



## STATE 9-1-1 COORDINATION BOARD

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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### Frequently Asked Questions: 9-1-1 Surcharge Usage in South Dakota Updated August 2012

#### 1. What must be done with interest earned on 9-1-1 fund investments?

ARSD 50:02:04:07 (4) states, "Any governing body receiving 9-1-1 emergency surcharge funds must deposit all received funds, including all interest earned on fund investment, in the 9-1-1 fund..."

#### 2. Can street name signs be purchased with 911 funds?

Street signs were allowable as a one-time expense with 911 funds when a city/county was deploying Enhanced 911. Any signage being completed now is considered maintenance therefore not an allowable expenditure with 911 funds.

#### 3. Are 911 sign parts and gas expense to drive out and check 911 addresses allowable out of the 911 Fund?

None of these items would be allowable. One time addressing and street sign costs incurred to allow the deployment of Enhanced 9-1-1, were allowable. However, once a county has E9-1-1 in place, those on-going recurring and maintenance costs related to addressing and street name signs are not allowable.

#### 4. Is there a difference between "dispatch services" and "9-1-1 services?"

Generally speaking, the answer is no. Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) are often referred to as "dispatch centers" or "9-1-1 centers." The primary work done in these facilities involves both answering 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls for public safety services and dispatching local public safety responders to those calls. Since both functions are always performed in a PSAP, the PSAP budget should include revenues and expenditures related to 9-1-1 call answering and public safety dispatching functions. The 9-1-1 board does not see a need to allocate costs related to either function separately within a PSAP budget.

With that said the board realizes that many counties contract with a PSAP in another county for 9-1-1 services and in a few cases "dispatch services" are considered a separate function and are negotiated as such. The board feels that counties and PSAPs should be free to negotiate contract terms that fit their local operations and preferences. The key being that the contract PSAP is providing *all* services even if the terms of payment are broken out and based on separate services.

There may be an instance where a county contracts with a PSAP in another county to answer their 9-1-1 calls, but chooses to keep the dispatch function local. The board feels this type of “dispatch only” operation does not qualify as a PSAP and that 9-1-1 surcharge funds cannot be used to fund a local “dispatch only” type operation.

#### **5. Can 9-1-1 surcharge funds be used to purchase radio equipment?**

9-1-1 surcharge funds may be used to pay for radio communication equipment that allows a PSAP to page and communicate with emergency responders. Such equipment may include: back room radio equipment and racks, central electronics banks, radio software, desktop radio consoles, radio computers and servers, control station radios, control station antennas and cables, mobile radios used by a PSAP as a control station or base station radio, portable radios used in a PSAP for backup purposes, and repeaters or paging terminals used by a PSAP. 9-1-1 surcharge funds may be used to pay connectivity costs between the PSAP and allowable communication equipment. 9-1-1 surcharge funds may not be used to purchase radio communication equipment or systems for emergency responders or other city or county agencies. Prohibited equipment may include: portable and mobile radios, pagers, cell phones, mobile data terminal and related equipment, automatic vehicle location (AVL) systems and related equipment, pyramid radios or systems, warning sirens and related equipment, radio towers, and equipment shelters.

#### **6. What other equipment or software can be paid for with 9-1-1 surcharge funds?**

ARSD 50:02:04:08 states allowable costs must be *directly related to the PSAP*. The purchase of hand held radios for county highway workers or the purchase of software used in a county jail are considered **not allowable** with the 911 fund.

#### **7. What if our PSAP provides other non-public safety related services to other government entities such as a city or school district; can 9-1-1 surcharge funds be used to pay for those types of services?**

It is the boards opinion that the PSAP should be receiving general fund revenue from those government entities to pay for the services being provided.

#### **8. What personnel costs can be paid with 9-1-1 surcharge revenue?**

ARSD 50:02:04:09 states that recurring costs may include PSAP personnel costs, where the employee’s primary function and duties must be to work as an employee of a PSAP or, at least 50 percent of the employees work hours must be spent performing PSAP duties. Here are two examples showing an allowable and non-allowable use of 9-1-1 surcharge funds for personnel costs:

\*An employee of a county department (Director of Equalization, Planning, Auditor, Highway, Emergency Management, Sheriff’s Office, etc.) spends a few hours a week (far less than 50% of their time) issuing new addresses, updating maps, updating a 9-1-1 database, etc. The employee may have the title of “County 9-1-1 Coordinator.” In this case, because the employee spends less than 50% of their time working on 9-1-1 related issues, no portion of their wages or personnel costs may be paid from 9-1-1 surcharge funds.

\*An employee of a local law enforcement agency becomes state 9-1-1 and EMD certified. Her normal work hours are 8-5, M-F. Each day part of her duties include serving as a “backup dispatcher” and she is subject to answering and dispatching 9-1-1 calls at any time. She covers for the dispatcher when he or she goes to lunch or takes a break. On average she answers a few 9-1-1 calls each week and often handles many support duties such as checking warrants, running license plate and drivers license checks, etc. When she is not doing 9-1-1 and dispatch related

work, she answers routine calls for the law enforcement agency, handles warrants or civil papers, and many other clerical or support duties. In this case, 9-1-1 surcharge revenue may be used to pay the employees personnel related costs because the employee is qualified to answer 9-1-1 calls (state 9-1-1 and EMD certified), is expected to serve as a 9-1-1 dispatcher 100% of the time if needed, and often does work as a 9-1-1 dispatcher throughout her normal week.

**9. When can we expect to receive our first 2012 reimbursement of 911 surcharge funds from the Department of Public Safety?**

Teleco providers are required to remit the July surcharge monies to the DOR by August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Those monies will then be transferred to the Department of Public Safety and payment will be processed. The first payment should be expected early September and monthly thereafter. As a side note, counties will continue to receive 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter surcharge in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter from the service providers.

**10. How can we project our 911 surcharge revenue for the next year?**

Counties can project their revenue after July 2012 with the following formula: Total 2011 surcharge collection "divided by" \$0.75 "divided by" 12 equals average number of service user lines in their county. Take that number "times" \$0.875 "times" 12 to project your first year collection under the new surcharge. Keep in mind for 2012 you will have half a year at \$0.75 and half at \$0.875. Also, some PSAPs will receive some additional incentive funds, which will be distributed base on population.

**11. In a non-PSAP dispatch center, can the wages of the dispatchers be paid from the 911 fund?**

While counties may elect to operate non-PSAP local dispatch center or jail/dispatch operation, 911 surcharge funds cannot be used to pay their costs. Because your facility is not a 911 PSAP, none of the associated dispatcher wages can be paid with 911 surcharge funds.

**12. How much of an employee's time must be spent on 911 in order for the wage to be paid from 911 surcharge?**

At least 50% of an employee's duties must be directly related to 911 in order for any of their wages to be paid from 911 surcharge revenue.

**13. Can MSAG costs be paid from 911 surcharge funds?**

911 data costs (MSAG, ANI and ALI maintained by Intrado) should be built into your monthly bill from Century Link. Those costs and the cost for dedicated 911 trunks paid by your agency are allowable.

**14. Are business phone line costs allowable with 911 surcharge funds?**

Business phone line costs are allowable if you are operating a PSAP. If you are not operating a PSAP then business phone line costs are not allowable.

**15. We run a non-PSAP dispatch center. Are the costs we pay to update and maintain GIS data used by the PSAP we contract with allowable?**

GIS data that is maintained for your PSAP or the PSAP you contract with is an allowable expense with 911 surcharge funds. Other GIS costs for data used in a non-PSAP dispatch center would not be allowable.

**16. We run a non-PSAP dispatch center. Are training costs to keep our dispatchers current allowable with 911 surcharge funds?**

Because your facility is not a 911 PSAP, the training costs for your dispatchers would not be allowable.

**17. If we are running a non-PSAP dispatch center, can the insurance costs for communications equipment, tower, repeaters, computers, radio, and digital equipment be charged to the 911 fund?**

Because your facility is not a 911 PSAP, the insurance costs mentioned above are largely not allowable. The exception would be insurance costs for radio and paging equipment in your county which is used by your contract PSAP to dispatch local county responders. If such costs can be detailed and related as described, they would be allowable.

**18. Can the contract fees we pay to the PSAP we contract with be paid with 911 surcharge funds?**

100% of the contract price paid to the PSAP for PSAP services provided to your county may be paid with 911 surcharge revenue.

**19. Are publishing costs to run job opening ads allowable?**

If your facility is not a 911 PSAP, then position opening ads are not allowable. If you are a PSAP, position opening ads would be allowable.

**20. Is tower space rented by my non-PSAP dispatch center for the placement of radio or paging equipment allowable?**

Tower space rented by your county for the placement of radio or paging equipment that would allow the PSAP you contract with to dispatch calls in your county would be allowable if the equipment is strictly used by the PSAP to notify and dispatch calls in your county. If the radio or paging equipment is also used for unit-to-unit communications by your county responders, or your county jailers/dispatchers to communicate with local responders, only a portion of the costs that can be detailed and related as described would be allowable.

**21. What non-PSAP dispatch center maintenance costs can be paid from the 911 fund?**

Costs to purchase and maintain repeaters and paging equipment used by your contract PSAP to dispatch calls for service in your county would be allowable as long as the equipment was only used by the contract PSAP and your county law enforcement, fire and medical responders. Mobile and portable radios and warning sirens are not allowable. In a non-PSAP dispatch center, virtually all maintenance costs would not be allowable from the 911 fund. Specific questions not already addressed about allowable costs related to a non-PSAP dispatch center should be directed to the State 911 Coordinator.

**22. We are a non-PSAP dispatch center. We send some of our employees to training in Pierre as well as to some 911 conferences. Are any of these expenses allowable with 911 funds?**

Because your facility is not a 911 PSAP, these costs would not be allowable from the 911 fund.

**23. What is the range for pass/fail on the hearing test? Does it need to be completed annually or only pre-hire?**

The State 911 Board has not set hearing test standards in administrative rule. However, the board offers the following standard hearing test result guidelines for PSAPs to consider.

Hearing threshold levels (the quietest sounds you can hear) are measured in decibels (db) at different frequencies from low (500 Hz – the sound of middle C on a piano) to high (8000 Hz, a little above the highest note on a piano).

A hearing test (audiogram) result on an applicant or employee should show their ability to hear frequencies between 500 Hz and 4000 Hz at 60 db or lower in at least one ear.

20 db represents mild hearing loss  
40 db represents moderate hearing loss  
55 db represents moderate severe hearing loss  
70 db represents severe hearing loss  
85 db represents profound hearing loss  
110 db and higher represents deafness

Applicants who cannot hear frequencies between 500 and 4000 Hz at 60 db or lower in at least one ear, should not be considered for employment as a 911 dispatcher due to the nature of the job. Current dispatchers whose annual hearing test shows degraded capability to hear at or below these levels in both ears should be considered for reassignment to a position that does not have the same hearing demands as a 911 dispatcher.

Source: Occupational Health Network, Inc. of Rapid City. <http://www.occuhealthnet.com/index.htm>  
605-718-2778

**24. Is there a requirement for continuing education for call-takers or just the training requirement when you are hired?**

Continuing education and training is always recommended for PSAP employees however, at this time only the new hire training specified in SDCL 34-45-24, ARSD 50:02:04:02, and ARSD 50:02:04:03 (2) is required.

**25. Is backup power required for remote radio equipment sites as well as for the main PSAP?**

There is no current law or rule for alternate power sources at remote radio sites however, common sense would dictate such, especially since Homeland Security funds have been available since 9-11-2001 for this very thing.

**26. Are we required to have an alternate exit from the PSAP center?**

No

**27. What is the disbursement breakdown of the new \$1.25 911 surcharge effective as of July 1, 2012?**

70% or \$0.875 will go back to counties  
30% or \$0.375 goes to the 911 Emergency Fund

Of the \$0.375:

- 74% or \$0.278 goes to the 911 Coordination Fund for NG911
- 26% or \$0.097 goes to eligible PSAPs based on population and compliance with administrative rule.

**28. How will the State know where to remit each county's surcharge beginning July 2012?**

SB 174 stipulates that \$0.875 of each \$1.25 collected will be remitted back to the county (specifically the public agency which has adopted the 911 ordinance) where it was collected. The telephone providers will report to the Department of Revenue how much they collected in each county. That information will be used by DOR and DPS to calculate disbursement of correct amounts back to the counties.

**29. Is a PSAP required to maintain one 9-1-1 budget to document all PSAP expenses?**

As of January 1, 2011, all revenues and expenditures related to a PSAP are required to be handled in a “9-1-1 budget” using the “222-xxx-xxx” state accounting codes. Any general fund revenues received by the PSAP must be reported as revenue to and deposited in the 9-1-1 fund as well as be expended from and accounted for in the 9-1-1 budget. In the past, some PSAPs operated with two budgets; one for 9-1-1 surcharge revenue and expenditures and another for PSAP related general fund revenue and expenditures.

Please direct any questions or comments you may have to State 9-1-1 Coordinator Shawnie Rechtenbaugh at 605-773-8145.