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## Section 1. Introduction to the NET Guard Program

The NET Guard Program develops and coordinates pre-trained and credentialed volunteers for assistance with community emergency information technology and communication.

All NET Guard Programs are locally based and used to meet emergency-related information technology, and communications (ITC) needs such as:

- Providing temporary restoration of internet connectivity and voice communication to affected areas
- Providing ITC support to community organizations responding to a disaster
- Providing additional ITC staffing(Surge capacity) as needed in periods of high demand for technical services
- Providing assistance to emergency management officials with information management and internet-based outreach efforts
- Collaborating with virtual volunteers assisting in disaster response and recovery efforts from remote locations

NET Guard Programs are based in local government or private, non-profit organizations. Each community tailors its NET Guard Program to local needs, hazards, and vulnerabilities. The information in this Program Guide and Toolkit serves as a framework for developing a successful NET Guard Program, but each jurisdiction is encouraged to adapt the program.

### 1.1.NET Guard Program Background

Following authorization in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the NET Guard Program concept initial development focused on defining the program scope. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) developed a concept of operations through a stakeholder work group whose members included potential partners representing State and local governments, emergency managers, the private sector, and DHS Divisions. In 2007, the FEMA Individual & Community Preparedness Division (ICPD) began the development and piloting of a NET Guard Program concept based on local implementation similar to thousands of locally developed Citizen Corps Partner Programs like the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC).

FEMA worked with four local jurisdictions and three private-public partnerships to pilot and refine the NET Guard Program.

#### **NET Guard is:**

- A Citizen Corps Partner Program
- Affiliated with local government through emergency management (EM), IT department, or other government entity
- Integrated into local Emergency Operations Plans (EOP)
- Organized in partnerships between local government and the private sector.

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Local jurisdiction emergency managers, IT and communications leads, and volunteer managers developed the local program pilots in their jurisdictions. Three privately based preparedness and resiliency organizations reviewed the NET Guard Program concept and worked to refine and tailor the NET Guard Program for their communities. These jurisdictions and organizations tested the program concept and provided tools, resources, and feedback reflected in the development of the NET Guard Program and this Guide.

## 1.2. Facts about NET Guard

NET Guard provides local jurisdictions with organized, trained, and skilled volunteers to support a wide range of Information Technology and Communications (ITC) services for government, private non-profit organizations, and other private sector entities providing essential emergency services. Additionally, NET Guard Programs may support related emergency management efforts by providing ITC services such as preparedness and education, expertise in technology, crisis mapping, data management, social media monitoring and outreach, and acting as a liaison between virtual volunteers and emergency management efforts.

NET Guard teams do not respond to cyber-security incidents that require real-time network response, nor do they engage in full repair, or reconstruction of public and private sector proprietary information management systems, or other Information Technology and communications systems. NET Guard supplements resources but does not substitute for government pre-disaster planning and contracts.

Potential NET Guard service areas include:

- Temporary restoration, alternate or backup voice and data communications systems for governmental entities, non-profit organizations, and private sector organizations providing essential services during emergency response and recovery
- Working with diverse sources to develop crisis maps for multiple preparedness and response purposes
- Monitoring and interacting with social media and internet communication
- Providing education for the community on ITC preparedness including cyber-security awareness and basic continuity through data backups, and remote storage
- Collaborating with virtual volunteers to use internet-based technologies to improve communication and situational awareness of a disaster
- Establishing alternate or backup systems to alert the public or to provide information following an emergency
- Assisting with communications to support shelters and evacuation, including communication services for evacuees and shelter residents
- Establishing and administering database systems for volunteer management
- Providing support for connecting displaced individuals to friends, family members, or emergency or recovery support

- Establishing resource-tracking systems, including information systems to support the receipt, assessment, and distribution of donated resources
- Participating in advance planning, prevention, and preparedness activities, including establishing a community inventory or registry of IT and communications systems and anticipated needs during an incident
- Supporting preparation for ITC related continuity of operations

### 1.3.NET Guard Public Sector Model

The base for the public sector, government-sponsored model is:

- Government sponsors programs consisting of one or more teams
- Government has responsibility for organizing, staffing, training, and deploying teams.
- The NET Guard Program identifies and provides emergency ITC needs, functions, and services in their community
- Partnerships with the Private Sector to assist in providing expertise and resources, including needs assessment, development, recruitment, and training.

In FY 2008, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) competitively funded NET Guard Pilot Programs in four Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) jurisdictions to test and evaluate the program concept. These pilot programs are located in Hamilton County, IN, the City of Austin, TX: the City of Chesapeake, VA and Cottonwood Heights City, UT.

Each of these NET Guard Programs developed its functions to meet the needs identified within their community. Examples of NET Guard functions provided by these pilots include:

- ITC support for shelters, volunteer reception center sites, evacuation staging center
- Communication back-up for the EOC or isolated critical city offices
- Staffing for a mobile capability to provide essential ITC services to the public
- Staffing expertise for crisis mapping
- Support for government and non-profit voluntary organizations by providing essential ITC services during and after an

- **Hamilton County, IN** - NET Guard Program provides communication and IT support for responders on the ground and for other volunteer responder groups
- **Austin** - NET Guard Program supports communications for the public in shelters in collaboration with the local chapter of the American Red Cross
- **Cottonwood Heights** - NET Guard Program provides support for mapping and reporting neighborhood level resident welfare in disasters as well as mobile ITC capability
- **Chesapeake** – NET Guard Program is chartered to help preserve, restore, and sustain critical communications and technology infrastructure in support of emergency operations across a large geographic area of distributed city services.

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## **1.4.NET Guard Private-Public Partnership Model**

The base for the private sector, corporate, or non-profit model is:

- Private sector organizations or corporations sponsor programs with one or more teams
- The private sector sponsor has the responsibility for organizing, staffing, and training volunteer teams
- Teams are deployed on request by and through emergency management as part of a pre-disaster agreement and plan
- Partnerships with government include needs assessment, prioritization, credentialing, pre-disaster integration, joint exercises and training

In FY 2010, FEMA began to expand the NET Guard Program concept and support its design through development and promotion of private-public partnership models.

FEMA identified communities and partnerships based on criteria recognized as indicators of successful private-public partnerships including:

- Partnership representation from a range of private and public entities
- Identification of a champion interested in the NET Guard program potential for their organization
- Partnership experience with related programs
- Commitment from the sponsoring organization based on recognized benefit
- Demonstrated capability in emergency management and ITC

The following private-public Partnerships reviewed the NET Guard Program concept and worked to tailor and develop the concept to meet local needs: the California Resiliency Alliance and the Bay Area InfraGard, San Francisco, CA; the Colorado Emergency Preparedness Partnership, Denver, CO; and the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments, Charleston, SC.

## **1.5.NET Guard Program Compared to a NET Guard Team**

Depending on the size and scope of the NET Guard Program, a Program may include one or more NET Guard Teams operating within the Program. A Program may have teams with different functions for example: a team assigned to the Emergency Operations Center to provide crisis-mapping support or a team assigned to deploy in a vehicle to provide on-site ITC capabilities. In large jurisdictions, teams may organize geographically to provide multiple services within a geographic area. The Guide discusses considerations for Team organization in section 6.4.

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## **1.6. Citizen Corps Program**

The NET Guard Program is designed as a national Citizen Corps partner program affiliated with local government emergency management or other government sponsor, integrated into local emergency operations plans, and organized in partnership between local government and the private sector. Current Citizen Corps partner programs include Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS), Neighborhood Watch, and Fire Corps.

The Citizen Corps mission is to engage the whole community in collaborative planning and activities to make communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to and recover from any emergency. Partner programs provide opportunities for the public to participate in a range of measures to make their families, their homes, and their communities safer from the threats of crime, terrorism, and disasters of all kinds.

The Citizen Corps mission is accomplished through a national network of state, local, territorial and tribal Citizen Corps Councils, partner programs and extensive local partnerships. Councils carry out a local strategy to involve government, community leaders, and citizens in all-hazards preparedness and resilience.

## **1.7. Regional and Local Organizations**

Many communities have regional or local associations, councils and organizations that encourage the coordination of emergency preparedness activities between private and public sector organizations such as Local Emergency Planning Committees and Councils of Government. Communities also have voluntary organizations that manage volunteers who support all phases of emergency management. These organizations are potential partners to coordinate, sponsor or provide resources in support of a local NET Guard Program. Regional and local partnership examples are provided in the appendix of this Guide.

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## 1.8. Tools to Help Introduce the NET Guard Model

Tool Kit items relating to this section of the NET Guard Guide are listed below.

Title or Description	File Name	Public/ Private
City of Chesapeake, Virginia NET Guard Program Overview (June 2010)	NET Guard Presentation- Chesapeake, VA Pilot.ppt	Public
City of Chesapeake, Virginia NET Guard Program Overview (May 2010)	Chesapeake, VA NET Guard Pilot.ppt	Public
Cottonwood Heights NET Guard Program Overview	Cottonwood Heights, UT NET Guard Pilot.ppt	Public
Hamilton County, Indiana NET Guard Program Overview	Hamilton County, IN NET Guard Pilot.ppt	Public