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**OREGON LAUNCHES PROGRAM TO SAFEGUARD DEAF 9-1-1 CALLERS**

*First State in U.S. to Implement Automated System to Meet Federal TTY Equipment Testing Requirements*

**ARLINGTON, VA. (September 20, 2005)** — Oregon's Office of Emergency Management recently became the first state 9-1-1 office to enroll and implement a new TTY testing program, called TTY-PASS (TTY Performance Assessment and Scoring System), for all fifty of its primary 9-1-1 centers. Sponsored on behalf of the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), the automated system was developed in partnership with TelecomXchange International (TXI) to help 9-1-1 centers comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which mandates that every emergency operator have access to text-based telecommunications devices for the deaf, known as TTYs or TDDs. The ADA also requires regular testing of such equipment.

"One of the main benefits of TTY-PASS is that it prepares 9-1-1 centers for calls from the hearing impaired and deaf community by making sure their TTY equipment is operating correctly 24/7," said Ken Keim, Oregon 9-1-1 Program Manager of the Oregon Office of Emergency Management, and NENA's Western Regional Vice President. "This level of testing has never been accomplished before—if the message was garbled through the TTY, you just assumed it was the transmission; now we're actually able to tell if it's our equipment that has a problem."

The system works by sending a three-minute test script to the 9-1-1 operator's TTY. The 9-1-1 call-taker then copies the received text into a secure website, where a score is generated. To receive a passing score, the TTY must have a total character error rate of one percent or less.

The enrollment, which cost less than \$75 for each TTY, was funded through Oregon's 9-1-1 surcharge. The system covers all 253 9-1-1 TTYs in the state.

"NENA is well-known for being on the leading edge of providing support and resources to 9-1-1 professionals," said Toni Dunne, ENP, chair of NENA's ADA/Accessibility Committee. "We are proud that Oregon has become the first state to participate in this state-of-the-art equipment testing program. By doing so, they are demonstrating their commitment to ensure quality emergency services are available to all citizens."

TTYs were invented in the 1930s as a way to send text messages over telephone wires, and often were used by journalists submitting stories. In the 1960s, Robert Weitbrecht, a scientist who was deaf, modified a teletypewriter by adding an acoustic coupler, allowing hearing-disabled people to use telephone lines to communicate.

More information on the system is available at [nena.org](http://nena.org).

#### **About the National Emergency Number Association (NENA)**

NENA helps to save lives and improve the safety of our communities through advancements in the technology, policy and operations that affect 9-1-1 systems. Established as a non-profit organization to promote universal acceptance and implementation of 9-1-1, NENA has grown to become the leading professional organization serving all of 9-1-1 emergency communications. With more than 7,000 members in 46 chapters across the U.S. and Canada, NENA serves as "The Voice of 9-1-1" through policy advocacy, the establishment of national standards, certification and testing programs, and a wide variety of educational offerings. Go to [www.nena.org](http://www.nena.org) to learn more.

#### **About TXI**

TelecomXchange International (TXI) provides services to niche markets in the telecommunications industry, including performance assessment and maintenance of telecommunications devices. The company was founded in 2004 by Edward A. Hall, a telecommunications industry principal technical member for 22 years. Hall's past 11 years have been with two of the leading telecommunications associations in Washington, D.C. Go to [www.telecomxchange.com](http://www.telecomxchange.com) for more information.

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