2024

Greenfield Tornado aftermath May 2024 image by S. Richardson

Springbrook State Park ISICS Site image by H. Nichols

Spencer Flooding June 2024 image by Eric Johannsen

Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System

Annual Report

Iowa Statewide Interoperability Communications System Board (ISICSB)

ISICSB 911 Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board

IOWA STATEWIDE INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM ISICS

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Introduction from the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator and ISICSB Chair

As we reflect on the milestones achieved in 2024, it is evident that Iowa's commitment to interoperability and collaboration has reached new heights. The Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System (ISICS) continues to serve as the backbone of our public safety communications, empowering responders at every level with the tools and resources needed to protect and serve our communities.

This year brought significant transformation for the Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board (ISICSB). The passage of Senate File 2385 reshaped our governance structure, decreasing Board membership to seven dedicated individuals while maintaining our commitment to representing the diverse needs of public safety and public service across the state. Despite these changes, the Board has continued to deliver on its mission, guided by the principles outlined in our updated **Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP)** and the **Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP)**.

The role of the **Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)** has been to foster partnerships, identify challenges, and implement solutions that advance our shared goals. Through enhanced training programs, expanded stakeholder engagement, and robust governance through standards development, we have strengthened the foundation of ISICS and broadened its impact.

From the Board's perspective, 2024 has been a year of growth and opportunity. The Board has witnessed firsthand the passion and professionalism of our public safety community. The accomplishments detailed in this report are a testament to the collaborative efforts of our committees, working groups, and volunteers who dedicate their time to improving communication for all Iowans.

Looking ahead, we recognize the challenges that lie before us. Sustaining and enhancing ISICS requires consistent investment in infrastructure, staffing, and training. It also demands innovative thinking to ensure our system remains resilient and adaptable to future needs. The Board remains steadfast in its pursuit of funding solutions and strategic initiatives that will support Iowa's evolving public safety landscape.

We thank you for your continued support and engagement. Together, we will ensure that ISICS remains a trusted and reliable resource for those who serve our communities every day.

Sincerely,

Statewide Interoperability Coordinator

Chair, Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board (ISICSB)

ISICSB 2024 Executive Summary

Since its establishment in 2007, the Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board (ISICSB) has been committed to advancing interoperable communication throughout Iowa. The year 2024 marked a period of growth and evolution for both the Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System (ISICS) and the Board.

A major transformation occurred this year with the passage of Senate File 2385, which reduced the Board's membership from 19 to 7 members. Despite this structural change, the scope and significance of the Board's work have only expanded. The year saw an active focus on reviewing and developing standards to support ISICS's continued adoption and enhancement. Agencies across Iowa have embraced ISICS at rates exceeding initial expectations, a testament to the system's reliability, extensive coverage, and vital role in public safety. With over 40,000 users relying on ISICS, 2024 presented a pivotal opportunity to fortify the Board's governance structure to ensure sustainable oversight and support.

This report celebrates the Board's key achievements over the past year while outlining critical steps to maintain and advance the system's capabilities for its users.

The Board is particularly proud of the following accomplishments:

- **Interoperability:** Response to numerous interoperability events and devastating natural disasters including the Greenfield tornado and Spencer flood.
- **Advancing the REMCDP Grant**: Continued work on the two-year, $1.8 million Rural Emergency Medical Communications Demonstration Project (REMCDP) grant awarded in 2023 to enhance communications between ambulance providers and hospitals.
- **Policy and Procedure Development**:
    - Establishing direct discipline specific channels for safe communication when public safety incident use-case demand it.
    - Strengthening interoperability coordination with surrounding states.
- **Training and Credentialing**: Provide scenario-based training, including a Communication Exercise (COMX) and credentialing 19 communication unit personnel and 1 Communications Unit Leader (COML) Trainer.
- **Application Review**: Processing 21 participation plans and gaining 14 new agencies on ISICS.
- **Strategic Planning**: Documenting goals and objectives by completing the Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP). Review of the Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) and the resources available to Iowa agencies. Deployment of the electronic Iowa Field Operations Guide (eFOG) to enhance state communication protocols and make technical reference manuals more accessible to emergency communication stakeholders.
- **FirstNet Build-Out**: Achieving the completion of the initial FirstNet build-out in Iowa, expanding broadband capabilities for first responders with reinvestment dollars allocation to our state infrastructure, technology, and responders.

Looking ahead, the Board has identified several priorities to ensure the long-term success of ISICS:

- **Staffing**: Secure adequate staffing to manage the system effectively.
- **Infrastructure Maintenance**:

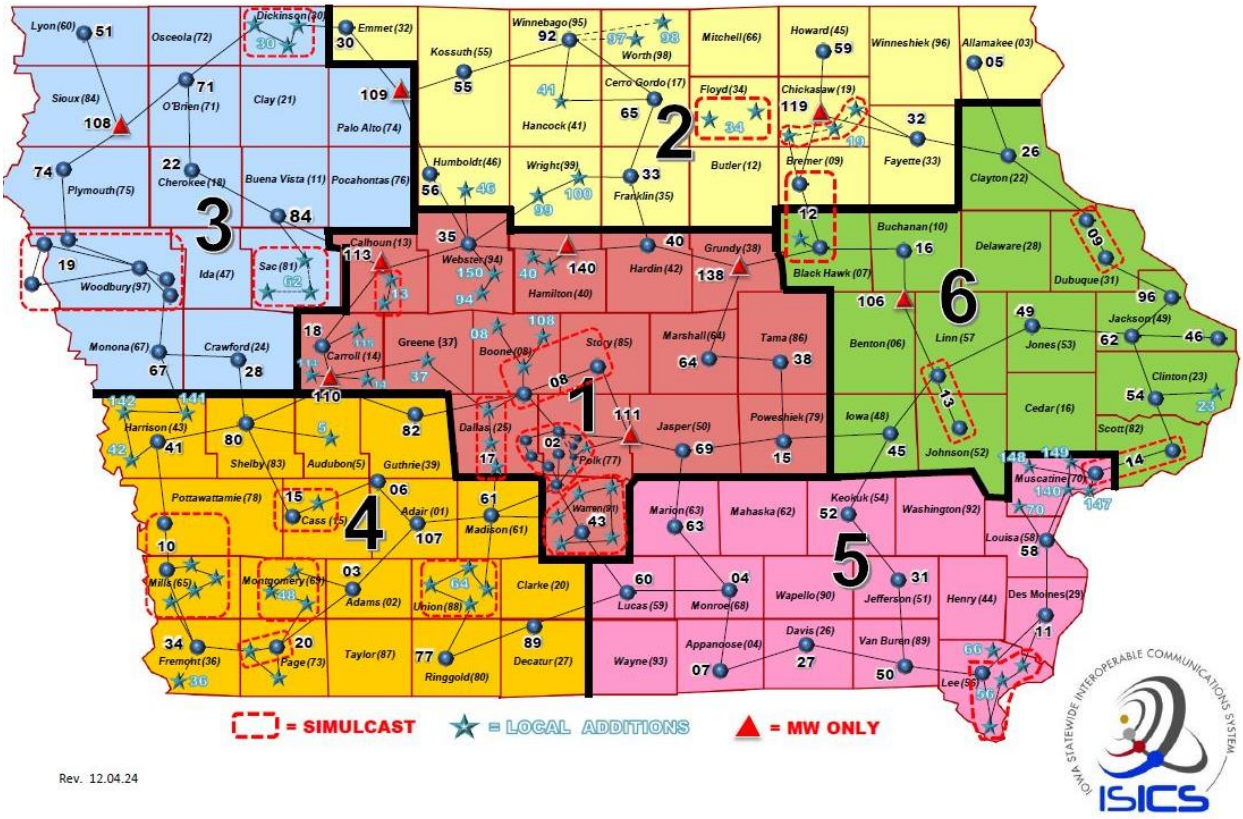
- Replacing end-of-life batteries.
- Adding a third core for redundancy and growth.
- Adding Critical Connect backup at the second core.
- Expanding channel capacity to meet user needs.
- Implementing enhanced cybersecurity measures.

- **System Enhancements**:
  - Expanding coverage to underserved areas.
  - Eliminating "spurs" in the network to improve resilience and redundancy.

As the ISICSB moves into 2025 and beyond, its focus remains clear: fostering a resilient, reliable, and innovative communications system that serves Iowa's public safety community and the citizens they protect.

Background

The ISICSB was established in Iowa Code sections 80.28 and 80.29 under the joint purview of the Iowa Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT). ISICS now serves as the interoperability platform for the State of Iowa and its 3.21 million residents. ISICS is a two-zone 700/800 MHz Trunked P25 Time Division Multiple Access (TDMA) Phase II standard digital statewide radio platform, when first built providing 95% or better mobile coverage border to border (see map).



The growth of ISICS users has been remarkable. At the time of this report, over 260 agencies and more than 40,000 radios utilize ISICS with over 3 million push-to-talks, or radio transmissions, each month. ISICS users are in all levels of government and non-governmental organizations. When agencies adopt the ISICS platform, they integrate their resources into an existing network of over 150 sites. This collaboration leverages ISICS's resilient backbone, which is designed to provide robust and reliable communication during routine operations and emergencies. Agencies benefit from this state-of-the-art infrastructure without needing to build or maintain standalone systems. As agencies join the network, they often contribute additional infrastructure, such as tower sites or coverage enhancements. These contributions directly strengthen their local communication capabilities by integrating with ISICS's statewide coverage, ensuring seamless and reliable communication for their operational needs, and support from the ISICS System Administration team. Contributions from new agencies don't just benefit their operations; they also improve network performance for all ISICS users. When new infrastructure is added to the network, it expands coverage and enhances capacity in the surrounding areas. This collaborative approach ensures broader, more reliable communication capabilities for everyone on the system. Joining a shared system eliminates the need for agencies to build and maintain independent networks. Instead, agencies can pool resources, reducing duplication and lowering costs while accessing state-of-the-art technology and continuous system upgrades. Integration into the ISICS network ensures seamless communication across local, county, state, and even federal agencies. This interoperability is critical during multi-jurisdictional incidents, enabling faster response times, better coordination, and improved safety outcomes.

By becoming part of a statewide land mobile radio (LMR) system like ISICS, agencies enhance their communication capabilities while contributing to a resilient, interconnected network that benefits public safety across the entire state. This partnership exemplifies the power of collaboration in building stronger, more reliable communication systems.

The Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board (ISICSB) achieves its mission through six dedicated committees, one subcommittee, and additional working groups as needed. With seven members, the Board reflects a diverse cross-section of Iowa's public safety and public service sectors, encompassing all public safety disciplines. The ISICS communication system thrives because it integrates diverse perspectives, fosters collaboration, and represents the unique needs of its stakeholders. Whether law enforcement is coordinating with fire, emergency medical services, or school systems during a disaster or emergency, the ability to connect instantly ensures faster, more effective responses and improves outcomes for communities in need.

To maintain transparency and engagement, the Board shares a wealth of information on its comprehensive website. This includes meeting agendas, minutes, standards, and a calendar of events, providing stakeholders with easy access to essential resources, which can be found at https://isicsb.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

The ISICSB has a robust governance structure with committees working in tandem pending final approval from the Board. Each committee is chaired by a ISICSB member and all committee members are volunteers dedicated to improving communications across Iowa. Committees under ISICSB have goals, metrics, objectives, and action plans outlined in the *Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP*). The Board finalized a *SCIP* update in September 2024 and has outlined the strategic plan for the ISICSB over the next three (3) years.

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** met its goal of creating, reviewing, and revising system policies, procedures, and standards through regular meetings with development of policy and procedure statements for the enhancement, deployment, and operation of ISICS and maintaining the standard review schedule. Governance also worked to meet the objective of promoting participation in ISICS Committees with 19 new members joining various committees in 2024.

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 Rural Emergency Medical Communications Demonstration Project sub-committee and the Technology Committee to meet their goal of identifying, reviewing, and updating legacy communications plans in their dedication to improve rural emergency medical communications and update the Iowa Emergency Medical Services Communication Plan. They met the goal of increasing the creation and sharing of After-Action Reports (AARs) with a report shared from the communications exercise (COMX), numerous presentations in collaboration with the Department of Public Safety of the after actions of the Greenfield tornado and webinars and demonstrations of abilities utilized during the Spencer flooding event.

The **Technology Committee** continued to meet twice per month to address the ongoing importance and ever-changing environment of the ISICS System.

The 700 MHz Air to Ground frequencies were licensed in 2024 and those frequencies were added to the ICS-217A, authorizing part 90 users to communicate with air mobile units from ground locations where uncontrolled landing sites may arise in emergency situations. The Committee worked to bring a group of existing channels more in line with National Naming Standards, and that work was adopted by the Board in 2024.

The committee continued discussions on discipline-specific encryption and licensed six suitable channels for this purpose.

- **Three channels** dedicated to encryption and specific storage location numbers (SLNs).
- **Two channels** designated for law enforcement use.

While encryption on the ISICS system remains a complex topic under consideration, the committee prioritized establishing conventional resources as an interim solution, allowing additional time for research and deliberation.

Stakeholders and administrators frequently present technological topics and challenges to the committee for review and consideration. The committee actively engages in in-depth research and discussions, holding regular meetings to evaluate these issues. This proactive approach ensures the System remains secure, effective, and optimized for statewide interoperable communications, meeting the needs of all stakeholders.

The **Training and Outreach 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. The Committee met its goal to increase the number of credentialed communications unit personnel and trainers by implementing a communications exercise (COMX) hosted in Story County where six communication unit leader trainees, six communication unit technician trainees and 18 incident tactical dispatch trainees completed tasks toward credentialing in those disciplines. ISICSB, with assistance from the committee, The Iowa Department of Public Safety, 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 19 incident tactical dispatchers. The Board credentialed 19 total communication unit personnel in 2024 expanding the core group who can deploy when needed, and Iowa gained a communication unit leader trainer, growing the ability to host courses and train more resources in our state.

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 the 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, representatives from the Board collaborated to update the Statewide Interoperable Communications Plan (SCIP) with measurable goals and objectives that have champions identified in ISICSB Committees to ensure completion. The goals and objectives focus on governance, technology and cybersecurity, and funding. They are designed to support our state in planning for emerging technologies and navigating the ever-changing emergency communications landscape. They also incorporate the SAFECOM/National Council of SWICs (NCSWIC) State Interoperability markers which describe Iowa’s level of interoperability maturity by measuring progress against 25 markers.

To enhance collaboration and ensure seamless information sharing between the Board and the State, an executive collaboration team has been established. This team comprises representatives from key stakeholders, including the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Department of Public Safety (DPS), the Chair of the Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board (ISICSB), and the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC). The team meets regularly to discuss the management, administration, and strategic direction of the System. These meetings provide a platform to address operational challenges, align on policy initiatives, and strategize on advancements to ensure the System meets current and future needs. By bringing together diverse expertise and perspectives, the collaboration team plays a pivotal role in maintaining an effective and interoperable communication infrastructure.

The Future of ISICS

In 2024, the ISICSB received $115,661 in state appropriated funding to sustain Board activities and the salaries and benefits for the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) (75%) and ISICSB administrative assistant (50%). Future improvement and vital resources for ISICS include:

- Deputy SWIC role – currently works on a volunteer basis. The Deputy SWIC would work as a subject matter expert and technical expert who supports the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) in managing and enhancing the state's interoperable communications systems and programs. This role involves collaboration with public safety agencies, local and state governments, and other stakeholders to ensure effective communication and coordination during emergencies and daily operations. This position is vital for ensuring the effectiveness of interoperable communication systems, directly supporting the safety and coordination of public safety agencies across the state.
- Three Department of Public Safety employees currently provide system administration with increased demands due to technological advancement and expansion of the System, which is unrelated to DPS's use of ISICS.
- Broadband System Administrator – with technological advancements the responsibilities of managing, maintaining, and supporting the communications platform for Long-Term Evolution (LTE)/Land Mobile Radio (LMR) integration must be considered for optimal system performance and security while providing functionality and technical support for system end-users and stakeholders.

In addition to the human capital needed to sustain ISCS, there are essential system upgrades, maintenance, and enhancements that will need to be addressed to maintain the resiliency of the System for Iowa. Identifying resources to fulfill these future needs 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 Projection: The current batteries are projected to reach the end of their useful life by 2027, while the System contract extends through 2030. Replacing the batteries before they fail is critical to ensuring the system's resiliency and uninterrupted operation.

Key Reasons for Replacement**:**

- **Uninterrupted Power Supply:** Batteries serve as a vital power backup during outages, ensuring seamless operation when primary line power or generator power is unavailable.
- **Resilience and Reliability:** Proactively replacing batteries before their end of life minimizes the risk of unexpected failures that could compromise system functionality during critical events.
- **Operational Continuity:** Adequate buffer time provided by new batteries allows for extended periods of operation during emergencies, safeguarding the system against prolonged power disruptions.

Timely battery replacement ensures the System remains dependable and capable of supporting uninterrupted communications through the duration of the contract.

Critical Connect and Smart Connect Backup – Ensuring System Resilience and Redundancy: Adding a Critical Connect and Smart Connect to the Dynamic System Resilience (DSR) core is essential to enhancing the reliability and resiliency of the ISICS communication network.

Key Reasons for Critical Connect Backup at the DSR Core:

- **Enhanced Redundancy:**
  - Critical Connect and Smart Connect backup at the DSR core provides an additional layer of redundancy, ensuring communication continuity if the primary connection is compromised.
  - This ensures the system remains operational during unexpected outages, cyberattacks, or natural disasters.
- **Failover Capability:**
  - In the event of a failure at the primary core or its backup connection, the DSR core with Critical Connect and Smart Connect can immediately take over, minimizing downtime and maintaining seamless communication.
  - This failover capability is crucial for public safety operations, where even a few seconds of communication loss can have significant consequences.
- **Distributed Resilience:**
  - By equipping the DSR core with its own Critical Connect and Smart Connect backup, the system gains geographic and structural resilience, allowing for continued operation even if an entire region or site is affected.
  - This separation reduces the risk of single points of failure impacting the overall system.
- **Future Growth and Scalability:**
  - As the system grows, having Critical Connect and Smart Connect at both the primary and DSR cores allows for balanced traffic management and ensures that redundancy is maintained without compromising performance.
  - It supports the evolving needs of public safety agencies and large-scale emergency response operations.

Installing a Critical Connect and Smart Connect at the redundant core is a strategic move to bolster the system's reliability, support high-stakes communication demands, and ensure compliance with public safety-grade requirements. It provides peace of mind that the system can withstand and recover from unexpected disruptions, safeguarding critical communication channels when they are needed most.

Additional Zone – Ensuring Growth and Redundancy: Implementing a third zone is essential for meeting the demands of a growing user base and achieving the reliability required for public safety grade operations on ISICS.

Key Reasons for a 3rd zone:

- **System Growth and Scalability:**
  - Currently, ISICS is a 2-Zone System currently. As the radio system expands to accommodate more users, agencies, and communication needs; an additional zone provides the necessary infrastructure to handle increased traffic without compromising performance.
  - It ensures that the system can support future enhancements and additional functionality as technology evolves.
- **Redundancy and Resiliency:**
  - A third zone introduces an additional layer of redundancy, ensuring that critical communication services remain operational if other zones or cores experience a failure.
  - This level of resiliency is a cornerstone of public safety-grade requirements, where uninterrupted communication can save lives during emergencies.
- **Load Balancing:**
  - Allows for better distribution of system workloads, reducing the strain on individual zone and improving overall performance.
  - It minimizes bottlenecks and ensures consistent service quality, even during peak usage or high-stress scenarios.
- **Disaster Recovery:**
  - The third zone can serve as a geographically separated backup, enhancing the system's ability to recover quickly from natural disasters, cyberattacks, or other catastrophic events.
  - It ensures continuity of operations by providing a fail-safe option in the event of widespread outages.

Adding a third zone is a strategic investment to future-proof the radio system, enabling it to grow, adapt, and maintain the reliability and redundancy critical for public safety communications.

Coverage Enhancements in a Statewide Radio System: Enhancing coverage in a statewide radio system is critical for ensuring reliable communication across diverse terrains, populations, and emergency scenarios. Coverage improvements directly contribute to the system's ability to meet public safety-grade requirements and support effective communication for first responders, public safety officials, and other essential personnel. ISICS System Administrators and ISICSB experts have identified a few strategic areas where enhancements could do the most good for the most users.

- **Seamless Communication Across All Areas:**
  - Rural and Remote Areas: Extending coverage ensures that users in less populated or hard-to-reach locations have the same access to reliable communication as those in urban centers.
  - Urban Environments: Addressing gaps caused by building density and infrastructure improves signal strength in urban and suburban areas.
- **Improved Public Safety Response:**

    - Reliable coverage allows first responders to communicate effectively during emergencies, regardless of their location, ensuring faster coordination and decision-making.
    - Enhanced coverage reduces dead zones, ensuring no responder is cut off during critical operations.
- **Support for Mutual Aid and Interagency Coordination:**
    - Statewide coverage ensures interoperability between local, regional, and state agencies, facilitating efficient communication during large-scale incidents that span jurisdictions.
    - A robust statewide system supports seamless communication between agencies operating under different systems or protocols.
- **Resilience During Disasters:**
    - Enhanced coverage mitigates the impact of natural disasters or infrastructure failures by providing alternative communication paths.
    - A resilient network ensures continued communication in adverse conditions, such as during hurricanes, wildfires, or other emergencies.
- **Operational Efficiency:**
    - Improved coverage reduces the need for temporary solutions like portable repeaters, saving time and resources.
    - It allows users to focus on their missions rather than managing communication challenges.
- **Future-Proofing the System:**
    - As communication needs evolve, a system with enhanced coverage is better equipped to handle increased usage and technological advancements.
    - It supports the integration of new technologies, such as broadband Push-to-Talk and IoT-based solutions.

Coverage enhancements in a statewide radio system are fundamental to achieving reliable, equitable, and effective communication across the entire state. They ensure that first responders and public safety officials can perform their duties efficiently and safely, regardless of location or circumstance. Investing in coverage improvements is a critical step toward building a resilient, interoperable, and future-ready communication infrastructure.

Eliminate Spurs – In a statewide radio system like ISICS, eliminating "spurs" significantly enhances system reliability and resilience. Spurs are individual or linear connections from a single tower that lack alternative pathways for communication traffic. If a failure occurs along the connection to a spur—whether due to equipment malfunction, weather conditions, or other disruptions—the communication capabilities of the connected tower and its coverage area can be compromised.

By contrast, the optimal design for a statewide radio system connects towers in loops, also known as ring topology. This configuration ensures multiple pathways for communication traffic to travel. If one link in the loop is disrupted, the traffic can automatically re-route in the opposite direction, maintaining uninterrupted service. Most of ISICS maintains redundant paths, but the System does have four (4) spurs.

Key Benefits of Eliminating Spurs and Implementing Loop Connections:

- **Enhanced Resilience:** A loop design ensures that communication traffic continues to flow even in the event of a failure, minimizing the risk of service outages.

- **Improved Redundancy:** Multiple paths between towers create redundancy, which is critical for maintaining service during maintenance, emergencies, or unforeseen disruptions.
- **Increased Reliability for Public Safety:** Uninterrupted communications are vital for first responders and public safety agencies who depend on real-time coordination, particularly during emergencies.
- **Optimized System Performance:** Loop connections help balance traffic loads, reducing the likelihood of congestion and ensuring efficient use of system resources.

For ISICS, eliminating the four remaining spurs would provide a significant upgrade in system design, aligning with best practices for public safety-grade communications infrastructure. This improvement would further reinforce Iowa's commitment to delivering a robust and dependable interoperable network.

Cybersecurity – Protecting ISICS Land Mobile Radio (LMR) network from cyber threats is as critical as ensuring physical infrastructure resilience. ISICS is foundational to public safety and emergency response, providing real-time communication for first responders, public safety, healthcare providers, and other essential services. Any compromise in their functionality due to cyberattacks can have severe consequences for public safety, response coordination, and overall security.

- **Protection Against Emerging Threats**
    - Cyberattacks Target Critical Infrastructure: LMR systems are increasingly at risk from hackers, including state-sponsored groups, criminal enterprises, and lone actors. Cyberattacks such as ransomware, denial-of-service (DoS) attacks, and malware can disrupt critical communication systems, potentially halting emergency response operations.
    - Growing Attack Surface: Modern LMR networks often integrate with IP-based systems, broadband, and other technologies, increasing the potential entry points for cyberattacks.

- **Safeguarding Public Safety Communications**
    - Uninterrupted Service: Public safety agencies rely on LMR networks for life-saving coordination. A network breach or outage during a disaster, crisis, or routine operation could cost lives.
    - Preventing Eavesdropping and Data Theft: Cybersecurity measures ensure communications remain private and protected from interception, maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of sensitive information.

- **Compliance and Standards**
    - Regulatory Requirements: Agencies must meet national cybersecurity standards, such as those outlined by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), to ensure their networks are secure and resilient.
    - Interoperability with Secure Systems: As public safety networks integrate across jurisdictions and systems (e.g., FirstNet), maintaining strong cybersecurity protocols ensures seamless and secure interoperability.

- **Mitigating Financial and Operational Risks**
    - Avoiding Costly Downtime**:** Cyber incidents can lead to extended system downtime, impacting operations and requiring significant financial resources for recovery.
    - Reducing Liability: A secure LMR network helps protect agencies from legal and reputational risks associated with data breaches or communication failures.

- **Preparing for the Future**
    - Adapting to Technological Advances: As LMR networks evolve to include next-generation technologies, such as broadband and IP integration, cybersecurity investments will be crucial to address new vulnerabilities and threats.
    - Proactive Defense: Building robust cybersecurity defenses today ensures networks are resilient against both current and emerging threats, including AI-driven cyberattacks and quantum computing risks.

Cybersecurity for ISICS

- **Managed Detection and Response (MDR):** Continuous monitoring to detect and mitigate threats in real time.
- **Continued Support:** Continued system support of current security protocols such as encryption, access controls, and incident response planning with a robust team of System Administrators and continuous funded maintenance agreements for regular updates and patch management to ensure software and hardware vulnerabilities are addressed promptly.

By investing in cybersecurity, ISICSB can continue to provide the reliable, uninterrupted, and secure communications network critical to public safety operations, reinforcing trust and readiness in an increasingly digital and threat-prone environment.

Conclusion

For 2024, ISICSB has fulfilled its mission.

ISICSB MISSION

Develop and provide the highest level of standardized interoperable public safety and public service communications in accordance with the Code of Iowa.

The Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board (ISICSB) consists of seven dedicated members who tirelessly work to enhance standards and procedures for interoperability across Iowa while fostering meaningful stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes.

As evidenced in this report and through 16 years of diligent effort, the Board remains steadfast in its mission to improve Iowa's interoperable communication capabilities. This commitment is supported by the invaluable contributions of the Board members and the committees that drive critical initiatives.

To maintain the resilience and reliability of the Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System (ISICS), proper and consistent resourcing is imperative. While grant opportunities will be pursued to expand the System's reach and functionality, the foundational needs of the System—including infrastructure, batteries, site equipment, and core components—must be prioritized. ISICS is a mission-critical system, and its upkeep is essential for ensuring the safety and efficiency of all users.

Effective administration of ISICS also requires resource allocation. As part of a national interoperability initiative, every state was tasked with establishing a Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) position, a role mandated by Iowa Code. The SWIC has been pivotal in advancing Iowa's interoperability goals, addressing legislative mandates, and achieving the Board's successes. Continued legislative support for this position is essential. Additionally, the creation of a Deputy SWIC position would address the growing demands of Iowa's expanding interoperable communication needs. The Board also emphasizes the necessity of employing a System Administrator to ensure the seamless operation of ISICS.

The ISICSB is committed to identifying sustainable, long-term resources while implementing cost-containment measures to support communications interoperability. Continued resourcing enables the Board to pursue federal grant opportunities, many of which require matching funds, and to expand ISICS infrastructure. Furthermore, enhanced resource allocation can facilitate training for end-users and support grants to local and county public safety agencies, promoting broader adoption and enhancing interoperability across Iowa.

Collaboration at the local, county, and state levels is essential for the sustainability and growth of ISICS. With appropriate management and funding, ISICS will continue to serve Iowa's public safety and public service communities, ensuring reliable and effective communication for years to come.

APPENDIX A:

IOWA STATEWIDE INTEROPERABILITY COMMUNICATIONS BOARD MEMBERS

Member	Representing	Committee Chair	Department
Michele Bischof **(ISICSB Chair)**	Fire Department	Finance Committee	Des Moines Fire Department
Patrick Updike **(ISICSB Vice-Chair)**	Member-At-Large	Technology Committee	Amateur Radio
Mindy Benson	Emergency Management	FirstNet Broadband Subcommittee	Black Hawk County
Luke Erpelding	Communications Center	Operations Committee	Iowa Department of Public Safety
Jeff Vandewater	Sheriff	User Group Committee	Adair County
David Ness	Municipal Police	Governance Committee	Des Moines Police Department
Curtis Woten	Emergency Medical Service	Training and Exercise Committee	Blakesburg Fire and Rescue

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.

See following pages for list of ISICS users, listed alphabetically and split out by jurisdiction when possible.

ISICS USERS

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

COUNTY AGENCIES		
	AGENCY NAME	LEVEL
	Adair & Guthrie County EMA	4
	Adams County EMA	3
	Allamakee County EMA	2
	Allamakee County Sheriff's Office	2
	Appanoose County Sheriff's Office	2
	Audubon County	3
	Benton County	2
	Benton County 911	2
	Black Hawk County 911 Board	2
	Black Hawk County EM	1
	Boone County Sheriff's Office	4
	Bremer County EMA	1
	Bremer County Sheriff's Office	4
	Buchanan County	1
	Buena Vista EMA	2
	Buena Vista Sheriff'S Office	2
	Butler County	3
	Calhoon County EMA	4
	Carroll County	4
	Cass County EMA	4
	Cerro Gordo County Sheriff's Office	3
	Cherokee County	2
	Chickasaw County 911 Service Board	4
	Chickasaw County EMA	1
	Clarke County EMA	1
	Clarke County Sheriff's Office	1
	Clay County	2
	Clayton County	2
	Clinton County	4
	Crawford County	2
	Dallas County	4
	Davis County	2
	Decatur County Sheriff's Office	3
	Delaware County	1
	Delaware Dubuque Jackson County	2
	Des Moines County Sheriff's Office	3
	Dickinson County EMA	3
	Dubuque E911	1
	Emmet County Sheriff's Office	2
	Fayette County EMA	1
	Fayette County Sheriff's Office	1
	Floyd County Communications	4
	Franklin County	3
	Fremont County	4
	Greene County Sheriff's Office	4
	Grundy County Sheriff's Office	1
	Hamilton County	4
	Hancock County	4
	Hardin County	3
	Harrison County 911	4
	Henry County	3

ELECTRIC / POWER COMPANIES		
	AGENCY NAME	LEVEL
	Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO)	2
	Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative	2
	Consumers Energy	2
	Corn Belt Power Cooperative	2
	Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative	2
	Farmers REC	2
	Guthrie County REC	2
	Iowa Association of Elecric Cooperatives	2
	Iowa Association of Municipil Utilities	2
	L & O Power Cooperative	2
	Metro Waste Authority	2
	Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative	2
	Osceola Electric Coop	2
	Southwerst Iowa REC	2
	TIP REC	2
	Western Iowa Power Cooperative	2
	Wings Air Rescue	2
SCHOOLS		
	AGENCY NAME	LEVEL
	Ankeny Community School District	2
	Chariton Community School District	2
	Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC)	2
	Des Moines Public Schools	2
	Moulton- Udell Ccommunity School District	2
	University of Iowa	2
	University of Northern Iowa	4
	Urbandale Community School Dirstrict	2
	Waukee Schools	2
OTHER		
	AGENCY NAME	LEVEL
	Albany Police Department (Illinois)	1
	Burt County EMA (Nebraska)	1
	Canadian Pacific Police Service	2
	Carroll County Sheriff's Office (Illinois)	1
	Cass County Sheriff's Office (NE)	1
	CN Railroad Police	2
	Des Moines International Airport	2
	Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART)	3
	Des Moines Metro Water Reclamation Authority	2
	Freeborn County (Minnesota)	1
	Fulton PD (Illinois)	1
	Gundersen Air	1
	Jo Daviess County Sheriff's Office (Illinois)	1
	Lee Comm	4
	Metro Communications (Sioux Falls, SD)	1
	MICRN	2
	Minnesota ECN	1
	Mower County (Minnesota)	1
	National Weather Service	2
	Nebraska OCIO - Patrol	1
	Region 6 Local Emergency Planning Committee	1
	Safeguard Iowa Partnership	2
	STARCOMM	4
	Washington County Sheriff's Office (MN)	1
	Westcom	4
	Whiteside County (Illinois)	2