



ISSUE BRIEFING

National E-911 Program Update

BACKGROUND

The nation's 911 emergency telephone response system faces budgetary and coordination problems. Approximately 95 percent of the nation's 911s have "enhanced" 911 (E911) for wireline callers, which means automated systems can identify the caller's number and physical location, and route the call to an answering point designated for that location. But less than forty percent of the country's call centers are capable of determining the precise location of the wireless callers dialing 911. The 108th Congress passed legislation that authorized the creation of a National 911 Program Office and provided technical and financial support for our nation's local emergency call centers. The Legislation was titled the ENHANCED 911 ACT of 2004.

The legislation authorized \$250 million between the Department of Transportation and the Department of Commerce (DOC) for grants. The legislation also called for an Implementation Coordination Office (ICO) under the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) with specific directives to:

- increase the amount of federal coordination on E911
- provide technical assistance to primary service answering points
- setup and establish the grant program to assist primary service answering points

The legislation created the authorization however, no appropriation was provided, so the program is stalled. In a joint letter from DOC and the DOT a recommendation was put forth to house the program at NHTSA. NHTSA has been working with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) under the DOC to establish a work plan for the program. They have been trying to figure how to meet congressional requirements without resources to establish the program.

On September 7, 2005 the Congressional E9-1-1 Caucus co-chairs sent a letter to the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requesting the Administration support the ENHANCE 911 Act and request full funding (\$250 million) from Congress for **FY 2007**. The letter stated, "We feel that there is no better use of public monies than to assist first responders to save lives in every community across America."

On September 14, 2005 an amendment was offered and approved that will provide \$5 million in grants that were authorized under the ENHANCE 911 Act. The amendment was added to the **FY 2006** Appropriations Bill for the Departments of Commerce. If the amendment makes it through the conference process it will be the first federal funding specifically available for E-911 answering points to upgrade their technology.



ISSUES AND ACTIONS

Neither NHTSA nor NTIA have established guidelines surrounding the program implementation at this time. NSGIC must be prepared to offer specific technical and policy recommendations to the program during its establishment. These issues and actions drive toward securing funding to support state and local geospatial activities. This may include the following action items:

- NSGIC and state GIS coordinators should emphasize as the ICO is established that current and accurate geospatial data and technologies play a vital role in emergency response. These components must be allowable expenditures that should be included in the grant program.
- NSGIC should be prepared to direct NHTSA and NTIA to other grant programs with specific geospatial guidelines such as those adopted by the Department of Homeland Security, Office for Domestic Preparedness State Homeland Security Grant Program.
- NSGIC should highlight existing statewide road centerline and addressing programs that may serve as implementation models.
- NSGIC and in particular, state GIS coordinators need to highlight existing statewide data collections suitable for the emergency response purposes that may eliminate redundancy.
- States should quickly move forward in the development and formal adoption of road centerline, addressing and other emergency response data standards prior to the grant program implementation. This will facilitate improved coordination and long term maintenance.
- NSGIC and state GIS coordinators should be prepared to support other organizations such as the National Emergency Numbering Association (NENA), the National Association of Public-safety Communication Officers (APCO), and the National Association of State 911 Administrators (NASNA) as they educate Congress on the importance of the funding to close the gap in national E-911 coverage.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

<http://www.nena.org>

<http://www.apcointl.org>

<http://www.nasna911.org>

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