



911

Advisory

Committee

Annual Legislative Update – 2021

COVER LETTER

DATE: January 13, 2022

TO: The Senate Energy, Environment & Telecommunications
Committee and House Public Safety Committee

Cc: Washington State Senators and Representatives

FROM: The 911 Advisory Committee (AC)
Keith Flewelling, AC Chair, Executive Director, Thurston 911 Communications
Richard Kirton, AC Vice Chair, Director, Kitsap 911
Adam Wasserman, State Enhanced 911 Coordinator, Washington Military Department

SUBJECT: 2021 REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE, 911 ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RCW 38.52.532 requires that “On an annual basis, the enhanced 911 advisory committee must provide an update on the status of enhanced 911 service in the state to the appropriate committees in the Legislature. The update must include progress by counties towards creating greater efficiencies in enhanced 911 operations including, but not limited to, regionalization of facilities, centralization of equipment, and statewide purchasing.” This report is the annual 911 Advisory Committee Legislative Report to the House Public Safety and Senate Energy, Environment & Telecommunications Committees.

The 2021 annual report identifies progress toward meeting key emergency service goals. Washington state completed a Next Generation 911 (NG911) network in 2020 and implemented additional core NG911 services in 2021. The Washington State 911 system is recognized by the National Association of State 911 Administrators (NASNA) as a good model that other states could emulate. Across the nation, 911 systems are in transformation as state and local jurisdictions are addressing costs, requirements, and user expectations. The Washington State 911 community’s goal is a reliable, secure, and responsive statewide 911 system while remaining fiscally responsible.

Thank you for your interest in and support of this vital work.

Attachment

Copy: The Honorable Governor Jay Inslee

*To accommodate persons with disabilities, this document is available in alternate formats by calling the
Washington Military Department at 253-512-8000*

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INTRODUCTION

The 2021 summary report to the Legislature is submitted by the 911 Advisory Committee pursuant to RCW 38.52.532. The Washington State 911 Advisory Committee was created to advise and assist the State Enhanced 911 Coordinator in coordinating and facilitating the implementation and operation of Enhanced 911 throughout the state.

Background

The 911 system is critical infrastructure through which those with a need may access public safety resources during emergencies. The 911 public safety telecommunicators respond to emergency requests and are the first link in the chain of public safety response. These public safety professionals perform their roles in 911 call taking and dispatch centers, known as Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). The United States Congress, the Washington State Legislature, and federal agencies, including the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), recognize the importance of 911 systems and mandate communications systems service providers to provide 911 services to their customers.

Next Generation 911 (NG911) systems utilize an Emergency Services Internet Protocol Network (ESInet) as the core infrastructure to transport 911 calls. Next Generation 911 Core Services (NGCS), which operate on an ESInet, provide NG911 call routing, interoperability, security, and related services. In July 2020, the state completed transition to a NG911 ESInet.

Next Generation 911 Core Services

NG911 improves interoperability and data sharing between PSAPs and other public safety responders. NG911 also supports technologically advanced capabilities such as Text-to-911, video calling, as well as, sharing images and data. NG911 enhances the accessibility to emergency services for the public and provides PSAPs and responders with information submitted through various communication technologies.

Making this additional information available to public safety professionals depends on the method of connectivity being used by the Originating Service Providers (OSPs) when connecting to the 911 system. Currently, many OSPs connect via legacy analog technology which limits information available to the PSAPs. Until OSPs update their connections to the NG911 network, data sources about the emergency caller's location, the caller, and the call itself may be limited.

While the statewide 911 system is reliable and modernized, additional services, features, and alternative data sources will continue to be deployed to achieve a more advanced NG911 end state. As additional services, features, and functionality become available, the 911 community, in collaboration with other public safety professionals, will review impacts and benefits, then determine options and procedures for adoption. Impacts may include software or hardware upgrades, telecommunicator and technical support staff training, Public Records Act compliance, and public education needs.

Revenues & Expenditures

History

State and county 911 excise tax is collected by the OSPs and then remitted to the Washington State Department of Revenue (DOR), which distributes funds in accordance with RCW Chapter 82.14B. The 911 excise taxes are applied to switched access lines, wireless subscribers, and voice over internet protocol (VoIP) service lines and were set at the current rates by the Legislature in 2011. On January 1, 2014, prepaid wireless retailers were also required to collect and remit 911 excise taxes on each retail transaction at the point of sale. The SECO, under the Washington State Military Department (WMD), is designated to manage and administer the state portion of the 911 excise tax revenue.

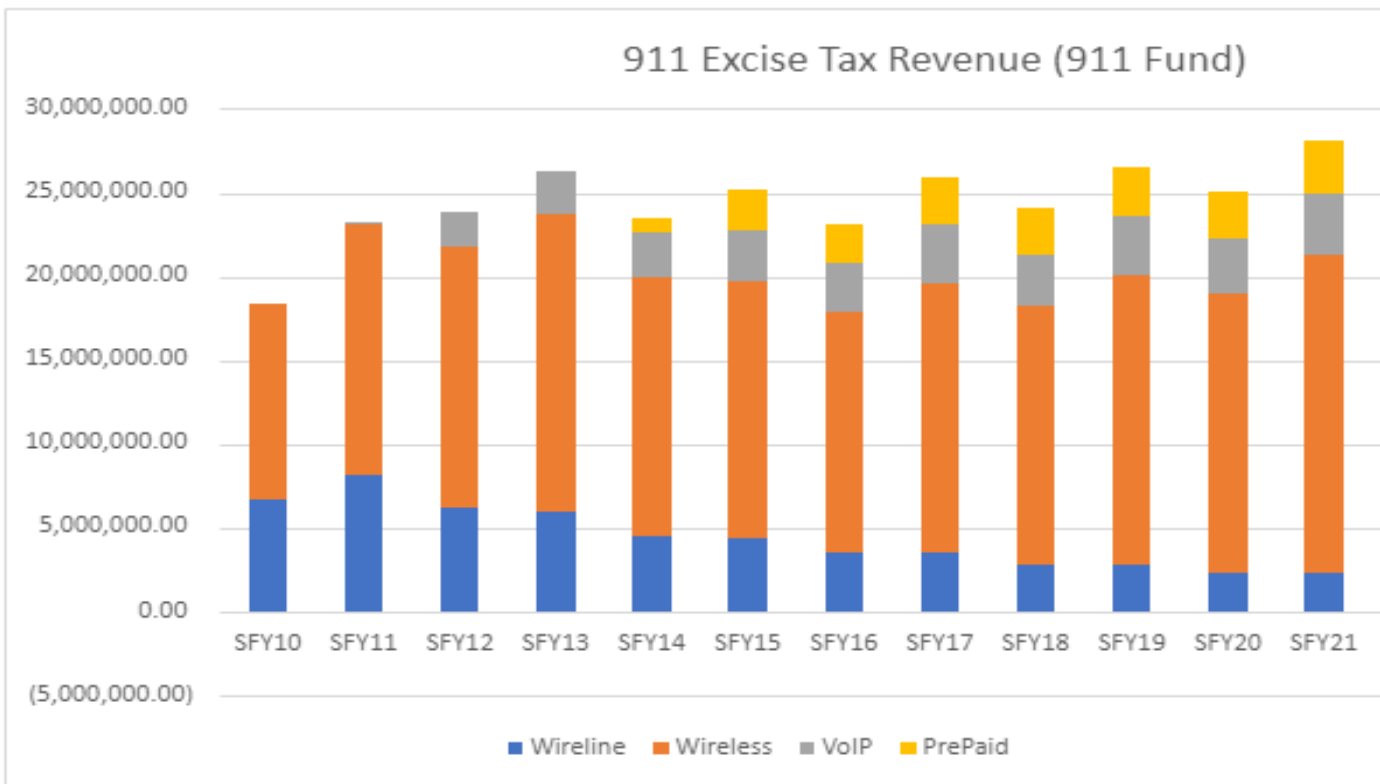


Figure 1

Figure 1 shows consistent wireless revenues over the last 10 years. During that same period, there has been a decrease in landline (Wireline) remittances and an increase in Prepaid and VoIP services. There were one-time revenue corrections in years 2013 and 2017, which account for a spike in revenue. Adjusting for the one-time events, excise tax revenue has remained steady, around \$25M per year or \$50M per biennium.

Status of the State E911 Fund

The 2020-2021 biennium has a balance in the State E911 account. For biennium 2019-2021, the Department of Revenue forecasted \$53.3M in state 911 telephone tax receipts, which results in a projected total of \$54M tax revenue into the account during the current biennium. For the current biennium, the Legislature appropriated \$43.7M to the state 911 account and an additional \$9.97M in Gated Funding held by Washington Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) and was released once deliverables are met for the ESInet transition project.

911 Funds

The NG911 system requires a funding model that assures 911 excise tax revenues collected from Washington state residents is fully appropriated solely for this purpose. Excise tax revenue is intended for system development, maintenance, current operating requirements, expansion of NG911 functionality and services, and Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) customer premise equipment (CPE). These funds are allocated to ensure the state 911 emergency public safety communication system is capable of processing data and voice technology statewide. RCW 38.52.540 was a mandate by the Legislature that assured all monies from 911 excise taxes be used only to support the 911 system. The Legislature took special effort to ensure no appropriations for purposes other than 911 were included in this biennial budget. This policy aligns with Congressional and Federal Communications Commission directives that 911 fees and charges should be used only for purposes related to the 911 system. States that divert 911 funds for services other than 911 are not eligible to apply or receive federal grant monies.

Progress Toward Efficiencies

Statewide initiatives

Text-to-911

41 PSAPs in 30 Counties have implemented or are completing the testing of Text-to-911. The project includes statewide policy recommendation development, security requirements, training, and public education development and delivery, as well as software and/or hardware updates. We expect the remaining PSAPs to be fully operational with text-to-911 by summer of 2022.

Training Program

SECO has the responsibility for the statewide telecommunicator training program. Two SECO training experts work with the 911 Advisory Committee Training Subcommittee developing curriculum, processes, and procedures for course delivery. The classes include: Telecommunicator 1, Telecommunicator 2, Communications Training Officer (CTO), Public Safety Communication Supervisor (PSCS), Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce (TERT) Member and TERT Leader.

Regionalization/Consolidation of Facilities and Equipment

Regionalization of facilities involves consolidating services for multiple authorities and PSAPs within a region into a single administrative facility/organizational structure to reduce overhead costs and improve service delivery. Centralization of equipment allows hardware and software to provide services to more than one PSAP. A consolidated PSAP operates multiple agencies within a county as a single 911 entity. A Regional PSAP serves jurisdictions within multiple counties and operates as a single 911 entity. The consolidation of facilities and equipment is a focus of many counties and the 911 Advisory Committee. Currently we have three regionalized PSAPs in the state; RiverCom (Chelan/Douglas), SECOMM (Benton/Franklin) and WHITCOM (Whitman/Asotin). There are several ongoing projects regarding the consolidation of equipment including:

Pierce County – South Sound 911

South Sound 911 moved operations to a new facility at 3580 Pacific Avenue in Tacoma, in 2021. This project completes the final consolidation of operations for 911 service in most of Pierce County. The cost of the new facility included a 911 call handling system, which can be configured to operate in a host/remote environment for other PSAPs within the County and as a backup PSAP throughout the region.

CRESA-TComm911 Pilot Project

Thurston (TComm911) and Clark (CRESA) counties completed the second generation of a geographically diverse, dual-hosted remote NG911 telephone network. The NG911 Consortium replaced call taking and processing equipment with a new Solacom system. The replacement system was partially funded by a federal grant. The Consortium also added another PSAP to the network. RiverCom, serving Douglas and Chelan Counties, joined the consortium expanding the network to two hosts and two remotes. The host remote concept has been proven operationally and economically effective and is being used as a model for another, larger consortium with six new counties (two hosts and four remotes). This new consortium leverages the Motorola Emergency Call Works (ECW) system and could add an additional three remotes in the short-term. One unique feature of this consortium is the location of the hosts – one East and one West of the Cascades – which helps mitigate any effects of a regional event affecting both hosts.

South Sound 911 and Joint Base Lewis McCord (JBLM)

In 2021, South Sound 911 and JBLM continued to partner on technology. South Sound 911 hosts the CAD system used by JBLM. This allows visibility for each agency into calls for service throughout Pierce County. Additionally, both JBLM and South Sound 911 are now utilizing Priority Dispatch protocols, with a shared pool of licenses hosted by South Sound 911, allowing for licensing cost reductions.

King County 911 Program Office:

In January of 2018, King County adopted a regional E911 strategic plan to provide:

- A system to integrate with the state's E911 system and local jurisdictions;
- A ten-year technology investment strategy;
- A ten-year sustainable funding plan; and
- An ongoing decision-making and governance structure.

King County is served by 11 primary PSAPs connected to the statewide ESInet. To achieve full NG911 capability and functionality, King County plans to migrate to a single platform system architecture by building three geographically diverse hosts which will receive calls from the ESInet/NGCS and will in turn deliver those calls to the PSAPs across a county-wide ESInet.

Challenges

Cybersecurity Protection

The new ESInet/NGCS includes extensive security elements and protocols embedded within the system's architecture, while the counties address security at the PSAP level and with their vendors. All these activities and systems help mitigate threats. However, as technology continues to evolve, cybersecurity threats will continue to be prevalent requiring vigilance and mitigation. Training and awareness of cybersecurity threats and vulnerabilities are ongoing concerns for the statewide 911 community.

Changing Landscape

The public safety telecommunications ecosystem is undergoing significant changes and a trend that is expected to continue into the future. HB 1477 implemented a statewide 988 suicide/mental health crisis emergency number that will need to interoperate with 911. HB 1054 establishes requirements for peace officers that has also impacted 911. These efforts impact the 911 community and are newly identified responsibilities. Additionally, the introduction of NG911 capabilities, such as receiving videos and images, place additional triage burdens on telecommunicators. Traumatic image viewing while performing emergency roles increases public safety telecommunicator stress and responsibilities.

Recruitment and Retention

One of the largest impacts to PSAP operations and the health of the 911 system in Washington is the statewide staffing shortage for Public Safety Telecommunicators. PSAPs across the nation as well are experiencing staffing shortages. Washington State PSAPs have been required to staff telecommunicator positions with managers and directors. Factors that impact the difficulty of recruiting include the pandemic, tight job market, wages, 24/7/365 schedules, job duties, timelines from application to hiring, drug use restrictions, and others.

Moving Forward

2019-2020 Statewide 911 Operational Cost Study

In 2020, the 911 community completed a 911 Operational Cost and Efficiency Study that was requested by the Legislature. The community is working on achieving the five key recommendations that came out of the study:

- 1) Enhance the governance role of the State 911 Coordination Office (SECO) to develop statewide

standards for the 911 system and provide necessary support to county and local 911 operations while maintaining local operational authority of 911 services.

- 2) Expand the use of shared technology platforms between PSAPs, creating economies of scale.
- 3) Change the E911 account to a non-appropriated account to allow the E911 program to more easily access and utilize funds in the account for intended purposes.
- 4) Develop a sustainable funding plan for all elements of emergency communications, including dispatch.
- 5) Create a certification and reclassification for Public Safety Telecommunicators.

Strategic Plan

The 911 Advisory Committee 2019 – 2025 Strategic Plan identifies the vision for 911 in the State of Washington. The plan includes fourteen objectives in four areas. These areas are Personnel, Finance, Outreach and Systems, and Policies & Procedures. This plan will be reviewed in 2022.

NG911 State Plan

The NG911 State Plan was recently updated to provide a roadmap for progress toward Next Generation 911 systems. The plan identifies critical, achievable goals, and supporting strategies to reach those goals. The four primary goals of the plan are to:

- 1) Ensure all 911 calls are Answered and Managed,
- 2) Minimize 911 Transfers,
- 3) Prepare PSTs, PSAPs, and Washington for Next Generation Technologies, and
- 4) Improve Efficiencies in the 911 System.

2022 Legislative Activities

There are two bills being introduced in the 2022 Legislative Session that have direct impact to 911. The first is HB1703 and its companion SB5571, Modernization of the Statewide 911 Emergency Communications System. This bill updates the language and definitions in the relative 911 statutes to align with the current state of operations and to allow for continued improvement and modernization of the 911 system into the future. The second bill SB5555 Public Safety Telecommunicators, establishes statewide certification for these crucial first responders.

Conclusion

Overall, the statewide 911 community's goal is to ensure a technologically advanced, highly reliable, available, and secure emergency communications system which serves the citizens of and visitors to Washington State. The State 911 Advisory Committee and the SECO believe that great strides towards providing this system have been made over the last several years and pledge to continue to ensure the system evolves as the technology evolves and needs of the users change. This has been a very challenging period for 911 with respect to the ongoing pandemic and numerous disasters that have hit the state; however, the system and the 911 community has been resilient and strong throughout. The Committee respectfully offers this report to the Legislature.