

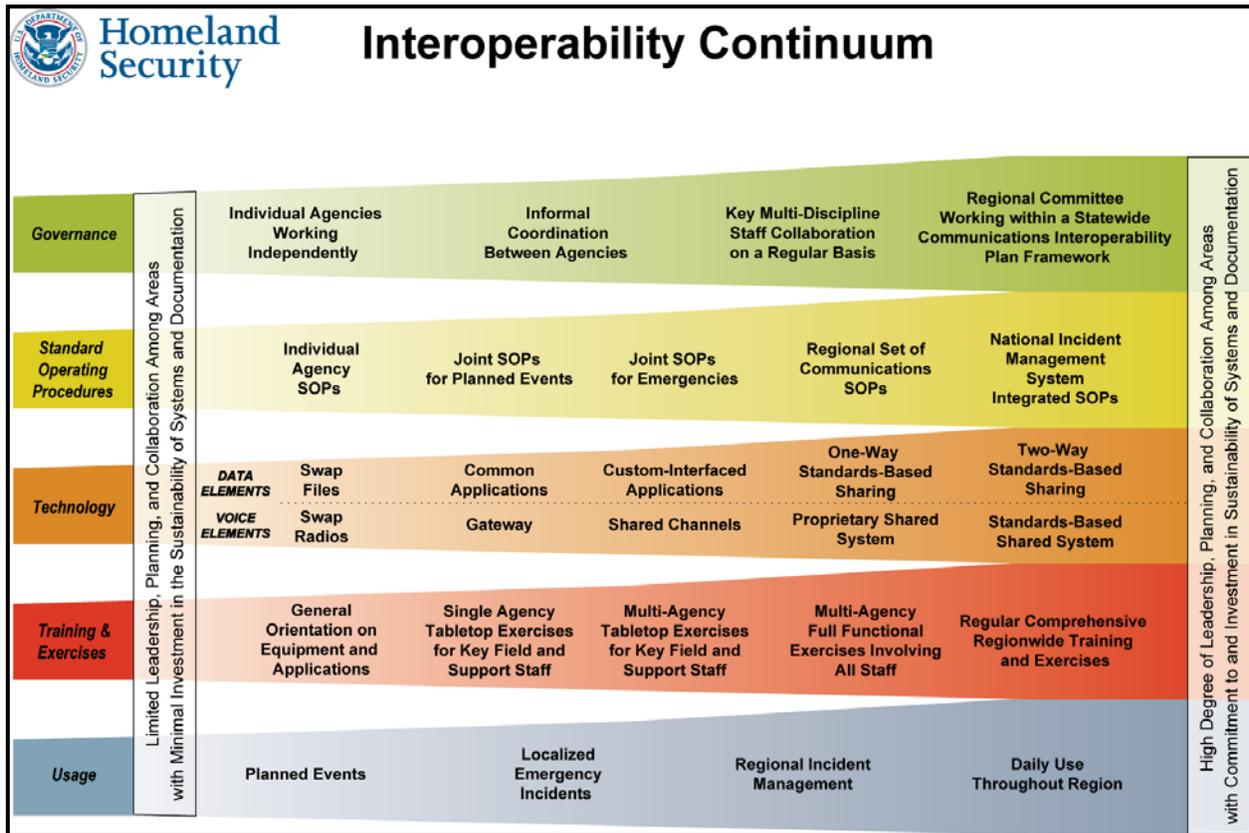


Texas Communications Capabilities Assessment Instructions

Working together, we can achieve our vision — Emergency responders can communicate “as needed, on demand, and as authorized at all levels of government and across all disciplines.” —National Emergency Communications Plan

Introduction

The National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) establishes three performance goals and a range of capabilities for emergency responders to build to¹. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) will assess the Nation’s progress in meeting these outcome-oriented goals by conducting evaluations of exercises, planned events, and actual incidents. It will also require that State, local, and tribal governments to assess and report on their capabilities to attain and maintain interoperability across the five dimensions of the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum².



¹ “Emergency Communications Capabilities Needed To Achieve Future State.” *National Emergency Communications Plan*. July 2008. Page 8.

² Information on the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum can be found online at http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/library/interoperabilitybasics/1190_interoperabilitycontinuum.htm.

Capability assessments can identify challenges and successes and help you build effective strategies for achieving and sustaining interoperability. These assessments should reflect how well the UASIs and regions have planned and prioritized funding for critical needs and advanced along the Interoperability Continuum, as well as identifying vital programs and resources still needed.

Background — the National Emergency Communications Plan

Goal 1—By 2010, 90 percent of all high-risk urban areas designated within the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) are able to demonstrate response-level emergency communications within one hour for routine events involving multiple jurisdictions and agencies.

Goal 2—By 2011, 75 percent of non-UASI jurisdictions are able to demonstrate response-level emergency communications within one hour for routine events involving multiple jurisdictions and agencies.

Goal 3—By 2013, 75 percent of all jurisdictions are able to demonstrate response-level emergency communications within three hours, in the event of a significant incident as outlined in national planning scenarios.

(Response-level emergency communication refers to the capacity of individuals with primary operational leadership responsibility to manage resources and make timely decisions during an incident involving multiple agencies, without technical or procedural communications impediments.)

The NECP establishes a vision for future communications interoperability. Its three goals target the Nation’s ability to assure **response-level emergency communications**³, first during routine operations and, ultimately, during significant incidents as outlined in national planning scenarios⁴. For the purpose of evaluating progress in implementing the NECP, capabilities will be assessed along the dimensions of the Continuum.

NECP Goal 1 & 2 Assessments (Demonstrations & Capabilities)

NECP Goals 1 and 2 target the routine communications interoperability of UASI and non-UASI jurisdictions, respectively. Evaluations of progress in meeting both will combine assessments of **capabilities** with those of actual **performance**.

For Goal 1, OEC teams of peers and subject matter experts will observe *response-level emergency communications* during planned events, such as large sporting events and public gatherings.

For Goal 2, jurisdictions across counties and/or similar geographic subdivisions will be asked to assess their individual performance using a self-evaluation tool.

Capabilities data will be collected through the assistance and guidance of Mike Simpson, the Texas Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC).

³ Response-level emergency communications refers to the capacity of individuals with primary operational leadership responsibility to manage resources and make timely decisions during an incident involving multiple agencies, without technical or procedural communications impediments.

⁴ Information on the National Planning Scenarios can be found online at http://www.fema.gov/pdf/media/factsheets/2009/npd_natl_plan_scenario.pdf.

Progress in meeting the NECP Goals must be reported through required annual SCIP Implementation Reports. Federal Fiscal Year 2010 Implementation Reports will include results for each UASI region within the State. The report will also describe the methodology that will be used for countywide assessments in 2011. Fiscal Year 2011 SCIP Implementation Reports will include the results of those Goal 2 demonstrations and a *capability assessment for each county in the State*.

Definitions:

Capabilities Assessment - The assessment of the highest levels of interoperable communications capabilities within a UASI region, county, or tribal community to evaluate progress in meeting Goals 1 and 2 of the National Emergency Communications Plan.

NECP Goals Evaluations - Assessments of progress in meeting national goals for communications interoperability established in the National Emergency Communications Plan. Goals 1 and 2 will be evaluated through a two-part process involving assessment of capabilities and actual performance.

SWIC - Statewide Interoperability Coordinator. Mike Simpson is the individual designated in Texas, by the Governor, as the single point of contact responsible for managing the SCIP and its implementation.

Capabilities Assessment Questions and Decision Trees

The following section provides a tool for evaluating interoperable communications capabilities for NECP assessment purposes. Lanes of the Interoperability Continuum are shown with statements describing various stages of capabilities development ranging from Early through Advanced. Each lane is accompanied by a decision tree with key questions that differentiate stages of development. The first question is used to distinguish Early and Intermediate stages from Established and Advanced stages of development. Depending on your answer to the first question, you will then answer a subsequent question to either distinguish Early from Intermediate stages or Established from Advanced stages.

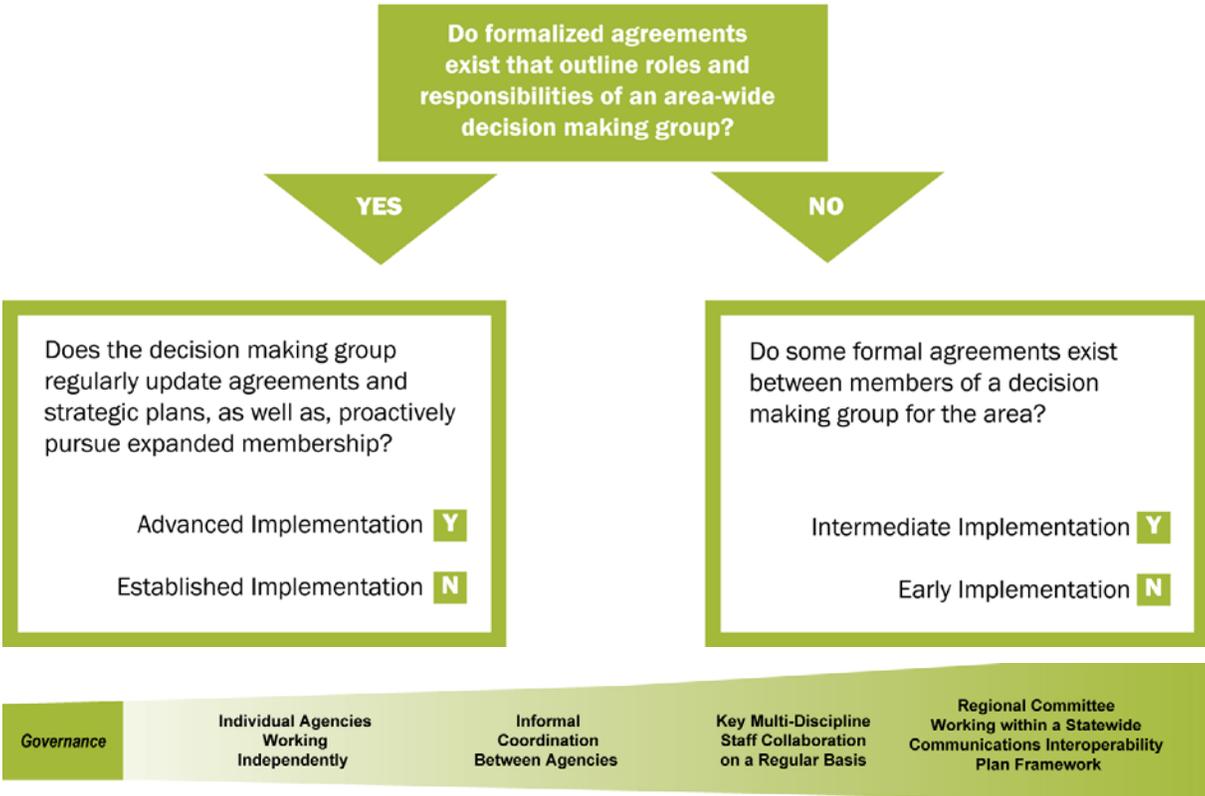
Respondents should not feel pressured to identify an Advanced stage of development for each lane of the Continuum. *An honest assessment will ensure that time and resources are appropriately dedicated to the interoperable communications effort.* Furthermore, each area has its own unique capability requirements and needs. These requirements and needs—based on factors such as population density, geographical landscape, and location relative to bordering areas—determine the appropriate level of capability for an area. For instance, it may be determined that an Established stage of development is appropriate for a UASI whereas an Intermediate stage of development is equally appropriate for a non-UASI area in the same State.

Governance – The Decision Making Groups

What are we measuring: The formality of and level of participation in interagency partnerships, forums, or governing bodies established to address common interoperability interests in the area.

| Capability | Early Implementation | Intermediate Implementation | Established Implementation | Advanced Implementation |
|-------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Governance | Area decision-making groups are informal and do not yet have a strategic plan to guide collective communications interoperability goals and funding. | Some <i>formal</i> agreements exist and <i>informal</i> agreements are in practice among members of the decision making group for the area; Strategic and budget planning processes are beginning to be put in place. | Formal agreements outline the roles and responsibilities of an area-wide decision making group, which has an agreed upon strategic plan that addresses sustainable funding for collective, regional interoperable communications needs. | Area-wide decision making bodies proactively look to expand membership to ensure representation from broad public support disciplines and other levels of government, while updating their agreements and strategic plan on a regular basis. |

Decision Tree

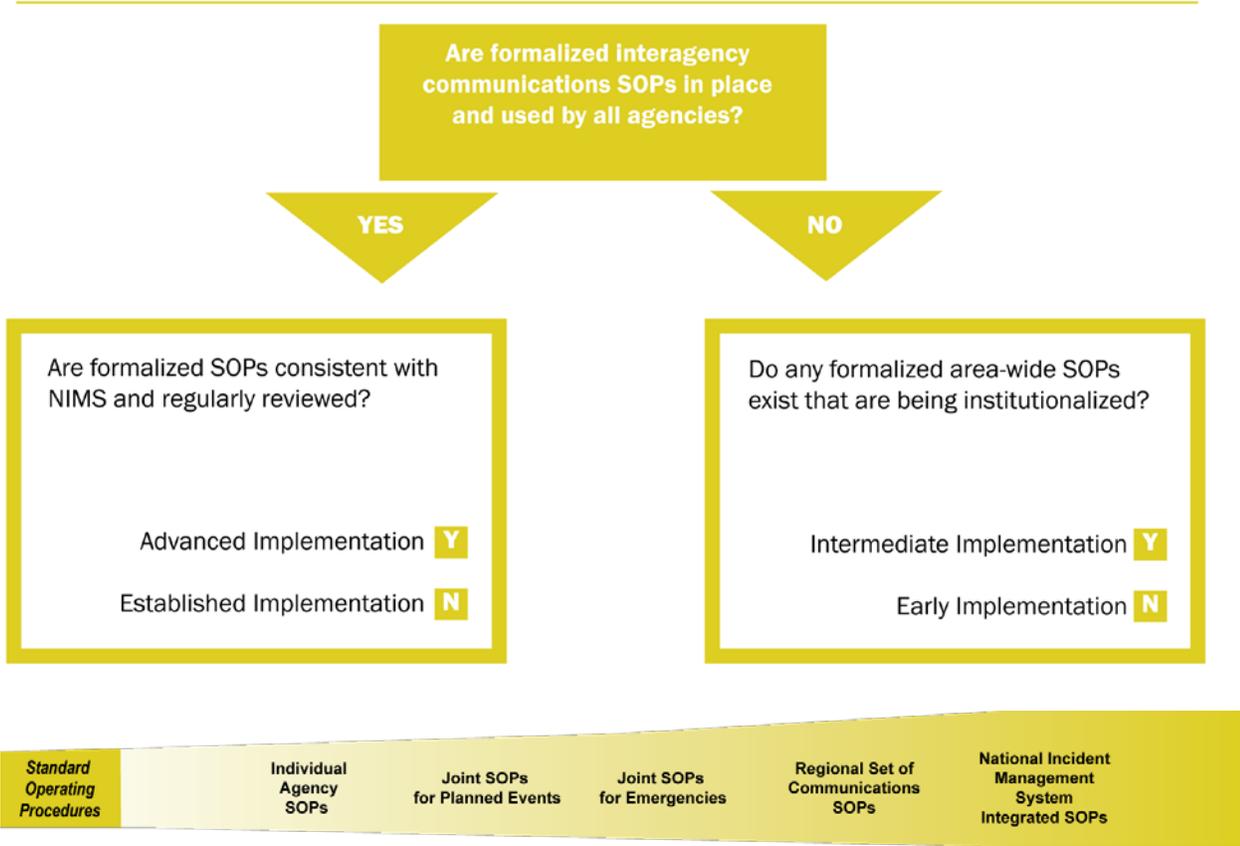


SOPs – Policies, Practices, and Procedures

What are we measuring: The level of adequacy, participation in developing, and consistency of formalized SOPs to address common interoperability interests in the area.

| Capability | Early Implementation | Intermediate Implementation | Established Implementation | Advanced Implementation |
|-------------|---|--|--|---|
| SOPs | Area-wide interoperable communications SOPs are not developed or have not been formalized and disseminated. | Some interoperable communications SOPs exist within the area and steps have been taken to institute these interoperability procedures among some agencies. | Interoperable communications SOPs are formalized and in use by all agencies within the area. Despite minor issues, SOPs are successfully used during responses and/or exercises. | Interoperable communications SOPs within the area are formalized and regularly reviewed. Additionally, NIMS procedures are well established among all agencies and disciplines. All needed procedures are effectively utilized during responses and/or exercises. |

Decision Tree

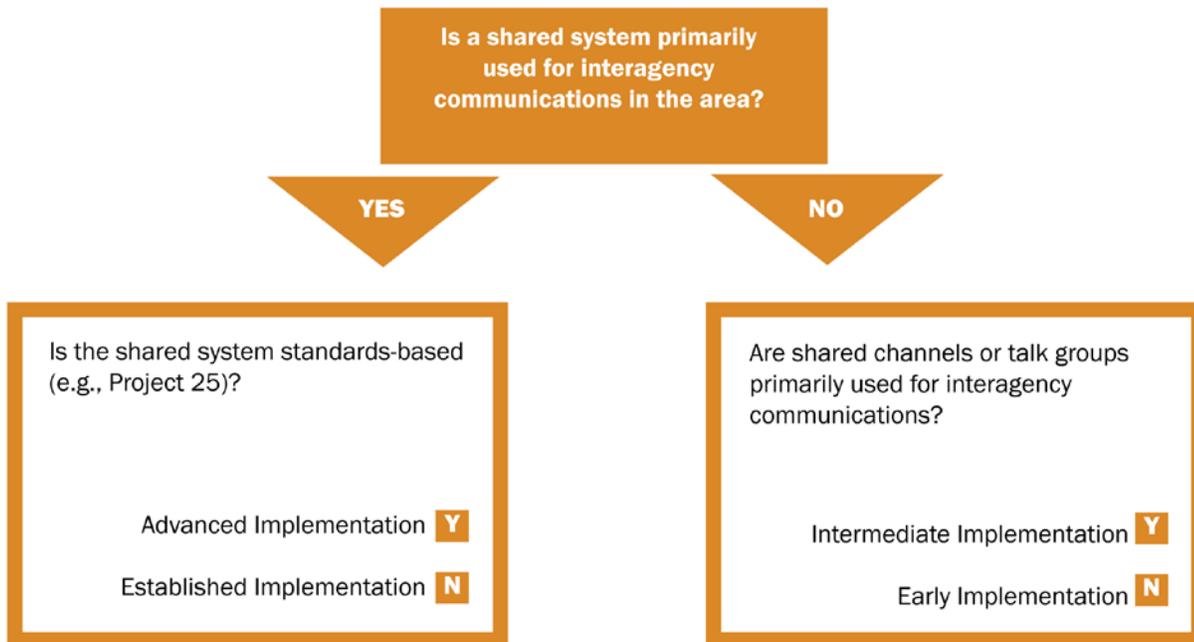


Technology – Standards and Emerging

What are we measuring: The technology standards and equipment that are being utilized to effectively provide interagency communications in the area.

| Capability | Early Implementation | Intermediate Implementation | Established Implementation | Advanced Implementation |
|-------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Technology | Interoperability within the area is primarily achieved through the use of gateways (mobile/fixed gateway, console patch), shared radios, or use of a radio cache. | Interoperability within the area is primarily achieved through the use of shared channels or talk groups. | Interoperability within the area is primarily achieved through the use of a proprietary shared system. | Interoperability within the area is primarily achieved through the use of standards-based shared system (e.g., Project 25). |

Decision Tree



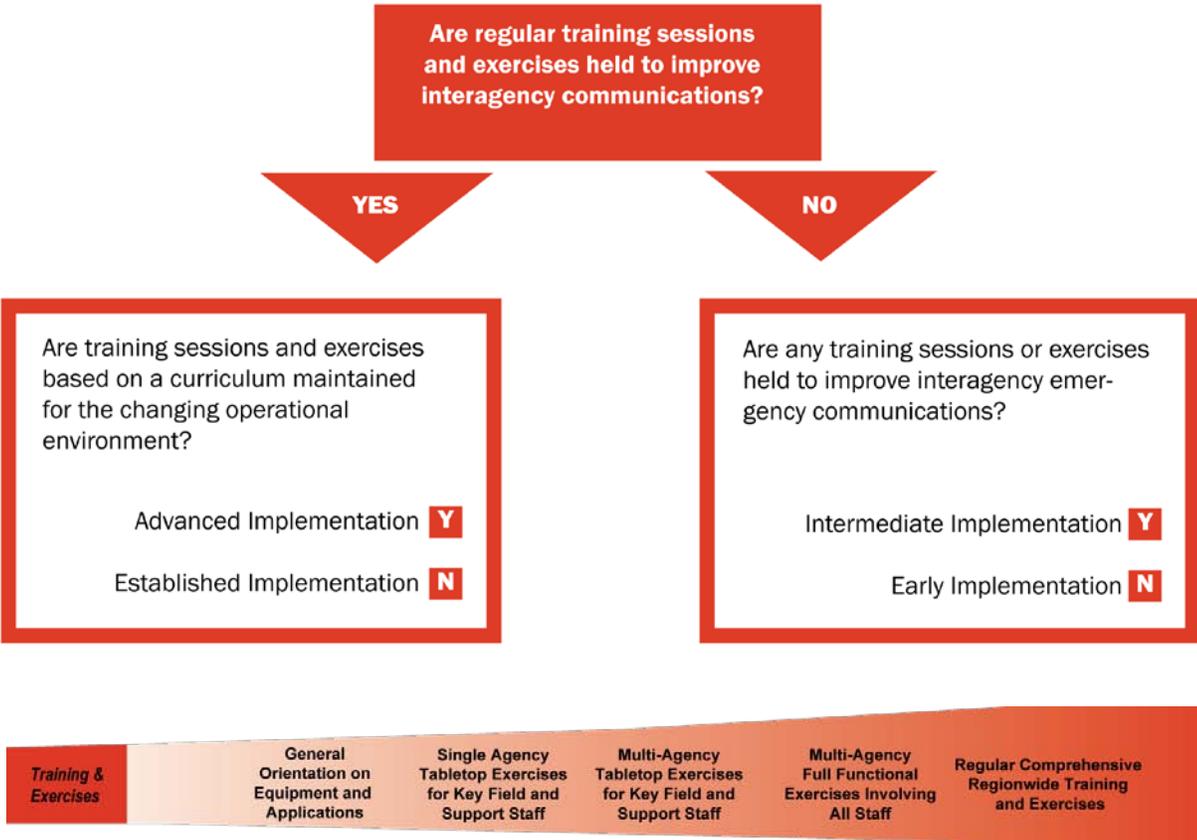
| Technology | DATA ELEMENTS | VOICE ELEMENTS | Common Applications | Custom-Interfaced Applications | One-Way Standards-Based Sharing | Two-Way Standards-Based Sharing |
|------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | Swap Files | Swap Radios | Gateway | Shared Channels | Proprietary Shared System | Standards-Based Shared System |

Training and Exercise – Emergency Responder Skills

What are we measuring: The availability and regularity of training and exercise programs for communications interoperability.

| Capability | Early Implementation | Intermediate Implementation | Established Implementation | Advanced Implementation |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Training & Exercises | Area-wide public safety agencies participate in communications interoperability workshops, but no formal training or exercises are focused on emergency communications. | Some public safety agencies within the area hold communications interoperability training on equipment and conduct exercises, although not on a regular cycle. | Public safety agencies within the area participate in equipment and SOP training for communications interoperability and hold exercises on a regular schedule. | Area public safety agencies regularly conduct training and exercises with communications interoperability curriculum addressing equipment and SOPs that is modified as needed to address the changing operational environment. |

Decision Tree

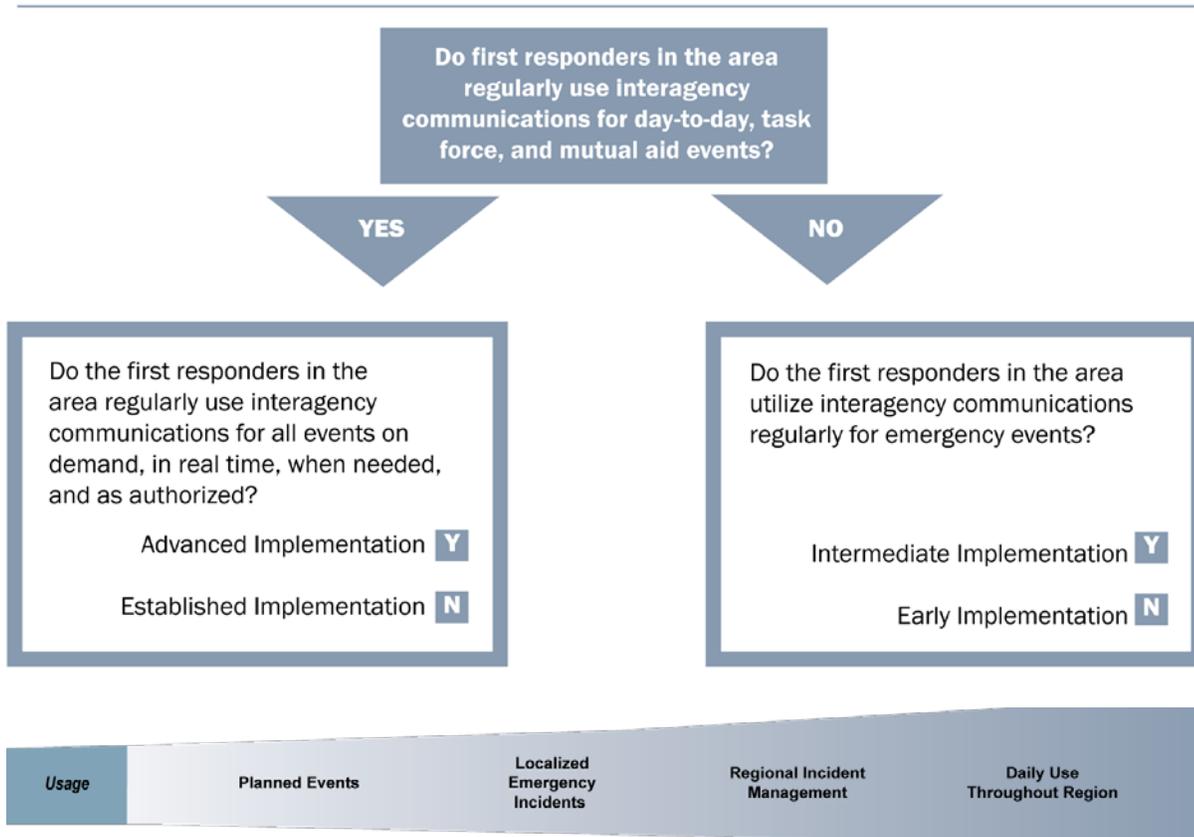


Usage – Frequency of Use and Familiarity

What are we measuring: Ease and regularity of using interagency communications technologies and procedures within the area and across all types of events, including day-to-day, task force, and mutual aid operations.

| Capability | Early Implementation | Intermediate Implementation | Established Implementation | Advanced Implementation |
|--------------|--|---|---|---|
| Usage | First responders across the area seldom use solutions unless advanced planning is possible (e.g., special events). | First responders across the area use interoperability solutions regularly for emergency events, and in limited fashion for day-to-day communications. | First responders across the area use interoperability solutions regularly and easily for all day-to-day, task force, and mutual aid events. | Regular use of solutions for all day-to-day and out-of-the-ordinary events across the area on demand, in real time, when needed, as authorized. |

Decision Tree



2010

Goal 1 Communications Assessments to be reported in the annual SCIP Implementation Report.

2011

Goal 2 Demonstrations and Communications Assessments to be reported in the annual SCIP Implementation Report.

Who Assesses Capabilities? — *The regional core communications group along with emergency response state agencies that have a significant presence and responsibilities within the region.*

1. UASI communications groups will complete a UASI-wide Capabilities Assessment Data Sheet.
2. Regional communications groups will complete a county-wide capabilities assessment for each county. Note: some county's capabilities may be minimal due to low population density or geographical landscape, but are adequate for their emergency response requirements. A total of 254 assessments will be completed statewide. (A UASI County may submit their Goal 1 assessment.)
3. *UASIs and regions are also to provide a Capabilities Assessment Narrative (no more than 500 characters) that justifies the current stage of capability development within their area. This written justification will afford the opportunity to affirm that their stages of capability development are appropriate given the funding received and the requirements and needs of their areas.*
4. A designated SWIC COML evaluator will meet with the UASIs / Regions to review and provide input to the Capabilities Assessment and Narrative. The SWIC COML evaluator and the UASIs / Regions must be in agreement on the Assessment and Narrative prior to submittal.
 - a. The UASIs must submit their Capabilities Assessments and Narratives to the SWIC office no later than September 10, 2010.
 - b. The Regions must submit their Capabilities Assessments and Narratives to the SWIC office no later than May 1, 2011.

Capabilities Assessments and narratives will be incorporated into the annual State Legislative Reports in support of the Texas SCIP funding plan as well as being reported in the annual SCIP Implementation Report (Congressional Report).