

FGDC Homeland Security Working Group Symbology Subgroup Charter

I. PURPOSE

The Department of Homeland Security, Symbology Subgroup is established under the auspices of the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) Homeland Security Working Group (HSWG) to serve as the focal point for defining, developing, and communicating a common set of cartographic symbols relevant to emergency management and homeland security / homeland defense objectives.

Geographic displays and maps are key assessment, planning, and response tools used by all levels of government. The geographic map is the common interface among responding entities, identifying critical infrastructure and key resources, conveying situational awareness about response assets and type and extent of damage or threat. The importance of a common symbology standard cannot be over emphasized and becomes readily apparent when considering the multiple levels of interaction between Federal, State, and local emergency management and law enforcement agencies in response to natural and manmade disasters and threats.

The implementation of commonly understood mapping symbology supports homeland security objectives by promoting E-Government interoperability initiatives, improvement in communications and coordination leading to improvement in response readiness at all levels, and minimizes the risk of misinterpretation of symbols which can lead to delayed response, loss of life, loss of resources, disruption in government and critical infrastructure operations.

II. SCOPE

The Symbology Subgroup will identify resources, methods, practices, and standards applicable to development of widely recognizable emergency and hazards management and homeland security cartographic symbols. It will identify commonly desired and critical non-existent symbols and symbol properties. It will be responsible for creation of a simple mechanism for discovery of symbols, definitions, and coordinate with the FGDC HSWG Content Subgroup for integration of symbols within DHS Geospatial Data Model (GDM) themes and features. It will account for multiple graphic formats which support common platforms and applications. It will advise on the applicability of the symbology standard to federal grant awarding guidelines.

The Symbology Subgroup will use sufficient coordination mechanisms between all levels of government and industry and academic stakeholders to encourage appropriate participation in its activities and to inform stakeholders about development, standards, production, and timeline/coordination activities.

III. LEAD AGENCY

The Department of Homeland Security will chair the Symbology Subgroup in accordance with FGDC processes and procedures for working group activities. A Co-chair may be considered through agreement of the HSWG and the chair.

IV. AUTHORITY

The activities of the Symbology Subgroup are in accordance with OMB Circulars A-16, A-119, and A-130, and Executive Order 12906 through the HSWG.

V. MEMBERSHIP

The Symbology Subgroup shall consist of voluntary representatives from:

- a) DHS components
- b) Other Interested Federal agencies and DoD components
- c) Civil emergency management, response, law enforcement, and associations
- d) Academic research partners and cartography associations
- e) Open Geospatial Consortium and other standards developers
- f) Industry associations

VI. RESPONSIBILITY

The responsibilities of the Symbology Subgroup include developing, recruitment, coordination, and facilitating development of methods and tools which enable wide recognition, understanding, discovery, distribution, and application of the standard Emergency Response and Hazards Mapping Symbol (ERS) sets. It will also initiate formal changes to the existing ANSI standard.

These Symbology Subgroup responsibilities fall into the broad mission areas of Policy Recommendations, Standards, Coordination, and Science and Technology. Principal responsibilities include the following:

Policy Development:

- A. Developing and implementing guidelines for the identification, dissemination, and sharing (web-served or other) of ERS graphic data sets.
- B. Assisting in the development and publication of process and policy guidelines supporting the testing and validation of methods or specifications developed or modified by the Symbology Subgroup.

Standards:

- C. Recommending additions, deletions, or changes to the data/event themes and definitions addressed in the ERS; participating in the development and evaluation of symbol definitions and validation methods used by research and cartographic organizations for cartographic symbology.
- D. Developing and publishing guidance, initiating changes to the ANSI standard, and facilitating the adoption of common standard mapping symbology for homeland security and response, for use by all levels of response activities.

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Coordination:

E. Supporting and promoting collaborative activities and initiatives with academic and non-commercial entities such as the Open Geospatial Consortium, GIS related university research groups with homeland security grants, cartographic associations.

Science and Technology:

F. Investigation, identification, or creation of technologies and methods for creation, management, discovery, and network and web based dissemination of graphic data libraries or entities supporting various platforms and applications, integration with graphic applications, cataloging mechanisms and taxonomy development, mapping to the GDM and local translation of symbols.

VII. PROCEDURES

The Symbology Subgroup will have a Chair and may have a Co-Chair appointed by the FGDC HSWG. The Symbology Subgroup will meet at least quarterly at the call of the Chairperson(s). A notification and meeting agenda will be distributed to members and the HSWG no less than 10 Federal working days in advance of the meeting. Meetings will be at the unclassified level.

Meetings will be held at mutually agreeable locations and times. Web Ex presentations may be used occasionally to minimize travel requirements and reach the widest audience. Attendance will be recorded. Results from the prior meeting will be reviewed. Action items will be recorded and status maintained. Meeting results will be posted on the appropriate FGDC HSWG Symbology Subgroup web site.

Issues offered for vote will be voted upon by the membership with a two thirds majority of Respondents required for adoption. Both in person and email responses are acceptable forms for vote collection. Email responses will be accepted for seven calendar days from the date of the voting invitation, including the date of the call for vote. Numeric results will be published to members. The Symbology Subgroup Chairperson(s) will coordinate with the Content Subgroup at the regularly scheduled Content Subgroup meetings. The Symbology Subgroup Chairperson(s) will coordinate with the DHS Geospatial Working Group (GWG) Standards Working Group as needed.

Meeting minutes will be briefed to the FGDC HSWG and the DHS GWG. The DHS GWG will offer recommendations through the FGDC HSWG.

Requests for financial assistance will be forwarded to the FGDC HSWG for decision.

The objectives and guidelines presented above will be enacted when accepted by the FGDC HSWG. The FGDC HSWG reserves the right to create, modify, abolish objectives and goals/endeavors of the Symbology Subgroup, and further reserves the right to modify guidelines and disestablish the working group.

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VIII. COORDINATING MECHANISMS

The Symbology Subgroup will employ those tools that are best suited to meeting its responsibilities. Examples include working group meetings, national user forums, requirements solicitations, user surveys and analyses, spatial data user workshops, research initiatives, and cooperative ventures. The Symbology Subgroup may use these tools or any other lawful tools it deems necessary for the conduct of its business and the coordination of its work with appropriate governmental, private sector, international, and academic entities.

IX. REPORTS

The Symbology Subgroup formally reports to the HSWG annually, prior to December 31. The Symbology Subgroup annual status report shall be submitted to the Chair HSWG, and shall contain:

- Accomplishments of the past calendar year,
- An operating plan for activities for the upcoming year,
- Photographs, diagrams, and other materials that may be of value for inclusion in FGDC reports,
- A brief discussion of any problems encountered and other matters of interest.

Special reports and technical papers also may be requested by the HSWG during the reporting period describing special projects, coordination with other subcommittees or working groups, and the development of status graphics or catalogs and informational or educational brochures on the use and availability of products supporting ERS Mapping Symbology needs for homeland security.

X. TERMINATION

The Symbology Subgroup shall remain in existence until terminated by the FGDC HSWG.