

911 Surcharge Reauthorization and Statute Updates



Counties are proud to provide one of the key functions in public safety—the operation of the 911 call-taking and dispatch system. As technologies continue to evolve and funding streams no longer align with current realities, counties need to be able to rely on consistent and sustainable funding to maintain their responsibility as the first line of emergency response.

Counties are continuously working with PEMA, legislative committees, emergency management professionals, the communications industry, and other interest groups on improvements to the 911 system. Center to this effort is forward movement and investment in Next Generation 911 (NG911) to take into account both current and future ways that people can communicate in an emergency, improvements in system efficiency through shared infrastructure and network connection for 911 public safety answering points statewide, accurate GIS information and data and better regional systems to assure availability and reliability. A strong, connected 911 system is critical to ensuring services will still be provided efficiently in situations of mass emergency to keep pace with the ever-changing technological advances to maximize emergency services delivery.

THE FACTS

- 911, while separate from our police, fire, and EMS system, provides the first response to callers, often offering medical triage advice or other critical information to ensure the safety and outcome for all involved while physical first responders are dispatched.
- The 911 surcharge is a flat-rate fee placed on a phone service bill monthly or at the point of sale for a prepaid device that provides funding for the operation of 911 emergency telecommunications services in Pennsylvania.
- At a surcharge of \$1.95, counties, and ultimately county taxpayers, are still shouldering nearly 20% of the cost of the 911 system.
- Compared nationally, Pennsylvania has a relatively average fee that covers a significant majority of 911 operational costs—other states have percentage-based or locally derived fees, including some as high as \$5.
- 911 call volume is increasing while revenue from the 911 surcharge has failed to maintain pace with system costs over the last several years
- Even outside of funding needs, the 911 statute needs technical changes and clean-ups to ensure the law meets the current realities and needs of the NextGen system.

COUNTIES SUPPORT

- Reauthorization of the 911 surcharge at a rate that brings the county share of the 911 system costs to 10-12%.
- Continued strategic planning and investment for evolving technologies and GIS data to properly support and maintain NG911.
- Opportunities for system and funding consolidation, including regional resource sharing and collaboration to guarantee system and service continuity.
- Discussion among policymakers and stakeholders well before the January 2026 surcharge sunset to ensure the reauthorization accounts for the proliferation of applications, devices, sensors, and services capable of contacting 911 and the ability to accurately assess and collect 911 surcharge revenue on these rapidly evolving consumer communications technologies.

THE BIG PICTURE

Achieving this priority would ensure all Pennsylvania residents and visitors will continue to have a quick and efficient connection to a 911 operator and services in any situation, regardless of geographic location or time of day.