INFORMATION SHARING RESOURCES

As information technology continues to permeate our lives, sharing information regarding cyber security incidents and events is an increasingly important part of safeguarding our organizations and communities. Formalizing the process and mechanisms for sharing of this information is the first step toward better integrating cyber security into our existing practices and methodologies.

While the Homeland Security SAFECOM Interoperability program’s primary focus is on inoperability of communication systems, the ideas, frameworks and other resources they provide can form the basis for a cyber security information sharing program. Interoperability is simply the ability to share information on a real-time basis. On a broad basis it is the ability to electronically transmit all types of communication whether voice, data, images or videos.

Guidelines, tools and modifiable templates are available for guidance and usage to outline the interoperability necessary for your community or organization with regards to cyber security and information sharing. These can be used to outline what policies and procedures may need to be in place in addition to legal documents where information sharing agreements are made internal or external to the community or organization.

Interoperability Basics

Interoperability is the ability to effectively communicate on-demand during an event at a basic level between community agencies. The guide to Public Safety and Wireless Communications Interoperability addresses the importance of creating a framework of standardized communications procedures and protocols and the associated benefits, issues and concerns. Day-to-day, Mutual Aid and Task Force are the three types of interoperability discussed within: www.safecomprogram.gov/NR/rdonlyres/127FFF18-100D-4405-AA40-076B79F17B1B/0/interopbooklet.pdf

Memorandum of Understanding

The Writing Guide for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) provides an overview of its basics components and how it protects information sharing parties. It outlines required sections, includes thought provoking questions and contains sample templates to facilitate the process. www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/library/interoperabilitybasics/1288_writingguide.htm

Tools such as the two Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) guides may be necessary when sharing information on a local-to-local or state-to-local basis. They are used to protect each entity by outlining intentions, expectations and deadlines. The guides are available in an editable format.

Local to Local MOU Guide:
Other Tools

The Coordination and Partnership Awareness Guide reinforces the importance of partnering and information sharing and how it improves interoperability. It also reviews problems, mitigations and outlines activities to ensure communications remain open through coordination and partnerships.

The Creating a Charter for Multi-agency Communication Interoperability Committee offers program startup guidance. This document describes the ground rules and why a charter is required. It provides clarity and alignment of a diverse group with a common purpose. The charter is an agreement made upon key issues that determine how the group best achieves its desired outcomes.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) will guide interaction and provide greater coordination for joint operations and should be mutually agreed upon, concise and scalable. These procedures, guidelines for their use, examples and templates are available.

Source: SAFECOM Program, www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/