

**Before the United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology**

*REALIZING NATIONWIDE NEXT-GENERATION 911*

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**Summary**

1. Local 9-1-1 centers must transition to Next Generation 9-1-1 at the same time that consumer wireline and wireless networks transition to IP-based service, and at the same time as FirstNet enables IP-based service for field responders.
2. Existing funding at the state and local levels covers maintenance and operations of legacy systems, and legacy voice-centric 9-1-1 service, with little room to enable the technical transition.
3. Delaying the NG9-1-1 transition will cause state and local costs to explode as legacy infrastructure maintenance overtakes the cost of providing basic services to the public.
4. Congress should accelerate NG9-1-1 deployment by making a one-time investment in the capital infrastructure and transition costs of NG9-1-1 systems at the state and local levels.

**Testimony**

Chairwoman Blackburn, Ranking Member Doyle, and may it please the Committee: My name is Trey Forgety, and on behalf of the 9-1-1 Associa-

tion's more than 12,000 public- and private-sector members, I want to thank you for holding this hearing. Providing emergency response service is perhaps *the* core function of government, and 9-1-1 is the crucial first link between the public and emergency responders.

The way consumers communicate has changed radically over the last 20 years. Telephones have evolved from single-purpose electrical appliances that hang on our walls to multi-purpose electronic computers we carry in our pockets. New media types that were once the realm of comic-book fiction are now common-place. But as consumers have adopted text, pictures, video calling, and richly integrated communications apps, the 9-1-1 world largely has not. For a large majority of our nation's more than 6,800 PSAPs, legacy analog voice remains the only effective means of handling a request for emergency service. This must change.

Sometime in the early years of the next decade, consumer wireline and wireless networks will complete their already-in-progress transition to all-IP operation. At the same time, our field responder colleagues in the law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical service disciplines will begin their transition to the all-IP services of FirstNet. If we do not transition our 9-1-1 systems to a new, all-IP architecture, and soon, we will lose out on the tremendous improvements to public safety and national security that are achievable with a modern, integrated emergency response architecture. Moreover, we will consign our state and local governments to a future of endlessly-rising costs, as more and more legacy network infrastructure must be maintained solely to keep legacy 9-1-1 service alive. To bridge the gap between consumer networks and FirstNet, and to relieve

the extreme burdens of legacy infrastructure maintenance, we must accelerate the transition to IP-based emergency services, and soon. In short, we must deploy a Next Generation of 9-1-1 service.

Next Generation 9-1-1 is a system comprised of hardware, software, data, and operational policies and procedures that provides a secure environment for emergency communications. It provides standardized interfaces from call and message services, processes all types of emergency calls, and acquires and integrates data useful to call routing and handling. NG9-1-1 delivers calls and messages and data to the appropriate 9-1-1 center, known in the industry as a Public Safety Answering Point or “PSAP.” Along with the field responder communications services that will be provided by FirstNet, NG9-1-1 will allow the public safety community to better coordinate incident response and management for everything from a minor traffic accident to a major terrorist attack.

The overall architecture for NG9-1-1 is defined by the so-called “i3 Standard.” i3 was developed at NENA by hundreds of public safety professionals from both the public and private sectors, starting in 2003. Now undergoing its second major expansion and revision, the i3 standard leverages common technologies and global standards from the internet era. This opens-up the 9-1-1 space to significant innovation by device manufacturers, application developers, communications platform providers, and public safety systems vendors. In deliberately building an open platform, NENA’s forward-thinking developers consciously chose to make emergency communications easy and low-cost for *any* communications platform to implement. Moreover, our developers anticipated the ongoing

drive to consolidate, virtualize, and share services and systems among and between PSAPs and 9-1-1 authorities. This will allow states and localities to reduce the cost burden associated with a transition of this magnitude. Using this consensus-based, standardized, innovation-forward approach, we can achieve enormous benefits to consumers and public safety alike. Realizing those benefits, however, is not a foregone conclusion.

Today, many states and localities are *not* ready to begin the transition to NG9-1-1. A number of states have no personnel or governance structures in place to manage this complex transition, risking wasteful or redundant expenditures. There are lingering misconceptions about how NG9-1-1 systems should be deployed, leading even some individual PSAPs to believe that they should, or must, deploy an entire NG9-1-1 system on their own. Worst of all, however, two significant financial barriers exist that substantially jeopardize the timely deployment of NG9-1-1 systems.

First, according to the FCC's latest report, at least 8 states continue to callously divert fees, paid in good faith by consumers for 9-1-1 service, to non-9-1-1 purposes. In some instances, these diversions have alternative, though no less illegitimate, uses for other public services. In the overwhelming majority, however, diversions are simply directed to states' general funds. This is fundamentally wrong. Consumers value 9-1-1 service, and routinely vote to fund it via fees. I wish to acknowledge here the Federal Communications Commission's ongoing monitoring and reporting on this trend, and on Commissioner O'Rielly's recent blog post on the topic. If we as a 9-1-1 community are to seek the assistance of our national government in completing the NG9-1-1 transition, it is absolutely right

and proper that we should acknowledge this failing, and work collaboratively to find ways to incentivize the expenditure of 9-1-1 funds for 9-1-1 purposes. NENA welcomes that debate, and pledges to work with members of this Committee to find solutions that reward states for spending their 9-1-1 fees appropriately, while not penalizing local 9-1-1 systems for decisions that are beyond their control.

Second, significant capital expenditure constraints at the state level make it incredibly difficult to simultaneously operate and maintain existing E9-1-1 systems while building, testing, and training for the NG9-1-1 systems of the future. Make no mistake: This transition *will* be expensive. However, NENA is convinced that a one-time infusion of federal capital, coupled with an appropriate matching component at the state level, can significantly accelerate the transition, lowering the long-term costs of the transition for every level of government. The laboratory of the states bears this out: In Indiana, the rapid, state-wide deployment of Text-to-9-1-1 technology saved millions of dollars in emergency response costs for accidental and abandoned 9-1-1 calls. In Washington state, a move to centralize and share expensive capital equipment using newly-deployed redundant broadband systems likewise reduced costs. And, in my own home state of Tennessee, the deployment of a state-wide Emergency Services IP network has laid the foundation for a thoughtful and efficient transition to NG9-1-1 service. With a boost from the federal government, these early successes can be replicated in other states.

Here, I wish to mention the ongoing efforts of the National 9-1-1 Program Office, and its director, Laurie Flaherty. Much of the data that we

have about where the NG9-1-1 transition stands within the states has been made available as a result of her office's efforts. Moreover, the Office has notched major successes like convening the first-ever work on a nationwide guideline for minimum 9-1-1 telecommunicator training, publishing a discipline-specific NG9-1-1 primer for the law enforcement community, and assembling an authoritative bibliography of standards and standards developing organizations in the 9-1-1 space. These efforts will significantly advance the NG9-1-1 transition by helping to make training portable and quash myths and misconceptions about what NG9-1-1 is and how it works. All of this has been done with exceptional support from both NTIA, which has consistently acted as a political champion for the office within Republican and Democratic administrations, and from DoT, which has maintained the office with discretionary funds, even when no program-specific funding was appropriated. Whatever the path to nationwide NG9-1-1 deployment, there should be no doubt that the national 9-1-1 program office will play a critical role.

Notwithstanding the significant challenges facing states and PSAPs as they navigate the NG9-1-1 transition, NENA is confident that we can achieve a successful roll-out of NG9-1-1 service, *if* the federal government steps in to accelerate the transition *now*. The consequences of waiting, or of doing nothing, are simply too high: lives lost, property destroyed, and costs increased. NENA's members are dedicated to serving people in their times of greatest need. I am honored, Madam Chairwoman, that you and your Committee have called this hearing and allowed me to testify about the future of the 9-1-1 systems on which NENA's members rely to carry

out that mission. NENA believes that significant improvements in 9-1-1 service can be achieved on an aggressive timeframe and for a reasonable price. I look forward to working with you and the Committee to achieve those improvements.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "T. E. Forgety, III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

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