

Next Generation 9-1-1 Service Comes to Iowa

DES MOINES – Iowa is taking an important step toward improving the public's access to 9-1-1 through the use of leading-edge technology.

The Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division (HSEMD), which oversees the state's wireless Enhanced 911 (E-911) system, is in the initial stages of a project that will upgrade Iowa's wireless E-911 system to support the use of a Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG-911) emergency services IP-based system. The upgrade will allow citizens to use texting, video and picture messaging to access emergency care via 9-1-1.

"While the existing E-911 system has been a success story for more than 30 years, it has been stretched to its limit," said HSEMD Administrator Brig. Gen. Derek Hill. "Many Iowans are using new wireless and Internet-based communication devices that offer text, video, and picture messaging capabilities, but unfortunately the current E-911 system was never intended to be able to handle these technologies."

An NG-911 emergency services IP-based system will facilitate all the current functions and features of the current E-911 system, but will support the new technologies. While these forms of communications are not immediately available through the current service providers, NG-911 will have the system functionality to support texting, video, and picture messaging once it is developed by the carriers and made available to the Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) who process the 9-1-1 calls through the NG-911 system.

"Modern communications has created the need for a more advanced system to access emergency care," said HSEMD's Barbara Vos, Iowa's E-911 program manager. "This solution will equalize emergency services across Iowa by allowing its PSAPs to connect to the statewide emergency services IP Network in order to receive and process 9-1-1 calls from both legacy and new technologies."

HSEMD recently awarded a five-year contract to TeleCommunication Systems, Inc (TCS) to develop Iowa's NG-911 Emergency Services IP system and services. The \$2.7 million project is funded by a \$1.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration. The matching \$1.3 million will come from Iowa's wireless surcharge carryover funds. Grants were awarded to 30 states and territories.

Implementation of the NG-911 Emergency Services IP System is the first step in developing an interconnected system of local and regional emergency services networks for nationwide emergency services. The overall goal is to improve the ability of emergency services to share information among the various stakeholders in our communities.

"TCS is dedicated to creating NG-911 solutions that improve the capabilities and quality of emergency communications," said Chris Nabinger, senior vice president of safety and security

for TCS. “We will be working closely with the State of Iowa 911 Program to ensure two things: first, that we meet all of its requirements for protecting its citizens, and second, that the state’s PSAPs can receive a wide range of information promptly and accurately.”

For more information on Iowa’s E-911 program, visit www.iowahomelandsecurity.org/programs/E_911.html.

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