



**Testimony Before the
House Veterans' and Emergency Preparedness Committee
In Support of HB 3317**

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Chair Matthews and members of the committee, my name is Hasina Squires and I appear before you today to present testimony in support of House Bill 3317 on behalf of the Oregon Chapters of the Associated Public Safety Communications Officers and the National Emergency Number Association.

Background

Prior to the advent of the 9-1-1 system, callers in need of emergency assistance would consult local telephone directories that contained listings of multiple telephone numbers for various police, fire, and emergency medical agencies. The first 9-1-1 system in Oregon was a basic 9-1-1 system established in March 1971 in the small town of Milton-Freewater. By 1980 the number of basic 9-1-1 systems grew to 39; and by the end of 1981, the number had more than doubled to 80. Legislation directed toward statewide implementation of 9-1-1 was introduced in 1975, 1977, and 1979 but failed for a lack of a well-defined funding mechanism and industry and local government support.

In 1981 the Oregon State Legislature issued a mandate for statewide 9-1-1 service [*Every public and private safety answering agency in this state shall establish or participate in a 9-1-1 emergency reporting system. ORS 401.720 (2)*]. The 1981 mandate was issued based on the premise of local control despite the fact that in addition to the approximately 80 basic 9-1-1 systems, approximately 220 dispatch centers also existed. Central dispatch and consolidation of systems were encouraged throughout the initial implementation effort. Permanent 9-1-1 funding became the catalyst to make public safety more unified.

By the time the state mandate for basic 9-1-1 was completed (1991), 60 primary public safety answering points (PSAPs) and 31 secondary PSAPs were providing basic 9-1-1 service in the state of Oregon. These PSAPs provided the facilities for receiving and processing calls for police, fire, and medical service for over 800 agencies. On January 1, 1991, Oregon became only the sixth state in the United States to have 9-1-1 service available on a statewide basis.

The initial implementation effort encouraging cooperation and consolidation has resulted in an extremely efficient public safety system including: 47 primary PSAPs, 14 standalone secondary PSAPs, and 2 regional dispatch centers (operated by OSP).

Funding

Initial funding of the program in 1981 was instituted as a 3% surcharge on subscribers' telephone bills. In 1991 the Legislature increased the surcharge from 3% to 5% and mandated that the state's 9-1-1 program provide for enhanced service. The fundamental difference between basic and enhanced 9-1-1 service is that basic 9-1-1 service callers must tell the 9-1-1 call taker their location; whereas enhanced 9-1-1 service callers' locations are automatically provided to the call taker. In 1995 the Legislature converted the 5% tax to a flat fee of 75 cents per exchange access line (including wireless) to provide local governments with greater revenue stability and predictability. The current 9-1-1 tax is scheduled to sunset on December 31, 2013.

Funding Allocation

The current funding distribution of the tax provides an essential component to the overall funding of each agency's 9-1-1 system. The 75 cent tax revenue distributions are as follows:

- ✓ Sixty and one-half percent (60.5%) of the revenues are distributed to counties and cities for operation of the state's 47 PSAP's. Distribution is in proportion to population, except that no county receives less than 1% of the distribution. The funds may not be used for PSAP operations unless they are directly related to 9-1-1.
- ✓ Thirty-five percent (35%) of the revenues are managed by Oregon Emergency Management (OEM) a Division of Oregon Military Department to pay for PSAP common network services, Federal Communications Commission Phase I and II wireless services, costs associated with the Enhanced 9-1-1 program which include network, database, equipment and other costs related to providing state-wide wire line and wireless 9-1-1 services.
- ✓ Four percent (actual costs or no more than 4% maximum) of revenues may be used by the Oregon Emergency Management to pay for OEM 9-1-1 program administration and Telecommunicator training at the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST).
- ✓ One-half percent (actual costs or no more than 0.5% maximum) of the revenues are distributed to the Department of Revenue for administrative processing cost recovery.

Conclusion

The state 9-1-1 tax is an essential revenue source that provides approximately 30% of each agency's total budget for 9-1-1 services. Should the tax not be extended, Oregon PSAPs would have approximately nine months to develop alternative funding for 9-1-1 or reduce the current level of services being provided to the citizens of Oregon.

This legislation is supported by fire, police, emergency medical service providers, cities, counties, special districts, and the 9-1-1 providers of the State of Oregon. I urge the committee's support to continue the 9-1-1 tax. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.