



**Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System (ISICS)
Standards, Protocols, Procedures**

ISICS Standard: ISICS Regional and Statewide Interoperability Talkgroups	Standard #:	1.5.0
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	Version:	

1. Purpose or Objective

The purpose of this standard is to establish policy and procedures for use of ISICS regional and statewide interoperable talkgroups in all user radios. The regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups are a resource intended to facilitate communications among and between different agencies and service branches which need to coordinate their operations during major incidents, pre-planned events, and task force operations. These resources are not intended for localized day-to-day interoperability when a more appropriate resource may be available.

This policy will provide standardized incident response radio communications capabilities for all service branches and, most importantly, will support the redeployment of interoperable resources throughout the state. This policy will provide the radio communications structure necessary to enable effective situational awareness, command and control, and resource coordination in support of the incident command and management structure specified under the National Incident Management System (NIMS). This policy will also serve to minimize usage conflicts when regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups are needed for multiple incidents.

2. Technical Background

• **Capabilities**

ISICS regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups provide a high level of interoperability for public safety and public service users respectively. Other effective levels of interoperability include switching to shared conventional frequencies, dispatch console patches, deployable portable gateways, and radio caches (swap radios).

- **Constraints**

The availability of and the use of the regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups must be easily understood by radio user personnel, who are primarily concerned with their mission and not with the operation of complex radios under stressful conditions. Standardization of capabilities will provide responding agencies with an assurance that they will have interoperable communications with any other agency with whom they need to work.

3. Operational Context

Universal access to the six (6) non-encrypted talkgroups for each region and statewide zone by all end-users and communication centers. Encryption is supported by the ISICS platform, however, implementation and use is under consideration. Any future encryption on interoperable talkgroups will be Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) 256. APCO Project 25 (P25) 700 / 800 MHz AES 256 equipped radios and communication centers guarantees fully compatible, interoperable communications among agencies and service branches for major incidents, pre-planned events, and task force operations.

The most current list of ISICS talkgroups is available at [here](#). It is recommended that ISICS users get any updated talkgroups programmed into their subscriber radios as soon as possible or within 18 months of those talkgroups being added or adopted to that list.

4. Standardized Policy

ISICS INTEROPERABILITY TALKGROUPS

Talkgroup Requirements	For Whom?
Required	All ISICS Users – All Radios – All communication centers (All regional and statewide interoperable talkgroups)
Recommended	N/A
Optional	Site Access - Sub Regional
Not Allowed	N/A
Site Access - Statewide	System Wide – All Sites
Site Access - Regional	Regional Sites + One

Type of Patch	Approval Needed	To Talk Groups
Temporary/Soft Patch	No	As Needed
Permanent Patch	Yes	

A temporary/soft patch is defined as something a dispatcher can establish on-the-fly via the console user interface. A permanent patch is defined as a connection between resources that cannot be easily built or torn down without the assistance of a system technician or engineer.

Primary Intended Use:

ISICS regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups, when feasible, should be considered as the primary resource for incidents involving joint response from multiple

agencies and/or service branches that operate in different service areas, jurisdictions or levels of government. Some smaller or more localized incidents may warrant the use of a regional or statewide interoperability talkgroup if no other common or interoperable resources are available at the time of the incident.

Incident Scope and Geographic Area:

The regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups are available for use in incidents anywhere ISICS provides geographic coverage, regardless of incident size or scale. Interoperability incidents may be localized or dispersed in area. Participating incident personnel and resources may be localized, regional, statewide, or national. Incidents may be pre-planned or emergent in nature.

Non-intended Use:

The regional and/or statewide interoperable talkgroups are not to be used for daily routine operations within a single agency.

Priorities for Use and Multiple Incidents:

In the event that multiple interoperability incidents occur simultaneously, exhausting the regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups, assignment of regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups in incident radio communications plans will be prioritized for: (1) multi-agency incidents, and (2) those incidents involving resources spanning multiple regions. Secondary use and localized or single region multi-agency incidents initially assigned to statewide interoperability talkgroups should be reassigned to regional talkgroups if it can be done safely. This reassignment will be coordinated between the affected incident commanders and dispatch centers controlling the incidents.

Console Resource Requirements and Patching:

Integrated ISICS dispatch consoles shall have the regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups in the console configuration available for patching. Regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups should not be patched to other regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups. In order to meet the communications needs for an event, the regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups may be patched to:

- Conventional radio frequency (RF) resources, such as VHF, UHF, etc.
- Private agency talkgroups, such as dispatch mains, tactical talkgroups, pools, etc.
- Local/locally shared tactical talkgroups (TACs) or channels.

Assignment Tracking:

Use of the NIMS/ ICS-205 Incident Radio Communications Plan format is highly recommended to assist with assignment tracking for pre-planned incidents, incidents utilizing more than one of the statewide talkgroups, and for incidents of long duration. It is also highly recommended and expected that the listed resources on the ICS-205 be reserved on StatusBoard to help prevent conflicts with other agencies who may be looking to utilize interoperable resources consistent with [ISICS Standard 1.17.0 - StatusBoard](#).

It is also highly recommended and expected that agencies utilize the StatusBoard program to assist tracking for emergent, no-notice events consistent with [ISICS Standard 1.17.0 - StatusBoard](#).

[ISICS Standard 1.17.0 - StatusBoard](#) allows for agencies to request that agencies make requests on StatusBoard on their behalf. It is recommended that public safety communications centers that are unable for any reason to make any reservations of interoperable resources on StatusBoard request that another agency makes it on their behalf.

NOTE: Coordination of interoperable resources is vital to prevent another agency's personnel from interrupting vital communications on that interoperable resource.

Multi-Group Prohibition:

Regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups shall not be part of any announcement or other pre-programmed multi-group. This prohibition does not apply to preset Multi/Simul-Select functions which are set up at dispatch consoles which are allowable.

NOTE: Multi/Simul-Selects that include the regional calling (CALL) talkgroups should be limited to broadcasts and/or announcements only.

5. Standardized Procedure

Notification:

If the StatusBoard is unavailable, contact a communication center with access to the StatusBoard to reserve a talkgroup.

Any patches built or created during an event should be announced as soon as possible on the resources being patched together once it is established, and also include which agency is making the patch.

Order of Use:

The usage of regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups for Preplanned Non-Emergency interoperability events should use the highest numbered talkgroup and descend.

The usage of regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups for Unplanned Emergency Incidents use the lowest numbered talkgroup and ascend.

Any use of the interoperable talkgroups should be noted on StatusBoard.

Training Exercises:

Preplanned use of regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups for training should be encouraged. Any use of an interoperable talkgroup for training purposes should be noted on StatusBoard.

Unit Identification:

When operating on the regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups, users should initially identify using plain English as described in [ISICS Standard 1.3.0](#).

Use of 10-Codes and Acronyms:

The use of 10-codes, signals, unique acronyms, and other codes should not be used on the regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups, because there is no standardized set of codes. Plain language should be used in all cases.

When a local operable channel/talkgroup is patched into a regional or statewide interoperable tactical talkgroup, local agencies should use plain English as described in [ISICS Standard 1.3.0](#) to ensure that all participating agencies receive clear communication of the events.

Termination of Use:

At the end of the event, the initiating dispatch center will remove any patches that were placed for the event, if any, and clear the StatusBoard so other communications centers will know this resource is available for use. Any patches that are removed should be announced on the talkgroup being used for that patch prior to breaking down the patch in order to allow an opportunity for objection from in-field personnel who may still be utilizing the patched resources.

6. Management

Communications Center Managers and Supervisors for agencies on the ISICS platform, Incident Commanders, Telecommunicators, and Communications Unit Leaders (COML) shall ensure that the policy and procedure for usage and assignment of the regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups is followed and shall receive initial training and periodic refresher training on the use of this procedure. Online training resources are available at <https://dps.iowa.gov/education-training> or by contacting the statewide interoperability coordinator or ISICSB Training and Education Committee Chair/Vice Chair.

The ISICSB, its committees and ISICS System Administrator are responsible for the maintenance of ISICS regional and statewide interoperable talkgroups. Any changes to those talkgroups will be done in accordance with [ISICS Standard 2.15.0 – Change Management](#) and disseminated to stakeholders consistent with [ISICS Standard 4.8.0 – Notification for System Changes and Outages](#).