BUDGET UNIT BRIEF – FY 2021

Fiscal Services Division

July 1, 2020

LSA
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911 Wireless Surcharge Administration

Purpose and History

The 911 Program was created under the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department (HSEMD), now its own Department, during the 1988 Legislative Session. The law required each county to establish a joint 911 service board maintained by the county board of supervisors. Each board was responsible for developing a countywide 911 plan, detailing the manner and cost of the implementation of a 911 system. The HSEMD reviewed and approved the 911 service plans for all 99 counties. Service plans included a description of the service area, a list of all public and private safety agencies (such as a private ambulance service) within the 911 service area, the number of Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) within the service area, and the agency responsible for management and supervision of the 911 communication system. Funding for the service was provided by a surcharge on each telephone access line within the 911 service area. Telephone service providers remit the surcharge to the respective joint 911 service board on a calendar quarterly basis.

As wireless technology and the use of cell phones expanded, the wireless line surcharge began on January 1, 1999. During the 2013 Legislative Session, HF 644 (E911 Surcharge Equalization Act) was enacted, imposing a $1 surcharge on both wireless and wireline 911 programs. The Act also did the following:

- Eliminated the existing voter referendum requirement regarding the imposition of the local wireline 911 service surcharge and the alternative surcharge applicable to wireline communications.

- Reinstated the wireless carrier cost recovery for Phase 1 services.

- Required the 911 Program Manager, in consultation with the 911 Communications Council, to establish methodology for the collection of data on all costs and expenses related to the operation of a PSAP. Data collection began January 1, 2014, with a report submitted to the General Assembly in December 2015, and additional reports due every two years thereafter. The Auditor of State also performed an initial audit of the data collection beginning July 1, 2014; the audit report was released March 1, 2016.

- Required the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department to conduct a study to identify 911 operation and expense efficiencies.

More Information

HSEMD — 911: homelandsecurity.iowa.gov/programs/e_911.html
Iowa Public Safety Answering Point Data Analysis:
www.homelandsecurity.iowa.gov/documents/911/911_PSAP_DataAnalysisReport_DEC2015.pdf
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Surcharge Uses

Moneys from the surcharge are to be used for recurring and nonrecurring costs of the system. Nonrecurring costs include but are not limited to network equipment for the PSAPs; software; database; addressing; training; and other capital expenditures, including the purchase or lease of subscriber names, addresses, and telephone information from the local exchange service provider. Recurring costs include but are not limited to network access fees and other telephone charges; software; equipment; database management; and maintenance, including the purchase or lease of subscriber names, addresses, and telephone information from the local exchange service provider. Recurring costs cannot be used for personnel. Personnel costs are paid from county or city funds, depending on the PSAP. If moneys remain in the 911 Wireless Surcharge Fund after all obligations are fully paid, the remainder may be accumulated in the Fund as a carryover operating surplus. The surplus will be used to fund future Phase 2 network and PSAP improvements and wireless carriers' transport costs related to wireless 911 services, if those costs are not otherwise recovered by wireless carriers through customer billing or other sources and approved by the 911 Program Manager (Iowa Code sections 34A.7A(2)(f)(3) and 34A.7A(2)(f)(3)(g)).

Wireless 911 Next Generation and Texting

The Iowa HSEMD has upgraded the wireless 911 system to support the use of the Next Generation 911 emergency services Internet Protocol (IP)-based system (ESInet). The Next Generation 911 ESInet is provided by the Iowa Communications Network (ICN). The upgrade will put Iowa in a position to accept text, video, and picture messaging as it is made available from wireless carriers to allow Iowans to access emergency care via 911. The carryover fund will also be used for the Next Generation 911 network for costs associated with the hardware and software for ongoing maintenance and enhancements to the network. All 99 counties in Iowa should have Next Generation 911 capabilities by the end of calendar year 2017.

TeleCommunication Systems, Inc. (TCS) has a five-year contract with the HSEMD and provides the Next Generation 911 solution in the processing of calls. TCS provides 24-hour technical support for the network and State-owned equipment at the PSAPs and data centers, along with 24-hour services to the 112 PSAPs.

Legislative Changes

In 2017, Senate File 500 (911 Consolidation Act) made the following changes:

- Modified and added technological terminology related to 911 emergency telephone communication systems.

- Allowed the 911 Program Manager to provide grants for the purpose of developing and maintaining Geographic Information System data to be used in support of the Next Generation 911 network.

- Made changes to the distribution and permissible expenditures of the 911 Emergency Communications Service surcharge by removing the allocation of $4.4 million to the Department of Public Safety for the FY 2017 lease payment for building of the Statewide Interoperable Communications System.

- Limited the definition of consolidation with respect to grants provided to PSAPs.

- Added a member appointed from the Iowa Geographic Information Council to the existing 13 members of the 911 Communications Council.

- Required the HSEMD to develop a plan to combine the wireline 911 network with the Next Generation 911 network.

- Changed the amount of funds available for local PSAP consolidation grants from $4.4 million to $7.0 million, and specified that these consolidations would be physical rather than virtual.

- Removed any reimbursement to the PSAPs for local costs to access the Statewide Interoperable Communications System. The PSAPs can currently use 911 surcharge funds for radio systems, and

the intent of this provision was to remove redundant language from the Iowa Code.

In 2018, House File 2254 (911 Emergency Telephone Systems) made the following changes to Iowa Code chapter 34A:

- Added definitions relating to 911 call processing equipment, equipment providers, transport providers, and next generation 911 network service providers.

- Replaced the term "911 service operating authority" with "joint 911 service board."

- Struck the requirement that an annual written request be submitted by the 911 Program Manager each year.

- Updated how the 911 Program Manager shall reimburse providers.

- Struck the cap on funds distributed from the fund.

- Required the HSEMD to implement its plan to consolidate the wireline 911 network with the Next Generation 911 network. Joint 911 Service boards are required to continue to pay costs of providing wireline 911 service. When the Department notifies a joint 911 service board that wireline service is being delivered to PSAPs within the 911 service area, the joint 911 service board shall no longer be responsible for any functions or costs for providing wireline 911 service, and costs shall be addressed by the Department according to the Iowa code.

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

Iowa Code chapter 34A
Iowa Administrative Code 605—10

Budget Unit Number

5830R430046

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