Public Safety Next Generation 9-1-1 Coalition

Next Generation 9-1-1 Fact Sheet

On July 27, H.R. 7624, the Spectrum Innovation Act, passed the House of Representatives following a unanimous, bipartisan vote in the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Title III of the Act addresses Next Generation 9-1-1 and contains the provisions establishing a much-needed federal grant program developed and agreed to by the Coalition, iCERT, NENA, and NASNA.

Our attention is now directed at the Senate, where our priorities are (1) preserve the House-negotiated and widely supported NG9-1-1 language, (2) fully fund NG9-1-1 at $15B to avoid have and have-nots, particularly in rural areas, and (3) provide the grant agency, NTIA, with sufficient borrowing authority to begin the grant program immediately rather than waiting until auction revenues become available.

Given that NG9-1-1 funding legislation is at this advanced stage in Congress, we provide below important facts about the legislation and its goals.

FACT: Public safety's comprehensive vision for Next Generation 9-1-1 has not yet been achieved anywhere in the United States.

It is simply incorrect for anyone to claim that NG9-1-1 has been successfully deployed anywhere in the country. NG9-1-1, defined in a comprehensive manner (consistent with pending federal funding legislation), means Emergency Communications Centers (ECCs) can receive, process, and analyze all types of 9-1-1 requests for emergency assistance (including photos, data, video) and seamlessly exchange relevant information with other ECCs and emergency responders. ESInets and Next Generation Core Services are only part of a full NG9-1-1 deployment, and many have involved limited to no interoperability, excessive costs, and undue delays. A limited vision of what NG9-1-1 entails has led to multiple problems. For example, focusing only on the call-delivery elements of NG9-1-1 means missing the benefits of a total solution needing enhancements to CAD and dispatch functions.

FACT: 9-1-1 and NG9-1-1 are locally controlled and operated.

Every 9-1-1 call, and future NG9-1-1 request for emergency assistance, is local in nature. The grant program is for the benefit of ECCs and is intended to meet their requirements. ECCs play a primary role in specifying and implementing precursor NG9-1-1 technologies and will carry that role through full NG9-1-1 deployments. The ultimate responsibility for responding to the public's need for emergency assistance rests with local ECC personnel. Some states have offices with varying degrees of authority and jurisdiction that are typically focused on the delivery of 9-1-1 calls to ECCs. The legislation does not vest any new authority upon state offices. Instead, the legislation requires state-level bodies to serve the limited purpose of coordinators to develop NG9-1-1 plans following a full opportunity for input from local 9-1-1 and other public safety agencies.

FACT: ESInets and 9-1-1 equipment lack interoperability, an unacceptable situation that is the responsibility of the vendors to solve.

Vendors deploy legacy and precursor technology deployments with proprietary elements that impede interoperability and saddle ECC directors with extensive delays and additional costs. Interoperability is a fundamental public safety requirement. It is the responsibility of the vendor community, not public safety or federal agencies (using public funds), to solve interoperability. Nothing prevents any vendor from deciding today to begin making its equipment and services interoperable with other vendors' products.

FACT: To best ensure that NG9-1-1 is fully deployed across the country, including in rural areas, at least $15B is needed.

Our conclusion that at least $15B is needed to fully fund NG9-1-1 is based on a prior congressionally mandated study published in 2018. Using cost data dating back to prior years, the study estimated the cost to be up to $12.7B. Accounting for cost increases and additional cybersecurity and training requirements, providing less than $15B will result in cybersecurity vulnerabilities and a patchwork of have and have not communities, with rural areas most likely to fall behind.

FACT: NG9-1-1 grant program development needs input from public safety professionals.

For a federal grant program of the scale and importance called for in transitioning the nation to NG9-1-1, the development of the right program requirements, grant guidance, and application criteria are essential. If pending NG9-1-1 legislation is passed, 9-1-1 professionals and other public safety practitioners with 9-1-1 expertise will provide a variety of recommendations through an Advisory Board regarding the importance of deploying NG9-1-1 in both rural and urban areas, ensuring flexibility for technology improvements, the value of creating efficiencies, the value of enabling effective coordination among government entities, and the relevance of existing cybersecurity resources to NG9-1-1 procurement and deployment.

FACT: NG9-1-1 deployment will be a high visibility target to intrusion and disruption by criminal elements that calls for a new nationwide approach to cybersecurity in addition to state and local level protections.

Disrupting the ability of the public to reach emergency services through a cyberattack can endanger the lives and property of those attempting to reach help, as well as the safety of 9-1-1 professionals and first responders. The pending NG9-1-1 legislation makes cybersecurity a priority and would establish a fully operational, first-of-its-kind Next Generation 9-1-1 cybersecurity center to coordinate with state, local, and regional governments on the sharing of cybersecurity information about, the analysis of cybersecurity threats to, and guidelines for strategies to detect and prevent cybersecurity intrusions specific to NG9-1-1.

FACT: The pending NG9-1-1 legislation would preserve and build upon prior investments.

The legislation will not only help maximize the investments already made in precursor NG9-1-1 deployments such as ESInets, but accelerate them through adaptations that ensure they are interoperable, multimedia capable, and extend beyond call-delivery to complete end-to-end NG9-1-1 solutions.

FACT: The substantive provisions of the House-passed NG9-1-1 funding legislation, H.R. 7624, resulted from successful bipartisan negotiations involving the Public Safety Next Generation 9-1-1 Coalition, iCERT, NENA, and NASNA.

Over the course of several months, bipartisan staff from the House Energy and Commerce Committee convened major public safety stakeholders to negotiate final legislative language. This involved representatives of the Public Safety Next Generation 9-1-1 Coalition, iCERT, NENA, and NASNA. The negotiations were successful, and the bill passed the committee on a unanimous bipartisan basis.

FACT: Public Safety Telecommunicators will need important new skills and additional training.

Public Safety Telecommunicators (PSTs) demonstrate a unique set of knowledge, skills, and abilities in performing their life-saving roles. In an NG9-1-1 environment, however, PSTs will need to manage many new forms of multimedia and data as well as new technologies. Provisions within the House-passed NG9-1-1 legislation would ensure funding is available for necessary training for PSTs to meet the demands of an NG9-1-1 environment.

FOR REFERENCE - KEY DEFINITIONS IN H.R. 7624

NEXT GENERATION 9–1–1.—The term 'Next Generation 9–1–1' means an Internet Protocol-based system that—
(A) ensures interoperability;
(B) is secure;
(C) employs commonly accepted standards;
(D) enables emergency communications centers to receive, process, and analyze all types of 9–1–1 requests for emergency assistance;
(E) acquires and integrates additional information useful to handling 9–1–1 requests for emergency assistance; and
(F) supports sharing information related to 9–1–1 requests for emergency assistance among emergency communications centers and emergency response providers.

INTEROPERABILITY.—The term 'interoperability' means the capability of emergency communications centers to receive 9–1–1 requests for emergency assistance and information and data related to such requests, such as location information and call back numbers from a person initiating the request, then process and share the 9–1–1 requests for emergency assistance and information and data related to such requests with other emergency communications centers and emergency response providers without the need for proprietary interfaces and regardless of jurisdiction, equipment, device, software, service provider, or other relevant factors.

COMMONLY ACCEPTED STANDARDS. —The term 'commonly accepted standards' means the technical standards followed by the communications industry for network, device, and Internet Protocol connectivity that—

(A) enable interoperability; and
(B) are
    (i) developed and approved by a standards development organization that is accredited by an American standards body (such as the American National Standards Institute) or an equivalent international standards body in a process—
        (I) that is open to the public, including open for participation by any person; and
        (II) provides for a conflict resolution process;
    (ii) subject to an open comment and input process before being finalized by the standards development organization;
    (iii) consensus-based; and
    (iv) made publicly available once approved.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER. —
(A) IN GENERAL. —The term 'emergency communications center' means—
    (i) a facility that—
        (I) is designated to receive a 9–1–1 request for emergency assistance; and
        (II) performs one or more of the functions described in subparagraph (B); or
    (ii) a public safety answering point, as defined in section 222 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 222).
(B) FUNCTIONS DESCRIBED. —The functions described in this subparagraph are the following:
    (i) Processing and analyzing 9–1–1 requests for emergency assistance and information and data related to such requests.
    (ii) Dispatching appropriate emergency response providers.
    (iii) Transferring or exchanging 9–1–1 requests for emergency assistance and information and data related to such requests with one or more other emergency communications centers and emergency response providers.
    (iv) Analyzing any communications received from emergency response providers.
    (v) Supporting incident command functions.

9–1–1 REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE. —The term '9–1–1 request for emergency assistance' means a communication, such as voice, text, picture, multimedia, or any other type of data that is sent to an emergency communications center for the purpose of requesting emergency assistance.