



911 Funding and Reauthorization

Counties are proud to provide one of the key functions in public safety—the operation of the 911 call-taking and dispatch system. As technologies continue to evolve and funding streams become out of line with current realities, counties need reliable, sustainable funding to provide 911 response services that meet the growing demands of Pennsylvania residents and visitors.

Counties provide one of the key functions in public safety, the 911 call-taking and dispatch system. Under counties' administration, Pennsylvania's system is by all measures one of the most effective, efficient and technologically compliant systems in the nation.

Yet the 911 system faces significant challenges—rapidly evolving technology requirements, a funding stream whose failure to keep pace with need requires counties to rely heavily and increasingly on the property tax. With the January 31, 2024, sunset of the current 911 statute on the horizon, this offers an opportunity to begin a comprehensive reexamination that will set Pennsylvania up for a sustainable future. Planning and discussions must begin now to ensure counties have the resources they need well ahead of the sunset of current funding formula.

Calls arrive at county call-taking centers, which then dispatch the appropriate emergency response. Calls come in through many media, including traditional wire line phones, wireless lines and VoIP. In 2014, counties began upgrading systems to receive emergency calls by text message, and in coming years, will need to accommodate the full range of next generation technologies Next Gen 911 (NG 911) including calls from video, non-human (e.g., Amazon Alexa, Siri) and non-specific (e.g., iPad) devices and as-yet unimagined sources. As technologies and the way people access 911

continue to evolve, funding and regulations need to account for upgrades to the system to ensure that standard of service is maintained and adequately funded.

In order to develop the necessary and comprehensive updates to Pennsylvania's 911 statutes, the groundwork must be laid now, before the current statute expires. Counties are actively working with Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, legislative committees, emergency management professionals, the communications industry and other interests on system reform. Center to this effort is forward movement and investment in NG 911, which includes accommodation of current and future communications devices, improvements in system efficiency through shared broadband backbones for 911 public safety answering points shared network switching, accurate GIS information and data and better regional system redundancy. Outcomes will encompass all current communication technologies including social networking platforms, ability to anticipate future technologies, consolidation of some system elements, and improvement in and consolidation of funding streams.

COUNTIES SUPPORT:

- Development of a funding formula, well ahead of the 2024 sunset, that adequately supports current county needs and also ensures that funding sources and distribution support our needs into the future.
- Continued strategic planning and investment for evolving technologies and GIS data to ensure NG 911 is properly supported and maintained.
- Opportunities for system and funding consolidation including regional resource sharing and collaboration to ensure system and service continuity.