

Connections

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333 Guadalupe St.,
Suite 2-212,
Austin, Texas 78701

Telephone: 512.305.6911

Email: csecinfo@csec.texas.gov

Web: csec.texas.gov

 [facebook.com/TXCSEC](https://www.facebook.com/TXCSEC)

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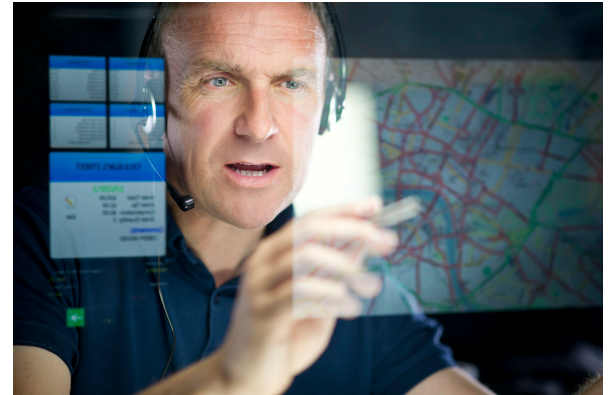
Transforming to a Next Generation 9-1-1 Environment

As the new fiscal year begins the Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) continues transformation

activities supporting the Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) as they transition from the legacy E9-1-1 system to a Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) system. These activities include revising the governance handbook, establishing a cooperative purchase agreement through the existing TEX-AN contract with DIR for the AT&T NextGen Service Offering (NSO), and lining up beta RPCs to lead the way for other RPCs to transform and transition to NG9-1-1.

At the July CSEC Commission meeting, the governance model in the CSEC 9-1-1 Program Governance Handbook was revised to replace the former CSEC State-Level Digital 9-1-1 Network (State-Level ESInet) Governance Handbook to incorporate the Commission's new vision for implementing NG9-1-1 for the CSEC Program. The Commission's former approach was to implement an owner-operated model utilizing a multi-sourcing systems integrator approach, and the new approach has changed to a vendor provided NG9-1-1 managed services.

The Governance handbook helps support the Commission's efforts to ensure all parts of the state are covered by 9-1-1 service and to preserve and enhance public safety and health in Texas through reliable access to emergency communications services. It helps establish a governance framework that guides the development of new policies and rules through collaborations with the Texas Association of Regional Councils (TARC), RPC representatives and Commission staff.



Not only does the approved CSEC Governance Handbook help integrate governance, but it also establishes the role of the 9-1-1 Strategic Alignment Committee (SAC), as an advisory steering committee that focuses on policy development and implementation, and the Emergency Communications Advisory Committee (ECAC), which focuses on the development, implementation and management of an interconnected, state-level emergency services ESInet.

"The Governance Handbook ensures all 9-1-1 Entities have an opportunity to work together as they transition to NG9-1-1 systems and it will assist CSEC by having different committees work together to create standards and business processes with an end goal of interoperability and interconnectivity," Deputy for Project Management Office Monica Watt said. "With the governance handbook updated and complete, the next steps are for CSEC to implement the revised governance model and establish new committees and begin the implementation of NG9-1-1."

CSEC has finalized the NSO ESInet managed services offering from AT&T through a Department of Information Resources (DIR) contract. This contract will provide services to RPCs in transitioning from the existing legacy infrastructure to the NextGen environment. Those RPCs participating in the NSO will contract directly with the DIR for the NSO and will have local control over the implementation of these services within their respective regions.



"I really enjoy visiting the staff in these rural communities and getting to know them."

– Sharon Rose

*Texas Tech Next Gen
Pilot Project Manager*

CSEC's Telemedicine Project Provides Needed Services to Rural Areas

Over the past biennium, CSEC has worked with Texas Tech University Health and Science Center

(TTUHSC) to establish a pilot project implementing, promoting, and assessing telemedicine utilization amongst emergency medical services (EMS) providers as well as area trauma centers. The pilot project takes place in West Texas and the main objective is to demonstrate that telemedicine technology can and will work in the EMS environments and maintain connectivity with trauma centers in the same regions.

"As project manager, I educate rural communities on how the project benefits their patients and I implement and train EMS providers and staff as well as make sure their equipment is being utilized," Texas Tech Next Gen Pilot Project Manager Sharon Rose said. "I really enjoy visiting the staff in these rural communities and getting to know them."

This project can potentially improve patient care by bringing injured patient and physician together quicker and providing physicians the ability to observe the injuries for a better and more effective treatment plan. By utilizing telemedicine, the EMS providers with the patient in a rural area can contact an Emergency Department via a teleconferencing video and see and talk to the Emergency Department to configure the best treatment plan. Since the project has been in place, it has already had several success stories.

One such success story included a motor vehicle accident call that went out to Andrews County EMS. When EMS arrived at the scene, a young female had multiple injuries and was losing blood. In order to transport her to Odessa Medical Center, they needed to replace her lost blood, so they contacted Permian Regional Medical Center via telemedicine technology. The Emergency Department physician ordered blood upon observing the patient and her vital signs via videoconferencing, so the EMS crew was able to swing by and pick up blood in order to make the trip to Odessa.

Another successful story from this telemedicine project was a cardiac call right after the project first started. Bailey County EMS responded to a "chest pain" call. EKGs performed showed the patient was having a significant heart attack. The local hospital was not equipped for these types of emergencies. It is usually protocol to then airlift the patient to Lubbock, but the patient was resistant and wanted to stay local. With the guidance of the Emergency Department in Muleshoe, they were able to convince the patient by speaking "face to face" and letting them know this was what was best for their medical situation. The patient agreed and was airlifted to Lubbock. Thank goodness, because once he got there, he went into full cardiac arrest but since he was where he needed to be to get help, they were able to save him.

It is calls like these that make telemedicine so important. Through this project, TTUHSC has been able to assist EMS departments with telemedicine calls and make sure patients in the area get the care they need. If the pilot project continues to be successful, and funding is available, this particular application of telemedicine could become something more rural Texas residents could depend upon going forward. The telemedicine project has been funded through December 31, 2020, when CSEC and TTUHSC are to submit a report on the pilot project to the Governor, Lt. Governor, and the Speaker of the House. For more information, please visit www.csec.texas.gov.



Transformation to NG9-1-1 Environment continued...

Each of the RPCs can now start working toward transforming their agencies to be NG9-1-1 compliant with a completion date of 2023. One of the most exciting parts of the NSO is that it is a nationwide offering with infrastructure and Next Generation Core Services (NGCS) that is currently being utilized in other states and regions in the U.S. This also means that the RPCs are not the only 9-1-1 regions who can be a part of this offering. Any 9-1-1 entity in Texas can join the DIR contract for transitioning to NG9-1-1.

"I am excited about the opportunity we have with the nationwide AT&T ESInet managed service offering", said Kelli Merriweather, CSEC Executive Director. "It is a critical step towards the reality of NG9-1-1 for our program and the 17 RPCs choosing this option. It will definitely help us make great strides to implement NG9-1-1 in Texas."

"I know CSEC has invested a great deal of time and resources finding the service offering that will allow the RPCs to smoothly migrate to NG9-1-1." – Van Bush, DETCOG

In addition, the ECAC will be working closely on interoperability with CSEC and the RPCs that are implementing NG9-1-1 using either of the available options, as well as with other ESInets platforms and services that are being implemented by the Emergency Communications Districts in the state.

CSEC recently lined up three of the RPCs throughout the state to have them participate as betas to the NG9-1-1 project, meaning they will be the first RPCs on the DIR AT&T contract who will get started on transitioning. The RPCs starting the transition to NG9-1-1 first include Deep East Texas Council of Governments (DETCOG), Rio Grande Council of Governments (RGCOG), and Nortex Regional Planning Commission (NRPC). As these RPCs embark on transforming to the new 9-1-1 platform, it will be exciting to see the process including the successes and opportunities that come with moving 9-1-1 into the NextGen environment.

"I know CSEC has invested a great deal of time and resources finding the service offering that will allow the RPCs to smoothly migrate to NG9-1-1," DETCOG 9-1-1 Director Van Bush said. "We have told our region's call takers that our goal is to complete the transition without the call takers noticing any changes."

The beta RPCs have already started the process by reviewing the Readiness Checklist and the next steps they will take. Each of these RPCs also have scheduled onboarding meetings on-site with AT&T and CSEC staff and some have already completed this part of the process. CSEC staff, with the help of the support services vendor North Highland, will work closely with each of these RPCs

as they coordinate planning, support the timely identification and resolution of issues to mitigate risk and act as any support that the RPCs might need during this transition.

"The initial kickoff meetings with CSEC and AT&T went very well. I am confident with the support of CSEC staff and AT&T that the process will be carefully planned and implemented," Bush stated. "Once completed, we all look forward to improved call-routing and other enhancements made possible by NG9-1-1."



The logo features the text "Kari's Law" in a blue serif font, with "No 9 Needed" in a larger blue sans-serif font below it. A large, bold red number "9" is positioned to the right of the word "No", partially overlapping it.

Ensuring Compliance with Kari's Law in Your Region

Since 2015, Kari's Law has been in effect in the state of Texas requiring direct access to 9-1-1. CSEC recently provided outreach efforts on Kari's Law to Education Service Centers (ESCs) who provide services to school districts throughout the state as well as other local and state conferences. Through these efforts, CSEC realized there is still a lot of educating to do about this important law so we can ensure all businesses with Multi Line Telephone Systems, or "MLTS", phones in Texas are compliant.

Additionally, a federal Kari's Law will go into effect on February of 2020 that will require any new MLTS phones to automatically be programmed to direct dial 9-1-1. Having a state law to adhere to makes it incredibly important for Texas 9-1-1 entities to help educate communities about this very important law. With a federal law on the horizon, proactive outreach and education is even more important. Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) can help ensure all owners and operators of MLTS phones in each region comply and are aware of the laws. For example, RPCs can send mailouts such as brochures or postcards to businesses. Another example would be to provide sessions at safety related conferences and events.

How does Kari's Law work?

Kari's Law was put into place so that all schools, businesses, and other locations, with MLTS phones ensure that any person utilizing their MLTS phone for help can direct dial 9-1-1 without having to dial an additional digit such as 9 to get an outside line. *If the MLTS phone(s), also known as a PBX, does not allow for direct access to 9-1-1, then the MLTS operator should be contacted to reconfigure the device(s).*

Ensuring Compliance with Kari's Law in Your Region continued...

CSEC recently sat down with Hank Hunt, whose daughter Kari Hunt was the ultimate driving force behind Kari's Law, to see what efforts he has seen nationwide in respect to the law that bears his daughter's name.

Since your grassroots campaign that started this all, we have seen some major milestones occur. How does that make you feel as not only Kari's dad, but also as a pioneer of helping assist passing bills in both Texas, and in other states including federally?

When I started this campaign, I had one goal in mind. I wanted my granddaughter to stand by the President of the United States and see him sign their name to legislation bearing her mother's name. I saw it happening, swore to not give up until it did and the day it happened was surreal to say the least. I had mixed emotions as I do today but never would we have succeeded without a tremendous support system holding us up.

"I am traveling to bring awareness by telling the story and teaching classes on communication and how to avoid the communication failures that occurred that day."

– Hank Hunt, Kari's Law

What do you continue to do to help spread the word about this law?

I am traveling to bring awareness by telling the story and teaching classes on communication and how to avoid the communication failures that occurred that day. It's a compelling story and when people hear it they understand why I was so adamant about fixing the problem.

If you were talking to 911 coordinators and educators, what would be some of the most important things you would want them to know when it comes to Kari's Law and why it is so important that they continue pushing compliance in their regions every year?

9-1-1 telecommunicators are there every day waiting to help. If you are in need they WANT to help, but if the public that so depends on them for that help can never reach them, then more needless deaths such as Kari's will occur. 9-1-1 was developed for a reason. A simple three digit number in time of need. Somehow over the years it has become perverted with prefix, postfix or trunk access numbers needing to be dialed before 9-1-1. That's now interfering with a 9-1-1 call. Help me fix it.



Pictured Above: An example of an MLTS phone.

Even after all the milestones you have made and continue to make, are there any other wishes or hopes that you would like to see come to fruition in the future?

We are interested in location services, which are being tackled with new technologies, but I also see funding problems with the 9-1-1 system due to diversion of taxes collected in some locations and states across the country. Those funds are collected for a reason and should be spent on improving our 9-1-1 infrastructure. We also want to ensure that children are taught that 9-1-1 is there but also, we need to ensure that when a child dials 9-1-1 as they were taught, they are answered.

For more information on Kari's Law and how you can ensure compliance visit www.texas911.org/karislaw or to see the CSEC toolkit which includes letters to media and MLTS operators, a logo and a press release, please visit www.csec.texas.gov under the 9-1-1 tab.

CSEC Transitions to Next Generation 9-1-1

CSEC is creating a Next Generation agency to support local technology and analyze ways of doing business. CSEC recently reorganized the organizational profile in support of NG9-1-1 and to carry out the agency's mission to "preserve and enhance public safety and health in Texas through reliable access to emergency communications services".

To view the new organizational chart for the agency, click on CSEC Organizational Chart. CSEC will continue to support the technological changes that NG9-1-1 brings to the emergency communications as well as supporting the Commission and its stakeholders.