

# **Summary of Chapter 223 of the Acts of 2008, An Act To Create A State 911 Department, Single 911 Surcharge And An Enhanced 911 Fund**

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The new State 911 Department was created on July 31, 2008 by the enactment of Chapter 223 of the Acts of 2008. The purpose of this new law is to further protect the public's safety by improving the Commonwealth's ability to coordinate and administer the Enhanced 9-1-1 system and ensure the most efficient and consistent approach for Enhanced 9-1-1 service to all 351 cities and towns.

Key features of the new law:

- Creates the State 9-1-1 Department within Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) that has the authority to direct day to day administration of the statewide enhanced 9-1-1 system and has its own independent budgetary authority. Transfers the Statewide Emergency Telecommunications Board (SETB) staff to the Department.
- Changes the 21-member SETB to the 19-member State 9-1-1 Commission that provides strategic oversight and guidance to the State 911 Department, advises the Department relative to its annual budget, and has approval authority over the distribution of grants, major contract issues, and the establishment of regulations and standards. The State 9-1-1 Commission is within EOPSS.
- Requires the formation of a State 9-1-1 Policy Advisory Committee to advise the Commission and Department on system and network issues.
- Changes the past scheme of separate wireline and wireless enhanced 9-1-1 surcharges and funds to create a single enhanced 9-1-1 surcharge and fund with the surcharge to be assessed on wireline, wireless, and "other" (such as VoIP) users.
- Sets the single enhanced 9-1-1 surcharge at 75 cents per month.
- Establishes new grants in addition to the training grant to be made available directly to local cities and towns to cover select personnel and equipment costs.

The grants are as follows:

- PSAP and Regional Emergency Communication Center Training Grant: will reimburse primary, regional and regional secondary PSAPs and regional emergency communication centers for allowable expenses related to the training and certification of enhanced 911 telecommunicators.

- Public Safety Answering Point and Regional Emergency Communication Center Support Grant : will reimburse primary, regional and regional secondary public safety answering points and regional emergency communications centers for allowable expenses related to enhanced 9-1-1 personnel and equipment costs.
- Wireless State Police Public Safety Answering Point Grant: will reimburse wireless state police public safety answering points for allowable expenses related to enhanced 9-1-1 personnel and equipment costs.
- Regional Public Safety Answering Point and Regional Emergency Communications Center Incentive Grant: will provide regional public safety answering points and regional emergency communication centers with funds in addition to amounts allocated as part of Public Safety Answering Point and Regional Emergency Communication Center Support Grant for reimbursement of expenses specified in Support Grant using a formula that applies specified percent of total surcharge revenues based on number of municipalities to be served by regional public safety answering point or regional emergency communication center.
- Regional and Regional Secondary Public Safety Answering Point, and Regional Emergency Communication Center Development Grant: will support the development and startup of regional secondary public safety answering points and regional emergency communication centers, including the expansion or upgrade of existing regional and regional secondary public safety answering points, to maximize effective emergency 9-1-1 and dispatch services as well as regional interoperability through disbursement of funds according to guidelines established by the State 9-1-1 Department with Commission approval.
- Transfers administration and oversight of Disability Access Programs - Specialized Customer Premises Equipment (SCPE) Distribution Service, and Telecommunication Relay Services (TRS) from private vendors to the State 9-1-1 Department. SCPE are devices which provide access to telephone networks for people with hearing, speech, vision, mobility or cognitive disability. TRS is a telephone transmission service that provides the ability for an individual who has a hearing or speech disability to engage in communication by wire or radio with a hearing individual in a manner that is functionally equivalent to the ability of an individual who does not have a hearing or speech disability to communicate using voice communication services by wire or radio.
- Requires that as of July 1, 2009 any new or substantially renovated multi-line (PBX) telephone system will be required to provide the same level of enhanced 9-1-1 service that is provided to others in the Commonwealth based on regulations to be promulgated by the State 9-1-1 Department. Multi-line telephone systems are comprised of common control units, telephones, and control hardware and software that provide local telephone service to multiple end-use customers in business, apartments, townhouses, condominiums, schools, dormitories, hotels, motels, resorts, extended care facilities, or similar entities, facilities or structures.
- Requires that the State 9-1-1 Department establish with the Commission's approval statewide certification requirements for enhanced 9-1-1 telecommunicators that will include emergency medical dispatch and quality assurance of emergency medical dispatch programs. These standards will require public safety

answering points to have certified emergency medical dispatch personnel or to provide emergency medical dispatch through an appropriate resource .

- Provides that individuals found to be misusing the 9-1-1 system or making false 9-1-1 calls will be subject to specific criminal penalties including fines and/or imprisonment.