

foster interagency communication and coordinate the gathering of all Federal, State, and local first responders in that area, consistent with the national strategic plan developed by the Department of Homeland Security, and to submit to Congress an interim report regarding the progress of the interagency communications pilot projects 6 months after Dec. 17, 2004, and a final report 18 months after Dec. 17, 2004.

**§ 195. Office for Interoperability and Compatibility**

**(a) Clarification of responsibilities**

The Director of the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility shall—

(1) assist the Secretary in developing and implementing the science and technology aspects of the program described in subparagraphs (D), (E), (F), and (G) of section 194(a)(1) of this title;

(2) in coordination with the Federal Communications Commission, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and other Federal departments and agencies with responsibility for standards, support the creation of national voluntary consensus standards for interoperable emergency communications;

(3) establish a comprehensive research, development, testing, and evaluation program for improving interoperable emergency communications;

(4) establish, in coordination with the Director for Emergency Communications, requirements for interoperable emergency communications capabilities, which shall be non-proprietary where standards for such capabilities exist, for all public safety radio and data communications systems and equipment purchased using homeland security assistance administered by the Department, excluding any alert and warning device, technology, or system;

(5) carry out the Department's responsibilities and authorities relating to research, development, testing, evaluation, or standards-related elements of the SAFECOM Program;

(6) evaluate and assess new technology in real-world environments to achieve interoperable emergency communications capabilities;

(7) encourage more efficient use of existing resources, including equipment, to achieve interoperable emergency communications capabilities;

(8) test public safety communications systems that are less prone to failure, support new nonvoice services, use spectrum more efficiently, and cost less than existing systems;

(9) coordinate with the private sector to develop solutions to improve emergency communications capabilities and achieve interoperable emergency communications capabilities; and

(10) conduct pilot projects, in coordination with the Director for Emergency Communications, to test and demonstrate technologies, including data and video, that enhance—

(A) the ability of emergency response providers and relevant government officials to continue to communicate in the event of natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters; and

(B) interoperable emergency communications capabilities.

**(b) Coordination**

The Director of the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility shall coordinate with the Director for Emergency Communications with respect to the SAFECOM program.

**(c) Sufficiency of resources**

The Secretary shall provide the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility the resources and staff necessary to carry out the responsibilities under this section.

(Pub. L. 107-296, title III, § 314, as added Pub. L. 109-295, title VI, § 672(a), Oct. 4, 2006, 120 Stat. 1441.)

**§ 195a. Emergency communications interoperability research and development**

**(a) In general**

The Under Secretary for Science and Technology, acting through the Director of the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility, shall establish a comprehensive research and development program to support and promote—

(1) the ability of emergency response providers and relevant government officials to continue to communicate in the event of natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters; and

(2) interoperable emergency communications capabilities among emergency response providers and relevant government officials, including by—

(A) supporting research on a competitive basis, including through the Directorate of Science and Technology and Homeland Security Advanced Research Projects Agency; and

(B) considering the establishment of a Center of Excellence under the Department of Homeland Security Centers of Excellence Program focused on improving emergency response providers' communication capabilities.

**(b) Purposes**

The purposes of the program established under subsection (a) include—

(1) supporting research, development, testing, and evaluation on emergency communications capabilities;

(2) understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the public safety communications systems in use;

(3) examining how current and emerging technology can make emergency response providers more effective, and how Federal, State, local, and tribal government agencies can use this technology in a coherent and cost-effective manner;

(4) investigating technologies that could lead to long-term advancements in emergency communications capabilities and supporting research on advanced technologies and potential systemic changes to dramatically improve emergency communications; and

(5) evaluating and validating advanced technology concepts, and facilitating the development and deployment of interoperable emergency communication capabilities.

**(c) Definitions**

For purposes of this section, the term “interoperable”, with respect to emergency commu-

nications, has the meaning given the term in section 578 of this title.

(Pub. L. 107-296, title III, §315, as added Pub. L. 109-295, title VI, §673(a), Oct. 4, 2006, 120 Stat. 1443.)

**§ 195b. National Biosurveillance Integration Center**

**(a) Establishment**

The Secretary shall establish, operate, and maintain a National Biosurveillance Integration Center (referred to in this section as the “NBIC”), which shall be headed by a Directing Officer, under an office or directorate of the Department that is in existence as of August 3, 2007.

**(b) Primary mission**

The primary mission of the NBIC is to—

(1) enhance the capability of the Federal Government to—

(A) rapidly identify, characterize, localize, and track a biological event of national concern by integrating and analyzing data relating to human health, animal, plant, food, and environmental monitoring systems (both national and international); and

(B) disseminate alerts and other information to Member Agencies and, in coordination with (and where possible through) Member Agencies, to agencies of State, local, and tribal governments, as appropriate, to enhance the ability of such agencies to respond to a biological event of national concern; and

(2) oversee development and operation of the National Biosurveillance Integration System.

**(c) Requirements**

The NBIC shall detect, as early as possible, a biological event of national concern that presents a risk to the United States or the infrastructure or key assets of the United States, including by—

(1) consolidating data from all relevant surveillance systems maintained by Member Agencies to detect biological events of national concern across human, animal, and plant species;

(2) seeking private sources of surveillance, both foreign and domestic, when such sources would enhance coverage of critical surveillance gaps;

(3) using an information technology system that uses the best available statistical and other analytical tools to identify and characterize biological events of national concern in as close to real-time as is practicable;

(4) providing the infrastructure for such integration, including information technology systems and space, and support for personnel from Member Agencies with sufficient expertise to enable analysis and interpretation of data;

(5) working with Member Agencies to create information technology systems that use the minimum amount of patient data necessary and consider patient confidentiality and privacy issues at all stages of development and apprise the Privacy Officer of such efforts; and

(6) alerting Member Agencies and, in coordination with (and where possible through) Member Agencies, public health agencies of State, local, and tribal governments regarding any incident that could develop into a biological event of national concern.

**(d) Responsibilities of the Directing Officer of the NBIC**

**(1) In general**

The Directing Officer of the NBIC shall—

(A) on an ongoing basis, monitor the availability and appropriateness of surveillance systems used by the NBIC and those systems that could enhance biological situational awareness or the overall performance of the NBIC;

(B) on an ongoing basis, review and seek to improve the statistical and other analytical methods used by the NBIC;

(C) receive and consider other relevant homeland security information, as appropriate; and

(D) provide technical assistance, as appropriate, to all Federal, regional, State, local, and tribal government entities and private sector entities that contribute data relevant to the operation of the NBIC.

**(2) Assessments**

The Directing Officer of the NBIC shall—

(A) on an ongoing basis, evaluate available data for evidence of a biological event of national concern; and

(B) integrate homeland security information with NBIC data to provide overall situational awareness and determine whether a biological event of national concern has occurred.

**(3) Information sharing**

**(A) In general**

The Directing Officer of the NBIC shall—

(i) establish a method of real-time communication with the National Operations Center;

(ii) in the event that a biological event of national concern is detected, notify the Secretary and disseminate results of NBIC assessments relating to that biological event of national concern to appropriate Federal response entities and, in coordination with relevant Member Agencies, regional, State, local, and tribal governmental response entities in a timely manner;

(iii) provide any report on NBIC assessments to Member Agencies and, in coordination with relevant Member Agencies, any affected regional, State, local, or tribal government, and any private sector entity considered appropriate that may enhance the mission of such Member Agencies, governments, or entities or the ability of the Nation to respond to biological events of national concern; and

(iv) share NBIC incident or situational awareness reports, and other relevant information, consistent with the information sharing environment established under section 485 of this title and any poli-