

NPSTC Frequently Asked Questions

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How did NPSTC begin?

- **In 1997**, thirteen organizations put aside individual agendas to unite their voices in support of vitally important issues that affect public safety telecommunications. "For the first time in my 30 years of public safety communications experience, all of the associations are working together within NPSTC, with one voice, to bring about change" says Douglas M. Aiken, NPSTC Vice Chair, International Municipal Signal Association (IMSA).
- **The National Public Safety Telecommunications Council (NPSTC)** was originally organized to encourage and facilitate implementation of the findings and recommendations of the **Public Safety Wireless Advisory Committee (PSWAC)**, established in 1994 by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to evaluate the wireless communications needs of local, tribal, state, and federal public safety agencies through the year 2010, identify problems, and recommend possible solutions.
- NPSTC has since taken on additional responsibilities including implementing the recommendations of the **FCC Public Safety National Coordination Committee (NCC)**. NPSTC also initially supported the development of the Computer Assisted Pre-coordination and Resource Database System (CAPRAD) for 700 MHz spectrum to assist the Regional Planning Committees (RPCs).

Why was PSWAC created?

- **PSWAC** was chartered as a result of significant pressure put on Congress by a number of public safety associations that sought much-needed spectrum relief for public safety communications and new technologies integration. PSWAC members represented a broad range of public safety agencies from local, state, and federal jurisdictions; public service providers; equipment manufacturers; commercial service providers, and the public at large. In 1996, the Advisory Committee released the PSWAC Final Report, which identified public safety issues and concerns. Most of the PSWAC findings and recommendations are considered valid today.

How does the NCC fit in?

- Five years later in 1999, the FCC sponsored the National Coordination Committee (NCC) to provide the Commission with similar recommendations concerning interoperability, technology, and implementation - this time, regarding the **24 MHz of spectrum in the 700 MHz band** reallocated by the FCC from broadcast television to public safety. As with the formation of PSWAC, the FCC realized the importance of directly involving local and state public safety leaders in developing these important decisions.
- When the NCC ended its work in July 2003 with a number of decisions still outstanding, NPSTC agreed to expand its original role to include NCC follow-on activities. "Beyond the many recommendations and reports developed by these two federal committees," says Harlin McEwen NPSTC, former Vice Chair, NPSTC, representing the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and other public safety associations, "their most important benefit to the public safety community was to provide a **public stage for discussion of relevant public safety wireless telecommunications issues.**" **NPSTC continues to provide that public stage.**

Why is NPSTC unique in its role as the collective voice of public safety communications?

- NPSTC emerged from the work of these two earlier advisory committees and continues to provide that important public stage for critical public safety telecommunications. Marilyn Ward, founding NPSTC

Chair and NPSTC's Executive Director, "PSWAC was the first time **all levels and disciplines within the public safety community worked hand in hand to identify our long-term needs**. After spending that period together, we discovered how critical it is to develop consensus and work together as we communicate our needs to the regulatory bodies that control public safety spectrum. The NCC process further solidified our community."

Has NPSTC's role changed?

- NPSTC provides a collective voice for a broad range of public safety organizations on public safety communications issues that are important to every U.S. citizen. Today, NPSTC's work has grown to encompass a wide range of public safety telecommunications issues that is likely to continue to expand. Currently NPSTC is working on policies and issues surrounding the following important public safety wireless communications areas:
 - National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP)
 - 700 MHz Broadband, Broadband Data, Narrowband, and General Use
 - Assessment of Future Spectrum and Technology Needs
 - International Border Communications
 - Issues in 470-512 MHz
 - Technology Education
 - Specialized Communications Applications including Airborne Video, Bomb Robots
 - Emergency Medical Communications
 - Amateur Radio
 - Effective Spectrum Management and Deployment
 - Software Defined Radio (SDR) and Cognitive Radio (CR) Technologies
 - Narrowband Technology Transition
 - VHF Spectrum Reconfiguration
 - Securing Additional Spectrum Resources
 - Interoperability Channel Naming
 - Wireless Alerting
 - In Building Coverage
 - Emergency Support Function #2 (ESF 2)
 - Statewide Interoperability Committee (SWIC)

Why does public safety need NPSTC?

- To provide a collective voice on communications issues for the approximately **2.5 million public safety first responders** in the United States working for 18,000 local and State law enforcement agencies, 26,000 fire departments, and more than 6,000 rescue departments, plus federal law enforcement, tribal law enforcement, and other agencies, such as transportation and the public utilities who need to talk to one another during critical incidents.

What does NPSTC do for public safety?

- **Develops and makes recommendations to appropriate governmental bodies** regarding public safety communications issues and policies that promote greater interoperability and cooperation between local, state, tribal, and federal agencies.
- **Serves as a standing forum for the exchange of ideas and information**, and works to identify and promote methods for funding development of public safety communications systems.
- **Monitors new technology research, supports studies of public safety communications, and uses research to stay abreast of user needs.**
- **Communicates information** on technology, research, and policy issues to the field through its **website**, www.NPSTC.org, and through its [Newsletter](#).

How can an individual or organization add its voice to NPSTC?

- Come to NPSTC's quarterly meetings and have a voice in this important work – [Meetings](#).
- Join NPSTC's listservs and stay abreast of activities – [Join NPSTC](#).
- Call into quarterly NPSTC meetings and join in via conference call.
- Join a Committee or Working Group and conference into their working conference calls – visit the Project Overview webpage at [Projects](#).
- Stay abreast to postings on the website at www.NPSTC.org.

How is NPSTC organized?

- **NPSTC's Governing Board** is made up of representatives from each of its member organizations. The Executive Committee comprises a Chair, a Vice Chair, and the three Committee Chairs. The officers must be employees of a public safety or public service organization as defined in the PSWAC Final Report or a recognized organization that represents these entities. NPSTC has three Committees: Interoperability, Spectrum Management, and Technology.
- Each Committee has a Chair and Vice Chair and comprises a number of Working Groups, each with its own lead as well.
- A Support Office (SO) provides administrative and technical support to NPSTC and its Committees, including meetings, documentation, reporting, the website, listserv, and archives, and the publication of the newsletter and quarterly and annual reports ([Support Office](#)).

How does NPSTC accomplish its work?

- The Committees, generally through their Working Groups, are responsible for conducting research, writing position papers, and giving presentations at various meetings and conferences at the request of the Governing Board.
- The Working Groups interact with one another and the associations to provide details of research, by reaching out to subject matter experts and developing positions for the Committee Chairs, who in turn forward those positions with comments to the Governing Board for approval.
- Committee Chairs are responsible for FCC filings on issues pertaining to their Committees once the item has been approved by NPSTC's Governing Board.

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