



# Fact Sheet

## Wireless Priority Service

**Purpose:** The goal of the Wireless Priority Service (WPS) is to provide an end-to-end nationwide wireless priority communications capability to key national security and emergency preparedness (NS/EP) personnel during natural or man-made disasters or emergencies that cause congestion or outages in the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN). Eligible users (see criteria at <http://wps.ncs.gov>) are key Federal, State, local, and tribal government and critical industry personnel who have NS/EP missions. WPS is complementary to, and can be most effective when used in conjunction with, the Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) to ensure a high probability of call completions in both the wireline and wireless portions of the PSTN. WPS serves NS/EP communications needs while minimizing impact on consumer access to the public wireless infrastructure.

**Background:** In 2000, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued a Report and Order (R&O) for Priority Access Service (PAS) authorizing wireless carriers to offer the service on a voluntary basis and with much needed liability protections. Following the September 11 attacks, the White House directed delivery of a wireless priority service to NS/EP leadership during emergency situations. WPS service began on a single carrier in limited areas in early 2002 and has since expanded to full nationwide coverage on most of the major cellular networks. The National Communications System has the responsibility for the day-to-day administration of WPS, with oversight responsibilities residing with the FCC.

### Highlights:

- ❑ **Priority Treatment:** WPS is an enhancement to basic cellular service that allows NS/EP calls to queue for the next available radio channel. Priority handling is provided from call origination, through the cellular and public telephone networks, and to the dialed destination.
- ❑ **Access Authorization:** WPS is invoked by dialing \*272 prior to the destination number on cellular devices with the WPS feature.
- ❑ **Ubiquitous Coverage:** WPS is available nationwide in Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) and in Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) networks. For the latest information on WPS carriers and coverage areas, see “Carriers” on <http://wps.ncs.gov>.
- ❑ **Service Authorization:** To subscribe to WPS, see “First Time Requestor” on <http://wps.ncs.gov>.

**Contact Information:** NCS NS/EP Priority Telecommunications Service Center, 866-NCS-CALL or, in the Washington DC metro area, 703-760-2255, option 2.

◆ Web Site: <http://wps.ncs.gov> ◆ E-mail: [wps@dhs.gov](mailto:wps@dhs.gov).