

Texas 9-1-1 Newsletter

Commission on State Emergency Communications

Fall 2008



Mission Statement

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

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Hurricane Planning and Preparation Pays Off

Hurricane Ike made landfall in Galveston on September 13, 2008, at 2:10 a.m. as a category 2 with sustained winds of 110 mph, and directly impacted the areas surrounding Galveston Bay. Despite widespread destruction and disruption of lives and critical infrastructure such as power, water, and telecommunications, 9-1-1 and Poison Control telecommunications systems remained available throughout the disaster and provided much needed access to emergency services. The strength and success of the 9-1-1 system during Hurricane Ike is the result of planning and preparations.

Ike had a significant impact, but preparations insured that calls were delivered to emergency call centers. Six regional 9-1-1 programs and 13 counties were directly impacted by the loss of commercial power, storm damage, and evacuations. Emergency power generators provided the ability for emergency call centers to remain open and allowed call takers to continue to answer calls. Loss of commercial power and recurrent power surges also caused the outage of one 9-1-1 database server. The system is designed with redundant, geographically diverse servers which insured critical location information was available at all times. In cases of evacuations and closures, 9-1-1 and Poison Control calls were rerouted and answered at pre-determined alternate call centers.

The Poison Control Center at University of Texas Medical Branch - Galveston was forced to close but the Texas Poison Control Network functioned exceptionally well because it utilizes a digital, internet-protocol network that allows calls originating in one geographic region, such as Galveston, to be automatically routed and answered at any one of the other five centers in Texas. The network also benefited from remote agent workstations that allowed call takers to log in to the network and work from home. The remote agent capability enhanced the ability of all other poison centers to distribute and absorb increases in call volume across the network.

The CSEC and Regional Planning Commissions proactively prepare for contingencies in order to mitigate potential risks to 9-1-1 service before a disaster occurs. Preparations that were instrumental in making sure 9-1-1 continued to operate during the recent hurricane included contingency routing and network testing plans, purchase of generators in hurricane prone areas, contingency communications procedures, satellite phones, and maintenance of a 24 x 7 contact list for key regional personnel. An Emergency Medical Dispatch pilot project that was started in September 2008 also provided support to two call centers in the impacted region.

The CSEC will continue to enhance and improve disaster planning and preparations because hurricane season comes every year.

TELECOMMUNICATORS RECOGNIZED

On August 27, 2008, telecommunicators from throughout Texas were honored by the Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) at the 20th annual Public Safety Telecommunicator Awards ceremony. The event was held in Austin, 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 exemplary handling of a 9-1-1 call. For the 20th anniversary of the awards, the following nine persons were presented with the highest honor, Telecommunicator of the Year:

- ★ John Bordelon, Pasadena, handled a call regarding a neighbor's house being broken into.
- ★ Santos Flores, Dallas, handled a call from a Down syndrome resident who was threatened by a home intruder.
- ★ John Garcia, San Antonio, handled a call from a person needing medical assistance who only spoke swahili.
- ★ Pamela Long, Dallas, handled a call from a man threatening suicide on YouTube, no location information.
- ★ Tammy Meadors, Bryan, handled a call from a child reporting that his mother lost consciousness while driving.
- ★ Barbara Morman, McKinney, handled a call from a woman reporting a home intruder assaulting her boyfriend.
- ★ Kathy Parker, Kountze, handled a call from a pilot who had crashed and was unaware of his location.
- ★ Brenda Rodriguez, Carrollton, handled a call from a woman threatening suicide.
- ★ Mary Sanchez, Euless, handled a call from an abducted victim needing assistance.
- ★ Michelle Thompson, Richardson, handled a call regarding a toddler who was unresponsive and not breathing.

The Team Award of Merit was presented to the City of Odessa Public Safety Communications Center for handling a call that turned into a "shots fired-officer down situation." The recipients were:

- ★ Sheila Belknap, Vicky Davis, Troy Doelling, Elma Rubio, Sandy Stewart, and Yvonne Woods

Silent Hero Awards were also presented to 77 telecommunicators for performance above and beyond the call of duty.

To view photos of all the telecommunicators recognized, visit the CSEC website at: www.911.state.tx.us/browse.php/9-1-1AppreciationDay

Wireless Phase II Implementation Update

Funding was appropriated to CSEC in the fiscal years 2008-2009 to implement Wireless Phase II capability at public safety answering points (PSAPs) in the state's 24 Regional Planning Commissions. CSEC and the regions have met the performance measures associated with the funding and are now focusing resources on fully deploying Phase II service.

The status as of October is as follows:

- ★ Phase II Capable – a PSAP has the equipment and mapping required to receive and display on a map the x/y coordinates of a 9-1-1 caller's location: 344 PSAPs are currently capable.
- ★ Request for Service – a Phase II capable PSAP places a request with each wireless carrier in its region to initiate deployment: 301 PSAPs have placed requests for service.
- ★ Phase II Deployed – a wireless carrier has enabled network, database and location determining technology to send a 9-1-1 caller's x/y coordinates to a PSAP. Carriers have six months to a year to deploy: 218 PSAPs have deployed Phase II service.

The CSEC staff projects that all PSAPs will have Phase II capability and will have requested and deployed Phase II service with all wireless carriers by the end of FY 2009.

Next Generation 9-1-1

The current 9-1-1 system has been a success story for more than 30 years, but the existing 9-1-1 infrastructure is based on technologies that were established decades ago. In the short-term, the emergency communications industry has adapted the existing 9-1-1 infrastructure to meet public safety requirements. However, in the long-term, this initial adaption will not be able to support more advanced capabilities.

Fundamental and significant change is required to move 9-1-1 toward an infrastructure that offers enhanced capabilities and increased change capacity to meet the needs and expectations of the public and emergency services operations. The new infrastructure is being referred to as Next Generation 9-1-1 or NG9-1-1.

The Commission is developing a Next Generation 9-1-1 Master Plan to chart the course for the future of 9-1-1 in Texas. CSEC has set the following priorities for Texas' emergency communications system:

- ★ Maintain the present level of efficient and effective 9-1-1 systems while improving capabilities;
- ★ Plan a statewide Emergency Services Internet Protocol Network (ESINet) to be shared by agencies
- ★ Plan and deploy selected regional/local ESINets;
- ★ Deploy a statewide ESINet; and,
- ★ Plan and deploy additional regional/local ESINets.

Implementation will be a multiyear effort that will entail significant investment, planning, and cooperation among public and private sector entities. Implementing NG9-1-1 presents both opportunity and challenge. The opportunity lies in the ability to enhance a vital public safety service and increase efficiency. The challenge will be to marshal the resources required to effect the change.

Next Generation 9-1-1:

- An Internet Protocol-Based Replacement for E9-1-1 system features and functions
- Supports all sources of emergency access to public safety answering points
- Operates on privately managed, multipurpose IP networks
- Provides expanded multimedia data capabilities for 9-1-1 and other emergency communications entities

CSEC Meets Performance Measures

For fiscal year 2008, the CSEC met or exceeded its key performance measures. The Legislature establishes performance targets to ensure that appropriated funds are utilized in the most efficient and effective manner possible. At the end of FY2008 (August 31, 2008), CSEC reported the following:

- ★ Number of Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) with Wireless Automatic Number Identification: 349 – target exceeded.
- ★ Number of PSAPs with Wireless Automatic Location Information: 331 – target exceeded.
- ★ Percentage of Time the Automatic Location Information System was Operational: 100% - target met.
- ★ Percentage of Time the Texas Poison Control Network was Operational: 100% - target met.
- ★ Total Number of Poison Control Calls Processed: 425,418 – target exceeded.



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: csecinfo@csec.state.tx.us.

Statewide 9-1-1 Program Marks 20 Years

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Commission on State Emergency Communications and the program known as the Statewide 9-1-1 Program. The program was created by the Texas Legislature to ensure that all parts of Texas had 9-1-1 service.

The Commission would like to recognize the state's 24 Regional Planning Commission's 9-1-1 Programs, and the years of service and partnership that have made statewide 9-1-1 service a reality and success for 20 years. Many of the regional staff has been involved in the program since its inception, while others have just arrived. We value both the old and the new, because each has a unique and important perspective to bring to the world of 9-1-1. They work on a daily basis to make sure that the citizens of each region have the highest level of 9-1-1 service available. For the first 20 years, and the next 20 years, we say "Thank YOU".

Governor Names New Presiding Officer and Commissioners

Governor Rick Perry has named John L. De Noyelles of Flint as presiding officer of the Commission on State Emergency Communications for a term to expire at the pleasure of the governor. He replaces Dorothy Morgan of Brenham.

Governor Perry also appointed three members to the commission to replace previous members whose terms expired. They are Mayor David Levy of Archer City, Mayor Steve Mitchell of Richardson, and Comal County Commissioner Gregory Parker of New Braunfels.

For more information on the Governor's appointees, please visit the CSEC website at www.911.state.tx.us

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