example, the Navajo Nation established roadblocks for a period prohibiting travel. The information was shared on the situational awareness board and was transmitted to commercial vendors establishing

communications for the alternate care sites to assist them in planning their work schedules and travel.

California ESF-2 provided the communications necessary to establish a 400-bed alternate care facility at ARCO Arena. This field hospital was used from May-August of 2020 and was re-established in December of 2020 and continues to operate now. ESF-2 provided Land Mobile Radio (LMR), IT, and communication support for the operation.

As the public transitioned to working from home and distance learning, traditional communications, landline, wireless, and internet protocol usage increased resulting in communication slowdowns. WPS and GETS were promoted to emergency managers and responders which helped to complete priority calls. The telecommunications systems were constantly monitored, and outages reported in the situational awareness room, state RECCWG members would report on progress for the outages and slowdowns as well as identify target rectification dates and times.

All states and territories under Region 9 coordinated with federal ESF-2 partners during targeted meetings to assess the regional status of communications, such as statewide LMR systems, 911 system loads, telecommunicator staff health and wellbeing, and impending communications needs for rapid buildouts of alternate care facilities and COVID-19 testing sites.

Additionally, the increased synchronization of efforts via the Region 9 DEC/ESF-2 Task Force has resulted in the constant development of solutions for potential shortfalls. These solutions are continuously developed and retained as “tools in the communications toolbox” that Region 9 looks to quickly utilize in the event a quick communications solution is needed.

FEMA Region 9 works in partnership with emergency management agencies of Arizona, California, Hawaii, and Nevada, as well as the territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

### ➤ **Accomplishment 4: Responded to wildland fires and rolling utility blackouts**

The region, especially California, had a significant increase in the number and size of wildfires during 2020. The unprecedented level of wildland fire activity in the Region provided yet again a real-world test of public safety and emergency communications capabilities. Additionally, wildfires require fire qualified communication technicians who are a limited resource in the Region under normal circumstances. The COVID-19 response and simultaneous occurrence of multiple large wildfires in the region brought the levels of cache radios and the availability of qualified technicians to very low levels. California developed an innovative approach to pool their fire qualified technicians and borrow additional technicians from the National Guard to backfill. This approach was shared with the RECCWG.

The wildfires brought to light shortfalls in cellular alerting of the civilian population in 2019. This issue continued in 2020, which were shared with the Region 9 RECCWG and the National RECCWG Co-Chairs. The public generally depends on cellular notifications as their sole source of alert and warning information. The after-action assessments will provide a strong foundation for future improvements and planning activities related to public safety communications systems.



While few public safety sites were damaged by wildfires, some lost commercial electrical power, forcing reliance on any backup power available at the site. In addition, rolling utility blackouts frequently occurred. This brought the need to prepare for widespread and lengthy power outages to the forefront. Discussions within the RECCWG and partners across the country encouraged a movement to seek alternate solutions to long term outages.

These discussions resulted in development of regional DEC and ESF-2 strategies and pre-planning efforts targeted at projecting communications losses and impacts during power outages. The plans were continuously articulated and discussed among the Region 9 DEC/ESF-2 Task Force members to maintain the continuity of knowledge necessary to address future unexpected outages.

➤ **Priority 1: Improve communications resiliency by reviewing, updating and refreshing communications planning**

RECCWG members will review and update communications plans throughout the region to include public safety LMR systems and segments of the commercial telecommunications industry to develop a more resilient infrastructure and meet emerging communications needs.

In addition, the RECCWG will continue to assess the survivability, sustainability, and interoperability gaps in state, local, territorial, and tribal as well as federal planning efforts.

The Region 9 RECCWG expects this to further result in an increased and continuous awareness of communications capabilities and potential shortfalls which are expected to further increase the effectiveness of Region 9 DEC/ESF-2 Task Force response efforts during upcoming disasters.

➤ **Priority 2: Improve situational awareness among the Region's states and territories by regularly establishing situational awareness rooms for disaster operations and publishing after action reports to the RECCWG's Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) page.**

During times of major disaster, establishing an information sharing, situational awareness room where ESF-2 partners across the region can gain status information, share ideas, collaborate and monitor communications challenges as well as coordinate across the federal, state and local ESF-2 landscape.

After Action Reports (ARRs) provide the best examples of communications lessons from real world operations. ARR's should be posted to the RECCWG's HSIN page to allow other members to learn from the experiences gained during responses.

Additionally, Region 9 will continue to share this information via the Region 9 DEC/ESF-2 Task Force Adobe Connect Platform which supports easier and more secure access to this data by authorized state and federal stakeholders.

**Statutory Duty 2:**

Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 5: Disaster Response in a Pandemic Environment.**

Federal surge professionals responded to Hawaii in preparation for Hurricane Douglas. Fortunately, Douglas veered north of the Hawaiian Islands, resulting in little impact on the state. Hawaii did not experience an extreme disaster; however, this provided an opportunity to identify important issues in preparing and responding to disasters in a pandemic environment. For example, access to the EOC and other facilities was limited and individuals who had not been in quarantine for 14 days were not permitted inside the buildings and were required to have limited access to the public.

The lessons learned from Hurricane Douglas were shared with the RECCWG membership and Nationally through the RECCWG Co-Chairs and brought about a reporting process to ensure

responders coming from outside areas have the latest quarantine and travel restriction information. This information is gathered regularly through the RECCWG and covers not only federal, state and local responders, but also requirements for commercial restoration personnel.

Additionally, the reporting process allowed Region 9 to place more planning pre-emphasis and visibility on communications responder's well-being and safety needs, e.g., personal protective equipment, which further resulted in increasing the travel confidence for those looking to deploy to the Region 9 COVID-19 impacted areas.

➤ **Accomplishment 6: Fostered relationships and partnerships with private sector entities and identified future priorities during natural disasters.**

During Hurricane Douglas response efforts, FEMA members operating within the Hawaii State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) could not utilize their FirstNet cellular phones, resulting in limited communications capabilities. AT&T/FirstNet cellular coverage was a known shortfall within the SEOC. A RECCWG member campaigned the need for cellular coverage within the SEOC and leveraged relationships and partnerships with the SWIC, the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency's (HI-EMA) Communications Chief, and representatives from FirstNet and AT&T to develop a plan that would increase FirstNet cellular coverage within the SEOC. This collaborative effort resulted in AT&T agreeing to install three cellular metro cells in the SEOC. These metro cells provide FEMA members (and other FirstNet users) with cellular service that substantially increases information sharing for emergency managers to make informed decisions based on near real-time information.

➤ **Priority 3: Balance disaster response with COVID-19 emergency activities to maintain effective communications**

The RECCWG, for the foreseeable future, will be managing disasters and wildland fires in a pandemic environment. They will share best practices and lessons learned across the region to help ensure the health and wellbeing of responders and the citizens they serve. Key to a successful response operation will be having an accurate and up to date knowledge of testing and quarantine requirements to enter the states and territories as well as to coordinate in person with the state's emergency management staff. The RECCWG will continue to update these requirements and discuss them during their monthly teleconferences as well as post requirements on their situational awareness Adobe Connect page for each disaster.

Additionally, it is expected that the Region 9 RECCWG will continue to make use of other information sharing platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams to backup and/or augment Adobe Connect capabilities.

**Statutory Duty 3:**

Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

➤ **Accomplishment 7: Cross regional coordination on ESF-2 requests**

The Navajo Nation is in the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. Alternate care facilities and testing centers were being established in both Arizona (FEMA Region 9) and New Mexico (FEMA Region VI) to serve the Navajo people. These centers required robust communications system in a rather austere communications environment. Rather than have two states working to establish separate communication systems on the Nation, Region 9 leveraged the RECCWG members in both regions to meet and clarify responsibility for the installation, with Region 9 and Arizona taking the lead in installation for both states.

The knowledge and lessons learned from this experience will be used in future response efforts involving close coordination

between two or more FEMA regions.

➤ **Accomplishment 8: Development of updated interoperability systems**

To meet emerging needs, the State of California is developing a new state of the art interoperability system. The California Radio Interoperability System (CRIS) is a 700 MHz LMR system currently being piloted in the Central Valley area. CRIS provides a statewide public safety, interoperable radio system which allows all participating agencies the ability to communicate seamlessly internally as well as interagency without developing their own LMR systems. Providing this high degree of 700 MHz radio coverage across the State of California allows first responders to communicate effectively across their typical jurisdictional boundaries during emergencies. It is expected the continued growth of this system will result in resolving interoperability challenges between the different agencies supporting California statewide public safety radio communications. California regularly reports to the RECCWG as a best practice example and keep them advised of progress in the event EMAC assistance is needed.

California and Nevada continue to work together to develop a plan to support a multi-agency fire dispatch center in the Tahoe Basin with agencies from California and Nevada participating in the effort. The center should improve interoperability in cross border fire response and deconflict response efforts.

An additional development that should assist in providing supporting technology to Guam's aging LMR system is the deployment of FirstNet in the territory on March 31, 2020. Guam's first responders now have three methods of communications, LMR, iConnect and FirstNet to support their communications needs.

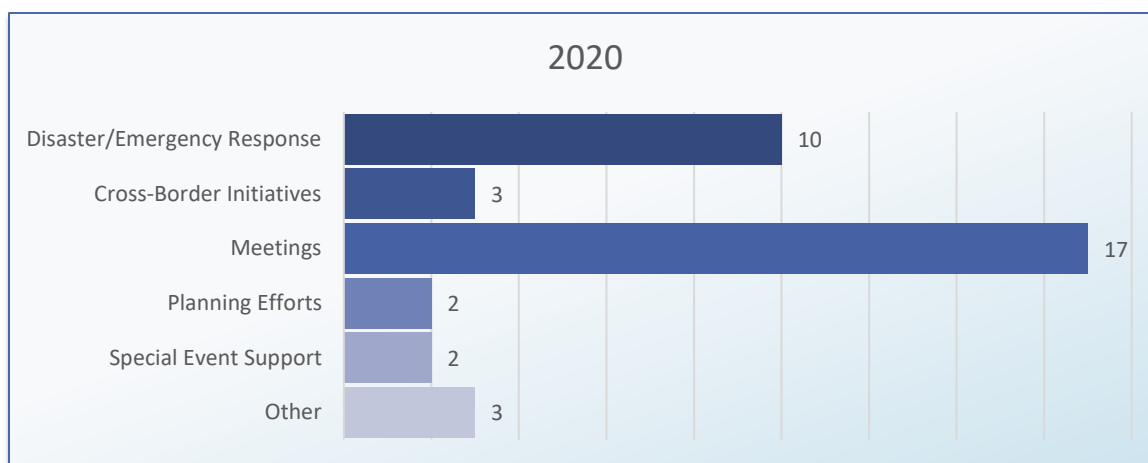
➤ **Priority 4: Increase cross-regional collaboration on cross-border and national communications preparedness**

A Cascadia Subduction Zone event will have major impact into Region 9 and will require significant support from the surrounding regions. The Region 9 and X RECCWGs had planned a joint plenary meeting to study communications in both regions and plan for a major event. The COVID-19 pandemic forced a cancellation of this meeting.

When the situation allows, the Region 9 RECCWG will reschedule and hold a joint plenary meeting with Region X's RECCWG to discuss and plan for cross regional response.

### **CY 2020 REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION ACTIVITIES**

Partners in all Region 9 states enhanced emergency communications through their efforts during an unprecedented year. COVID-19 has reshaped the way business was conducted and changed the focus of many conversations around public safety and emergency communications. The pandemic caused the cancellation of many large-scale events, exercises, conferences, and cross-state and cross-regional events. Nevertheless, RECCWG members adapted to a new normal and continued to improve their communications systems, collective knowledge base, and peer networks across the country. Error! Reference source not found. provides a summary of 2020 events and efforts in Region 9 that were sponsored by the RECCWG or its members.



**Figure 2: 2020 Regional Events**

**Table 2** lists incident responses, planning activities, trainings, exercises, briefings, coordination efforts, and other events sponsored or hosted by a state where awareness, participation, and/or information sharing were coordinated through the Region 9 RECCWG.

**Table 2. Regional Coordinating Activities**

REGION 9		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
Disaster/Emergency Response	1/19/2020	American Samoa Covid-19 Pandemic - (DR-4537-AS) Major Disaster Declaration declared 4/16/2020
	1/19/2020	American Samoa Covid-19 (EM-3465-AS) Emergency Declaration declared 3/12/2020
	5/17/2020	Arizona East Desert Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5310) declared on 5/18/2020
	6/11/2020	Arizona Big Horn Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5312) declared on 6/11/2020
	6/20/2020	Arizona Bush Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5313) declared on 6/20/2020
	6/23/2020	Arizona Aquila Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5314) declared on 6/23/2020
	6/27/2020	Arizona Avondale Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM-5315) declared on 6/27/2020
	8/17/2020	Arizona Griffin Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM-5340) declared on 8/26/2020
	1/20/2020	California - Major Disaster (DR-4482) declared on 3/22/2020 for Covid-19
	1/20/2020	California - Emergency Declaration (EM-3428) declared on 3/13/2020 for Covid-19
	8/1/2020	California Apple Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5325) declared on 8/2/2020
	8/14/2020	California Wildfires - Major Disaster (DR-4558) declared on 8/22/2020

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REGION 9		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
	8/16/2020	California River Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5329) declared on 8/17/2020
	8/17/2020	California Sheep Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5339) declared on 8/22/2020
	8/17/2020	California Bear Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5363) declared on 9/9/2020
	8/17/2020	California LNU Fire Complex – Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5331) declared on 8/18/2020
	8/18/2020	California Jones Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5329) declared on 8/17/2020
	8/18/2020	California Carmel Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5333) declared on 8/19/2020
	8/20/2020	California CZU Lightning Fire Complex - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5336) declared on 8/20/2020
	8/20/2020	California SCU Lightning Fire Complex - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5338) declared on 8/21/2020
	9/4/2020	California Wildfires Major Disaster (DR-4569) declared 10/16/2020
	9/6/2020	California Creek Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5348) declared 9/6/2020
	9/8/2020	California Slater Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5361) declared 9/9/2020
	9/13/2020	California Bobcat Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5374) declared 9/13/2020
	9/13/2020	California SQF Complex Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5373) declared 9/13/2020
	9/27/2020	California Glass Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5376) declared 9/27/2020
	9/28/2020	California Zogg Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5377) declared 9/28/2020
	1/19/2020	Guam Covid-19 Pandemic (DR-4495-GU) Major Disaster Declaration declared 3/26/2020
	1/19/2020	Guam Covid-19 (EM-3466-GU) Emergency declaration declared 3/12/2020
	1/19/2020	Hawaii Covid-19 Pandemic (DR-4510-HI) Major Disaster Declaration declared 3/31/2020
	3/26/2020	Hawaii – Severe Storms and Flooding - (DR-4549-HI) Major disaster declaration declared 7/8/2020
	7/22/2020	Hawaii – Hurricane Douglas (EM-3529-HI) – Emergency Declaration declared 8/24/2020
	1/20/2020	Nevada Major Disaster Declaration (DR-4523) declared 4/4/2020 for Covid-19 Pandemic
	1/20/2020	Nevada Emergency Declaration (EM-3443) declared on 3/13/2020 for Covid-19

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REGION 9		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
	6/27/2020	Nevada Poeville Road Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5316) declared on 6/27/2020
	7/6/2020	Nevada Numbers Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5319) declared on 7/7/2020
	7/21/2020	Nevada Rockfarm Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5322) declared on 7/21/2020
	8/2/2020	Nevada North Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5326) declared on 8/3/2020
	8/14/2020	Nevada Loyalton Fire - Fire Management Assistance Declaration (FM – 5328) declared on 8/15/2020
Cross-Border Initiatives		New talkgroups, MOU/MOA, cross-regional plenary participation (virtual), virtual information sharing for situational awareness, subcommittee meetings (if multiple states participated), amateur nets, etc.
Teleconferences and Meetings (incl. virtual)	1/28/2020-1/29/2020	Arizona SWBCWG Meeting held at Phoenix, Arizona
	1/23/2020	RECCWG Teleconference
	2/27/2020	RECCWG Teleconference
	05/28/2020	RECCWG Teleconference
	06/25/2020	RECCWG Teleconference
	07/30/2020	RECCWG Teleconference
	9/24/2020	RECCWG Teleconference
	10/14/2020	RECCWG Virtual Plenary
Communications Planning Efforts		Exercises, conferences, presentations, subcommittee initiatives, website development, use of HSIN, Adobe Connect, other platforms, innovations shared regionally (portable 911 kits, devolution planning for PSAPs, etc.). Can probably list events that were cancelled due to pandemic if significant planning went into them
	01/28/2020-01/29/2020	California SWBCWG Working Group Workshop in Phoenix, Arizona
Other (e.g., communications innovations, technology refresh, statewide system upgrades)	07/31/2020	HIWIN Interoperability Radio Test with MERS radio cache
	08/25/2020	All-Hazards Planning COVID-19 Tabletop Exercise: Guam
	08/24/2020	All-Hazards Planning COVID-19 Tabletop Exercise: CNMI
	08/31/2020	All-Hazards Planning COVID-19 Tabletop Exercise: Nevada
	09/03/2020	All-Hazards Planning COVID-19 Tabletop Exercise: American Samoa
	09/24/2020	All-Hazards Planning COVID-19 Tabletop Exercise: Hawaii



## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

REGION 9		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
Technology Refresh Arizona	01/28/2020 -11/01/2020	Buildup of AZDPS Communications Van
	01/28/2020 -11/01/2020	Updated Radio Programming to include V/U IR/LE frequencies. V/U IR/LE interop channels included in the state priority programming guide.
	01/28/2020 -02/01/2020	Finalized AZ SWIC website to facilitate easy access to interoperability documents. <a href="https://www.azdps.gov/services/government/swic">https://www.azdps.gov/services/government/swic</a>
	11/01/2020 -12/31/2020	Developing and refreshing plans for a Southern Arizona PSAP to PSAP radio talkgroup. Talkgroup on AZWINS/YRCS system will be used for instant interoperable communications between multiple Southern Arizona communications centers.

## REGION 10

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**FEMA**

April 20, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn  
Assistant Administrator  
Response Directorate

FROM: Vincent J. Maykovich  
Acting Regional Administrator

**LON BIASCO**

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BIASCO  
Date: 2021.04.20 08:15:58  
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SUBJECT: FEMA Region 10 Regional Emergency Communications  
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by 6 U.S.C. § 575, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region 10 RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined RECCWG Annual Report for calendar year (CY) 2020, which will be distributed to the Director of the Emergency Communications Division (ECD) of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.
- Coordinate the establishment of federal, state, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments the Region 10 RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly

represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value the RECCWG has as a venue for federal, state, local and tribal agencies, and the Whole Community to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region as shown through activities in this report. The Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole of Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Attachment: Region 10 CY 2020 RECCWG Annual Report

## REGION 10 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP

### CY 2020 OVERVIEW

Region 10's Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) continues to strengthen relationships across the region and to expand interoperability coordination within each of the member states. Planning efforts continue in preparation for the National Level Exercise (NLE) Cascadia Rising 2022. Region 10 RECCWG member states

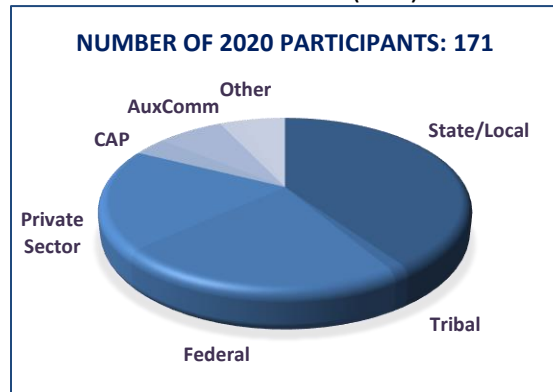


Figure 1: 2020 RECCWG Participation

experienced several disasters in 2020, and received seven Major Disaster Declarations, six Emergency Declarations, and 25 Fire Management Assistance Declarations.

Composed of the states of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, the Region 10 Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) worked diligently throughout 2020 alongside its federal and private sector partners, auxiliary communications (AuxComm) volunteers, and a host of enthusiastic professionals who lent

their time and expertise to advance communications interoperability across the region. The notable growth in participation is attributed to the RECCWG's goal of representing the whole community. They added new partners from the private sector and increased representation by the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), AuxComm. RECCWG participation in 2020 shown in **Figure 1**.

Region 10 experienced major disasters in all four states from wildfires, the COVID-19 pandemic, and civil unrest. In addition to natural disasters, RECCWG members responded to and reported on numerous incidents and planned events that required interoperability among field personnel, command centers, volunteer organizations, and local agencies. Each event posed a unique set of challenges that responders and officials, many of whom are members of the RECCWG, were able to solve and learn from, thanks in part to close collaboration with their peers in the region and across the country.

**In 2020, Region 10 states and tribal nations received seven Major Disaster Declarations, six Emergency Declarations, and 25 Fire Management Assistance Declarations.**

COVID-19, which sparked a nationwide pandemic, highlighted the value of the RECCWGs. The new working environment in CY2020 had a direct impact on the participation and membership of the RECCWGs due to the shift towards increased virtual support and collaboration across jurisdictions. The Region 10 RECCWG worked together and discussed issues regarding access control, travel restrictions and testing requirements, as well as best practices setting up communications for alternate care sites. The Region 10 RECCWG helped facilitate surge support to states with personnel needs by calling upon the RECCWG membership to provide knowledgeable and experienced support staff throughout 2020. ESF-2 and industry partners

established quarantine waivers for commercial and public safety surge responders and helped provide cross-state surge support and access to communications capabilities, as requested by states identifying a need. The events of CY2020 provide lessons learned to address in planning efforts for pandemics, cascading events and complex disasters moving forward.

As a diverse yet cohesive team, the RECCWG tackled many new challenges to interoperability in the region as the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) continued to grow and next-generation 911 (NG911) initiatives progressed. The year's events also underscored the criticality of well-functioning and universally compatible alert and warning systems. The technological advances of 2020 made it clear the collective expertise of communications professionals as a singular body is increasingly effective in shaping the future of interoperability among systems, both technologically and legislatively. Highlights of the RECCWG's

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*The Region 10 RECCWG overcame COVID-19 challenges by leveraging virtual platforms to maximize information sharing between RECCWG members.*

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accomplishments in 2020 are documented in this report and serve as examples of the advancements made within Region 10 and through the RECCWG program nationally. Similarly, priorities for 2021 have been set to leverage the extensive professional experience, comprehensive conversations and research, and close collaboration among member agencies within the region.

The Region 10 RECCWG was able to share lessons learned from the September wildfires in both Oregon and Washington at the virtual meeting in October. RECCWG members contributed valuable information which was incorporated into the Region 10 All Hazards Plan, the Alaska Response plan, and the Alaska Emergency Communications Annex to the Regional Emergency Communications Plan.

The Region 10 RECCWG continues to experience increases in participation each year. This continued membership growth demonstrates the value this work group provides to state and local responders. COVID-19 affected many of the scheduled meetings in 2020, forcing meeting organizers to shift the meetings to online, virtual information sharing platforms. The virtual environment expanded access to these meetings and led to increased participation across the Region. The Region 10 RECCWG added members from a wide range of emergency communications positions and first responders, across all levels of local, state, tribal, and federal government as well as private industry partners, non-governmental organizations (NGO), and amateur radio operators.

For additional information regarding the Region 10 RECCWG, please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region 10 Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), Laura Goudreau, at [Laura.Goudreau@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Laura.Goudreau@fema.dhs.gov), or 425-487-4706.

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

**Table 1: RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2020**

Name	Role or Agency
<b>RECCWG Leadership</b>	
Vincent Maykovich	RECCWG Chair, Region 10 Regional Administrator (Acting)
Ben Call	RECCWG Co-Chair/Idaho Military Division, Public Safety Communications (PSC), Branch Chief
Laura Goudreau	FEMA Region 10 Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC)
Richard Wilhelm	Department of Homeland Security, FEMA Region 10
Chris White	Department of Homeland Security, FEMA Region 10
Lloyd Kimball	Department of Homeland Security, FEMA Region 10
<b>Alaska (AK) Representatives</b>	
Chris Bishue	Anchorage Fire Department (outgoing member), Chief
Greg Eubank	Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM)
David Aragon	Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM), Communications Manager
Jim Larsen	American Radio Relay League (ARRL), Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES)
Rich Leber	Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR)
Brian Fisher	Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
Bill Galligan	Alaskan Command (ALCOM) / Joint Task Force Alaska (ATF-AK)
John Rockwell	Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)/Alaska State Troopers
Scott Nelson	Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM)
Del Smith	Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR)
<b>Idaho (ID) Representatives</b>	
Aaron Blake	Emergency Communications Program Manager at Idaho Office of Emergency Management
Buddy Jacob	City of Boise, ID, Communications
Brent Larson	Idaho Office of Emergency Management, Operations Section Chief
Craig Logan	Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission
Brian Shields	Idaho Office of Emergency Management, SWIC/ESF #2 Coordinator
Steve Woodall	SLIGP Program Manager (FirstNet)
<b>Oregon (OR) Representatives</b>	
Doug Jimenez	Oregon Office of Emergency Management
Mark Bucholz	Salem Police Department
James Gadsby	Bonneville Power Administration
Shawn Halsey	Umatilla Morrow Radio & Data District
Ken Kurth	ARRL
Erik Rau	Oregon OEM
David Rudawitz	Civil Air Patrol (CAP)
William Chapman	SWIC
Ron Wright	<i>(Agency not identified)</i>
Lisa Gorsuch	Oregon Public Utilities Commission, ESF-2
<b>Washington (WA) Representatives</b>	



## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

Name	Role or Agency
Steve Aberle	Clarke County, ARES/RACES
Sue Aberle	Clark County, ARES/RACES
Joshua Atkins	Pierce County Emergency Management
Frederick W. Baker	WA State Department of Transportation
Christopher Barnes	Spokane Emergency Management
Tamara Bartholdi	Washington Air National Guard
John Boal	City of Redmon
George Boswell	ARES
Jon Bromberg	Eastside Fire and Rescue
Michael Burk	Washington National Guard
Scott Dakers	Washington EMD
Mark Douglas	Washington Emergency Management Division
Robert Ezelle	Washington Military Department
Angie Fode	Adams County Sheriff's Office
Richard Hall	Washington State Military Department IT Division
Scott Honaker	Snohomish Emergency Management
C.M. Sam Jenkins	Ferry County ARES/RACES
Robert Lang	Washington Military Department (WMD)
Mark Glen	WMD Chief Information Officer
Matthew R. Modarelli	Washington Department of Transportation
Scott Mosley	Washington Air National Guard
Stan Nelson K7DKK	Pierce County ARES
Gary Nevius	Amateur Radio
Major Chuck Parsons	Washington Air National Guard
Jacob Rain	WMD – Emergency Management Division
Simone Ramel-McKay	Greater Spokane Department of Emergency Management
Justin Roach	Spokane County, Sr. Cyber Security System Administrator
Ons Saleh	City of Issaquah
Josh Shelton	City of Tacoma Emergency Management
Mark Sheppard	City of Seattle
Monte Simpson	Washington EMD
Frank Stasser	WA Wing CAP
Jeff Stidham	Washington State Emergency Net (Amateur Radio)
John (Jack) Tiley	ARRL, EWA Section Manager
Carrie Wentzel	Washington Air National Guard
Dee Williamson	Puget Sound Energy
Tribal Representatives	
Julie A. Jefferson	Lummi Nation
James Schaeffer	Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

Name	Role or Agency
Private Industry	
Mark Anderko	Mutualink
Justin Alwin	T-Mobile
George Barela	Verizon
Nieama Booker	Verizon
Kent Bacon	T-Mobile
Richard Braun	Marine Spill Response Corporation
Tim Brewer	T-Mobile
Bill Boni	T-Mobile
Mike Butterfield	Verizon
Lewis C. Curtis	Microsoft
Genevieve Dujenski	T-Mobile
Dustin English	T-Mobile
Tony Grat	T-Mobile
Robert Gordon	AT&T
Mark Haase	T-Mobile
Brian Hudnet	T-Mobile
Amir Khawaja	Verizon
Dave Kilker	AT&T
Kenny Mack	AT&T
Chandler Martelo	Verizon
John Melbert	T-Mobile
Carla Montrose	T-Mobile
Casey Muilenburg	T-Mobile
Lauren Paolini	AT&T FirstNet
Bill Peters	T-Mobile
Pierce Power	Teleira
Supriya Ramel-McKay	T-Mobile
Pati Scanlan	T-Mobile
Cory Sulenes	T-Mobile US
Carol Tagayun	AT&T
Robert Vickers	T-Mobile
Alan Valiev	Verizon
Rob Waites	AT&T
Federal Partners	
David Adsit	Department of Homeland Security, FEMA, Spectrum Manager
Terry Alverson	Department of Justice, ESF #13
Robin Baker	NCC-MARC
Andrew Bollenbacher	NOAA, National Weather Service

## 2020 RECCWG ANNUAL REPORT

Name	Role or Agency
Andy Brown	NOAA, National Weather Service
Matthew Butler	Department of Homeland Security, FEMA MERS Bothell
Vincent Crawford	GSA
Mike Foster	Department of Homeland Security, FEMA Region 7
Larry Harkleroad	Department of Homeland Security, FEMA MERS
Robert Hugi	Department of Homeland Security, CISA
Jeremy Johnson	Department of Homeland Security, CISA
Jessica Kaputa	Department of Homeland Security, CISA
Scott Kesler	Department of Homeland Security, HQ
Brian K. Kutz	Department of Justice
Mark MacAlester	Department of Homeland Security, CISA
Eric Main	Department of Homeland Security, FEMA DEC HQ
Artena Moon	Department of Homeland Security, CISA Emergency Communications Division
Richard Noble	Department of Homeland Security/ JWPMS Spectrum
Steve Noel	Department of Homeland Security, CISA
John O'Connor	Department of Homeland Security, CISA
Cathy Orcutt	Department of Homeland Security, CISA, Priority Access Representative
Jamie Rivas	FCC
Jo Robichaud	Department of Homeland Security, FEMA Region IV
Bruce Richter	Department of Homeland Security, CISA
Corey Royer	Department of Homeland Security, FEMA IMAT
Bill Schrier	First Responder Network Authority
John A. Sherrill	ARMY MARS
Brandon Smith	Department of Homeland Security, CISA
Matt Solum	NOAA, National Weather Service
Kristi Wilde	First Responder Network Authority
Scott Sweigart	Department of Homeland Security, FEMA Bothell MERS
Other Participants	
Rod Goosen	RoGO Fire
Sean Luangrath	Inergy
Lorraine Nelson	PC ARES
Mike Ping	ARES
Rodney Rohm	Rodney Rohm Enterprises
Ron Oja	Reliable Building and Remodeling
Jonathan Saad	Roadpost
Casey Schooley	REDi Healthcare Coalition
Eileen Sherrill	(Agency not identified)
Steve Waterman	SHARES

## 2020 RECCWG ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND 2021 PRIORITIES

The Region 10 RECCWG made significant progress in addressing many of its CY 2020 priorities, despite the persistent obstacles in place from COVID-19. Additionally, the RECCWG leveraged existing relationships and cultivated new strategies for cooperation to strengthen the region's capacity to meet the demands of responding to a catastrophic disaster during a global pandemic.

➤ **Accomplishment #1: Responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in a multi-faceted approach across jurisdictions and regions**

**Statutory Duty 1:** Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

The COVID-19 pandemic touched every aspect of life in the United States and led to an unprecedented period of response that is expected to last until at least 2021. Remote working became the new normal for nearly the entire United States to protect employees from potential exposure to COVID-19. The RECCWG in Region 10 excelled in adapting to telework and virtual coordination. In transitioning to a largely virtual environment, Region 10 continued to coordinate meetings and participate in cross-regional response efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19. All states and territories under Region 10 coordinated with ESF-2 partners during targeted meetings to assess the regional status of communications, such as

statewide land-mobile radio systems, 911 system loads and telecommunicator staff health and wellbeing, and impending communications needs for rapid buildouts of alternate care facilities and COVID-19 testing sites. Region 10 used Adobe Connect as an information sharing platform for real-world events, monthly educational webinars, and also as a standing site for RECCWG members to share and access emerging practices, fact sheets and other documents with members across the Region.

➤ **Accomplishment #2: Starlink's high-speed internet launches beta trials across Region 10**

SpaceX's new Starlink satellite internet service is coming at the appropriate time where remote work and remote learning are the new ways of life due to COVID-19. In coordination with Washington State ESF-2, one of the first communities to receive this service is the Hoh Tribe in Washington, who previously received internet speeds at 0.3 to 0.7Mbps. Starlink's satellite network is capable of delivering 100Mbps download speeds at a latency below 30 milliseconds. After implementing Starlink for the Hoh Tribe, residents say their children can finally access the internet for remote learning and provide the necessary healthcare for its citizens.

Washington State's ESF-2 also coordinated with Starlink to provide free service to affected communities. As affected communities continue to recover from the wildfires of 2020, residents are still connected to the internet because of extended beta tests throughout the state. Starlink also sent terminals and equipment to fire camps, armories, and areas without access to broadband internet throughout affected communities in Washington. In a town of approximately 200 people where about 80% of its buildings were completely destroyed, emergency responders have the support of Starlink internet to help residents rebuild and recover. This community received seven internet terminals to offer free public Wi-Fi and aid incident command vehicles.

➤ **Accomplishment #3: Completed Alaska's Emergency Communications Annex and the Alaska Response Plan in 2020**

RECCWG members have maintained their momentum in actively reporting on technology upgrades and other changes in the operational and political landscapes of their respective states and localities. Although the many changes are well documented in meeting summaries and reports, it is also important that FEMA and other response agencies have a clear picture of communications operations in each State and in Region 10 as a whole. State Emergency Communications Annexes provide the foundation for the Region 10 Regional Emergency Communications Plan (RECP), which allows FEMA to more effectively respond to a state's needs. Communications officials in State, local, and Tribal agencies, many of whom are also RECCWG members, are instrumental in updating the Region 10 Emergency Communications Plan through their participation in State Communications Annex updates. In 2020, in coordination with Alaska's SWIC, FEMA was able to work with Alaska state emergency communications personnel to update the State Emergency Communications Annex.

➤ **Priority #1: Conduct Region 10 RECCWG exercises to assess communications operability and interoperability and further develop ESF-2 capability/processes regionwide**

CY2020 started off with multiple planned exercises in accordance with the multiyear exercise plan implemented by the Region 10 RECCWG exercise development subcommittee. COVID-19's initial outbreak in Washington State affected scheduled events and trainings, and as the year progressed, COVID-19's effects eventually led to the cancellation of many of the scheduled drills and exercises involving ESF 2. RECCWG members continued to perform monthly HF interoperability exercises, but were unable to perform the two additional multistate exercises due to travel restrictions related to COVID-19 safety measures. These HF interoperability exercises test interoperability and allow states to plan how to successfully connect and communicate with each other prior to a real-world incident.

➤ **Accomplishment #4: Use of RECCWG to support identifying resources to provide cross-state mutual aid assistance**

**Statutory Duty 2:**

Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

In September 2020, the state of Oregon required assistance during its state of emergency due to the ongoing wildfires. Many communication sites were lost, and coordination of the response required additional staffing resources. The Region 10 RECCWG helped communicate a request for aid for specific communications resources, mobile communications vehicles, Communications Unit Leaders (COML), Communications Unit Technicians (COMT), and Information Technology Service Unit Leaders (ITSL). Requests for assistance were distributed using the RECCWG and the GovDelivery portal. Once resources were identified using this novel approach, Oregon worked with the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) to bring the needed resources to their state to support response and recovery efforts.

➤ **Priority #2: Develop regionwide emergency communications plans and procedures to respond to multistate incidents**

In 2021, RECCWG members will continue to collaborate with the Region 9 RECCWG for a Cascadia-like incident and other topics to build a cross-regional collaboration plan. In addition, members will continue to participate in the development of RECCWG exercises, state radio conferences, etc., with a priority for using virtual delivery platforms to effectively collaborate. Through these processes, Region 9 and 10 states can help identify areas for improving interoperability with border states that are not in their regions.

➤ **Priority #3: Build out the exercise and training portal to share capabilities, templates, and event information among RECCWG membership to prepare for state and regional exercises leading up to Cascadia Rising 2022**

The Region 10 RECCWG intends to continue to lead the nation in content development of the communications exercise (COMM-X) portal and further develop communication/ESF-2 exercises-in-a-box for stakeholder use. Stakeholder and player input from the current cycle of exercise development further enhanced the realism of the current COMM-X game and excited and challenged participants. Building on feedback from participants, RECCWG members in coordination with the Region 10 RECC, will continue to update the product and upload it for use by anyone who would like to use it for their exercises. In addition, each of the exercises the RECCWG coordinates or participates in will provide after-action reports using the template available to members on the portal. This approach allows members to not only understand the reporting process and have a tool to employ but also identify areas to improve and plan to test in the future exercises.

➤ **Accomplishment #5: Used emerging technology to address imagery capabilities gap**

**Statutory Duty 3:**

Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

Region 10 RECCWG members proved adept at meeting new challenges, especially when it comes to unique forms of imagery for damage assessments. Capturing damages from aircraft was challenging in Oregon during the 2020 wildfires due to the large amounts of smoke. However, a new Civil Air Patrol (CAP) capability, was able to provide 3-D, 360-degree views of affected areas. The new aerial imaging system was installed on the body of aircraft and programmed to take aerial photos automatically with the input of GPS coordinates. The software combines images together, as if being viewed from the ground in 3D – a capability that was not available until it was used in Oregon. The WaldoAir system was previously used by Nevada, California, and Washington before it was deployed to support Oregon

during the 2020 wildfires. This new way of capturing damages was favored by emergency communication professionals due to the system's ease of transmitting images to those who assess the damages and make informed decisions. Through RECCWG relationships, a partnership was developed with the FAA to help expedite clearance to take aerial photographs of affected areas.

The CAP gathered imagery provided clear visual evidence of damaged Land Mobile Radio and wireless service towers and communications systems. The imagery also enabled remote assessment of operational sites for fire damage. Photos were geotagged and were able to overlay with existing mapping software which helped make the data more accessible to decision-makers.

➤ **Priority 4: Continue to build relationships with tribal governments, the private sector, and NGOs to aid in response and preparedness**

In 2021, members will use partner outreach and the Cascadia Rising 2022 exercise development meetings for building stronger relationships with tribal leadership, the private industry, and NGOs. To meet this priority, the Region 10 RECCWG will meet to improve their capabilities, share lessons learned, and to test how well people and gear perform in a disaster environment. The ongoing virtual environment should provide additional opportunities to bring members together and the RECCWG will continue to use plenaries and exercises held in other states to reach out to tribal partners, the private sector, and NGOs to participate in and build relationships.

➤ **Priority 5: Bring together state and regional personnel to host joint workgroup meetings to build cross-state collaboration**

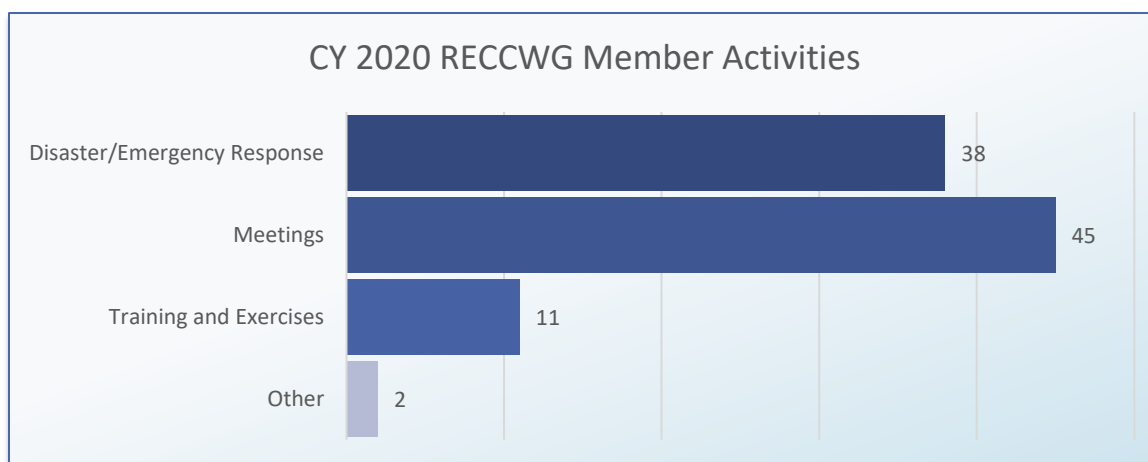
Since 2016, the Region 10 RECCWG has held virtual RECCWG meetings in conjunction with in-person RECCWG plenary sessions. This approach increased cross-state collaboration and access to information for members across the Region. The experience gained from hosting virtual events over the years, eased the transition to a fully virtual environment for RECCWG meetings in 2020. Although cancelled due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Region 9 and Region 10 RECCWGs were scheduled to hold a joint-RECCWG Plenary session in Monterrey, CA in 2020. With continued



work-disruption expected in 2021 due to COVID-19, the Region 10 RECCWG will find new ways to leverage the access provided by virtual information sharing platforms, to bring together more members across the region.

### CY 2020 REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

Partners across Region 10 enhanced emergency communications through their support of real-world events and disaster response; attendance at training courses, workshops, and conferences; and their efforts to create and participate in exercise scenarios aimed at closing the gaps in communication across the region. **Figure 3** provides a summary of these events.



**Figure 3:** 2020 Regional Events

**Table 2** lists incident responses, planning activities, trainings, exercises, briefings, coordination efforts, and other events sponsored or hosted by a state where awareness, participation, and/or information sharing were coordinated through the Region 10 RECCWG.

**Table 2.** Regional Coordinating Activities

REGION 10		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
Disaster/Emergency Response	1/19/2020	Alaska - COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4522-AK) Major Disaster Declaration declared on April 8, 2020
	1/19/2020	Alaska – COVID-19 (EM-3446-AK) Emergency Declaration declared on March 12, 2020
	1/19/2020	Idaho – COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4534-ID) Major Disaster Declaration declared on April 8, 2020
	1/19/2020	Idaho – COVID-19 (EM-3467-ID) Emergency Declaration declared on March 12, 2020
	1/20/2020	Oregon – COVID-19 (EM-3429-OR) Emergency Declaration declared on March 13, 2020

REGION 10		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
	1/20/2020	Oregon – COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4499-OR) Major Disaster Declaration declared on March 28, 2020
	2/5/2020 – 2/9/2020	Oregon – Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (DR-4519-OR) Major Disaster Declaration declared on April 3, 2020
	8/12/2020	Oregon – Mosier Creek Fire (FM-5327-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on August 13, 2020
	8/17/2020	Oregon – White River Fire (FM-5341-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on August 28, 2020
	9/8/2020	Oregon – Holiday Farm Fire (FM-5357-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 8, 2020
	9/8/2020	Oregon – Powerline Fire (FM-5358-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 8, 2020
	9/7/2020	Oregon – Beachie Creek Lionshead Complex (FM-5356-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 8, 2020
	9/7/2020	Oregon – Two Four Two Fire (FM-5354-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 8, 2020
	9/8/2020	Oregon – Almeda Glendower Fire (FM-5364-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration Declared on September 9, 2020
	9/8/2020	Oregon – Archie Creek Fire (FM-5365-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 9, 2020
	9/8/2020	Oregon – Riverside Fire (FM-5366-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 9, 2020
	9/8/2020	Oregon – South Obenchain Fire (FM-5367-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 9, 2020

REGION 10		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
	9/8/2020	Oregon – Echo Mountain Fire Complex (FM-5362-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 9, 2020
	9/8/2020	Oregon – Wildfires (EM-3542-OR) Emergency Declaration declared on September 10, 2020
	9/8/2020	Oregon – Clakamas County Fire Complex (FM-5370-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 10, 2020
	9/8/2020	Oregon – Chehalem Mountain Bald Peak Fire (FM-5371-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 10, 2020
	9/8/2020	Oregon – Slater Fire (FM-5368-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 10, 2020
	9/12/2020	Oregon – Brattain Fire (FM-5371-OR) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 12, 2020
	9/7/2020	Oregon – Wildfires and Straight-line Winds (DR-4562-OR) Major Disaster Declaration declared on September 15, 2020
	1/20/2020	Tulalip Tribes of Washington – COVID-19 (EM-3507-WA) Emergency Declaration declared on March 13, 2020
	1/20/2020	Washington – COVID-19 (EM-3427-WA) Emergency Declaration declared on March 13, 2020
	1/20/2020	Washington – COVID-19 Pandemic (DR-4481-WA) Major Disaster Declaration declared on March 22, 2020
	1/20/2020 – 2/10/2020	Washington – Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (DR-4539-WA) Major Disaster Declaration declared on April 23, 2020
	7/11/2020	Washington – Road 11 Fire (FM-5320-WA) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on July 12, 2020
	7/27/2020	Washington – Anglin Fire (FM-5323-WA) Fire Management Assistance Declaration Declared on July 28, 2020

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REGION 10		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
	8/16/2020	Washington – North Brownstown Fire (FM-5330-WA) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on August 17, 2020
	8/20/2020	Washington – Palmer Fire (FM-5337-WA) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on August 20, 2020
	9/1/2020	Washington – Evans Canyon Fire (FM-5342-WA) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 1, 2020
	9/7/2020	Washington – Cold Springs/ Pearl Hill Fire (FM-5351-WA) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 7, 2020
	9/7/2020	Washington – Apple Acres Fire (FM-5352-WA) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 7, 2020
	9/7/2020	Washington – Babb Fire (FM-5355-WA) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 8, 2020
	9/8/2020	Washington – Bordeaux Road Fire (FM-5359-WA) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 9, 2020
	9/8/2020	Washington – Sumner Grade Fire (FM-5360-WA) Fire Management Assistance Declaration declared on September 9, 2020
Teleconferences and Meetings (incl. virtual)	2/5/2020	ALMR Alaska Land Mobile Radio User Council Meeting
	2/15/2020	Salem Ham Swap Meet Fair
	2/20/2020	WECCWG Meeting at Washington SEOC – Public and Private Coordination During a Disaster
	2/20/2020	Alaska Partners in Infrastructure Protection (APIP) Meeting
	3/5/2020	IPSCC Meeting – Ada County ID PSAP
	3/7/2020	Electronics Show & Swap Meet. Puyallup, WA
	3/8/2020 – 3/13/2020	Oregon Executive Development Institute (OEDI) Annual Session in Silverton, OR

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REGION 10		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
	3/16/2020	WA State APCO/NENA Spring Forum – Kitsap 911
	3/17/2020 – 3/19/2020	OR APCO-NENA Quarterly Meeting 2020 at Hood River, OR
	3/19/2020	Alaska Partners in Infrastructure Protection (APIP) meeting/exercise
	4/1/2020	ALMR Alaska Land Mobile Radio User Council Meeting
	4/16/2020	Alaska Spring Preparedness Conference in Anchorage
	4/16/2020	Alaska Partners in Infrastructure (APIP) Meeting
	4/16/2020	ALMR Alaska Land Mobile Radio Executive Council Meeting
	5/6/2020	ALMR Alaska Mobile Radio User Council Meeting
	5/7/2020	IPSCC Meeting – Eastern ID
	5/12/2020	FEMA Region 10 AUXCOM Meeting
	5/21/2020	Alaska Partners in Infrastructure Protection (APIP) Meeting
	6/3/2020	ALMR Alaska Land Mobile Radio User Council Meeting
	6/9/2020	FEMA Region 10 AUXCOM Meeting
	6/18/2020	Washington State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) Virtual Meeting
	6/23/2020	Oregon State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) Virtual Meeting
	7/1/2020	ALMR Alaska Land Mobile Radio User Council Meeting
	7/14/2020	Region 10 AUXCOM Meeting
	7/16/2020	ALMR Alaska Land Mobile Radio Executive Council Meeting
	8/5/2020	ALMR Alaska Land Mobile Radio User Council Meeting
	8/11/2020	FEMA Region 10 AUXCOM Meeting
	8/20/2020	Region 10 RECCWG, Virtual
	9/2/2020	ALMR Alaska Land Mobile Radio User Council Meeting
	9/3/2020	IPSCC Meeting – North Idaho
	9/8/2020	FEMA Region 10 AUXCOM Meeting
	10/7/2020	ALMR Alaska Land Mobile Radio User Council Meeting

REGION 10		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
	10/13/2020	FEMA Region 10 AUXCOM Meeting
	10/15/2020	ALMR Alaska Land Mobile Radio Executive Council Meeting
	10/21/2020	Region 10 RECCWG, Virtual
	10/29/2020	RECC Webinar
	11/4/2020	ALMR Alaska Land Mobile Radio User Council Meeting
	11/5/2020	IPSCC Meeting
	11/9/2020	Washington/Oregon Regional Joint Interoperability Committee Meeting
	11/10/2020	FEMA Region 10 AUXCOM Meeting
	11/19/2020	GETS/WPS User Council Webinar
	11/20/2020	SHARES Interoperability Working Group Meeting
	12/2/2020	ALMR Alaska Land Mobile Radio User Council Meeting
	1/25/2020 – 1/26/2020	ACES Basic Course for Amateur Radio Operators. Bremerton, WA
Training and Exercises	1/28/2020 – 1/30/2020	MGT-346 EOC Operations and Planning for All Hazards, Coeur d'Alene, ID
	1/28/2020 – 1/30/2020	Federal Risk Management Process Training Program
	2/19/2020	Region 10 HF Interoperability Exercise
	2/22/2020 – 2/23/2020	ACES Basic Course for Amateur Radio Operators. Kirkland, WA
	6/17/2020	Region 10 HF Interoperability Exercise
	7/15/2020	Region 10 HF Interoperability Exercise
	8/19/2020	Region 10 HF Interoperability Exercise
	9/16/2020	Region 10 HF Interoperability Exercise
	10/21/2020	Region 10 HF Interoperability Exercise
	11/18/2020	Region 10 HF Interoperability Exercise
	12/16/2020	Region 10 HF Interoperability Exercise
Other (e.g., communications innovations, technology refresh, statewide system upgrades)	2020	The state of Oregon, through OR-Alert, is working to provide statewide access to modern, interoperable alerts, warnings, and notification (AWN) capabilities and to enable real-time sharing of hazard information across Oregon. Currently, 16 of 36 counties within Oregon lack the ability to reach wireless subscribers via FEMA's Integrated Alerts and Warnings System (IPAWs) and can only reach users that

REGION 10		
TYPE	DATE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
		have opted-in to a local AWN system. OR-Alert has implemented a program to ensure all counties have the capability to receive timely AWNs across multiple channels, including text, landline and cellular voice, social media, and broadcast media by mid-2021.
	2020	The state of Idaho is in process of implementing a statewide encryption of several Law Enforcement channels that required significant coordination with local agencies. The EMS and Transportation department systems are upgrading their repeater systems to Internet Protocol capable equipment.