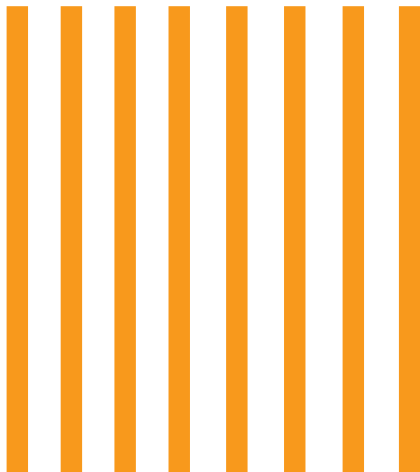




Serving Counties Since 1886

## Strengthening 911 Services

# COUNTY GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES



## Fact Sheet 2008

Counties have responsibility for one of the key functions in public safety, the operation of the 911 call-taking and dispatch system. Counties are in the midst of implementation of enhanced systems to locate wireless callers, perhaps the greatest increase in call volume over the last several years and now accounting for more than half of our calls. Counties' new and concurrent challenge is rapidly-expanding Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) and other internet services, which lack adequate locators and create a new imperative to assure that those in need can place emergency calls to the correct call center, and be assured of correct emergency dispatch. Lack of locator technologies requires call takers to keep the caller on the phone, and try to get them to describe their location. This takes valuable time, and worse, when the caller cannot communicate, they cannot dispatch.

While wireless locators are funded through a \$1 surcharge on monthly wireless bills, counties' aggressive deployment of wireless caller locator systems has outpaced receipts so, although recent problems with administration of the fund by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency are largely resolved, significant cash flow difficulties remain. Moreover, the surcharge is set to expire on June 30, 2009, and the Association supports early and permanent renewal, with provision for an appropriate inflator in the fee.

No similar funding source yet exists for VOIP and other internet-based systems. The Association supports as a 2008 priority passage of S.B. 385 or comparable legislation that provides for a VOIP subscriber surcharge and locator provisions.

With the advent of new technologies, there has been a significant decrease in the number of traditional wire-line subscribers and the corresponding per-line 911 surcharges (ranging up to \$1.50 per month). These fees, included in the original 1990 legislation, are the backbone of the 911 systems. The Association supports H.B. 1610, which would provide the first increases in these fees since their inception almost two decades ago.

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Counties must also adapt to other new and anticipated technologies. Counties are seeking legislation to require PBX and similar systems to be outfitted to facilitate location of callers within buildings and campuses. Another key component of the system is assurance that telephone system providers are properly collecting , and remitting the subscriber fees that support the development, deployment and operation of these systems.

**For more information on correction issues in counties, contact Douglas Hill, 717-232-7554 x 3115 or [dhill@pacounties.org](mailto:dhill@pacounties.org).**