



**New York State**

**COMMUNICATIONS UNIT (COMU)**

**POSITION CREDENTIALING POLICY**

**Division of Homeland Security  
and Emergency Services  
(DHSES)**

**Office of Interoperable &  
Emergency Communications  
(OIEC)**

**\* \* \* REVISED 11/02/2023\* \* \***



***Executive Summary***

This document establishes the credentialing policy for all Communications Unit (COMU) positions, for use in the State of New York.

This policy was established by the Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications with assistance and input from federal, local, state peers, and subject matter experts.



**Record of Changes**

This Record of Changes is used to record revisions to this document, including a brief description of the changes made, the date the changes went into effect by approval of the New York State Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC).

<i>Change Number</i>	<i>Change Date</i>	<i>Summary of Revision</i>	<i>Authorization/Approval</i>
1	10/15/2014	Initial document	SWIC
2	11/29/2017	6.2 Application Approval Process	SWIC
3	1/5/2018	Section 2: NYS COMU Credentialing Process	SWIC
4	1/5/2018	Section 2.1: Credential Period	SWIC
5	1/5/2018	Section 4: COMU Position Task Book	SWIC
6	1/5/2018	Section 4.4: Authorized Evaluators	SWIC
7	1/5/2018	Section 4.6: PTB Document Version	SWIC
8	1/5/2018	Section 5.1: Required Documentation	SWIC
9	1/5/2018	Section 6.2: Qualification Review Committee	SWIC
10	1/5/2018	Section 7.1: Credentialing Renewal Proficiency Requirements	SWIC
11	1/5/2018	Section 7.2: Renewal Period	SWIC
12	1/5/2018	Section 8: Agency Affiliation Changes	SWIC
13	1/5/2018	Added Section 9: Revocation of Credentials	SWIC
14	4/20/2018	Section 1.4: Updates and Revisions	SWIC
15	4/20/2018	Section 2: NYS COMU Credentialing Process	SWIC
16	4/20/2018	Section 3: COMU Position Credentialing Training Requirements	SWIC
17	4/20/2018	Section 3.1: NIMS/ICS Prerequisites	SWIC
18	4/20/2018	Section 3.2.1: COML Course	SWIC
19	4/20/2018	Section 4: COMU Position Task Book	SWIC
20	4/20/2018	Section 4.6: PTB Document Version	SWIC
21	4/20/2018	Section 5.1: Required Documentation	SWIC
22	4/20/2018	Section 6.1: Credentialing Approval	SWIC
23	5/7/2018	Section 7: Communications Assets Survey and Mapping (CASM)	SWIC



24	5/7/2018	Section 8.1: Continuing Education Requirements	SWIC
25	5/7/2018	Section 8.2: Application for Renewal of Credentials	SWIC
26	5/7/2018	Section 8.3: Review of Renewal Paperwork	SWIC
27	5/7/2018	APPENDIX F: Credential Renewal Form	SWIC
28	8/25/2023	Full Policy and Document Review and Update	Program Manager
29	11/02/2023	Full Policy and Document Review and Update	Program Manager



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**Appendix B:** Agency Certification

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**Appendix E:** Information Communication Technology Branch Structure



## 1 NYS Communications Unit Program Policy Information

### 1.1 Background

During all-hazards emergency response operations, communications among multiple jurisdictions and disciplines—including emergency medical, fire, and law enforcement services — is essential. Unfortunately, the absence of on-scene communications coordination has often compromised critical operations. To close this capability gap, the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Emergency Communications Division (ECD), in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and practitioners from across the country developed performance and training standards for the All-Hazards Communications Unit Program positions.

Under the National Incident Management System (NIMS)-Incident Command System (ICS) structure, the Communications Unit (COMU) consists of the following positions:

- Communications Unit Leader (COML)
- Communications Technician (COMT)
- Incident Communications Center Manager (INCM)
- Incident Tactical Dispatcher (INTD)
- Auxiliary Communications (AUXCOMM)
- Radio Operator (RADO)
- Information Technology Service Unit Leader (ITSL)<sup>1</sup>

### 1.2 Authority

Authority for the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES), Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications (OIEC) to develop this policy was established pursuant to the provisions provided in NYS Executive Law; Section 717. The Statewide Interoperable and Emergency Communications Coordinator (SWIC), in consultation with the COMU Peer-Review Committee, will review, approve, and re-certify all COMU position credentialing.

### 1.3 National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Position Credential

This policy meets the position specific guidance developed by CISA-ECD and FEMA. Those seeking credentialing in similarly titled positions administered by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG), will need to complete additional requirements beyond the scope of this policy.

### 1.4 Updates and Revisions

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the COMU, adjacent to the COML is the Information Technology Service Unit Leader (ITSL). As ICS is expandable and scalable, certain incidents may require further expansion of the Information Communication Technology Branch, which the COMU falls underneath as of March of 2023. ICT's functional requirements and personnel demands expansion for more complex incidents; through the ITSL this is possible.



This document will be reviewed semi-annually or in conjunction with updates of the NYS Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP). Revisions to this policy will be reviewed by the SWIC and the Peer-Review Committee. Comments and suggested revisions or additions to this policy should be submitted via E-mail to: [OIEC.Training@dhses.ny.gov](mailto:OIEC.Training@dhses.ny.gov).

Individuals requesting credentialing for a NYS COMU Program position are responsible for checking the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) website <https://www.dhses.ny.gov/communications-unit-comu> to obtain the current version of this document.

### 1.5 Definitions and Acronyms

AHIMT:	All Hazards Incident Management Team
Applicant:	Individual seeking to obtain a COMU position credential
AUXCOMM:	Auxiliary Communication
AUXCOMM TtT:	Auxiliary Communication – Train-the-Trainer
Certifying Official:	Refers to an Agency’s executive or the Agency executive’s designee. This will vary depending on the Agency and the version of the Position Task Book (PTB) issued during training. Examples include Agency Heads, Chiefs, and Division/Department Directors.
CISA-ECD:	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency – Emergency Communications Division
COML:	Communications Unit Leader
COML TtT:	Communications Unit Leader – Train-the-Trainer
COMT:	Communications Unit Technician
COMT TtT:	Communications Unit Technician – Train-the-Trainer
COMU:	Communications Unit
COMU Office:	NYS DHSES-OIEC is the designated COMU Office in NY State
COMMEX:	Communications Unit Exercise
COMLEX:	Communications Unit Leader Exercise





DHSES:	New York State – Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
FCC:	Federal Communications Commission
FEMA:	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Final Evaluator:	The person qualified to evaluate subordinate positions
HSEEP:	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
ICS:	Incident Command System
INCM:	Incident Communications Center Manager
Instructor Candidate:	NYS COMU Program member that is seeking to become a NYS Authorized Instructor for the NYS COMU Program
INTD:	Incident Tactical Dispatcher
IMT/AHIMT:	Incident Management Team/All Hazards
ITSL:	Information Technology Service Unit Leader
NIC:	FEMA, National Integration Center
NIFOG:	National Interoperable Field Operations Guide
NIMS:	National Incident Management System
NYS INST AUTH:	New York State Instructor Authorized, Instructor Authorization – reflected in DHSES LMS
NYSTICFOG:	New York State Tactical Interoperable Communications Field Operations Guide
OIEC:	New York State - Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications
PTB:	Position Task Book
RADO:	Radio Operator
SCIP:	Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan
SIEC:	State Interoperable and Emergency Communication Board



STO:	State Training Officer
SWIC:	Statewide Interoperability Coordinator
Trainee:	An individual, approved by their employing/sponsoring organization, who is preparing to qualify for an ICS position, is credentialed as a Trainee in that position once prerequisites are met and the PTB has been initiated. A Trainee is eligible for formal, on-the-job training.

## **2 NYS COMU Credentialing Process**

The NIMS ICS All-Hazards positions, require candidates that serve in the COMU positions, to currently serve in a public safety communications role. A public safety communications background with exposure to field operations is critical in the performance of these positions. Personnel who are regularly assigned to functional, support, unit leader positions, may apply for credentialing. They should have supervisory and personnel management skills, in addition, be able to demonstrate knowledge of local communications systems, and communications capabilities.

NIMS provides a consistent, nationwide approach for agencies to manage emergency response operations. COMU training is recognized by the FEMA/NIC as supporting NIMS.

All Hazards COMU credentialing requires six (6) steps to attain credentials in New York.

- Step 1: Completion of prerequisite NIMS/ICS courses (Most Recent)
- Step 2: Completion of COMU Program Course
- Step 3: Completion of Position Task Book
- Step 4: Completed & Approved NYS COMU application for position credentialing
- Step 5: Completion of Agency sign-off
- Step 6: Sign-off by New York State COMU Office and SWIC

### **2.1 Credential Period**

The credential will remain valid for three (3) years after the date of issuance.

## **3 COMU Position Credentialing Training Requirements**

In order, for an individual to participate in the COMU credentialing process, all local, state, and federal prerequisite requirements must be met prior to applying for participation in the classroom training course.

### **3.1 NIMS/ICS Prerequisites**

Applicants must meet the ICS training course prerequisites, most current edition, prior to attending the COMU position training course.



**Required Prerequisites:**

IS-100 Introduction to the Incident Command System (ICS)  
IS-200, Incident Command System (ICS) for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents  
ICS-300, Intermediate Incident Command System (ICS) for Expanding Incidents (For COML & ITSL Only)  
IS-700, National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction  
IS-800, National Response Framework (NRF)  
IS-144, TERT Basic Course (For INCM Only)

**Recommended, but not required:**

ICS-400, Advanced Incident Command System (ICS), Command & General Staff.  
IS-704, NIMS Communications and Information Management  
IS-802, Emergency Support Functions Communications

**3.2 Classroom Courses for the Communications Unit Program**

The course must be taught by CISA recognized instructors. A Federally approved classroom course, taken in another state, is valid in meeting the New York State COMU credentialing requirements.

**Note: This is subject to change with any CISA, DHS, or OIEC certification changes, and all certifications must be current at the time of renewal.**

**3.2.1 COML Course**

The COML applicant shall successfully complete the most current version of the national training courses, and the NIMS ICS All Hazards Communications Unit Leader Course.

**3.2.2 COMT Course**

The COMT applicant shall successfully complete the most current version of the national training course, NIMS ICS All Hazards Communications Unit Technician Course.

**3.2.3 INCM Course**

The INCM applicant shall successfully complete the most current version of the national training course, NIMS ICS All Hazards Incident Communications Center Manager Communications Unit Course

**3.2.4 INTD Course**

The INTD applicant shall successfully complete the most current version of the national training course, NIMS ICS All Hazards Incident Tactical Dispatcher Communications Unit Course.

**3.2.5 RADO Course**

The AUXCOMM applicant shall successfully complete the most current version of the national training course, NIMS ICS All Hazards Radio Operator Communications Unit Course.



### **3.2.6 AUXCOMM Course**

The AUXCOMM applicant shall successfully complete the most current version of the national training course, NIMS ICS All Hazards Auxiliary Communication Communications Unit Course.

### **3.2.7 ITSL Course**

The ITSL applicant shall successfully complete the most current version of the national training course, NIMS ICS All Hazards Information Technology Service Unit Leader Communications Unit Course.

## **4 COMU Position Task Book**

The Position Task Book (PTB) is the standardized means of documenting the performance of the trainee in the designated COMU position. The books contain a variety of requirements that must all be successfully performed to qualify for credentialing under this policy.

- The COMU position specific tasks must be performed at multi-agency or multi-jurisdictional and include multi-service (EMS, Fire, Police) functional or full-scale exercises, (COMLEX and COMMEX are acceptable) planned events or actual emergency incidents
- The person signing off on the tasks performed, must be present at the event and personally witness the trainee performing the tasks
- Approving signatory must provide contact information for verification, if necessary
- It is not necessary to complete all tasks during a single event. Trainees may participate in multiple events until all tasks have been completed.

### **4.1 Agency Certification**

The trainee's agency "Certifying Official" is responsible to attest that the trainee has complied with the New York State credentialing requirements, by signing the applicant's Position Task Book.

### **4.2 Prior Experience Credit (Historical Recognition)**

COMU position activities that were performed within two (2) years prior to the completion of the training course will be admissible as credit for performance. Performance must be documented in a PTB.

### **4.3 PTB Completion Time Frame**

The trainee will have up to three (3) years to complete a PTB, once the specific COMU training course has been completed and a Position Task Book initiated. If the Position Task Book is not completed within the three (3) year period, the individual must re-take the specific COMU training course.

The trainee will have three (3) years starting on their course end date to complete their Position Task Book.



#### 4.4 Authorized Evaluators

Persons authorized to document performance of tasks in a PTB are:

- An individual credentialed in a NYS COMU position above (see Appendix E for **ICT Branch Structure**) the sought COMU position or certified from another State<sup>2</sup> or from NWCG; consistent with the position being evaluated; OR
- A qualified Logistics Sections Chief (LSC) for the exercise, preplanned event, or incident; OR
- An Incident Commander (IC) for the exercise, preplanned event, or incident

**Note: Final sign-off must be by an individual who is credentialed in the position that the candidate is seeking to become credentialed in. (i.e. – The final sign-off for a COML candidate must be a credentialed COML)**

#### 4.5 PTB Documentation

The PTB documentation must be clear, legible, and include the following elements:

- Contact information for each evaluator
- Each numbered task must be initialed by a qualified evaluator
- Final Evaluator's Verification, attesting all tasks were performed by the trainee
- Agency Certification, signed by an agency Certifying Official, confirming that the candidate has met all requirements for qualifications for the position

#### 4.6 PTB Document Version

The most current Position Task Book (PTB) can be found on the DHSES-OIEC [website](#) however, if necessary, a current copy can be obtained by contacting DHSES-OIEC at the following email address: [OIEC.Training@dhses.ny.gov](mailto:OIEC.Training@dhses.ny.gov).

### 5 Credentialing Application

The trainee shall submit the required documentation to the COMU Program Manager(s) to request credentialing in a COMU position.

#### 5.1 Required Documentation

- A completed **COMU Position Credentialing Application and Submission Checklist** (Appendix A)
- A completed **Home Agency Certification Form** (Appendix B)
- A completed **Performance - Proficiency Form** (Appendix C)
- Copies of all current ICS related training certificates

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<sup>2</sup> A certified COMU position personnel from another state may sign off on NYS trainee's task book as long as the certified individual has met their states' certification requirements. (Note: The NYS-SWIC has access to the national database of qualified COMU positions for each state.)



- Copy of the specific COMU course completion certificate
- Completed (Original) COMU Position Task Book(s), specific to the position (Appendix A, B, C)
- Back-up documentation for PTB. This shall include but is not limited to; incident action plans (IAPs), organizational charts, and communications plans; ICS-204, ICS-205, ICS-217A, or other forms. This documentation must clearly identify the actual position that the applicant served in during the event.

## **5.2 Applications**

### **5.2.1 Recognition of Prior Learning**

For application requirements completed PRIOR to the effective date of issue of this policy, the age of the documentation shall not exceed ten (10) years. Please note, for the Train-the-Trainer courses, I-300 & I-400 must be completed after May 1, 2019.

### **5.2.2 Initial Application for COMU Program Specific Position)**

Trainees will have from the completion of the specific COMU training, up to three (3) years to complete all credentialing requirements.

## **6 Application Approval Process**

### **6.1 Credentialing Approval**

Applicants' final paperwork must be submitted with the documentation outlined in 5.1.

### **6.2 Staff Review**

All applications submitted will be reviewed by OIEC staff to ensure compliance with the credentialing requirements before being reviewed by the Peer Review Committee. Applications that do not meet the requirements will be returned to the applicant for further action.

### **6.3 Qualification Review Committee**

A Qualification Review Committee, comprised of four (4) OIEC subject matter experts, will review submitted applications, and make recommendations to the SWIC to either approve or reject an application.

All four (4) members must participate in each review. Review may be conducted either in person, via teleconference call, video conference or other form of electronic communication. Committee members unable to attend may provide their comments and recommendations to the committee.

The Committee:



- Must abstain from acting on their own application or where there may be a potential conflict of interest
- Will consider each candidate's application on its own merits
- May request additional information or clarification be provided by candidate

#### **6.4 Recommendation for Credentialing**

Final determination for the issuance of a credential will reside with the SWIC. Candidates granted credentials will be issued documentation and will be added to the state and federal databases of credentialed COMU personnel.

#### **6.5 Recommendation for Denial of Credentialing**

Applicants denied credentialing will be informed and provided with an explanation of the denial. Recommendations will be provided for any additional training and/or experience that is required before the candidate may re-apply for credentialing.

### **7 Communication Assets Survey and Mapping (CASM)**

All credentialed personnel will be required to have and maintain a Communications Assets Survey and Mapping (CASM) user account.

In addition, they will also be required to ensure that their agency information is always kept current in the CASM system, if approved by their agency.

### **8 Credential Renewal, Proficiency and Performance**

To maintain credentialing in a COMU position and to be eligible for renewal of the credential, the individual holding the credential must demonstrate successful performance of activities required in this section and document those activities on a **Credential Renewal Form** (Appendix D).

The individual credentialed in the New York COMU Position will maintain a continuing education program, based on the requirements below.

The New York SWIC may renew New York COMU Position Credential if all requirements are met.

If requirements are not met, the New York credentials will expire after three (3) years.

#### **8.1 Continuing Education Requirements**

For an Individual Credentialed in a COMU Program Position to maintain a current and consistent skill set, the individual will be required to complete a continuing education program during their three (3) year credentialed period.

##### Continuing Education Unit (CEU) Credits



Credentialed individuals will be required to complete thirty-six (36) hours of CEU, prior to their expiration date, in the following six (6) categories:

- Job duties as it relates to communications systems (voice, data, IOP planning) **(4 Hours Minimum)**
- Establish a communications system to meet incidents operational needs **(4 hours minimum)**
- Workshops and/or seminars **(6 Hour Minimum)**
- Exercises (functional or full scale) **(12 Hours Minimum)**
- Communications/ICS related training programs **(6 Hour Minimum)**
- Communications presentations/teaching **(4 Hour Minimum)**

Individuals credentialed in a COMU Program position may participate in an approved classroom or online training, exercise (Communications Exercise, functional or full-scale), planned event, or actual incident to receive credit for continuing education. Participation in an exercise, preplanned event, or incident must be in the role of the credentialed position to qualify for this credit. Completion of verified continuing education will serve as adequate for renewal of the credential in the NYS COMU Program position.

DHSES-OIEC reserves the right to contact certifying agents to verify authenticity.

It is the individual's responsibility to communicate this information to the SWIC in a timely fashion once all requirements have been completed in respective areas.

## 8.2 Application for Renewal of Credentials

Individuals seeking renewal of their credentials, must submit a completed packet containing the below documents, prior to their expiration date, to the New York State SWIC.

**Appendix A:** Application and Submission Checklist

**Appendix B:** Agency Certification

**Appendix D:** Credential Renewal Form

**Additional:** Updated certifications and/or diplomas received after initial credentialing process

**Note: This is subject to change with any CISA, DHS or OIEC certification changes, and all certifications must be current at the time of renewal.**

## 8.3 Review of Renewal Paperwork

Completed renewal packets will be evaluated by the Qualification Review Committee. Candidates, whose credentials are renewed, will be notified by the COMU Program Manager.

Individuals will receive a mailed packet including: their certification renewal confirmation and an updated credentialing certificate and ID card.





#### **8.4 Failure to Meet Renewal Requirements**

If the New York State SWIC or COMU Program Manager has not received a completed renewal packet from a credentialed individual prior to their expiration date, the credentials will automatically expire, and will be removed from the active COMU list, CASM, and will be considered ineligible for deployment by New York State.

#### **9 NYS COMU Program Train-the-Trainer – Instructor Candidate Policy**

Please refer to the New York State Authorized Instructor Policy and Procedure. To request this document please email: [OIEC.Training@dhses.ny.gov](mailto:OIEC.Training@dhses.ny.gov).

\*\*\* Please only request the document if currently ready to move forward with becoming an instructor in the NYS COMU Program. \*\*\*

#### **10 Agency Affiliation Changes**

Individuals issued credentials in a COMU position by DHSES-OIEC shall notify OIEC within thirty (30) days of any change in agency affiliation, including contact information, employment status, or deployment status. Failure to do so may result in loss of credentials.

#### **11 Revocation of Credentials**

The SWIC or COMU Program Manager reserves the right to revoke an individual's credentials, and will provide thirty (30) days' notice, in writing, at which time an individual has five (5) business days to return credentials.

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