



Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The seeds of interoperability were sown in the fertile vision of Illinois officials more than 40 years ago when the nation's first statewide emergency radio network was founded in the Prairie State. Known as the Illinois State Police Emergency Radio Network, or ISPERN, the system has provided interagency communications capabilities to municipal, county, state, and federal law enforcement agencies since 1965.

Today, Illinois' public safety agencies are served by multiple interoperability systems which provide effective, efficient data and voice communications platforms among service-aligned agencies as well as in cross-disciplinary applications. The rollout of Illinois' STARCOM 21 (State Radio Communications for the 21st Century) radio network promises to raise the state of interoperability in Illinois to an unprecedented level. This state-of-the-art 700/800 megahertz (MHz) radio network is bringing interoperability into the mainstream of police, fire, and emergency medical response agencies throughout Illinois.

An overarching goal of Illinois' SCIP is to ensure the state is prepared to welcome the world in 2016. Chicago's selection as the United States' nominee to host the 2016 Summer Olympic Games places an added incentive on planners to ensure a maximized state of interoperability exists prior to the Games. While the host city will not be officially named until October 2009, Chicago is widely regarded as one of the front runners in the competition.

The enormity of this endeavor dictates a high-level of planning and interagency cooperation for success under the omnipresent threat of a major terrorist attack. In addition to the lure of the Olympic Games, Chicago's wealth of critical infrastructures may serve as a magnet for zealots who, in the name of their distorted religious or political ideologies, could seize the opportunity to use the world stage of the Olympic Games to strike the city with violence and mayhem.

A comprehensive interoperable communications plan will ensure first responders have the knowledge, technology, and usage skills they need to react quickly and effectively to any incident. The foresight of Illinois' officials more than four decades ago set the standards for the state's national role as a leader in the field of interoperable communications . . . a role which Illinois refuses to cede today. With its rich tradition of success, coupled with today's climate of opportunity and technological growth and the potential which exists for the world spotlight to shine on Illinois in 2016, the following plan demonstrates Illinois truly is "A State of Interoperability."