



THE HSIN ADVOCATE

A Message from Margie Graves

Principal Deputy Chief Information Officer at the Department of Homeland Security

Making Active Collaboration Standard Practice

Nothing is more critical to the homeland security mission than information sharing. It is one of the critical reasons that Congress created DHS after the 9/11 attacks. Our goal is to make information accessible so that those with a need to know can connect dots, derive conclusions and maintain a level of situational awareness that makes it possible to take action as a situation warrants. HSIN is a key tool in this process. As a secure foundation for information sharing, HSIN makes it possible for federal, state, local, tribal, territorial, private sector and international partners to work together more closely. The platform makes it easy to push information to partners so that the regional and national state of play can be shared while also enabling agencies to find and retrieve information to support their specific mission objectives.

Even with the best tools, simply posting information in a central location doesn't meet our complex security needs. Information is most valuable when it is actionable. HSIN is unique in that it recognizes that no two operations are the same and may require different strategies. The inherent flexibility of the platform enables each HSIN community to determine what type of information should be shared and who can access it. Mission owners can also set the parameters for how that information impacts their operations. HSIN then provides the tools necessary to support active, real-time collaboration.

During the response to the 2013 **Boston Marathon** bombing, we were able to coordinate response efforts

immediately. Raw data from the field was being shared in real time so that law enforcement and intelligence officials from across the country were able to not only track what was happening, but also support the investigative process. As leads were identified, partner agencies were able to follow up and provide actionable intelligence. HSIN made this level of active collaboration possible.

With any major event or public gathering, there's the potential for nefarious activity. However, we cannot live in a state of fear. Instead, we must take every necessary step to create an information sharing framework that makes it possible to respond effectively to threats against our public safety. Now, because of HSIN, we have a direct link to maintain situational awareness. During events like the G-8 summit or the papal visit, we can coordinate more effectively, so that if something were to happen, we have the ability to provide a coordinated response and get help to those that need it.

Within the secure HSIN environment, users can spot activities that may not seem suspicious on their own, but are actually representative of larger trends. The ability to recognize these patterns can help prevent an incident from occurring. In this way, HSIN has become a centerpiece for law enforcement communications and provides a strong backbone for partnerships between DHS and their state and local counterparts.

And we're continuing to expand these capabilities. We are currently working to increase cyber-related information sharing

MARCH 2016

Coordinating Efforts in the Ciudad Juárez Border Region

Rapid Information Sharing to Rescue the Alaska Ranger Crew

Spotlight on a Mission Advocate

Keeping Partners Up to Speed 24/7

Supporting Security During March Madness



to support all 17 critical infrastructure sectors. We're adding features and tools to enhance our analytics and the ability to derive conclusions and strengthen our intelligence. As we add partners, we're also making it easier to find needed information and reduce redundancy.

As HSIN users, the more information you share and the more partners you bring onto the platform, the better able we all are to achieve the DHS mission. In this way, the goal of information sharing can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Expanding Access to Geospatial Resources

Recently, the Homeland Infrastructure Foundation-Level Data (HIFLD) Subcommittee made 275 geospatial datasets available to the public to support community preparedness, resiliency, research and more. Known as HIFLD Open, the datasets are downloadable from the [HIFLD website](#) and do not require HSIN membership to access. Making this data publicly accessible is intended to help build a more transparent and collaborative ecosystem for information sharing as part of a whole-of-nation approach to homeland security.

To learn more about HIFLD Open, visit <https://gii.dhs.gov/hifld/data/open>.



Cross-Border Papal Mass: Coordinating Efforts in the Ciudad Juárez Border Region

On Feb. 17, Pope Francis visited Ciudad Juárez as the last stop during his trip to Mexico and held Mass within 300 yards of the U.S.-Mexico border. For the tens of thousands of people that didn't cross into Mexico, the pope's Mass was streamed live on large screens set up on the El Paso, Texas side of the international boundary and in the 50,000-person Sun Bowl stadium. Throughout the pope's visit and in the weeks leading up to it, HSIN was relied on by federal, state and local partners to support information sharing and situational awareness.

Using HSIN, partner agencies were able to seamlessly share status updates related to the pope's schedule, travel routes and traffic status, locations of mass gatherings, threat assessments and related public safety activities. Throughout the entire visit, partner agencies also used HSIN to identify and track significant incidents in real time across multiple stakeholders.

"HSIN was instrumental to our information sharing efforts," said Felipe Payan, crime



Image of the El Paso Emergency Operations Center during the cross-border papal mass

analyst with the Multi-Agency Tactical Response Information eXchange (MATRIX) fusion center. "We were able to share information with other federal and state agencies as well as officers in the field. This would have been impossible without HSIN."

This event was the first time the MATRIX fusion center relied on HSIN to support coordinated information sharing. [You can read more about the benefits HSIN brought to their operations on HSIN Central](#).

HSIN History: Rapid Information Sharing to Rescue the Alaska Ranger Crew

On March 22, 2008, the 203-foot Alaska Ranger, a Seattle-based commercial fishing boat, sank off the coast of the Aleutian Islands. Forty-two of the 47 crew members on board abandoned ship, but the Ranger's three life boats were separated from the ship before the crew could board them. Considered one of the U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) most challenging rescue operations, USCG personnel battled 15-foot seas, 30-knot winds and a wind chill of minus 24 to rescue 42 crew members from the freezing waters of the Bering Sea.

In one of its earliest uses, HSIN was used by Coast Guard personnel during the rescue of the Ranger's crew to coordinate operations among two USCG helicopters, a C-130 plane and the Cutter Munro, along with the Ranger's sister ship, the Alaska Warrior. After receiving radio calls from crew members about

the ship's sinking, the Coast Guard dispatched helicopters to the area while the Munro made its way towards the Ranger. Coast Guard helicopters and the Warrior were able to pull survivors out of the water and expedite medical aid, as most survivors were already suffering from severe hypothermia. HSIN played a key role in the operation by providing situational awareness for USCG leaders at all levels and aiding in the efficient deployment of resources during this dangerous operation.

For the HSIN Program, the rescue of the Alaska Ranger's crew was an early instance of information sharing between federal and private partners in an emergency situation. HSIN enabled emergency responders to share information about rapidly deteriorating weather conditions, the ship's last location and the location of survivors



Image of the Alaska Ranger rescue from the Coast Guard Cutter Munro

spread out across nearly a mile-long stretch of open water, under cover of darkness.

You can read this and other success stories from HSIN Program history on the [10-year anniversary page on HSIN Central](#).

Spotlight on a Mission Advocate Understanding Information Sharing from the User Side



By Lead Mission Advocate Jim Mackin

Having worked for 27 years as a special agent with the United States Secret Service, I understand the impact and tremendous responsibility local, state, federal, tribal and territorial partners have and the importance effective information sharing plays in a successful operation. I retired from the Secret Service as a deputy assistant director in the Office of Protective Operations and I know that we could not have completed our mission successfully without these partnerships; we relied on them every day. Now that I am the lead mission advocate for the HSIN Program my role has changed, but the goal has not, by helping stakeholders across the homeland security enterprise understand the benefits of information sharing and implementing best practice strategies to achieve mission success.

Though I'm located in the HSIN Program Management Office in Washington, D.C., our team of 18 mission advocates are stationed across the country to support our users' information sharing needs. Like me, every member of the HSIN Outreach team has experience from the user side of information

sharing, which gives us necessary insight into how we can best support HSIN users.

In the time that I've been with the HSIN Program, we've seen a significant increase in the scope and usage of HSIN at large events, thanks to our growing reputation among users. But we've also seen a significant increase in the scope and scale of HSIN usage on a daily basis, for law enforcement, emergency management, and a whole host of public safety needs. These efforts are integral to the homeland security mission. Large-scale events deservedly get a lot of attention due to the massive effort they require. However, it's the increased daily and steady state use of HSIN that we're seeing that lets me know that we're making a difference every day, by supporting the people who work to secure the homeland and respond to incidents or events.

The importance of information sharing cannot be overstated and it's an honor to be a part of this effort to expand and support the partnerships that keep our nation safe. Everyone who is a part of this effort should be proud of their role, efforts and contributions.

If you want more information on how we can help you get the most out of your information sharing and collaboration efforts, contact us today at HSIN.Outreach@hq.dhs.gov.

Keeping Partners Up to Speed 24/7

For U.S. Coast Guard Sector Honolulu, search and rescues play a large part of their standard mission operations. Search and rescue mission coordinators (SMCs) stand weekly watches to provide command decisions for all active operations. Keeping the SMC and all supporting staff informed with the latest information is vital. HSIN makes it possible for everyone to have access to the same information, no matter if they are in the office, on a vessel or even at home.

"We post everything to HSIN," explained Command Intelligence Officer Lt. Scott Branner, "images of the vessel in distress, screen shots of intended search patterns and everything for our physical status board in the office. Because an SMC has to stand duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week, we can provide a verbal brief over the phone and while they access all the supporting details on HSIN. This is an incredible benefit."



Image of the Haleiwa Beach Park incident command post during search efforts for 12 Marine aviators

Recently, when two U.S. Marine helicopters collided and 12 service members were lost at sea, the search and rescue operation was expanded to include non-traditional partners. Using HSIN, everyone was able to coordinate their efforts so that the search could be affected as efficiently and broadly as possible. [You can read more about how HSIN has impacted their operations on HSIN Central](#).

Making It Easier to Share Best Practices



HSIN users and community managers now have a new resource to help them get the most out of their HSIN experience. The newly revamped **Best Practices** section on HSIN Central makes accessing the best advice and lessons learned from fellow HSIN users and HSIN Mission Advocates easier than ever.

If you have a best practice or lesson learned regarding how HSIN supports your operations, [let us know](#) and we'll share it with the HSIN community.

Best Practices CoE: Using HSIN to Support Exercises

During the April Best Practices Community of Excellence session, Mission Advocate Jonathan Abbassi will walk through many of the lessons learned and best practice approaches for using HSIN during exercise planning and conduct. The discussion will include: how facilitators can use HSIN Connect to inject new data or scenarios into the exercise; creating a Master Scenario Event List tool in HSIN; and how to use HSIN as a Master Control Cell. Join us on **Tuesday, April 19, at 1 p.m. EDT** to take part in the discussion.

For more information and to register for the session, contact HSIN.Outreach@hq.dhs.gov!

Supporting Security During March Madness

The 2016 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament kicked off on Thursday, March 17 across the country with 16 games a day for three days in eight locations stretching from coast to coast. The NCAA Tournament requires extensive coordination efforts to provide security for tens of thousands of fans. Nine teams and their fans gathered in Providence, Rhode Island for six of the season's first playoff games on March 17 and March 19.

The Rhode Island Fusion Center and Rhode Island State Police routinely use HSIN to maintain situational awareness during large events and support daily operations. When it came time for the tournament, it made sense to turn to HSIN as personnel were already well-versed in its capabilities and benefits. In Providence, HSIN was used as the primary information sharing platform for public safety and security personnel from the moment teams and fans began arriving and throughout the tournament.

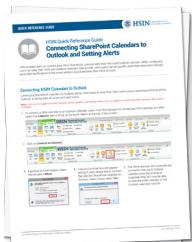
In January, HSIN was used by the Rhode Island State Fusion Center to facilitate situational awareness for the state



emergency operations center and to brief Governor Gina Raimondo on the state's emergency preparedness and response during Winter Storm Jonas. From major events to inclement weather, HSIN supports Rhode Island personnel in meeting their mission.

If you want more information on how HSIN mission advocates can help you get the most out of your information sharing and collaboration efforts, contact us today at HSIN.Outreach@hq.dhs.gov.

New Resources Available!



Connecting Calendars and Setting Alerts

Did you know that HSIN makes it possible to connect and synchronize your HSIN SharePoint calendars with your personal calendar in Outlook? When configured properly, you can view your HSIN and Outlook calendars side-by-side and set alerts to be automatically about updates.

Check out this new quick reference guide on the Training section of HSIN Central to learn how to set this up!



Updating Your HSIN Password

For security reasons, HSIN requires you to update your password every 90 days. The simplest way to reset your password is to click the "Reset Your Password" link in the HSIN log-in page and follow the steps provided. However, there are times when other mitigating factors impact the standard process for password resets. To assist you, we have created a simple, frequently asked questions quick reference guide that will help you through the process. You can find this attached to the email with the March edition of the HSIN Advocate and stored with other **frequently asked question materials on HSIN Central**.

Watch Now!



In the latest HSIN video, Trish Hukill, senior intelligence analyst at the Northern Virginia Regional Intelligence Center, discusses how HSIN is used to support day-to-day operations in the National Capital Region, including special events like the World Police and Fire Games and Pope Francis' visit to the United States.

[You can watch this and other videos on HSIN Central.](#)

HSIN Learn



HSIN is about more than just accessing information. It's about sharing knowledge, resources and materials. We invite you to [check out HSIN Learn today](#) to help you get the most out of HSIN. These courses and more can be taken at a time and location that meets your schedule:

-  [HSIN Basics](#)
-  [Site Owners](#)
-  [HSIN Connect](#)
-  [HSIN Box](#)
-  [HSIN Notify](#)
-  [HSIN Chat](#)

