

Chapter 5

Tactical Communications

OVERVIEW

This chapter addresses the communications you will have to establish for your SNS Operations Management Team to successfully respond to a public health crisis using SNS assets. For an effective execution of your plan to distribute and dispense SNS assets, you will have to have robust and redundant communication systems. You will find that communications will be the key element in the continual and timely flow of assets to dispensing, treatment, and other locations. Communication support enables

- oversight of the S/L SNS distribution system by the SNS Operations Management Team and timely status reports to the event command and control (C&C),
- driver reports of deliveries and en route problems,
- orders from points of dispensing (PODs) and treatment centers for assets, and
- coordination with law enforcement for protection and traffic/crowd control.



In the following sections, we discuss the methods, security, and staff needed to ensure effective tactical communications among all of the SNS elements. In this Chapter, you will learn about

- the different communication methods available,
- who will communicate with whom,
- communication security,
- the communication personnel needed to execute your plan, and
- TARU communication capabilities.

COMMUNICATION METHODS

Implement Your plan needs to identify communication methods that are convenient, fast, and reliable. Every method—even the most reliable—needs at least one backup in

case of failure. Common communication methods include land-line and cell phones, fax, Internet, and portable and stationary radios. Other potential methods include ham radio, Wireless Priority Service (WPS) cell phones, Government Emergency Telecommunication Service (GETS) cards, satellite phones, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Warning System. Contingency communication systems, such as some listed above, can be researched and acquired at little or no cost by contacting the National Communications System (NCS) at (866) NCS-CALL or (866) 627-2255. As you consider the methods that you want to use, do not overlook the simplest communication method: paper forms and reports delivered by drivers, law enforcement personnel, or even couriers on bicycles. It may be the only method available when others fail.

Implement We suggest that, at a minimum, you equip each S/L SNS physical location (including PODs and treatment centers) with a phone and fax. The main RSS facility should be equipped with a minimum of *three analog lines for the sole use of the DSNS's TARU*. You may want an additional three analog lines at the RSS facility for sending and receiving orders and information reports via e-mail or fax. The RSS team should provide two or three radios to be used by the TARU to monitor the security situation.

Every distribution vehicle and the distribution dispatcher should have a cell phone or two-way radio. If you use aircraft to deliver assets, staging, dispatch, and all delivery locations need to be able to communicate with the pilots. The organization that provides air support should be able to help with air/ground communications.

Implement Remember that portable radio communications deteriorate rapidly as the distance from a transmission source grows beyond line of sight. If your RSS facility is a considerable distance from the delivery points, you will need to establish a series of radio repeater stations to ensure reliable communications among drivers, distribution dispatchers, PODs, and treatment centers. Alternatively, you may want to use an existing network that has repeaters in place, such as the one used by your emergency management department. For radio communications, you need to know the frequencies for reaching specific parties.

Who Talks to Whom

Implement Your plan should list the phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and radio frequencies of everyone with whom each function must communicate. This list should be updated monthly to ensure accuracy. The following is a list of each SNS function and those with whom it will need to communicate:

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- The event C&C (state EOC organized under ICS, unified command, or area command) will communicate with
 - Treatment centers for case-count information to make SNS-asset-allocation decisions if the supply is temporarily unable to satisfy all demands,
 - The SNS Operations Management Team for status of the S/L SNS distribution system,
 - Law enforcement and other departments to resolve problems that affect the S/L SNS distribution system, and
 - The TARU for assistance.
- The SNS Operations Management Team will communicate with
 - C&C to provide operational status reports about SNS assets distribution and to receive information and direction on distributing the SNS assets,
 - Law enforcement for security,
 - The TARU for assistance, and
 - Each distribution site for monitoring operations.
- The Inventory Control Team will communicate with
 - The SNS Operations Management Team to provide inventory status, including replenishments, allocations, and possible shortages;
 - Delivery locations for ordering materiel; and
 - Staff members and volunteers working within inventory control.
- The RSS facility will communicate with
 - The SNS Operations Management Team to report operational status and problems,
 - Inventory control to process orders for delivery,
 - The TARU for coordinating receipt of SNS assets, and
 - Staff members and volunteers working at the warehouse.
- Repackaging (if needed) will communicate with
 - The SNS Operations Management Team to report operational status and problems,
 - Inventory control to request bulk drugs, and
 - Staff members and volunteers performing the repackaging.
- Distribution will communicate with
 - The SNS Operations Management Team to report operational status and problems;
 - Law enforcement for traffic control and en route protection;
 - Public works for repair and fuel;
 - Drivers to report their locations, problems, and delivery status;
 - PODs and treatment centers for delivery directions; and
 - Staff members and volunteers working on distribution.
- PODs will communicate with

Deploy

Deploy

- Their respective reordering agency (the RSS facility, an EOC, or an intermediate supply node, depending on how you have organized your plan),
- Law enforcement for protection and traffic and crowd control,
- Public works for facility problems,
- Distribution dispatch for status on incoming shipments,
- Staff members and volunteers working at the dispensing sites, and
- The SNS Operations Management Team.
- Treatment sites will communicate with
 - The SNS Operations Management Team for resolution of general SNS system problems;
 - Inventory control to order additional assets, request status about assets that were ordered but not received, and provide allocation information; and
 - Distribution dispatch for status about incoming shipments.

Deploy

Tactical Communications: Security

It is unlikely that S/L SNS operations will need a secure, encrypted communications system. However, everyone who uses two-way radios needs to be careful about what they say. Their conversations could reveal sensitive information to unauthorized listeners and potentially jeopardize or interfere with S/L SNS operations. Your local law enforcement agency should have experience with secure two-way radio communication and should be consulted with any questions. Your best defense is to caution radio users to be careful about what they say on the radio.

Deploy

Conversations of a sensitive nature should never take place over a cell phone or land line unless a National Security Agency approved device is being used (STU-III, STE, or Sectera cell phone).

Tactical Communications: Staff

Implement

As part of your SNS Operations Management Team, you should have someone in charge of arranging all the communication requirements to meet the needs of your plan. Your Communications Lead will have to organize a staff to ensure that all communication needs are met. Fortunately, most states and large cities have robust and redundant communication systems in their law-enforcement or emergency-management agency. Take every advantage these established systems have to offer you. The Communications Lead for your SNS Operations Management Team is responsible for

- alerting SNS staff members and calling them to their designated sites;

- ensuring SNS communication people exist for each S/L SNS function;
- maintaining and distributing phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and radio frequencies;
- updating the list of phone numbers and e-mail addresses monthly to ensure the correct contact information;
- instituting an alert system or phone tree and conducting routine practice tests to ensure that everyone is trained on how the system will work during an emergency; and
- providing technical advice to SNS teams on the communication devices.

TARU Communication Needs and Capabilities

The TARU will need local support at the RSS facility. The TARU will bring all of its own communication devices; however, it will need three analog lines with long distance calling capability. Two lines will be used for voice and one for data. The TARU will require the use of electrical outlets to power its TARU Operations Center (TOC). These outlets will power the computers, the printer, the charging station for all batteries, and the STU-III phone. If DSL, broadband, or some other high-speed network is available, it must be hardwired; *the CDC security directives prevent TARU from being on a WIFI system.* The TARU will bring a satellite phone that will need outside access on the southeast side of the RSS facility. The antenna has a 20-meter cable that must be attached to the phone base located at the TOC.

Implement

In summary, the TARU communication needs to be supplied by the state are

- Three analog lines with long distance calling capability, two for unsecure voice and one for secure voice;
- Electrical outlets (six plugs);
- Two or three two-way radios (depending on type and capabilities), at least one for the TOC and one for the U.S. marshals;
- LAN or high-speed Internet connection (cannot be wireless; not mandatory); and
- Window or door, preferably with outside access within 20 meters of the TOC. (This is for the satellite phone; the antenna for this device must face skyward in a southeasterly direction.)

The TARU communications capabilities are

- Two notebook computers capable of hard-wired Internet connectivity,
- WinFax software (fax capability);
- One printer/scanner/copier;
- Phones:

- Speaker (analog) and
- STU-III (secure analog);
- Contingency communications:
 - Wireless Priority Service (WPS),
 - Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS), and
 - Globalstar;
- INMARSAT SATCOM (needs southeast window access); and
- Two-way radios.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Consideration	Responsibility		
	State	Regional	Local
Does your plan have a method to access a robust and redundant communication system?			
Does your plan's communication section designate who talks to whom and how information will flow?			
Does your plan incorporate communication security measures to ensure that unauthorized parties cannot intercept sensitive information?			
Does your plan have a communication annex, listing radio frequencies, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses that you will use to communicate?			
Does your plan provide for the communication needs for DSNS's TARU at the RSS facility?			
Does your plan provide communication equipment and/or methods for PODs and treatment sites?			

Implementation Capabilities

Capability	Responsibility		
	State	Regional	Local
Have you acquired the phones, fax, Internet, radios, and other required communication equipment, including backups?			
Have you arranged for a phone and fax at each physical location, a minimum of six analog lines at the main RSS facility, two radios for the TARU, and a cell phone or two-way radio for each delivery vehicle?			
Have you checked whether repeater stations will be needed for complete communication coverage?			
Do you have a list of the phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and radio frequencies of everyone with whom each function must communicate?			
Do you have a Communications Lead and staff to call in SNS staff members, maintain and distribute contact information, test the system, and provide technical advice?			
For the TARU at the RSS, have you arranged for three long-distance telephone lines (one secure), six electric plugs, two radios, a high-speed Internet connection; and southeasterly access for a satellite phone cable?			

Deployment Processes

Capability	Responsibility		
	State	Regional	Local
Oversee the distribution system and issue timely status reports to C&C.			
Monitor driver reports of deliveries and en route problems.			
Fill orders for assets from PODs and treatment centers.			
Coordinate with law enforcement for protection and traffic/crowd control.			
Caution radio users to be careful about what they say on the radio.			