



APCO International
Association of Public Safety Communications Officials



**The Keystone Chapter of the National Emergency Number Association (PA NENA)
&
The Pennsylvania Chapter of the Association of Public Safety Communications
Officials International (PA APCO)**

Position Paper on the Need to Preserve Existing 9-1-1 Wireless Funding Surcharge

OBJECTIVES:

- Continue the wireless surcharge program to July, 2020 for the funding of 9-1-1 systems in Pennsylvania counties.
- Provide for consistency in the authorized usage of wireline, and wireless 9-1-1 revenues for 9-1-1 and emergency communication system expenditures.
- Streamline the funding process in order to disburse funds to PSAPs in a more efficient, effective manner.

Pennsylvania Public Safety Answering Points have implemented Enhanced 9-1-1 systems that allow Telecommunicators to receive critical caller and location information from persons who call 9-1-1 from wireline, wireless and Voice Over IP (VoIP) telephones. The Commonwealth achievement is made possible by funding from 9-1-1 tariff on wireline phones and the establishment of \$1.00 per month surcharge on all wireless devices within the Commonwealth, as amended by Act 78.

On July 1, 2009, Pennsylvania law will no longer authorize collections of the wireless surcharge fee as specified in the amended Act 78. The legislation is scheduled to sunset on June 30, 2009. This will cause significant reduction in the amount of 9-1-1 operating revenue, adversely impacting upon the ability of small, medium and large counties to maintain, upgrade and modernize their emergency communication systems. In addition, the extension of the wireless surcharge is essential to ensure that all PSAPs are able to continue providing Phase II level of wireless service within their public safety emergency systems. PSAPs will encounter considerable financial hardships and may be faced with difficult decisions regarding the continuation of service if the surcharge is not extended.

Pennsylvania Public Safety Answering Points and emergency communication systems must meet a number of challenges in the future if they are to continue to provide enhanced 9-1-1 services that meet the communications needs of citizens. Those challenges include:

- Having sufficient, dedicated funding to maintain, sustain and upgrade enhanced 9-1-1 equipment and networks; to update digital maps used to locate 9-1-1 wireless callers and emergency responders; to pay for vendor services and networks required to route 9-1-1 calls and caller information to the correct dispatch center.
- Modernization of existing analog based 9-1-1 systems so that dispatchers can receive 9-1-1 text messages and other digitally based communications from new devices coming onto the marketplace.
- Future requirements to receive and transfer information sent automatically from vehicles involved in crashes to ambulances and hospital emergency rooms and to

receive and transfer emergency calls from *Onstar* and similar systems to emergency responders.

- Emerging need to receive and transmit images, video and other digital information from cell phones, security cameras and other systems to emergency responders and command centers.
- As 9-1-1 centers continue to upgrade all the technological aspects of the communications center the most important part of the operation must not be overlooked. The proper personnel required to operate the equipment, process the emergency calls and manage the technical and personnel issues of a 24 x 7 operation is extremely critical. Throughout the Commonwealth there are 9-1-1 call takers and dispatchers who process millions of emergency calls annually for the residents and visitors of Pennsylvania's counties and cities. The wireless surcharge is needed to help provide an adequate salary, training and continued education for these tireless professionals.

With the rapid evolution of communications technologies, it will be necessary to ensure adequate and ongoing funding for our public safety dispatch centers and emergency communications systems to provide equipment and technical services to transmit 9-1-1 call information and other digital information to emergency responders. Failure to provide for ongoing and dedicated funding for these needs will result in the financial inability of many Pennsylvania communities to continue the provision of enhanced 9-1-1 services as well as to modernize their 9-1-1 equipment and services to fully function with Next Generation digital communication technologies.

Concern about the future adequacy of 9-1-1 revenues to meet 9-1-1 and emergency communication system requirements is shared by public safety officials from agencies of all sizes. Members of the Pennsylvania NENA and other public safety communications officials have worked together to identify future 9-1-1 and emergency communication system needs affecting Pennsylvania communities and have recommended the following amendments to 9-1-1 statutes to proactively address those needs.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO STATUTES:

- (1) Extend the sunset on the wireless surcharge.
- (2) Authorize wireless surcharge fees to be used for the same purposes as is authorized for wireline 9-1-1 funds Act 78 of 1990.
- (3) One combined overall Advisory Committee, which will allow for effective recommendations on E-911 policies, procedures, and funding issues, from an experienced group of public safety and relevant telecommunications industry representatives, along with four year, staggered appointments of Advisory Committee members to ensure consistency and reduce turnover on the committee.
- (4) A streamlined funding process in order to disburse funds to PSAPs in a more efficient, effective manner. Ninety-eight percent of the provider remittances received will be passed-through from PEMA directly to the PSAPs. The remaining two percent of the remittances will be utilized by PEMA for administration of the program
- (5) "Technology-neutral" language that will encompass any current or future technology.

WHY ACT IN 2009?: Enacting the needed revisions to Act 56 will sustain the current level of E-911 service that exists, while meeting the future needs and challenges of the Commonwealth.

Please feel free to contact us at the numbers below. We are open and willing to answer any questions you may have.

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