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# Texas 9-1-1 Newsletter

Commission on State Emergency Communications

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## State works to improve 9-1-1 service, new technology

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The majority of the state's emergency call centers now receive 9-1-1 calls from customers whose telephone service relies upon Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology. In a report released March 8th, the Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) provided a status of statewide efforts to provide 9-1-1 service to VoIP telephone subscribers. The CSEC VoIP Deployment Report is available at [www.911.state.tx.us](http://www.911.state.tx.us).

VoIP is the term broadly used to describe telephone services that transmit voice communications over a digital data network using internet protocol technology. Since VoIP telephony is increasingly being adopted by the public, it is critical that VoIP customers have access to emergency services through dialing 9-1-1.

In June 2005, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued an order requiring that companies providing interconnected VoIP telephone service also provide their customers with Enhanced 9-1-1, or "E9-1-1". E9-1-1 service means that a 9-1-1 call is routed to the correct answering point along with the caller's telephone number and location information, which greatly improves emergency response effectiveness. In Texas, E9-1-1 is almost universally available on traditional wireline and wireless phones.

Texas 9-1-1 entities formed a working group with industry to expedite deployment in response to the FCC's order. According to Paul Mallett, Executive Director of the CSEC, the purpose of the group was to document the impact of VoIP telephony on 9-1-1 in Texas and to explore potential solutions to identified problems. "Our agency continues to facilitate and monitor VoIP 9-1-1 deployment in Texas to ensure that VoIP customers have access to 9-1-1 and emergency services," stated Mallett.

Deployment activity to date has been successful. Texas 9-1-1 entities have deployed VoIP E911 service in the majority of the state's 544 public safety answering points. The Regional Planning Commissions report deployment at over 300 of the 348 answering points in the CSEC program area. Comptroller service fee collections reports reflect that some VoIP service providers have begun to remit 9-1-1 service fees into the account. Remittance of the service fee by VoIP service providers provides funding for the network operations and database functions that are required to provide 9-1-1 services and deliver telephone number and location information to an answering point.

### Mission Statement

*To preserve and enhance public safety and health through reliable access to emergency telecommunication services.*

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## Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness

Natural and man-made disasters, such as hurricanes, floods, tornados, wildfires, and terrorism, require maintaining regular communications between the CSEC and the Regional Planning Commissions to preserve public safety and health in Texas through reliable access to 9-1-1 service. The CSEC has taken the following actions to ensure that this critical communication link is maintained, especially during times of disaster.

✧ **Established Policies and Procedures –** Contingency communications procedures have been established to ensure that administrative communications related to supporting and/or assisting the Regional Planning Commissions during times of disaster or loss of normal communications.

✧ **Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS), and Wireless Priority Service (WPS) –** CSEC staff has obtained approval from the Federal Communications Commission for the use of these priority telephone services as a means of supporting on-going communications with the regions. These services prioritize public safety related calls over the public switch telephone network when high call volumes result from disaster conditions.

✧ **NIMS Training –** CSEC management has successfully completed the National Incident Management System (NIMS) IS-700 course offered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency Emergency Management Institute. This training ensures that all entities that could potentially be involved in responding to disasters “speak the same language” during incidents that may cross jurisdictional boundaries and involve multiple agencies.

✧ **Contingency Planning –** A Continuity of Operations plan is in place to ensure that CSEC staff has access to the necessary resources and information to continue the operations of the agency during times of disaster. Review of the agency’s plan is on-going and was partially tested during the ice storm earlier this year that prevented CSEC’s employees from coming in to work.

✧ **Pre-positioning of Resources -** Five satellite phones were procured by CSEC at the start of last year’s hurricane season and then subsequently issued to the Regional Planning Commissions along the Texas

Gulf Coast: Monthly test calls have been conducted throughout the year. The Commission has also provided funding for emergency power equipment for 9-1-1 answering centers in hurricane-prone areas.

With these preparations in place, and with the arrival of the 2007 hurricane season, CSEC is ready to respond and will monitor conditions closely to maintain the availability of 9-1-1 services in Texas.

## 9-1-1 APPRECIATION DAY

Plans are well underway for the 19th annual 9-1-1 Appreciation Day which will be taking place in conjunction with the Texas - National Emergency Number Association (NENA) Conference in San Antonio.

The CSEC will honor the achievements and contributions of 9-1-1 calltakers, who are the backbone of Texas' successful 9-1-1 program. Honorees were selected from nominations submitted by Texas Public Safety Answering Points. Awards will be presented in the following categories:

- ✧ Silent Hero Certificate of Recognition
- ✧ Team 9-1-1 Award of Merit
- ✧ Telecommunicator of the Year

Make your plans to attend the conference and awards celebration by going online and registering at: [www.texasnena.org/conference](http://www.texasnena.org/conference)





## NEXT GENERATION PARTNERS

On May 8 and 9, the CSEC was pleased to host a meeting of the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) Next Generation Partner Program. The purpose of the Program is to develop, coordinate, and integrate the foundation for an evolved, fully-functional, "Next Generation E9-1-1" system that will meet the needs of our communities for years to come. Participants from both the public and private sectors participated in discussion about how to facilitate implementation of universal Next Generation E9-1-1 technology. Brian Kelly, the Director of Telecommunications for the Texas Department of Information Resources, also a CSEC Commissioner, made a presentation on the state's new Internet Protocol (IP) network and its potential integration into Next Generation E9-1-1 in Texas. The NENA Next Generation Partner program is one of several programs focused on emergency communication systems of the future in which the CSEC actively participates.

## Poison Control Network Completes Equipment Replacement

In June 2006, the CSEC partnered with the Department of Information Resources (DIR) to transition the Texas Poison Control Network (TPCN) to DIR's Internet Services Gateway (ISG) Network. The ISG platform is a new technology for the Poison network which allows for the transmission of voice and data over the same network without having to invest in costly equipment at each facility. The new network enhances the poison system through automated functions that provide improved reliability and public access to poison control services.

The TPCN is made up of six regional poison control centers located in Amarillo, Dallas, El Paso, Galveston, San Antonio and Temple. Poison control services are available to all Texans through the national Poison control number: 1-800-222-1222. Calls to this number are routed to the nearest Texas regional poison control center, or the first available agent in the statewide system.

Calls are answered and handled by highly trained call takers, also known as Specialists in Poison Information (SPIs). SPIs are registered nurses or pharmacists specializing in toxicology. Callers receive poison control services and, if needed, are directed to the nearest emergency health care facility for treatment. Each poison center has direct connections to 9-1-1 and emergency response services as well.

### Summer Poison Tips

*Summer months historically see increases in calls to the TPCN. Kids are out of school and people spend more time outdoors. Even insects and reptiles are more active in the summer months. Carolyn Insall, Public Education Specialist of the Central Texas Poison Center offers these tips to avoid some of the most common summertime poison exposures.*

- ✦ *Make sure the kids are out of the swimming pool before adding the chlorine or acid.*
- ✦ *Spray insect repellent on exposed skin and clothing, avoiding the eyes and skin under clothing.*
- ✦ *When enjoying nature, wear boots with pants tucked inside and try to avoid habitats of scorpions, spiders, ticks, and venomous snakes.*

*If you think you have been exposed to a poison or toxic substance, call Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222. The call is free - peace of mind is priceless.*







Texas 9-1-1 Newsletter is an external publication of the Commission on State Emergency Communications. We want to hear from you. E-mail your questions and comments to the newsletter editor at: [info@csec.state.tx.us](mailto:info@csec.state.tx.us).

## CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

TX- NENA Conference	August 27-28
Telecommunicator Awards Luncheon	August 29
Commission Meeting	September 20
Public Education Fall Order Period begins	October 1
Commission Meeting	November 15

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