



News for Immediate Release

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Nine Southwestern Counties to Share Network to Allow Enhanced 911 Capabilities

Harrisburg – Nine counties in southwestern Pennsylvania are teaming to establish a new, Internet-based 911 Emergency Services network, sharing resources to use the most advanced technology, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency said today.

The new system, which will be a joint effort of Armstrong, Butler, Lawrence, Fayette, Indiana, Mercer, Greene, Somerset and Westmoreland counties, will ultimately reduce costs by sharing resources, as well as sharing information and situational awareness.

“These counties are leading the way in Pennsylvania by establishing a model that we will duplicate across the state,” said PEMA Director Glenn Cannon.

The change will ultimately provide the foundation to increase services to those with special needs, Cannon added. The hearing-impaired community, for example, can communicate through texting and messaging, which is something the current 911 system cannot support.

“This represents the way ahead,” said Wes Hill, chairman of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Task Force (PA Region 13). “Currently, our counties do not have systems that can talk with each other or with devices other than a standard telephone - and this will change that.”

When comparing the cost of replacing the systems now in use or investing in the next generation 911 systems, Cannon said, the state can save more than \$13 million by investing in a more efficient method of communication.

The requirements for the newer system are now being assessed, along with the needs of the counties. The design phase will start in early 2012, with the counties transitioning to the new system next fall.

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