

2010

Report to the Governor



OKLAHOMA

STATEWIDE 9-1-1

ADVISORY BOARD

Nine-one-one service saves lives every day across Oklahoma. Nine-one-one service is operated by local governments and funded by local citizens who pay a self-imposed fee on their telephones for this important public safety service. However many Oklahomans continue to have inadequate enhanced 9-1-1 services available to them in times of emergency.

Some of the more populated areas have “enhanced” service, meaning that they have the technology that routes the call to the right emergency responder and delivers location and caller information to the call taker. But low populated areas often cannot generate enough local revenue to purchase enhanced equipment and services, even if they assess the maximum 9-1-1 fees allowable by statute.

Even for the best funded 9-1-1 systems in Oklahoma, keeping equipment and services current is always a challenge. The current trend by consumers in Oklahoma and nationwide is to discontinue the landline telephone and use only cell phones. Local governments continue to financially struggle to prepare to respond to the explosive growth in cellular and other telephone technologies. Industry figures indicate that approximately 60% of all cell phone calls are made from the home. But even before Oklahoma can catch up to provide wireless 9-1-1 service, technology is already evolving to allow 9-1-1 capabilities with computers and other handheld devices.

Oklahoma’s current patchwork of 9-1-1 systems does not provide uniform protection for its citizens and visitors. In June of 2005, after identifying many of the 9-1-1 issues facing Oklahoma citizens, Governor Henry and the Oklahoma Legislature created, through HB 1460, the Statewide 9-1-1 Advisory Board (Board). Statutorily, the duties of the Board are to take steps and make recommendations to improve 9-1-1 systems in the state.

The Board, utilizing funding from the Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security, engaged a nationally recognized consultant to develop a statewide strategic plan for Oklahoma. The strategy included a comprehensive snapshot of the state of enhanced 9-1-1 in Oklahoma. Part of the plan included building out enhanced 9-1-1 services statewide, and improving the consistency of 9-1-1 standards for service in Oklahoma. The Board has reviewed and accepted this Statewide 9-1-1 Plan, which is the basis for the recommendations contained in this report.

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THE CURRENT STATE OF ENHANCED 9-1-1 SERVICES

There are 105 public safety answering points in Oklahoma providing various levels of landline, wireless and next generation 9-1-1 service. Still there are Oklahomans that do not have access to life-saving enhanced 9-1-1 service. Additional legislative action is required to address the critical need to upgrade the FCC mandated and basic 9-1-1 systems to enhanced systems.

Though many counties have taken proactive steps since 2005 to implement enhanced 9-1-1 services but **ten counties still have not assessed a 9-1-1 service fee** (Stephens County has scheduled a vote on this issue in December, 2010).

LANDLINE 9-1-1

The FCC has mandated that when a caller dials 9-1-1, the call must be answered somewhere. But basic 9-1-1 assures only that the call goes some place where the telephone is answered 24 hours a day. The call taker does not have location or caller information that is so important for emergency response. There are 22 counties in Oklahoma that are still without enhanced 9-1-1 landline service countywide. Enhanced landline calls are routed to the correct emergency responder for that caller along with the caller's location and call back information so that help can arrive even when the caller does not know their location.

WIRELESS ENHANCED 9-1-1

Similar to enhanced landline 9-1-1 features, a fully developed wireless enhanced 9-1-1 system routes an emergency call to the appropriate emergency responder, displays the call back number of the caller and provides the location information through x, y coordinates that can be plotted on a map.

There are nearly **300 million wireless subscribers in the United States today**, twice as many as in 2003. This influx places additional burdens on the public safety answering centers. Consistently across the United States **wireless calls make up approximately 60% of the total emergency call volume into an enhanced 9-1-1 center.**

According the U.S. Center for Disease Control, Oklahoma has a higher percentage of household who have only cell phones for telephony in their homes. Approximately 22.9% of all U.S. adults, or 52 million, live in households with only wireless phones, a trend continuing to grow.

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FUNDING 9-1-1 IN OKLAHOMA

The use of cell phones in place of landline telephones reduces 9-1-1 fee revenue; because cell phone fees are generally lower than landline fees. As cell phones become a household's only phone, local revenues fall while the need to upgrade 9-1-1 systems to respond to the new technology increases.

The wireless industry has begun to see an increase in the purchase and use of pre-paid wireless telephones. These "pay as you go" devices present additional challenges to 9-1-1, as they make up approximately 20% of the wireless telephone market. As another example of technology outpacing 9-1-1 funding sources, in 2010 additional legislation was enacted to address this transit market. Oklahoma was one of the first states to enact a *Point-of-Sale* mechanism for collection and remittance of the 50-cents wireless service fees for prepaid wireless telephones.

NEXT GENERATION 9-1-1

Much of Oklahoma's existing 9-1-1 systems do not have the capability to perform basic tasks such as transferring misdirected 9-1-1 calls to other parts of the state or the life-saving wireless 9-1-1 location information. Upgrades to the existing systems not only need to address these needs, but also have the capability to take 9-1-1 into the "next generation" by having the capability to handle 9-1-1 calls being placed through voice over internet protocols (VOIP), 9-1-1 calls being delivered from telematics services (in-car emergency notification) and other new technological formats that the citizens of Oklahoma may use to access 9-1-1 for emergency assistance.

Moving forward, the state will need to design and implement a "next generation" 9-1-1 system which will be a shared system comprised of multiple entities and components, which will require coordinated planning and funding. This will require the development of a statewide Emergency Services IP Network (ESInets), furthering the need to coordinate at a statewide level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Without state planning and coordination, populated areas will continue to provide high quality 9-1-1 services while service in rural areas will be poor or non-existent. There are ways to address the problem, but even when money is not an issue, implementing enhanced 9-1-1 is a daunting task. It requires some basic understanding of telephone networking, mapping and 9-1-1 equipment. There is no single place, person, or office in Oklahoma that a jurisdiction can go to for help.

Statewide planning and coordination is also needed to standardize and improve 9-1-1 service delivery. For example, in order to locate a caller and direct emergency workers, it is vital that each 9-1-1 call center have a mapping technology. The electronic map must contain properly formatted addresses for every home or business. Uniform addressing standards are crucial to providing fast and accurate emergency response. Currently, there are no state standards for addressing, and no person, no place, and no office to assist communities in building a standardized accurate map. Additionally there are no state standards or curriculum for call taker training.

In order to address these challenges, the State 9-1-1 Advisory Board is recommending the creation of a State Enhanced 9-1-1 Coordination Office. This office would be charged, in part, with assisting with building out enhanced 9-1-1 service statewide and improving the quality of 9-1-1 service statewide. The State will need to develop a comprehensive strategy to implement the Board report's recommendations. The Statewide Advisory Board would assist the staff with recommendations.

The Board finds that the following four recommendations vital to begin addressing the critical issues of 9-1-1 in Oklahoma:

- Identify permanent funding source(s) that would enable the creation of a 9-1-1 Coordinator's Office to include administrative staff to carry out the tasks outlined in this Report and to help supplement certain duties of the Board.
- Identify the agency placement of the 9-1-1 Coordinator's Office.
- Provide job requirements and select a State 9-1-1 Coordinator.
- Develop a permanent means of funding for equipment and services.

Emergencies do not observe jurisdictional boundaries. The very nature of 9-1-1 services necessitates proactive state leadership. Without such high-level leadership, improvement in 9-1-1 services will be slow or nonexistent, especially in rural areas. The Governor and Legislature have taken the first step toward improving 9-1-1 services by creating the Statewide 9-1-1 Advisory Board. After four years of meeting together the Board urges state leaders to centralize the planning and coordination of 9-1-1 services into a Statewide 9-1-1 Coordinator's Office.

Every Oklahoma 9-1-1 caller deserves the best and fastest emergency response available. The Board is hopeful that the Governor and Legislature will see this critical need and take steps to make Oklahoma safer for all its citizens.

THE OKLAHOMA STATEWIDE 9-1-1 ADVISORY BOARD

The Statewide 9-1-1 Advisory Board is composed of 23 members appointed by the Speaker, Senate President Pro Tempore or Governor, representing various sized cities, counties, council of governments, law enforcement agencies, the Emergency Medical Services Authority, 9-1-1 professional organizations, large and small landline telephone companies, and national, regional and local wireless service providers. The duties of the Board are outline in 63 O.S. 2847. They are, in paraphrase:

1. Secure resources for the creation, operation, expansion and cooperative undertaking of local public safety answering points;
2. Secure an direct the distribution of public funds and grants as needed;
3. Facilities information-sharing among public safety answering points;
4. Create and maintain best practices databases for public safety answering point operations;
5. Encourage equipment and technology sharing among small jurisdictions;
6. Take steps to explain enhanced wireline 9-1-1 service to every telephone user in the state
7. Assist public safety answering points in implementing Phase I and Phase II wireless technology;
8. Provide a clearinghouse of contact information for all telephone companies operating in the state and contact information and nine-one-one fees charged in each jurisdiction;
9. Develop training program standards for nine-one-one call takers;
10. Designate a statewide nine-one-one-Coordinator; and
11. Take any steps necessary to carry out the duties provided for in this subsection.

BOARD MEMBERS:

Norman McNickle, Stillwater/Payne County 9-1-1 Chairman

Darita Huckabee, Indian Nations Council of Govts. Vice-Chair

Gene Thaxton, Okla. Department of Public Safety Secretary

Vicki Atchley, National Emergency Number Assoc.

M.T. Berry, City of Oklahoma City

Dana Church, Southwestern Okla. Regional 9-1-1

Lanette Coppedge, Johnston County 9-1-1

Greg Fisher, City of Sand Springs

Ronnie Freeman, AT&T Oklahoma

John Hampton, Assoc. of Public Safety Comm. Officials

Linda Herndon, Washington County

Leroy Lage

Darryl Maggard, Muskogee County 9-1-1

Lynn Mell, T-Mobile

Diane Pedicord, Oklahoma Municipal League

Richard Ruhl, Pioneer Telephone

Blaine Smith, Assoc. of South Central Okla. Govts.

Ben Stout, City of Tulsa

Ron Strecker, Panhandle Telephone

Stephen Williamson, EMSA

Stephen Willoughby, 9-1-1 Assoc. of Central Okla. Govts.