

# IOWA STATEWIDE INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM BOARD (ISICSB) COMPLETES DETAILED STUDY

“The completed 9-1-1 study will help in the planning for the future of the 9-1-1 program in the State of Iowa. We enjoyed working with the GeoComm team, and they produced a very usable study for our program.”

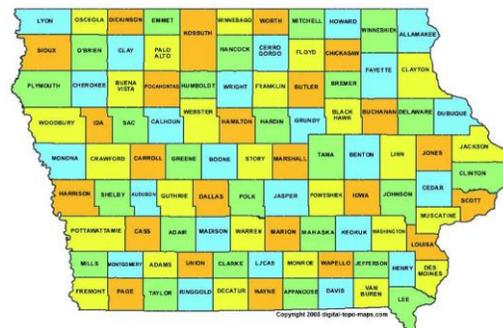
- Barbara Vos, Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management E9-1-1 Program Manager

The 117 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) across Iowa are dedicated to high-quality 9-1-1 service. They have been accepting Phase 2 calls with latitude/longitude information since 2007 and have a long history of collaboration with other local governments and at the state level. In an effort to continue to advance the 9-1-1 system, Iowa's existing wireline and wireless 9-1-1 systems were recently reviewed to determine how they could be improved to operate more effectively and efficiently in the future. The second important aspect was a high-level review of the interoperability capabilities of the PSAPs in Iowa in an effort to improve the ability of public safety personnel to communicate across jurisdictional boundaries during regional and large-scale emergencies. To complete this study, the Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications Systems Board (ISICSB) partnered with GeoComm's Public Safety Consulting Services to determine the quality of the existing 9-1-1 and interoperability environment.

The project consisted of assessing the current public safety communications environment in Iowa and providing the Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board, the 9-1-1 Communications Council, and the ISICB project team with specific recommendations to improve the systems. Presentations were also made at the fall 2011 and spring 2012 NENA/APCO conferences.

## EXISTING SYSTEM REVIEW

The project began by reviewing the current conditions of the wireline and wireless 9-1-1 and interoperability systems in Iowa followed by an outreach effort to PSAPs across the state. PSAPs had the opportunity



to meet with GeoComm consultants during an APCO/NENA conference and discuss the scope of the study, potential improvements, and current challenges. A data collection effort was also conducted with each of the 119 PSAPs as well as a sample group of PSAPs where PSAP personnel and key stakeholders were interviewed. The review was an extensive research analysis in order to look at technology, operations, and governance. GeoComm utilized this information to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the current 9-1-1 and interoperability environment and allow for the identification of potential improvements in the overall operational, administrative, and financial processes.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

Many different aspects of Iowa public safety were examined to determine the existing conditions of Iowa's 9-1-1 wireline and wireless telephone system. To begin, the team assessed the current funding methods being used for both wireline and wireless telephone systems and how wireless surcharge funding is distributed among the PSAPs. This aided in determining if the large number of

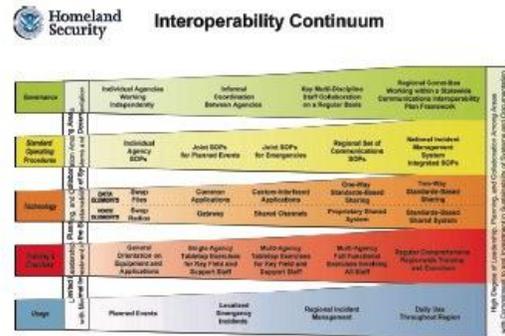
PSAPs in Iowa impacted the quality of E9-1-1 services being provided, and the viability of creating one network instead of two.

“At this point in the study, the GeoComm team came together to review, discuss, and analyze the information collected. This was all done with goal of providing the ISICSB and PSAPs with recommendations that, if accepted, would significantly enhance 9-1-1 service throughout the state,” stated Nancy Pollock, GeoComm Project Manager.

### ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

GeoComm determined that while there are high-quality public safety communications services provided under the current structure, there are many benefits to be obtained from enhanced synergy between agencies and a plan for improvements in governance, operations, technology, and fiscal management. This project resulted in numerous short and long-term recommendations related to the funding, governance, network, operations, technology, interoperability, GIS, and legislation of the current 9-1-1 system. All of the recommendations centered on improving the 9-1-1 service and encouraging collaboration between the state and PSAPs across the state. Just a few of the recommendations included:

- Comprehensive and collaborative statewide strategic plan in order to advance the state’s 9-1-1 service in the most efficient and effectual way.
- Modifications of the wireless surcharge rate and further evaluation of equalizing wireline surcharge rates among all communities in Iowa.
- Enhancements across the state regarding the involvement, authority, and function of E9-1-1 Communications Council.
- Standardized process to collect workload data for all PSAPs.
- Complete and distribute a statewide interoperability plan working agreement by the ISICSB and the regional committees work.



### CONCLUSION

Throughout the process, GeoComm identified the strengths and weaknesses in the current Iowa 9-1-1 wireline and wireless system and interoperability between PSAPs. The findings were documented and recommendations were made to strengthen the 9-1-1 environment and enhance public safety communications interoperability throughout the state of Iowa. The partnership between ISICSB, the Iowa 9-1-1 program, and GeoComm resulted in a comprehensive and useable roadmap for improving 9-1-1 service, sustainability, and survivability for the State of Iowa.