

Texas 9-1-1 Newsletter

Commission on State Emergency Communications

Volume 3, Issue 1, Fall 2005



Mission Statement

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

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Congratulations Telecommunicators

On August 31, 2005, telecommunicators from throughout Texas were honored by the Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) at the 17th annual Public Safety Telecommunicator Awards celebration, held in Corpus Christi, in conjunction with the annual conference of the Texas chapter of the National Emergency Number Association.

Each year the CSEC invites all Texas 9-1-1 public safety answering points (PSAPs) to submit nominations for the awards, granted for exemplary handling of a 9-1-1 call. For the 17th anniversary of the awards, the following eight persons were presented with the highest honor, Telecommunicator of the Year:

- ★ Christina Longoria, Houston, handled a call from a man whose spouse had a miscarriage.
- ★ Mikki Martinez, Brady, handled a call from a store clerk who received life threatening phone calls.
- ★ Deven Myers, Tyler, handled a call from a child whose grandmother was not breathing.
- ★ Elaine Pacheco, Jourdanton, handled a call from a person reporting a man who had shot family members.
- ★ Lydia Prieto, Irving, handled a call regarding a suicidal father planning to hurt his son.
- ★ Jim Simpson, Belton, handled a cellular call from a man who had been stabbed 19 times.
- ★ Elivra Smith, Dallas, handled a call from an elderly woman attempting to call for help.
- ★ Valerie Stewart, Kountze, handled a cellular call from a lost pilot whose plane had electrical failure.

The Team Award of Merit was awarded to 18 telecommunicators as a result of their coordinated efforts in handling 9-1-1 communications during a bank robbery. The recipients were:

- ★ *Richardson Police Department* - Stephanie Barbee, Kim Brown, Sherry Buford, Sherry Holley, Kathy Rhea, Jackie Stuckey, and Michelle Thompson.
- ★ *City of Plano 9-1-1* - Alicia Armstrong, Kelli Clouse, Gretchen Dunlap, Rob Johnson, Chris Karhu, Sheryl Kieffer, Jason Neubauer, Jill Orr, Sheila Rice, James Robison, and Joe Tomlinson.

Silent Hero Awards were presented to over 70 telecommunicators for performance above and beyond the call of duty. "Texans in need routinely rely on the expertise of telecommunicators, underscoring the foundation of excellence that you have established," stated Governor Rick Perry in a letter to the honorees. For more information, and to view photos of all the telecommunicators recognized, visit the CSEC website at www.911.state.tx.us/browse.php/appreciation_day.

PSAPS REROUTE 9-1-1 CALLS DURING HURRICANE

On September 22, 2005, the Texas gulf coast went on alert as Hurricane Rita stormed the Gulf of Mexico. As a result of her impending landfall, several regional planning commission (RPC) offices and public safety answering points (PSAP) closed temporarily. In the early morning hours of September 24, 2005, Hurricane Rita left her impact on the Texas/Louisiana state line. The South East Texas Regional Planning Commission, Deep East Texas Council of Governments, and Houston-Galveston Area Council were hardest hit.

As a result of high winds, telephone and power lines were downed, and local agencies depended on generators to operate the PSAP equipment. 9-1-1 service continued uninterrupted despite the extreme heat and lack of air conditioning. Contingency routing plans operated as planned and all responding agencies cooperated to cover the high volume of 9-1-1 calls.

The Orange County Sheriff's Office was the only PSAP in the CSEC 9-1-1 program relocated to a temporary site. It is again a full-functioning PSAP with a remodeled dispatch center.

CSEC extends a heartfelt "Well Done" to all of the dedicated 9-1-1 professionals who endured the disruption of Hurricane Rita to insure citizens' calls for help were answered.

FY 2005 Key Performance Measures

The CSEC met or exceeded all of its key performance measure targets in Fiscal Year 2005.

- ✧ Total Number of Poison Control Calls Processed by the Texas Poison Control Network: Target exceeded by 35.26% with 345,187 calls processed.
- ✧ Number of 9-1-1 Calls Received by State Program Public Safety Answering Points: Target exceeded by 8.02% with 5,460,331 9-1-1 calls.
- ✧ Number of Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) with Wireless Automatic Number Identification: Target met with all program PSAPs capable of receiving Wireless Phase I 9-1-1 service.
- ✧ Percentage of Time the Wireline Automatic Location Identification System was Operational: system was operational 100% of the time.
- ✧ Percentage of Time the Texas Poison Control Network was Operational: system was operational 99.99% of the time.

9-1-1 Lingo

VoIP - Voice Over Internet Protocol

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.

VSP - VoIP Service Provider

The company that provides VoIP service to an end user. The VSP contracts with a VPC (for positioning information) who in turn connects to an emergency service gateway for hand off of the call to the telephone company selective router, routing the 9-1-1 call to the correct PSAP.

VPC - VoIP Positioning Center

VoIP Positioning Center provides positioning information to support the routing of VoIP emergency calls and cooperates in delivering location information to the PSAP over the existing 9-1-1 lines.

REGIONAL 9-1-1 PRIMER

In Texas, 9-1-1 services are provided by a mix of 9-1-1 home rule municipalities, emergency communication districts, and the CSEC program, which is administered by the 24 regional planning commissions (RPCs). The enabling legislation of the agency is Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 771, which provides strategic planning requirements and funding sources from the 9-1-1 service fee and equalization surcharge assessed on every phone bill in Texas. CSEC's legislative responsibility is to oversee, fund, and monitor the program to assure that the network, equipment, and database will efficiently and reliably deliver 9-1-1 calls around the clock.

According to Legislation, the CSEC develops minimum performance standards for 9-1-1 equipment and operation. Established policies and procedures, enable the CSEC program to monitor each RPC for compliance with applicable law, rules, policies, and procedures. The contract between CSEC and the RPCs in turn explains the responsibility of each RPC to execute local agreements with its local agencies participating in the 9-1-1 plan and to monitor their performance.

Compliance assessments and monitoring activities are conducted to determine compliance with CSEC rules, policies, and effectiveness in administering 9-1-1 services. The evaluation of compliance assessments identifies existing risks and degree of exposure these risks pose on the operation of the 9-1-1 program. All the information obtained by these activities provides CSEC and the RPCs with the data necessary to best assist in strengthening the 9-1-1 system in Texas.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN LAUNCHED BY POISON CONTROL

This past September, the Texas Poison Control Network (TPCN) activated their Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) for emergency closure as Hurricane Rita potentially threatened the Galveston area. The Southeast Texas Poison Center (SETPC) in unison with its host institution, the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, successfully launched all emergency closure plans as expected.

The TPCN is comprised of six regional poison centers located in Amarillo, Dallas, El Paso, Galveston, San Antonio, and Temple. When the Galveston center implemented emergency closure procedures, workstations and phones went off-line and all calls were automatically routed to the West Texas Regional Poison Center in El Paso (WTRPC). This permitted callers from the SETPC region to continue receiving the same level of service as all other Texans utilizing the poison control network services. Call handling data shows that the El Paso center handled nearly 100 percent of the calls that originated from the SETPC region during the time of evacuation and emergency operations.

The EOP launched by the TPCN, allowed it to meet its goal of providing accessibility, with quality of service, for all callers and health care facilities requiring poison control services. All functions were carried out as planned:

- * Calls overflowed as designed and without degradation of service,
- * TPCN staffing levels adjusted as appropriate to handle calls,
- * Percentage of completed calls did not change,
- * Centralized database provided ability to identify Hurricane Rita calls for follow-up,
- * Access to regional emergency and health care services for consultations was maintained.

Fortunately, the TPCN did not have personnel suffer injuries nor experience damage to any buildings or equipment during Hurricane Rita. The SETPC came back on line to resume full service on September 27th. The CSEC would like to express its appreciation to the WTRPC for managing the calls from the SETPC region during the emergency.



Poison Emergency?
1-800-222-1222

VoIP 9-1-1 Update

VoIP, or Voice over Internet Protocol, is a fast emerging technology that is changing the way phone service is provided to consumers today. And, it is certainly having its impact on 9-1-1.

Currently, not all VoIP Service Providers (VSPs) can deliver calls to 9-1-1 on the dedicated 9-1-1 network – they are sent to emergency 10-digit numbers at public safety answering points (PSAPs), such as police departments and sheriff's offices. This is a concern to emergency responders because, unlike traditional enhanced 9-1-1, VoIP calls to 10-digit administrative lines do not provide a call back telephone number or address that can be used to respond to the 9-1-1 caller.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has taken action to ensure that VoIP telephone companies begin to offer enhanced 9-1-1 service to their customers now. The FCC established a November 28, 2005, deadline with which all VoIP service providers must comply. The CSEC and other 9-1-1 administrative entities in Texas, such as Emergency Communications Districts and 9-1-1 Home Rule Municipalities, have been proactively working with VoIP providers to implement this crucial level of service. Implementation is well on its way, and Texans should have VoIP 9-1-1 in the very near future.

The United States Senate Commerce Committee has also taken action on VoIP 9-1-1 by approving S 1063, "IP Enabled Voice Communications and Public Safety Act of 2005." This legislation has many key provisions that support 9-1-1 service for VoIP customers, and calls for a National 9-1-1 Implementation and Coordination Office to provide a plan to Congress on the migration towards a "next generation" IP-enabled 9-1-1 system. Final approval of the Senate and House companion bill remain pending.



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

Commission Meeting (Held at Real Estate Commission offices)	January 19
TTY/ADA Update Training Class	February 6
TTY Train the Trainer Class	February 7- 8
Commission Meeting	March 16
Commission Meeting	May 18
Telecommunicator Awards Luncheon	August 29

CSEC

EMPLOYEE

LONGEVITY

RECOGNITION

At the November 10, 2005, meeting, the Commission on State Emergency Communications continued its tradition of awarding employees for 5, 10 and 15 years of service to the agency. The following were recognized for their loyal service to the Commission, which became fully operational on September 1, 1988.

5 years: Avis Shaw, Kerry Coward, Rob Huggins, and Lucila Rodriguez

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