

Public Safety Board Note

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Dispatching: Next Generation 9-1-1

By: *Larry Pasha*

The National Emergency Number Association recently held its annual conference in Tampa, Florida (June 7 – June 12, 2008). Several sessions focused on next generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) technology. These sessions addressed how to deal with inabilities of the current copper wire-based 9-1-1 system. Copper wire systems have tremendous problems handling new cell phone and global positioning System (GPS) based technologies.

Public Service Access Points (PSAP) or what are commonly called 911 communication centers are struggling with rapid changes in consumer communication technology. Today's consumer communication style is more than mobile, it's almost nomadic, and brings havoc for location accuracy and proper dispatch of services.

Over 9 million households have dropped their land lines telephones and now rely on cell phones for communications. Many people are also switching to Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) as their telephone service. VOIP is cheaper priced for households and saves them money.

Public safety officials are concerned with saving and protecting lives. Voice over Internet protocol (VOIP) and cell phones can make it almost impossible for 911 communication centers to locate people who have an emergency.

Public Safety officials can neither save or protect lives, if thousands perhaps millions, of citizens would be missed by a public safety generated reverse 911 telephone call.

Advantages of NG9-1-1

Next generation 9-1-1 technology may help our local Public Service Access Points (PSAP). However, it will not solve human and personnel problems that may exist. NG9-1-1 can:

1. Accept calls from a variety of devices such as laptops, cells phones or other mobile devices.
2. Improve location accuracy.
3. Receive more data from calls such as voice, text, video, picture, and e-mail.
4. Easier transfer of service calls between or to other communication centers, citywide or to neighboring municipalities in the event of shutdown or capacity overload.

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