



**FEMA**

# Fact Sheet

October 2009

## **VOLUNTARY PRIVATE SECTOR PREPAREDNESS ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

The Voluntary Private Sector Preparedness Accreditation and Certification Program (PS-Prep) is mandated by Title IX of the *Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007*. Congress directed the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to develop and implement a voluntary program of accreditation and certification of private entities using standards adopted by DHS that promote private sector preparedness, including disaster management, emergency management and business continuity programs.

The purpose of the PS-Prep Program is to enhance nationwide resilience in an all-hazards environment by encouraging private sector preparedness. The program will provide a mechanism by which a private sector entity—a company, facility, not-for-profit corporation, hospital, stadium, university, etc.—may be certified by an accredited third party establishing that the private sector entity conforms to one or more preparedness standards adopted by DHS.

Currently there is no comprehensive set of standards by which American businesses and other private sector entities can assess their preparedness for all hazards. Having a plan to reduce the impact of all hazards on business and protect employees can help ensure that a business is able to recover and reopen following a disaster.

### **Voluntary Program**

Participation in the PS-Prep program is completely voluntary. No private sector entity will be required by DHS to comply with any standard adopted under the program. However, DHS encourages all private sector entities to seriously consider seeking certification on one or more standards that will be adopted by DHS.

### **Designation of Preparedness Standards**

Congress directed DHS to designate one or more standards for assessing private sector preparedness. The standards will be used by accredited certifying entities to evaluate and certify compliance by private sector entities with the standards adopted by DHS.

DHS has published a notice in the Federal Register announcing its intent to adopt the three standards listed below under PS-Prep. The notice also requests public comment on these standards and other programmatic issues:

- ASIS SPC.1-2009 “*Organizational Resilience: Security Preparedness, and Continuity Management Systems*”
- British Standard 25999-2:2007 “*Business Continuity Management*” - The British Standards Institute is making BS25999 available for inspection, downloading and printing for a reduced fee of \$19.99.
- National Fire Protection Association 1600:2007 “*Standard on Disaster / Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs*”

Each of these standards comprehensively deals with preparedness and can be applied to the majority of private sector entities.

Although DHS intends to select only the three identified preparedness standards at this time, it may select additional standards in the future.

DHS considered several types of preparedness standards, including standards that are likely to apply to a particular industry or sector of the economy. In all, DHS evaluated twenty five standards (21 of which were recommended by the public) using Target Criteria, published in the December 24, 2008, Federal Register notice (73 FR 79140) in which DHS announced the PS-Prep Program and sought public comment on all aspects of its implementation. As the program develops, DHS remains committed to ensuring that PS-Prep is developed and standards are selected in close coordination with the private sector and other interested stakeholders. DHS has engaged the public on programmatic issues through a series of Federal Register Notices, public meetings and other interactions with private sector firms, associations, and others.

### **Small Business Considerations**

Because the certification process may involve expense, and that expense may cause small businesses to avoid seeking certification, the statute calls upon the Designated Officer and the selected entity to “establish separate classifications and methods of certification for small business concerns. . . .” DHS is working to address the concerns of small business and establish separate classifications and methods of certification for small business interests. The December 24, 2008, Federal Register Notice (73 FR 79140) discussed certain processes under consideration for certification of small businesses. The current Federal Register Notice further discusses small business considerations and requests comment on the effects of adoption of the three identified standards on small businesses.

### **Understanding the Certification Process**

DHS has selected an accreditation body, the ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB), to develop and oversee the certification process, manage the accreditation and accredit qualified third parties to carry out the certification in accordance with the accepted procedures of the program.

Private sector organizations, including businesses and critical infrastructure and key resources (CIKR) entities, may apply for certification to the applicable requirements of preparedness standard(s) adopted by DHS.

Certification, in the context of this program, is confirmation that an accredited third party certification organization has validated a private sector entity's preparedness to a standard. Once an organization is certified, there will be a periodic reassessment and audit process so the certification organization can continue to have confidence in the organization's conformity to emergency preparedness and business continuity management system. The certifying organizations will be accredited by ANAB.

DHS will maintain and make public a listing of any private sector entity certified as being in compliance with PS-Prep, if that private sector entity consents to such listing.

### **Program Monitoring**

DHS will monitor the effectiveness of the program on an ongoing basis. DHS will review the accreditation and certification program annually to ensure its effectiveness, to include the operations and management of any of the accreditation and certification bodies and the designated standards. DHS will make improvements and adjustments to PS-Prep as necessary and appropriate.

### **Private Sector Preparedness Coordination Council**

FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate is the Designated Officer responsible for the accreditation and certification program. The Administrator chairs a Private Sector Preparedness Coordinating Council comprised of department leadership from the Science & Technology Directorate, Office of Infrastructure Protection, and Office of the Private Sector. Once standards are adopted, the Council will focus on the remaining requirements of the law, which include addressing small business considerations, defining and promoting the business case to encourage private sector entities to work toward voluntary certification and overseeing the program's progress.

### **How to Get Involved**

Private sector entities can get involved in PS-Prep by submitting comments on the identified standards, suggesting additional private sector standards to be adopted by DHS, and participating in future public meetings on the topic. Details will be posted at <http://www.fema.gov/privatesectorpreparedness>.

DHS has posted the Federal Register notice at <http://www.regulations.gov>. Comments may be submitted to <http://www.regulations.gov> or [FEMA-POLICY@dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-POLICY@dhs.gov). (Identify Docket ID FEMA-2008-0017). For further information please e-mail [PrivateSectorPreparedness@hsi.dhs.gov](mailto:PrivateSectorPreparedness@hsi.dhs.gov).

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