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ISICSB 2023 Executive Summary

2023 was an excellent year for the Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System (ISICS) (the System). Since 2007, the Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board (ISICSB)(the Board) has worked to improve interoperable communication across Iowa and 2023 marked the first full year since system acceptance. The adoption of ISICS by agencies continues to grow, far exceeding expectations. With this rapid adoption rate, there have been some great opportunities and growing pains. This report will detail what the Board has accomplished and outline the work needed to sustain and improve the System for ISICS users.

The Board is most proud of the following accomplishments detailed in the report.

- 1.8 million dollar REMCDP Grant to improve emergent communications between ambulance providers and hospitals
- Development and review of policy and procedures for ISICS users
 - Air to Ground channels for first responders and air ambulance providers to communicate on-scene
 - Coordination of interoperability with surrounding states
 - Encrypted talk groups
- Training and credentialing of public safety communication professionals
- Application review and recommendation of 36 participation plans
- Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) and the Iowa Field Operations Guide (FOG) adopted for Iowa
- Completion of the initial FirstNet build-out in Iowa

2024 and beyond will provide the Board with the opportunity to tackle the following funding items:

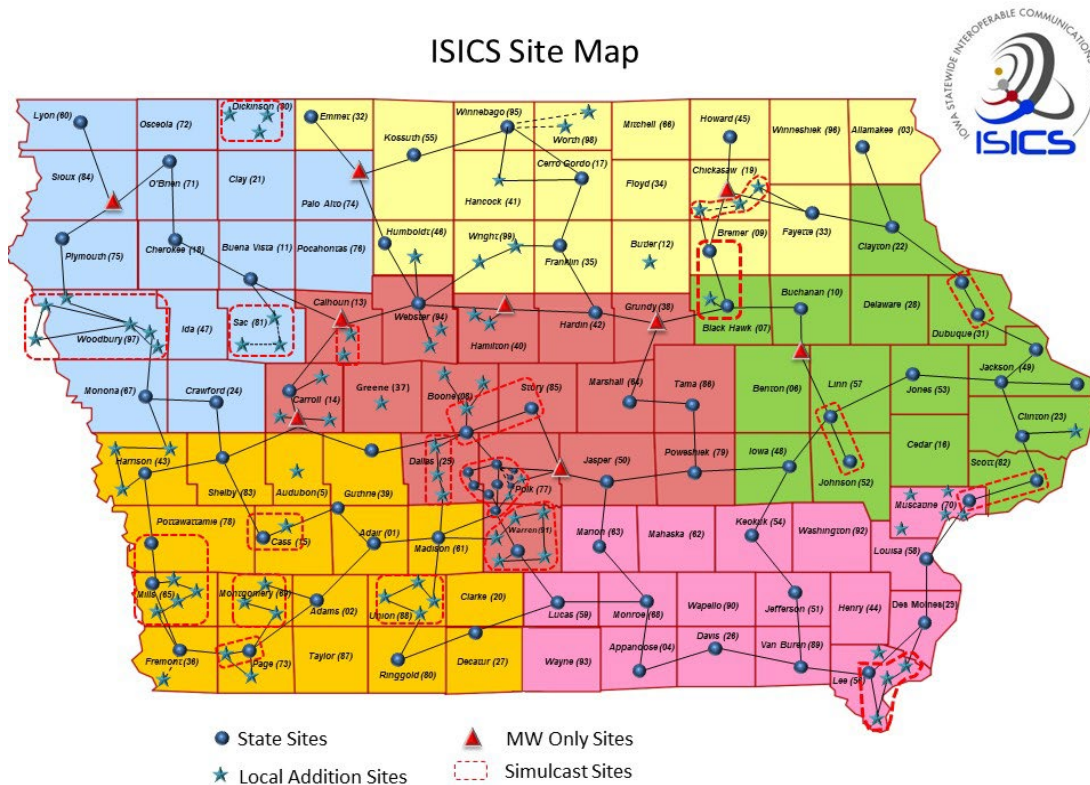
- Proper staffing to manage the ISICS system
- Maintain Infrastructure through
 - Battery Replacement
 - Additional Core
 - Channel Capacity
 - Cybersecurity
- Enhance the System
 - Coverage Enhancement
 - Eliminate Spurs

Background

The ISICSB was established in Iowa Code sections 80.28 and 80.29 under the joint purview of the State Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the State Department of Transportation (DOT) in 2007. ISICS now serves as the interoperability platform for the State of Iowa and its 3.19 million residents. ISICS is a two-zone 700/800 MHz Trunked P25 Time Division Multiple Access (TDMA) Phase II standard digital statewide radio platform providing 95% mobile coverage border to border (see map). The growth of ISICS users has been tremendous. At the time of the publishing of this report, over 200 agencies and more than 34,000 radios utilize ISICS with almost 3 million push-to-

talks, or radio transmissions, each month. ISICS users are in all levels of government and non-governmental organizations.

ISICS Site Map



ISICSB works to meet its mission through its six committees, one subcommittee, and various working groups. The Board represents the landscape of Iowa's public safety/public service profession and all levels of government among its 19 voting members. This diverse representation ensures the System works for all to improve interoperability. The Board shares information, including meeting agendas, minutes, policies, standards, and a calendar of events on a robust website, which can be found at <https://isicb.iowa.gov>

ISICSB Committees

- Finance Committee
- Governance Committee
- Operations Committee
- Technology Committee
- Training and Outreach Committee
- User Group Committee
- FirstNet Broadband Subcommittee

A list of the current board members can be found in Appendix A.

Board Accomplishments

Committees under ISICSB have goals, metrics, objectives, and action plans outlined in the *Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP)*. Since adopting the current *SCIP* in December 2019,

each committee has progressed toward achieving the defined goals. The Board is conducting a *SCIP* update that will be completed in early 2024 and will outline the strategic plan for the ISICSB over the next three (3) years.

The ISICB also has a robust governance structure. These committees work in tandem with final approval from the Board. All committee members are volunteers dedicated to improving communications across Iowa.

The **Finance Committee** continued to help the Board fulfill and maintain its fiduciary responsibility over the \$115,661 of State appropriated funds that sustain board activities and the salaries and benefits for the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) and ISICSB administrative assistant.

The **Governance Committee** developed and updated policy and procedure statements for the enhancement, deployment, and operation of ISICS; created a policy naming procedure; and documented the process for creating, reviewing, and revising policy. The committee also developed a schedule to review all ISICS policies and standards to ensure they remain current.

The **Operations Committee** establishes operational policy for ISICS access and identifies, reviews, and updates existing communication plans. The Operations Committee has worked closely with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and Carroll County in the Operational Rapid Assistance Package (O-RAP) for rural emergency medical communications mission to examine communications barriers and identify solutions that enhance existing emergency communications infrastructure to improve the delivery of rural medical care and address National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) implementation gaps.

The initial O-RAP work positioned the Board to be awarded the Rural Emergency Medical Communications Demonstration Project (REMCDP) grant for \$1,853,953 through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. Iowa proved it had a robust, redundant, and well-utilized statewide communications system required for the award. Iowa can utilize these grant funds to promote and strengthen interoperability in the rural medical field, demonstrate how emerging technologies and systems ensure successful communications in emergency medical situations, and harden the rural emergency medical communications network into a reliable public safety-grade platform in the face of disaster or disruption. Most importantly, this grant will improve communications among medical responders, hospitals, fire departments, and law enforcement. This grant will encompass Iowa's ISICS Region 1 over the next two years. The ISICSB is dedicated to seeking out and securing more funding opportunities to maintain Iowa's public safety interoperability, safety, and security and expand the vision through Regions 2-6 of Iowa.

The **Technology Committee** met its goal of leading technological solutions for public safety voice and data interoperability through many hours of work in 2023. The Technology Committee regularly meets multiple times a month due to the nature and importance of technology in an LMR system. The committee finished a 700 MHz low-power itinerant frequency structure licensed by the Iowa DOT, mapped how many Iowa stakeholders were implementing gateways within their local systems, and worked with board approval to license 700 MHz Air to Ground Channels. The Technology Committee also took time to review FCC Part 90 Rules regarding the various frequency bands used in Iowa. Stakeholders within the state expressed the need for discipline-specific encryption for their agencies within the existing ISICS system. A plan was developed to rename those channels listed in the ICS-217a, a communication resource availability worksheet, to

align with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). The committee will work with board approval to license additional channels in 2024 and continue developing standards for implementing discipline-specific encryption fully. The committee took part in a meeting with interested agencies in Minnesota about forming an interoperability crosswalk between the two states and plans to continue those meetings into 2024 and include Iowa's other neighboring states. Currently, the committee is looking at all aspects of the technical side of interstate interoperability.

The **Training and Outreach Committee** was reorganized in 2023, combining Training and Exercise and Outreach Committees. The committee met its goals to develop, review, update, and provide standard essential training for interoperable communications across various state regions with several just-in-time deliverables available in the online training portal located on the ISICS website and available to end-users 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. ISICSB, with assistance from the committee and the SWIC, provided on-site training, presentations, or support across Iowa on an as-needed basis to develop, update, and deliver outreach materials for those considering ISICS use. The committee facilitated courses that trained 16 Incident Tactical Dispatchers, 13 Communication Unit Leaders, seven (7) Communication Unit Technicians, and seven (7) Audio Gateway personnel. The Board credentialed 22 Communication Unit personnel in 2023, expanding the statewide core group who can deploy when needed.

The **User Group Committee (UGC)** is tasked with developing processes and reviewing requests to the ISICS platform. With UGC's recommendation, the Board approved 36 ISICS participation plans. The UGC also revised the participation plan form for new user requests. To strengthen the Regional Interoperable Committees (RICS), which are sub-committees to the UGC, outreach efforts were made by the committee(s) and SWIC to increase participation and share valuable and relevant information.

The **FirstNet Broadband Subcommittee** received reports from AT&T and FirstNet Authority Representatives and monitored the coverage, capacity expansion, and build-out across Iowa. The initial build-out phase was completed in 2023, where AT&T met initial expectations to offer extensive coverage for Iowa. The committee maintains a "Who's on FirstNet?" self-reporting website to gauge FirstNet adoption in Iowa. The committee will continue to monitor coverage and reinvestment projects in the State.

Through the work of several committees, the Board adopted a Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) and the Iowa Field Operations Guide (FOG), which outlines available resources and operational procedures in Iowa.

The Board made an American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act request to the Governor to meet the needs of the System. Additional channel packs and a cybersecurity program were requested. Increasing the number of channel packs to sites recommended by ISICS System Administrators would offer more talkpaths for voice and data and ensure a talkpath is available when needed in emergent situations. The cybersecurity program monitors the System for malicious activity and resolves any problems identified. Both of these items increase the resiliency and reliability of ISICS.

To facilitate collaboration and information sharing from the Board to the State, an executive collaboration team with members from DOT, DPS, the ISICSB Chair, and the SWIC meet regularly to discuss the administration and future of the System. The ISICSB Chair created working groups

focusing on emerging subjects in 2023 with the FCC eligibility working group and the Rural Emergency Medical Communications Demonstration Project grant working group.

The Future of ISICS

ISICSB will finalize its SCIP review and revision early in 2024 and implement a strategic plan for the next three years. The SCIP defines the goals, objectives, plans, and metrics for success for the Board and its committees.

A Review of Iowa's Boards & Commissions Final Report with Findings and Recommendations 2023 recommended ISICSB for reorganization. The recommendation details that reduced membership to a smaller number of no more than seven members. In 2024, the Board must consider the best ways to fulfill its mission while completing the necessary and time-consuming work required to align with the SCIP with fewer Board members. Maintaining the varied landscape of the Board that coincides with the varied landscape of the public safety/public service stakeholders in the State and the needs of the System is paramount to the future of ISICSB.

In 2023, the ISICSB received \$115,661 State appropriated funding to sustain Board activities and the salaries and benefits for the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) (75%) and ISICSB administrative assistant (50%). Unfunded and vital resources for ISICS are:

- Deputy SWIC role – currently works on a volunteer basis.
- Three Department of Public Safety employees provide system administration with increased demands due to technological advancement and expansion of the System, which is unrelated to DPS's use of ISICS.

In addition to the human capital needed to sustain ISCS, there are essential system upgrades, maintenance, and enhancements that need addressed to maintain the resiliency of the System for Iowa. Funding for these future needs through sustained appropriations will allow the System to function and grow as needed for successful interoperable communications across Iowa. Below is a high-level list of ISICS infrastructure needs

- Battery Replacement – End of life in 2027, may fail sooner. Resiliency of uninterrupted power and buffer time when line and generator power are unavailable.
- Additional Core – having a 3rd core will allow for continued growth and ensure the redundancy needed to meet public safety grade requirements.
- Coverage Enhancement – Provide coverage in areas that currently do not have street-level coverage.
- Eliminate Spurs – the best design is to have a tower connected in loops; this provides multiple means for communications traffic to travel in the case of a failure. ISICS has four spurs
- Cybersecurity - Managed Detection and Response (MDR) Cybersecurity provides Security Operations Center support 24/7/365 monitoring and resolution of cybersecurity risks to the ISICS network.

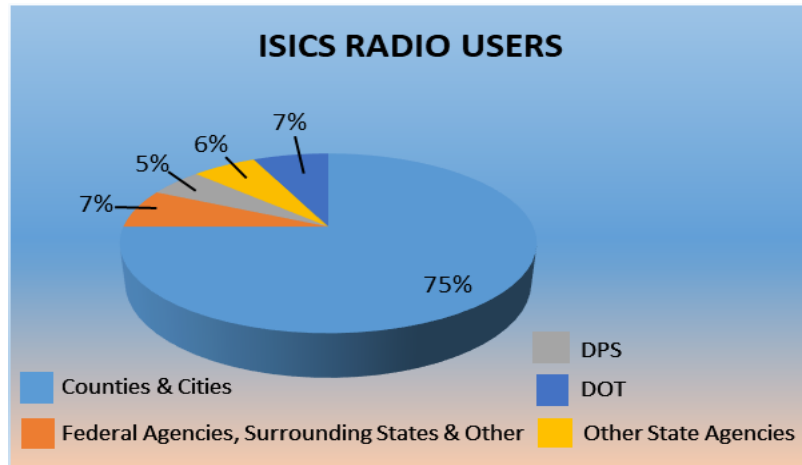
The Board would like to see future General Fund appropriations to keep pace with capacity requirements while sustaining and expanding interoperable efforts in Iowa.

ISICS Use and Expansion

As of the publication of this report, the System has 145 interconnected tower sites and 34,294 user radios, with monthly Push-to-talk (PTT) numbers nearing 3 million per month. This System is in use and necessary for successful communications in Iowa. A complete user list is in Appendix B.

ISICSB has worked to engage county and local membership. State agencies use ISICS for daily operability and interoperability when the need to work across jurisdictions or disciplines arises. Adoption of ISICS by local entities for operability has been robust; along with operability inherently comes interoperability with all others on the System.

Creating the path for interoperability between public safety and school officials through the ISICS redundant and resilient communication system enhances safety for all. The School Safety Initiative announced in 2022 has allowed Iowa schools to order 1,253 ISICS-capable radios, allowing for public safety grade emergency alerting at the push of a button.



Conclusion

For 2023, ISICSB has fulfilled its mission.

ISICSB MISSION

The board shall develop, implement, and oversee policy, operations, and fiscal components of communications interoperability efforts at the state and local level, and coordinate with similar efforts at the federal level, with the ultimate objective of developing and overseeing the operation of a statewide integrated public safety communications interoperability system.

As illustrated in this report and the previous 15 years of effort, the Board will continue to fulfill this mission through its dedicated board members and the invaluable work of the committees.

With proper funding, the Board will ensure that the Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communication System remains resilient and reliable for all users of the System. The Board will seek grant funding where possible to expand the use of the System. However, the cost of the System's infrastructure (towers, batteries, site equipment, and cores) must be accounted for within the State's budget. The mission-critical system we have must be maintained.

Proper funding is also needed to administer the System. As part of a national interoperability initiative, each State was to establish a SWIC position. This position is also consistent with this Iowa Code-mandated element. This SWIC position has been critical to improving interoperability in Iowa,

addressing legislative mandates, and the resulting accomplishments of the Board. It is essential that legislative funding continue to be appropriated to pay the SWIC's salary and to consider funding a Deputy SWIC position to continue to meet Iowa's growing interoperable communication needs and the expanding statewide System. Additionally, the Board should bear the cost of a System Administrator.

ISICSB continues to seek ways to identify sustainable, long-term funding and cost-containment measures for communications interoperability. Continued state funding for ISICSB allows this Board to seek federal grant opportunities that may include a required local match. Future sustained ISICSB is identifying funding streams that will enable the expanded ISICS infrastructure and administration of grants to local municipal and county public safety agencies to promote and broaden interoperability across Iowa. Local, county, and state funding is essential for the sustainability of any interoperable communications system. State funds will continue to train end-users and, where possible, build and maintain infrastructure.

With proper management and funding, ISICS will serve the public safety and public service community well into the future.

APPENDIX A:

IOWA STATEWIDE INTEROPERABILITY COMMUNICATIONS BOARD MEMBERS

Member	Representing	Department
Michele Bischof (Chair)	Fire Department (Career)	Des Moines Fire Department
Patrick Updike (Vice-Chair) Technology Chair	Iowa DOC	Iowa Department of Corrections
Mindy Benson FirstNet Chair	Emergency Management	Black Hawk County
Rhonda Braudis	Member-At-Large	Marshall County Communications Commission
Daniel Brown	Iowa DOT	Iowa Department of Transportation
Blake DeRouchey	HSEMD	Homeland Security and Emergency Management
Bridget Edson Operations Chair	EMS	Chickasaw County Rescue
Dan Fank	County Sheriff	Worth County Sheriff's Office
Cindy Heick	Iowa DPH	Iowa Department of Public Health
Wendi Hess User Group Chair	Communications Center	Woodbury Communications Center
Heath Hove	Iowa DPS	Iowa Department of Public Safety
Anna Voss	ILEA	Iowa Law Enforcement Academy
David Ness Governance Chair	Municipal Police	Des Moines Police Department
Daniel Schaffer	Municipal Police	Denison Police Department
Michael Strauser	Iowa DNR	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Jessica Turba	OCIO	Office of the Chief Information Officer
Curtis Woten	Fire Department (Volunteer)	Blakesburg Fire and Rescue
Travis Solem Training and Outreach Chair	Communications Center	Warren County Communications
Jeff Vandewater	County Sheriff	Adair County

Legislative Ex-Officio Members

Senator Jesse Green
 Senator Todd E. Taylor
 Representative Phil Thompson
 Representative Ross Wilburn

APPENDIX B:

ISICS USERS and LEVEL OF USE

A **Level 1** user of ISICS has access to ISICS talkgroups for interoperability purposes. All of Iowa's 111 PSAPs are a pre-approved Level 1 user of ISICS. In addition, all PSAPs that border Iowa in neighboring states have also been approved for Level 1 access to ISICS which facilitates the expansion of interstate interoperability.

A **Level 2** user of ISICS consists of a local agency have the ability to interoperate with other agencies, as well as enhancement of features of the ISICS system including custom talk groups for their local operations (operability).

A **Level 3** user adds in a direct connection to the ISICS core computers via a hardline or hardwire connection to the System. This direct connection requires significant engineering and coordination. In some cases, additional capacity may be added by the local user to a site to support their additional traffic. Level 3 users of ISICS rely on the System for their LMR communications daily.

A **Level 4** user has chosen to add infrastructure to the network, such as additional towers, to enhance performance and/or expand the coverage offered by ISICS in their community. This coverage benefits more users than just the local agency. Enhancements may be needed to guarantee a feature like in-building coverage.

ISICS USERS			
CITY AGENCIES			
AGENCY NAME	LEVEL	AGENCY NAME	LEVEL
Altoona FD	1	Johnston-Grimes FD	1
Altoona PD	1	Mapleton PD	2
Altoona Public Works	1	Maquoketa PD	3
Anamose Fire Department	1	Marion, City of	2
Ankeny FD	1	Mitchellville FD	1
Ankeny PD	1	Mitchellville PD	1
Atkins, City of	2	Nevada, City of	2
Aurelia	2	Northern Warren FD	2
Baxter FD	2	Osceola, City of	3
Blakesburg Fire & Rescue	2	Pella PD	1
Bondurant FD	1	Pleasant Hill FD	1
Camp Township FD	1	Pleasant Hill PD	1
Carlisle FD	1	Pocahontas PD	1
Cedar Rapids, City of	2	Polk City FD	1
Clear Lake PD	3	Polk City PD	1
Coulter FD	1	Postville PD	2
Delaware Township FD	1	Saylor Township FD	1
Des Moines, City of	4	State Center PD	2
Elkhart FD	1	Virginia Township FD	1
Fonda PD	1	Waukon PD	2
Granger FD	1	Webster City PD	3
Jewell Fire Rescue	1	West Branch PD-FD	2
Johnston PD	1	Windsor Heights, City of	1

COUNTY AGENCIES			
AGENCY NAME	LEVEL	AGENCY NAME	LEVEL
Adair & Guthrie County EMA	4	Ida County	3
Adams County EMA	3	Iowa County	1
Allamakee County EMA	2	Iowa Medical & Classification Center	2
Allamakee County Sheriff's Office	2	Jackson County EMA	1
Appanoose County Sheriff's Office	2	Jasper County	2
Audubon County	3	Jefferson County	3
Benton County	2	Johnson County JECC	2
Black Hawk County 911 Board	2	Jones County	1
Black Hawk County EM	1	Keokuk County EMA	2
Boone County Sheriff's Office	4	Keokuk County Sheriff's Office	1
Bremer County EMA	1	Kossuth County	2
Bremer County Sheriff's Office	2	Lee County EMA	2
Buchanan County	1	Linn County Sheriff's Office	1
Buena Vista EMA	2	Louisa County	2
Buena Vista Sheriff's Office	2	Lyon County Sheriff's Office	3
Butler County	3	Madison County Sheriff's Office	3
Calhoun County EMA	4	Mahaska County 911	1
Carroll County	4	Marion County Sheriff's Office	2
Cass County EMA	4	Marion County EMA	2
Cerro Gordo County Sheriff's Office	3	Marshall County EMA	2
Cherokee County	2	Mills County EMA	4
Chickasaw County 911 Service Board	4	Mitchell County	1
Chickasaw County EMA	1	Mitchell County EMA	2
Clarke County EMA	1	Monona County 911 Dispatch	3
Clarke County Sheriff's Office	1	Monroe County	1
Clay County	2	Montgomery County EMA	4
Clayton County	2	Muscatine County EMA	2
Clinton County	4	O'Brien County	2
Crawford County	2	Page County EMA	4
Dallas County	4	Palo Alto County Sheriff	2
Davis County	2	Palo Alto EMA	1
Decatur County Sheriff's Office	3	Plymouth County	3
Delaware County	1	Polk County Sheriff's Office	1
Delaware Dubuque Jackson County	2	Pottawattamie County	2
Des Moines County Sheriff's Office	2	Poweshiek County EMA	1
Dickinson County EMA	3	Ringgold County	2
Dubuque E911	1	Sac County	3
Emmet County Sheriff's Office	2	Scott County - SECC	2
Fayette County EMA	1	Scott County Health	1
Fayette County Sheriff's Office	1	Shelby County	3
Floyd County Communications	1	Story County 911 Board	2
Franklin County	3	Tama County	1
Fremont County	4	Taylor County	2
Greene County Sheriff's Office	4	Union County LEC	4
Grundy County Sheriff's Office	1	Van Buren County 911 Board	2
Hamilton County	4	Warren County Sheriff's Office	4
Hancock County	4	Washington County Communications	2
Hardin County	2	Wayne County	2
Harrison County 911	4	Webster County EMA	4
Henry County	3	Winnebago County Communications	3
Howard County EMA	1	Winneshiek County EM	2
Humboldt County	4	Worth County Sheriff's Office	4
		Wright County	4

STATE AGENCIES			
AGENCY NAME	LEVEL	AGENCY NAME	LEVEL
5th Judicial District	2	Iowa DOC - Fort Dodge Correctional Facility	2
8th Judicial District	2	Iowa DOC - Fort Madison	4
185ARW - IA Air National Guard	2	Iowa DOC - Mount Pleasant	2
Glenwood Resource Center - Iowa DHS	4	Iowa DOC - North Central Correctional Facility	2
Independence Mental Health Institute - Iowa DHS	2	Iowa DOT	4
Iowa Correctional Facility for Women	2	Iowa DPS	4
Iowa DHHS	2	Iowa HSEMD	2
Iowa DNR	2	Iowa National Guard	2
Iowa DOC - Anamosa State Penitentiary	2	Iowa Veterans Affairs (VA)	2
Iowa DOC - Clarinda	4		
FEDERAL AGENCIES			
AGENCY NAME	LEVEL	AGENCY NAME	LEVEL
10th District Reserve Law Enforcement	1	OIG HHS	2
ATF	2	United States Army Corps of Engineers - Lake Red Rock Project	2
DEA/DOJ	2	United States Capitol Police	2
DHS - Investigations	2	US Fish & Wildlife Service	1
DHS OEC	1	US Marshal Service	2
FBI	2	US Postal Inspection Service	2
FEMA	1	US Probation Office (USPO) - Southern Iowa	1
AMBULANCE / HOSPITAL AGENCIES			
AGENCY NAME	LEVEL	AGENCY NAME	LEVEL
Air Methods	2	Medforce Quad City Helicopter EMS	2
American Medical Response	2	Medic EMS (Davenport)	2
Avera Health - Avera Careflight	2	Mercy Ambulance Des Moines	2
Cherokee Regional Medical Center	2	Mercy Hospital (Iowa City)	2
Genesis Ambulance Service	1	Sioux Center Ambulance	1
Global Medical Response	2	Tipton Ambulance Service	2
		Unity Point Health	3
ELECTRIC / POWER COMPANIES			
AGENCY NAME	LEVEL	AGENCY NAME	LEVEL
Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO)	2	Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities	2
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative	2	Metro Waste Authority	2
Consumers Energy	2	Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative	2
Corn Belt Power Cooperative	2	Osceola Electric Coop	2
Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative	2	Southwest Iowa REC	2
Farmers REC	2	TIP REC	2
Guthrie County REC	2	Western Iowa Power Cooperative	2
Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives	2	Wings Air Rescue	2

SCHOOLS			
AGENCY NAME	LEVEL	AGENCY NAME	LEVEL
Ankeny Community School District	2	University of Iowa	2
Chariton Community School District	2	University of Northern Iowa	4
Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC)	2	Urbandale Community School District	2
Des Moines Public Schools	2	Waukee Schools	2
OTHER			
AGENCY NAME	LEVEL	AGENCY NAME	LEVEL
Albany Police Department (Illinois)	1	Metro Communications (Sioux Falls, SD)	1
Burt County EMA (Nebraska)	1	MICRN	2
Canadian Pacific Police Service	2	Minnesota ECN	1
Carroll County Sheriff's Office (Illinois)	1	Mower County (Minnesota)	1
Des Moines International Airport	2	National Weather Service	2
Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART)	3	Nebraska OCIO - Patrol	1
Des Moines Metro Water Reclamation Authority	2	Region 6 Local Emergency Planning Committee	1
Freeborn County (Minnesota)	1	Safeguard Iowa Partnership	2
Fulton PD (Illinois)	1	STARCOMM	4
Jo Daviess County Sheriff's Office (Illinois)	1	Washington County Sheriff's Office (MN)	1
Lee Comm	4	Westcom	4
		Whiteside County (Illinois)	2