



**FOR IMMEDIATE:
September 12, 2016**

**Contact: Mark Lavigne
518.465.1473
mlavigne@nysac.org**

RESCUING 9-1-1 CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED BY ADVOCATES SEEKING TO BOOST EMERGENCY SERVICES

A statewide coalition of advocates composed of county leaders, emergency planners, and first responders today announced a public awareness effort dubbed [Rescuing 911](#), designed to raise awareness that 9-1-1 call centers across New York State are facing escalating call volumes with aging systems.

The effort was unveiled during national preparedness month to raise the profile of a widely held concern that our emergency communication systems need more dedicated resources to address call volume and communication technologies.

Rescuing 911 has the backing and support of a wide range of local officials including county executives, sheriffs, legislators, supervisors, 9-1-1 coordinators, firefighters, emergency managers, and other first responders.

John Merklinger, Director of the City of Rochester 9-1-1 Call Center, said: “Last year, millions of New Yorkers instinctively dialed 9-1-1 when faced with a fire, accident or emergency. Increasingly, those calls are coming on mobile devices – everyone in the community from senior citizens on the board walk to young people on a school bus. These are the most difficult and important calls to trace.”

Merklinger coordinates a system serving all of Monroe County that responds to 46 fire departments, 32 EMS squads, and 16 police departments.

“We’ve come a long way in 50 years, and Next Generation technologies will allow us to better pinpoint the location of the caller and the emergency and translating text messages at 9-1-1 call centers,” Merklinger continued.

The federal government has recognized the need to adapt these new technologies and they are requiring states and localities to adopt new Next Gen 9-1-1 (NG911) standards. Equipment and technology costs associated with New York’s NG911 services are expected to approach \$2.2 billion over the next 10 years.

“Unless and until counties have access to a dedicated revenue stream to help pay for the system upgrades and new communications equipment, NG911 will be out of reach for many areas of the state.

That's what this campaign is all about," said NYSAC Executive Director Stephen J. Acquario. "In order to meet the expectations of the millions of New Yorkers who are calling and texting 9-1-1 from their cell phone, we need to upgrade our systems."

In the 1960's emergency phone calls came through dedicated phone lines into the homes, and workers would then notify the fire department. As these emergency call services were consolidated under 9-1-1, the function was taken over by the state police. Today, most of the state's 9-1-1 emergency communication systems are operated and funded at the county level. However in the absence of additional resources many counties will be unable to finance public safety upgrades and equipment without a more dedicated revenue stream.

In the Capital Region, Rensselaer County, which spans from the east side of the Hudson River to the Massachusetts boarder, County Executive Kathleen Jimino has been a vocal advocate for [Rescuing911 – and has appeared in a one-minute video](#) outlining the campaign.

"Rescuing911 grew out of a grass roots discussion driven by a fundamental concern about public safety," said NYSAC President William E. Cherry, the Schoharie County Treasurer. "In every corner of the state, from rural and remote communities to our inner cities we must be prepared to answer the call."

A twitter handle - @Rescuing911 - and a Youtube Channel have been created to allow the public to engage in the effort and learn more about how to participate in the campaign. To learn more about the initiative, visit: <http://www.nysac.org/rescuing911>.

#

The New York State Association of Counties is a bipartisan municipal association serving the counties of New York State. Organized in 1925, NYSAC's mission is to represent, educate and advocate for member counties.