



METCOM 9-1-1

March 11, 2019

Paul Evans, Chair
House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness
900 Court St, NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support of HB2449

Chair Evans, Members of the Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

On behalf of the twenty-six Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Service agencies that utilize the Telecommunication Services from Marion Area Multi-Agency Emergency Telecommunications (METCOM) Dispatch Center or Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), we request your support with HB2449. METCOM is a crucial lifeline for the residents throughout our jurisdiction covering Marion and parts of Linn and Clackamas Counties.

The 9-1-1 tax money aids in our ability to install equipment necessary to receive emergency calls from our residents, as well as paying for infrastructure for the telephone lines and a small portion of personnel costs. In an effort to better serve our citizens, and provide some costs savings, METCOM was created in July of 2013 by consolidating North Marion Communications (NORCOM) and Santiam Canyon Communications Center (SCCC).

In 1995, the 9-1-1 tax was set at 75 cents per phone line. During the nearly 25 years since then, our costs have increased dramatically. In addition to rising personnel costs, we have seen a dramatic increase in not only the costs of technology, but also the types of technology needed to process emergency calls. Our 9-1-1 centers in Oregon have modernized telephone equipment, but are historically unable to meet the increasing needs of our community. As an example, cell phones were introduced to the public in the early 1980's. By 1993, text messaging was introduced to the public; however our 9-1-1 centers in Oregon were unable to accept text messaging until 2018, and then only by installing additional equipment.

The telephone equipment that was in use in 1995 resembled an old style, multi-line switchboard similar to what you would have seen in a large office building. Today, the system is computer based and resembles a typical computer monitor. This upgrade in equipment is drastically different from what was in use in 1995. The costs to install, maintain, and upgrade equipment has increased alongside the new and upgraded technology. Our electrical needs have also significantly increased with these systems compared to what was in use 25 years ago.

MARION AREA MULTI-AGENCY EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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Recently the State 9-1-1 Program notified METCOM that the 9-1-1 tax does not have sufficient funds in the equipment account to continue paying for the needed telephone positions within our center. We have also been advised the costs associated with maintaining emergency routing of our 9-1-1 lines will no longer be covered by the 9-1-1 tax. These are among several examples of costs that are core functions of 9-1-1 shifting from the 9-1-1 tax designed to support this, to our local jurisdictions. Our Public Safety agencies are now forced to determine if we can absorb these costs, or if we must re-evaluate our service levels. Funding these costs at the local level will directly affect our police, fire and medical agencies as they take on more of the financial burden that was designed to be covered by the 9-1-1 tax. Neglecting to fund these costs will create direct impact to our citizens and their ability to call during times of crisis.

We are nearing a critical point with our funding for the 9-1-1 system at METCOM and throughout Oregon. We strongly encourage you to support HB2449 and respectfully ask for the following modifications:

- Remove the 1% and 2% formula distributions as added to the bill. Although we understand the need to ensure operations of 9-1-1 statewide, the current language would have some PSAP's earning upwards of 300% of their current allocation amount while many centers would still be well below 30%.
- Reduce the amount set aside for OEM from 4% to 2%. The 9-1-1 program has continually stated to the 9-1-1 community that they do not utilize the 4% that is allocated to them for supporting 9-1-1 in the state. Based on their own admissions it would not make sense to set aside additional funds for the program but instead allow those funds to go directly to the PSAP's or the equipment account.
- Reduce the amount allocated to DAS from 1% to 0.5%. The change in this tax is not projected to add additional work to DAS which would mean the funds should be directed back to the PSAP's or the equipment account.

We need your help to provide funding for this critical lifeline for our citizens. We humbly ask for your support of HB2449.

Respectfully,



Jim Ferraris
City of Woodburn Police Chief
METCOM Board Chair



Mark Spross
METCOM Executive Director