



911 Funding and Reauthorization

The Time for Action is NOW

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 no longer align with current realities, counties need to be able to rely on consistent and sustainable funding to maintain their responsibility as the first line of emergency response. To that end, counties support development of a funding mechanism well ahead of the January 31, 2024, sunset of the state’s 911 statute, that adequately supports current county needs and also ensures that funding sources and distribution support needs into the future. Further, counties support continued strategic planning and investment for evolving technologies and GIS data to ensure NG911 is properly supported and maintained.

To this end, counties are calling for an increase in the 911 surcharge to \$2.30 with \$0.15 increase until the next reauthorization (five years). Since the 911 surcharge is the only dedicated source of statewide funding for 911, funding that adequately supports the growing needs of this critical emergency response system will need to be found elsewhere. Without an increase to the surcharge, counties would need to fund any remaining costs through their General Funds. Since the only source of General Fund revenue is property tax dollars, this likely would actualize as an increase in property tax rates for Pennsylvanians. By increasing the surcharge, it creates a predictable fee Pennsylvanians can anticipate each month on their phone bill for the specific and dedicated purpose of providing 911 services.

URGENT ACTION NEEDED

The Ask

- Counties support **an increase in the surcharge to \$2.30 with \$0.15 increase until the next reauthorization (five years)**
- Counties recognize the need to “buy-in” to the system- currently counties are funding 34% of the system through property taxes.
 - With this proposed surcharge rate, counties will continue to provide a level of “buy-in” to the system (approx. 10-15%) without relying on regular property tax increases to cover the county share.
- A flat annual increase provides certainty to counties and other stakeholders over the course of the authorization.
- A five-year reauthorization allows for time to better understand and determine if a surcharge is still an appropriate funding mechanism as technologies and capabilities evolve.

KEY POINTS

Counties' costs for 911 service continue to outpace 911 surcharge collection.

- Revenues from the current fee have remained relatively flat, so counties are again picking up more and more of the cost of the 911 system.

What this means for taxpayers

- A phone subscriber will pay an additional \$57 dollars total over the five-year period (currently \$19.80 annually, up to \$33 annually by 2027).
- An increase to \$2.30 with a \$0.15 increase annually for five years amounts to \$156 for five years of surcharges for a regular cellphone subscriber.
- **We need to act now:** A one year delay at current funding levels would bump counties to funding nearly 38% of the system. Over time, if current fee remains in place, that number will jump to 46% in 2027. This means the potential for property tax increases to cover the increasing county share of 911 costs.