

Texas 9-1-1 Newsletter

Commission on State Emergency Communications

Volume 1, Issue 1, Spring 2004



Mission Statement

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

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TEXAS BEATS NATIONAL PERCENTAGE OF PSAPS WITH WIRELESS "PHASE I" 9-1-1

One hundred percent of counties in the statewide 9-1-1 program can receive wireless Phase I 9-1-1 service. According to the National Emergency Number Association's (NENA) preliminary assessment of the most recent FCC quarterly filings, only 65 percent of Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) nationwide have deployed Phase I wireless 9-1-1 (www.nena9-1-1.org April 14, 2004). Texas is the first state to undertake a centrally controlled statewide wireless deployment.

Wireless calls to 9-1-1 differ from calls made from a traditional "wire-line" phone. When a person calls 9-1-1 from their home phone, the 9-1-1 PSAP receives the address and phone number of the caller. Without this location and callback information, critical response time is lost. Since wireless phones are not associated with a specific location such as a house or an office, the FCC has created specific requirements for the delivery of location information with 9-1-1 calls. Phase I wireless service provides the PSAP with the location of the cell tower that transmitted the 9-1-1 call, along with the caller's number. Phase II service provides more location information by delivering the latitude and longitude (X, Y) coordinates of the caller along with the Phase I information to the PSAP.

Without this location and callback information, critical response time is lost.

In order to provide the highest level of public safety communications for the citizens, the Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) has aggressively pursued Phase I deployments for all carriers to all PSAPs. Approximately 1,400 deployments have been performed to date.

"When CSEC placed initial Phase I requests for service with the Texas wireless carriers, no one really knew how much work would be involved," stated Kelli Merriweather, CSEC Director of Program Services. "Due to new [wireless cell] towers being built, and carriers expanding their service areas, the project will be ongoing. CSEC is very pleased with the level of the current deployments."

With the accomplishment of statewide deployment of Phase I, CSEC is now ready to achieve the next milestone of wireless 9-1-1: Phase II. Testing of Phase II begins in three regional planning commissions this year. Find out more about the CSEC Phase II implementation plan by visiting: www.csec.state.tx.us/browse.php/wireless_reports.

Just The Facts

- ◆ 4.7 million 9-1-1 calls were made by Texans within the CSEC program area in 2003.
- ◆ 37% of these calls were made using wireless phones.
- ◆ 4.2 million 9-1-1 address records are maintained and updated in the CSEC database so that the callers' address information is delivered with the 9-1-1 call.

9-1-1 Lingo

At times it may seem that a friendly discussion about 9-1-1 is more like a formal exchange of acronyms. This glossary primer will help keep you updated.

ANI (Automatic Number Identification)

The 9-1-1 caller's telephone number that appears on the call-taker's screen, like caller ID.

ALI (Automatic Location Identification)

The 9-1-1 caller's address that appears on the call-taker's screen.

PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point)

A location which answers 9-1-1 calls.

TELECOMMUNICATOR

A person who is trained or employed in public safety telecommunications. The term is interchangeable with 9-1-1 operator, call takers, dispatchers, radio operators or any combination of such functions in a PSAP.

WIRELESS PHASE I

The delivery of a wireless 9-1-1 call with call-back number and identification of the cell sector from which the call originated.

WIRELESS PHASE II

A call delivered with Phase I requirements plus the location of the caller within feet.

VoIP

Voice Over Internet Protocol is the technology used to deliver voice conversations over the Internet or private intranet. 9-1-1 calls placed using VoIP technology presently are not fully compatible with the 9-1-1 network.

9-1-1 Telecommunicator Excellence

Since 1989, CSEC has formally recognized over 160 9-1-1 call-takers who have handled 9-1-1 emergency situations with exceptional skill. These telecommunicators reassure the frightened caller, take command of the conversation to obtain vital information quickly, and respond with resourcefulness as special circumstances may dictate.

A past winner of the 9-1-1 Telecommunicator of the Year award was recognized for using exceptional skill to overcome one of the major challenges that occurs when emergency calls are placed from wireless phones: lack of sufficient location information.

In the early hours of September 8, 2002, the call came from a frightened woman, "I am in a van somewhere in Lubbock," she whispered. The caller had been abducted, and was in a moving vehicle. Over the next 13 minutes, the call-taker worked with the caller to identify landmarks in an effort to establish the caller's location. Finally, the name of a furniture store helped the call-taker to dispatch officers to the correct area, and the caller was rescued.

In 2003, CSEC awarded ten Telecommunicator of the Year awards; one Team Award of Merit; and 65 Silent Heroes. Nominations for the 2004 awards are being accepted from all Texas PSAPs through June 2nd; forms are available from the CSEC website at: www.911.state.tx.us.

The 2004 9-1-1 telecommunicator award recipients will be recognized by CSEC at a special luncheon in their honor at the Texas Emergency Number Association conference this fall. CSEC is proud to continue its 16-year-old tradition of recognizing outstanding Texas 9-1-1 public servants at this event.

Emergency Communications Primer

In Texas, 9-1-1 services are provided by a mix of 9-1-1 Home Rule Municipalities, single purpose Emergency Communication Districts and the state program administered by the Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) and operated by the 24 Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs). Of the 254 counties in Texas, 225 belong to the CSEC/RPC program.

Funding for 9-1-1 services within the CSEC/RPC program is appropriated by the Texas Legislature from two dedicated revenue sources identified on your monthly telephone bill: the 9-1-1 Service Fee (\$0.50) and the Equalization Surcharge (.006 of intrastate long distance charges).

The funds appropriated by the Texas legislature are allocated to the RPCs according to the statutory formula based on population. The RPCs develop regional budget plans to expend the 9-1-1 funds for the database where the callers' phone and location information are stored, the 9-1-1 telecommunications network that delivers the 9-1-1 call over dedicated lines to the answering center, and administrative costs.

Poison Control Program is Awarded National Grant

In August 2003, the Texas Poison Control Network (TPCN), a collaborative effort between the CSEC, the Texas Department of Health (TDH), and the six Poison Control Answering Points (PCAPs), was awarded a federal grant in the amount of \$150,000 per year for two fiscal years. The grant enables the six PCAPs to communicate vital medical information with each other quickly via a centralized database transmitted over a wide-area network (WAN).

The grant award and implementation of the centralized database will enable the Poison Control program to meet the following objectives:

- 1) Improve the efficient handling of emergency calls to poison control;
- 2) Achieve the American Association of Poison Control Centers' (AAPCC) system certification standards;
- 3) Collaborate with the Centers for Disease Control and the AAPCC for data communication with poison centers nationwide; and
- 4) Comply with a legislative appropriations rider instructing the Poison Control program to seek grant funds.

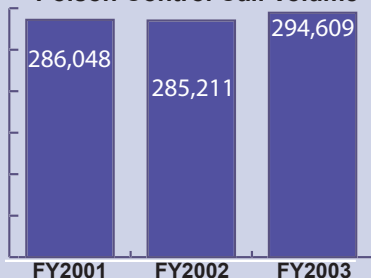
A project team with representatives from CSEC, TDH, and the PCAPs has worked to develop the centralized database. Redundancy is built into the system by allowing the six centers to maintain their independent local databases while participating in the shared central database. A successful pilot rollout took place during the second week of March 2004.

Poison Lingo

PCAP (Poison Control Answering Point) - The answering location for handling poison control calls. Also called the poison control center.

SPI (Specialist in Poison Information) - A person who answers and processes calls at a poison control center. Usually a nurse or a pharmacist by profession.

Poison Control Call Volume



Poison Prevention

By dialing 1-800-222-1222, the citizens of Texas have access to a network of nurses, pharmacists, paramedics, and physicians who have extensive education, training, and expertise in the field of toxicology.

9-1-1 and Poison Control Handle Flood of Calls After Shuttle Columbia Disaster

Following the break-up of the space shuttle Columbia upon re-entry on February 1, 2003, 9-1-1 call centers in the east Texas area started receiving an almost overwhelming number of calls reporting the explosion. In the Deep East Texas Council of Governments (DETCOG) region, the Nacogdoches Police Department answered over 400 9-1-1 calls that day. As many as 1,000 9-1-1 calls are estimated to have been handled by Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in the DETCOG region that day. The East Texas Council of Governments and other surrounding regions also received an increased number of calls surrounding the Columbia disaster.

Shortly after the shuttle break-up, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) advised the public that the shuttle's propellants were a potential health risk and contact with the debris should be avoided. Within minutes, Texas Poison Control Answering Points (PCAPs) began receiving requests from hospitals wanting guidance in anticipation of patients. PCAP personnel quickly contacted NASA officials for identification of the potentially toxic substances, and proceeded to advise the hospitals and callers appropriately and effectively regarding contact with shuttle debris.

Both the 9-1-1 and Poison Control call-taking personnel demonstrated responsiveness and resourcefulness in meeting the increased demand for services due to the public reaction to the space shuttle Columbia disaster. They stepped up to meet the needs of concerned citizens and the responding health and safety officials in the aftermath of a national tragedy.

Find out more about Poison Control in Texas by visiting:
www.poisoncontrol.org



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.

CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

COG Strategic Plans Due to CSEC	May 17
TDD/TTY Training - ETCOG	May 19
TDD/TTY Training - BVCOG	May 24 - 25
Telecommunicator Nominations Due	June 2
Agency Strategic Plan Due	June 18
TENA/CSEC Conference & Awards	August 30 - Sept. 1
Agency Appropriations Request Due	August



The Nomination Deadline for Telecommunicator awards is coming up on June 2, 2004. You may e-mail your nominations to: robert.gonzalez@csec.state.tx.us.

This marks the 16th year that the CSEC hosts the annual event. Every PSAP in Texas is encouraged to participate. Visit our website for details on the upcoming event to be held in Austin on September 1, 2004.



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