

National Emergency Number Association
The Voice of 9-1-1



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Congress Provides Funding for ENHANCE 911 Act
NENA applauds passage of Digital Television and Public Safety Act

Arlington, VA – NENA applauds the efforts of the House-Senate Conference Committee that approved the Digital Television and Public Safety Act on Monday as part of the Budget Reconciliation conference report. The legislation provides \$43.5 million to implement the ENHANCE 911 Act, a bill that was sponsored by the Congressional E9-1-1 Caucus and signed into law by President Bush last year. In addition to establishing a national 9-1-1 Implementation and Coordination Office, the ENHANCE 911 Act authorizes up to \$250 million per year in matching grants for states, local governments and tribal organizations to improve their 9-1-1 communications systems. These upgrades are necessary to provide 9-1-1 emergency communications centers with the capability to know the location of emergency callers when dialing 9-1-1.

“Our goal must be to equip Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) with the best technology available, enabling them to provide the service that citizens have come to expect when they dial 9-1-1. Funding the implementation of the ENHANCE 911 Act is a critical step needed to meet this goal,” said NENA President David Jones, ENP.

The funding for the ENHANCE 911 Act will come through proceeds of a spectrum auction that will be held no later than January 28, 2008. The auction will come in advance of a February 17, 2009 date in which broadcasters are required to vacate the analog portion of public spectrum which will be made available to emergency responders for interoperable radio communications. Proceeds from the auction will be deposited into a “DTV Transition and Public Safety Fund” in the Treasury which will then be available for ENHANCE 911 grants. Several other items must first be paid for before the \$43.5 million is available for E9-1-1 upgrades, including \$1.5 billion for a DTV converter box subsidy program and \$1 billion for state and local interoperability grants. More than \$10 billion will need to be raised during the spectrum auction for the funding to be made available for the ENHANCE 911 grants. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the auction will raise \$10 billion, while several independent reports estimate that total to be closer to \$20 billion. The House voted on Monday to approve the Budget Reconciliation Conference Report and the Senate passed the legislation today.

While most areas in the United States have basic 9-1-1 service, there are still many communities operating without it. Over 225 counties still do not have enhanced 9-1-1 (automatic location information and a call back number) for their landline telephone service. Additionally, only fifty-four percent of PSAPs, covering only two-thirds of the population in the United States, have the necessary technology to locate wireless 9-1-1 callers. Also, new technologies such as voice over IP (VoIP) continue to emerge and provide a challenge to PSAPs. A primary reason for these limitations is due to a lack of funding for 9-1-1.

“I applaud the leadership of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation as well as the House Energy and Commerce Committee for including funding for the ENHANCE

911 Act in this bill,” added Jones. “This is an important step in the right direction towards funding the ENHANCE 911 Act and NENA looks forward to working with Congress to fully fund the Act in the years preceding the 2008 spectrum auction through the traditional appropriations process. NENA appreciates the promise of this future revenue, but we must not lose sight of the funding needs that the 9-1-1 community still faces today.”

Current Wireless 9-1-1 Statistics

NENA published current wireless E9-1-1 statistics earlier this month measuring the number of counties, individual Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) and total population covered by Phase I and Phase II wireless location technology. The statistics, part of an ongoing wireless deployment project sponsored by the US Department of Transportation, are available on the NENA web site at http://www.nena.org/911_facts/911fastfacts.htm. More detailed county by county statistics can be found on the wireless deployment section of the NENA web site at <http://nena.ddti.net/>.

As of December 1st, 69.7 percent of counties contain PSAPs receiving Phase I data while 42.7 percent of counties have PSAPs accepting Phase II calls. The percentages for individual PSAPs are slightly improved from previous statistics with 79.3 percent receiving Phase I calls and 53.9 percent Phase II capable. The PSAP statistics translate to 84.5 percent of the US population covered by Phase I and 66.7 percent covered by Phase II enabled PSAPs. As the numbers suggest, the greater population covered than PSAPs with Phase I and II technology in place, particularly for Phase II, indicates that more deployments are occurring in high-density population areas and that rural areas continue to struggle to upgrade their E9-1-1 capabilities. This is a critical reason why funding the ENHANCE 911 Act grant program is so important.

The need for precise wireless E9-1-1 location information has been demonstrated in recent weeks resulting in lives saved where the technology exists. Only a month after implementing an E9-1-1 system, on December 12 in Brown County, Wisconsin an injured snowmobiler was saved after making a wireless 9-1-1 call. The caller did not know exactly where he was, but the 9-1-1 telecommunicator did thanks to the Phase II E9-1-1 system. Emergency responders were able to quickly find him and get him the help that he needed. A day after Brown County's E9-1-1 system helped locate the injured snowmobiler, the Calumet County, Wisconsin Sheriff's Department says it was also able to save a life thanks to its new E9-1-1 system. A 13-year-old girl used a cell phone to call for help saying that her mom was having a seizure. She could only tell the 9-1-1 telecommunicator that she was somewhere between Chilton and Neenah but with the precise location provided by the E9-1-1 system, emergency responders were able to find the girl and her mother.

These examples occur on a regular basis around the country with lives being saved because authorities can locate wireless 9-1-1 calls and lives being lost when the technology is not in place. NENA will continue to monitor the progress being made in the deployment of Phase II wireless technology and will work with all parties to meet our goal of 100 percent phase II deployment.

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About the National Emergency Number Association

NENA is *The Voice of 9-1-1*[™]. Now celebrating its 25th year, NENA was established to promote implementation and awareness of 9-1-1 as North America's universal emergency number. NENA has grown to become the leading professional non-profit organization dedicated solely to 9-1-1 emergency communications issues. NENA serves its more than 7,000 members in 46 chapters across the U.S. and Canada through policy advocacy, establishment of technical and operational standards, certification programs and a broad spectrum of educational offerings. Find out more at www.nena.org.