



April 29, 2021

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

RE: OEM 9-1-1 Workstation Funding Informational Hearing

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

My name is Margie Moulin, and I am the Director of Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon (ECSO), which is the consolidated 9-1-1 and dispatch agency formed under ORS 190. With the increase in the tax, ECSO is funded approximately 21% by the 9-1-1 tax, with the remainder of our funding received from our subscriber agencies consisting of police, fire and EMS agencies throughout Jackson County and Crater Lake National Park.

ECSO dispatches for 29 public safety agencies, and handles over 400,000 calls for service each year, more than a quarter of which are calls to 9-1-1.

While I did not serve on the Advisory Committee during the conversations between Oregon APCO/NENA and OEM, my center was one of the eight largest 9-1-1 centers in Oregon to be negatively impacted by the formula adopted by OEM. These 8 call centers account for 71% of all 911 calls in Oregon, and are experiencing a 46% decrease in workstation allocation due to this formula.

ECSO is the result of a consolidation in 2010 of Southern Oregon Regional Communications (SORC) and Rogue Valley Consolidated Communications (RVCCOM). Prior to consolidation, RVCCOM was allocated 7 workstations by OEM. SORC was allocated 6. This worked well for the activity levels within each center, and continued to work well with the combined workload and call volume in the consolidation which became ECSO. Today, using the formula adopted by OEM, ECSO is allocated 11 workstations, serving all of Jackson County.

However, had we not consolidated, using this same formula, RVCCOM would still be allocated 7 workstations, and SORC would be allocated 6. It does not make sense that the same number of calls

split into two centers would justify more positions, and it is my belief this disincentivizes consolidation efforts for other centers in the future.

Originally, OEM supported 13 workstations with ECSO. With the newly adopted formula, ECSO was allocated 10 workstations (9 workstations and 1 supervisor workstation). In February of this year, I applied for a variance, asking OEM to increase the allocation back to 13; the number of workstations that have served the citizens of Jackson County for 20 years.

That request is attached to this testimony to provide you with the summary of my justification for keeping all 13 workstations. OEM reviewed our data and approved one additional workstation, increasing our allocation to 11. This leaves ECSO's member agencies; police, fire, and ems, with the choice of lowering service levels, or providing funding to retain the 2 remaining workstations.

In reviewing the numbers again during the variance request, it became clear to me that part of the formula has to do with the duration of the call. The longer the call taker is on the phone, the more it increases the number of workstations based on this formula. This is inherently flawed, as the busier a center is, the faster they need to complete the call to be able to answer the next 9-1-1.

As you have heard from my colleague's testimony, this formula utilizes Erlang to determine how many workstations are needed. Erlang is designed for call centers that can leave callers on hold, a practice we try to limit in 9-1-1 centers. While busier centers may have 9-1-1 calls go into a queue while all telecommunicators are busy, our goal is to get that call out of queue as quickly as possible. Erlang simply does not work for emergency call centers. In fact, the Association of Public Safety Communications officials, (APCO international) researched this and determined that Erlang should not be recommended for determining staffing in 9-1-1 centers. APCO is the association that sets standards and best practices for 9-1-1. If an international association that specializes in best practices and standards for 9-1-1 has determined erlang to be invalid for this purpose, that should speak volumes to the inadequacy of this formula.

This discussion on the need to save money from the 9-1-1 sub-account, was initiated prior to the 9-1-1 tax increase. With the recent increase into the 9-1-1 tax, the sub-account is now receiving 2/3rds more funding that we previously have. This is another reason it is time to review this formula and determine if these cuts to service in our 9-1-1 centers is necessary.

It is my belief, and my testimony, that the 9-1-1 committee and OEM should work hand in hand to find a solution to this issue together that is in the best interest of the citizens of Oregon.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony.