



## Community Health Connections

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# Fact Sheet

## Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) FAQs

### Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS)

#### GETS Frequently Asked Questions

##### What is GETS?

The Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) provides National Security/Emergency Preparedness (NS/EP) personnel a high probability of completion for their phone calls when normal calling methods are unsuccessful. It is designed for periods of severe network congestion or disruption, and works through a series of enhancements to the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN). GETS is in a constant state of readiness. Users receive a GETS "calling card" to access the service. This card provides access phone numbers, Personal Identification Number (PIN), and simple dialing instructions.

##### Why is GETS important to me?

Natural disasters, power outages, cable cuts, and software problems can cripple the telephone services of an entire region. Congestion alone (e.g., the Mother's Day phenomenon) can prevent access to circuits. During times of emergency, the NS/EP community needs to know their calls will go through.

##### When do I use GETS?

GETS is used in an emergency or crisis situation when the PSTN is overloaded (congested) and the ability to complete a call by normal means is significantly decreased.

##### How does GETS work?

GETS is accessed through universal number (-1-710-NCS-GETS) using everyday telephone equipment (e.g., standard desk set, fax, modem, STU III). A series of prompts direct you to enter your 12-digit card number and destination phone number. Once authenticated, your call receives priority treatment.

##### Where can I use GETS?

GETS is primarily designed for calls within the United States and its territories. You can request international calling privileges for calls to or from international destinations. However, note that GETS provides priority treatment only in the United States portion of the call.

##### Do I need extra hardware or software?

No. You will only need a GETS card, which will have both the universal access number and a Personal Identification Number (PIN).

##### Will GETS work on my cell phone?

You can place a GETS call from any cell phone. However, it will not receive priority treatment until it reaches a landline network. To receive priority treatment in wireless networks, you must register for the [Wireless Priority Service \(WPS\)](#),

##### What functions does GETS support?

- Presidential Communication
- Continuity of Operations (COOP)
- Disaster Response
- Agency essential emergency functions
- State Emergency Operations Centers
- Emergency Broadcast Interface
- International interface for diplomatic and defense telecommunications

### **What features and enhancements does GETS provide?**

GETS provides a higher probability of call completion even in damaged or congested networks by providing numerous enhancements and key features.

- Toll-free access number with alternate numbers for direct carrier access
- Access control using Personal Identification Numbers (PINs)
- Failsafe access - if the access control system fails, GETS calls would automatically be allowed to complete
- Enhanced routing to one of the three interexchange (long distance) carriers
- Alternate carrier routing in the event one of the carriers is unavailable
- Priority treatment with trunk queuing, sub-grouping, and reservation
- Exemption from restrictive network management controls during congestion
- International calling (when requested and authorized in advance)
- Interoperability with other networks
- Number translation (for special users)

### **How much does GETS cost?**

The only charge is for usage when making calls using a GETS card. GETS calls are billed at a rate of 7¢ or 10¢ per minute (depending on carrier and other factors) for calls within the United States and its territories, Canada, and most of the Caribbean. International calls are billed at commercial rates, though international calling privileges are restricted to those cards so authorized by your organization's Point of Contact (POC) or alternate.

Federal government organizations are exempt from billing until an annual threshold for GETS calls has been exceeded. However, the NCS reserves the right to bill federal users for GETS calls if there has been fraud, waste, or abuse using your GETS card.

For organizations outside the Federal government, a Program Designator Code (PDC) is required to establish a billing account for payment of GETS calls placed by members of your organization. GETS charges are payable to our contracting office, the Defense Information Technology Contracting Organization (DITCO). Details on paying these charges would be included with the bill you receive from them. NOTE: You will not normally be billed for calls to confirm receipt of individual GETS cards, familiarization calls, or short-duration test calls to the familiarization line (703-818-3924). However, we reserve the right to bill for all calls, especially if there has been fraud, waste, or abuse using your GETS card(s).

### **How effective is GETS in actual emergencies?**

GETS is designed to provide 90% call completion rates when call volume is eight times greater than normal capacity. In actual emergencies, GETS has consistently met or exceeded this completion rate.

### **How do I become a GETS user?**

If you believe you are [eligible](#), follow the menu selection for "First Time GETS Requestor" at this URL: <http://gets.ncs.gov/eligibility.html>. Select your organization type from the menu.

### **Who do I contact for further information?**

For questions about applying for GETS or managing your GETS account, please contact GETS Administration toll free at 866-NCS-CALL (627-2255) (DC metro area, use 703-760-2255) or [gwids@saic.com](mailto:gwids@saic.com).

For general questions about GETS, please contact GETS Operations at [gets@ncs.gov](mailto:gets@ncs.gov).