

How to apply

To be eligible for GETS, an organization must have requirements for emergency telephone services and qualify as part of the NS/EP community, defined by the National Communications System (NCS) as governmental or non-governmental organizations that directly support at least one of the following:

- National Security Leadership
- National Security Posture and Population Warning
- Public Health, Safety, and the Maintenance of Law and Order
- Public Welfare and Maintenance of the National Economic Posture
- Disaster Recovery

Federal organizations that are not members of the NCS, along with state, local, and tribal governments and non-governmental organizations, must be sponsored by the NCS or one of its member organizations.

If your organization already participates in GETS, contact your GETS point of contact (POC). If you need assistance identifying your POC, contact the NCS.

New subscribers apply for GETS via the GETS website (gets.ncs.gov) using the "First Time Requestor" link and following the instructions.

All organizations must identify a POC and alternate who will manage the GETS account for the organization. We recommend the POC for GETS be the same POC for the Wireless Priority Service (WPS), if applicable. WPS is the NCS wireless companion program to GETS (<http://wps.ncs.gov>).



For information on how to participate in the GETS program, visit the GETS website at <http://gets.ncs.gov>.

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Department of Homeland Security National Communications System

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Web: <http://gets.ncs.gov>

GETS

**Government Emergency
Telecommunications Service**



**National
Communications
System**

Government Emergency Telecommunications Service

(GETS) provides emergency access and specialized processing in the local and long-distance segments of the public switched telephone network (PSTN) to authorized National Security and Emergency Preparedness (NS/EP) personnel.

What is GETS?

GETS is a nationwide priority telecommunications service intended for use in a crisis, disaster, or other emergency when the probability of completing a phone call has significantly decreased. GETS is implemented as a calling card providing access authorization and priority treatment in the PSTN through a unique dialing plan and personal identification number (PIN).

GETS uses three types of networks:

- The local networks provided by the local exchange carriers (LECs) and wireless providers, such as cellular carriers and personal communications services.
- The major long-distance networks provided by the interexchange carriers (IXCs) – AT&T, MCI, and Sprint – including their international services.
- Government-leased networks, including the Federal Technology Service (FTS), Defense Switched Network (DSN), and Diplomatic Telecommunications Service (DTS).

GETS is accessed through a universal access number using a standard desk set, secure phone, facsimile, or cellular phone. GETS provides a means to overcome network congestion through the following key features embedded in the PSTN:

- **Dialing Plan** – based on a non-geographic area code reserved for NS/EP use. If this is not successful, alternative access is available by dialing unique toll-free or Carrier Access Code (CAC) numbers. Means of accessing GETS through the FTS, DSN, or DTS are also available.

- **Access Control** – ensures only authorized users access the service. After dialing the universal access number, prompts direct the caller to enter the PIN and destination phone number. Once authenticated as a valid user, the call is identified as an NS/EP call and receives special treatment, increasing the probability of call completion in damaged or congested networks.
- **Enhanced Routing** – allows LECs, wireless providers, and foreign carriers to route GETS calls to one of the GETS IXCs. (In the LECs, access is enhanced by Alternate Carrier Routing, which automatically tries all GETS IXCs.) The IXCs have also implemented enhanced routing services.
- **Priority Treatment** – over normal traffic through:
 - High Probability of Completion classmark, a method for identifying NS/EP calls. The classmark travels across the PSTN to trigger priority features.
 - Exemption from restrictive network management controls, allowing GETS calls to proceed while carriers block other calls to reduce congestion.
- **International Calling** – routes calls to the appropriate international gateway switch for call completion to the destination country. After the call reaches the gateway switch in the United States, it is routed for PIN validation and then to the destination number.
- **Interoperability with Other Networks** – GETS is compatible with the FTS, DSN, and DTS by first accessing these circuits, then entering the universal access number. This provides direct access around potential PSTN problems by avoiding outages or congestion.
- **“Number Translation” Call Access** – is provided for users who require this type of service.

GETS does not preempt public traffic, nor are there levels of precedence in GETS.

Why use GETS?

The tremendous growth in the telecommunications industry has enabled NS/EP personnel to expand services at reduced costs, which has increased their reliance on the PSTN.

However, this growth was accompanied by an increased vulnerability to a variety of problems. Telephone services are increasingly more vulnerable to disruption by natural or man-made disasters. Recent events have shown that fires, power failures, fiber cable cuts, and software problems – as well as terrorism – can cripple the telephone services of entire regions. Non-emergency congestion in the PSTN, such as the well-documented “Mother’s Day” phenomenon, can also prevent circuits from being accessed.

Although backup systems are in place, the loss of a single fiber optic cable or the failure of a computer program can disrupt thousands of telephone customers for hours or days. GETS is designed to make maximum use of all available telephone resources should outages occur during a crisis, disaster, or other emergency.

How much does it cost?

There is no initial sign-up or monthly recurring service charge for GETS. GETS calls are billed at a rate of \$0.10 or \$0.074 per minute (depending on carrier) for calls within the US and its territories, Canada, and most of the Caribbean. International and operator-assisted calls are billed at commercial rates.