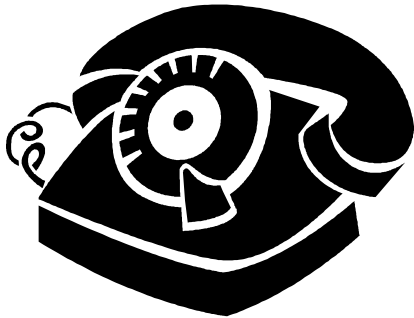


## HOW DOES MY FACILITY RECEIVE PRIORITY ACCESS TO COMMUNICATIONS DURING AN EMERGENCY?

The federal government offers priority communications options for healthcare organizations during an emergency. The two your organization should consider provide priority access for land-line phones and priority access to cellular phones.

### Priority Access for Land-Line Phones: GETS



**What is GETS?** GETS (Government Emergency Telecommunications Service) provides priority access to the switches that route telephone calls. This service is most useful during an event when there is no damage to the telephone system, but the circuits are overloaded. In this situation, the caller usually hears a very fast or very slow busy signal after the number is dialed, indicating that too many people are making calls at the same time. GETS provides you priority access to the circuit, which allows your call to go through.

**How does GETS work?** GETS works like a calling card. You call a number and enter a set of codes, then dial the number you are trying to call.

**How much does GETS cost?** GETS costs 7-10 cents per minute when in use, depending on your local and long distance carrier. There is no activation fee and no monthly fee for GETS. You will be billed after the event for your usage during the response.

**How do I apply for GETS?** Visit <http://gets.ncs.gov> and apply for a GETS card. You will need to designate a Point of Contact (POC) for your GETS application process. All applications made by your facility will be connected to this POC. If you have a large clinic network, it may be most efficient to designate only one POC for the network, not for each individual site. After you apply, you will receive a package in approximately two weeks with your access information. *After your initial application, you may be prompted to obtain government sponsorship to receive GETS. If so, please contact your King County Healthcare Coalition contact for assistance.*

**Who should have GETS in my organization?** Because GETS is a relatively low cost service, the Healthcare Coalition recommends that each person who may be called upon to serve in the incident command structure have their own GETS card. Because there is a cost associated with this service, it will also be important to provide training on the appropriate use of this card.

## Priority Access for Cellular Phones: WPS



**What is WPS?** WPS (Wireless Priority Service) provides priority access to the cellular towers that route cell phone calls. This service is most useful in situations when the cellular infrastructure is intact and the circuits are overloaded by a large number of callers. In this situation, the caller usually receives a message indicating that the call cannot be completed or receives a fast busy signal. WPS helps your call receive priority access through the cellular phone system.

**How does WPS work?** WPS works by queuing your call and routing it through the cellular network during the next available opening. During a response, you will enter a code preceding the number you are calling to access the priority service.

**How much does WPS cost?** WPS has a federal maximum activation fee of \$10 per cellular line. The maximum monthly charge is \$4.50 per line and will appear on your monthly statement. The maximum per-minute charge is 75-cents when using the WPS access numbers during an emergency event. When making normal phone calls (not accessing the WPS system), your per-minute cost will be what is reflected in your standard cellular phone contract.

**How do I apply for WPS?** Visit <http://wps.ncs.gov> and apply for WPS to be added to your cellular account. You will need to designate a Point of Contact (POC) for your WPS application process. All applications made by your facility will be connected to this POC. If you have a large clinic network, it may be most efficient to designate only one POC for the network, not for each individual site. After you apply, you will receive a package in approximately two weeks with your access information. *After your initial application, you may be prompted to obtain government sponsorship to receive WPS. If so, please contact your King County Healthcare Coalition contact for assistance.*

**Who should have WPS in my organization?** The Healthcare Coalition recommends that each of the cell phones assigned to your Emergency Operations Center for general communications include WPS. If you have cell phones that on-call physicians or nurses carry, those should also be enabled with WPS. It is also recommended that those critical emergency responders within your organization that may need to return to your facility during an emergency event or check in with on-site staff via phone have WPS on their work cell phones. Examples of these type of staff include Administrators, Nurse Managers, Executive Staff, etc. The WPS service is expensive when used (75-cents per minute), so training will be necessary on proper use of this system.

### Comparison at a Glance:

	GETS	WPS
Purpose:	Land-Line	Cellular
Activation Fee:	none	\$10/phone
Monthly Fee:	none	\$4.50/phone
Per Minute Fee:	7-10 cents	75 cents