

Emergency 9-1-1 Surcharge

Counties operate and maintain most 9-1-1 functions in the state. The funding mechanism to operate, maintain, and upgrade 911 system capability and performance is not generating enough revenue to maintain current systems and prepare to implement the next generation of 9-1-1 technology required under federal law.

The State of New York imposes a \$1.20 public safety surcharge on all wireless telephones in order to fund 9-1-1 operations, and help first responders and law enforcement communicate and respond to emergencies. Last year, the state collected \$185 million and provided only \$75 million in grants to counties for 9-1-1 services.

Current hardware and software in many local 9-1-1 systems is reaching the end of its useful life and must be upgraded and/or replaced. In addition, the Federal government is requiring states to build next generation 9-1-1 systems that have the capability and flexibility to receive information from a variety of electronic devices in various forms. This upgrade is expected to cost billions of dollars in New York State in the coming years.

1. Develop a more appropriate implementation of the surcharge

Support efforts to apply the state and local surcharge to all devices capable of connecting to 9-1-1.

The current surcharge is only applied to contract cell phones, and exempts pre-paid wireless phones. Over the years, trends in the cellular market have shifted and the majority of cellular network providers have moved away from long term contracts. The State's revenue from this surcharge has plateaued while the number of cellular devices capable of accessing 911 systems continues to grow. As a result, the surcharge burden is placed disproportionately and unfairly on contract phone users.

If all cell phone users pay the \$1.20 surcharge, the state's revenue would increase. The State Interoperable Communications Grants (SICG), administered by the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Office of Interoperability and Emergency Communication, could be increased to provide additional grant funding to counties to help offset the costs of upgrading our 911 services.

2. Authorize all counties to charge a local surcharge

Support budget language give all counties blanket authority to apply a local surcharge

As of September 2014, all but eight counties have the authority to charge a separate local surcharge of at least \$.30 per wireless phone for E-911 services. This inequity prevents the remaining eight counties (Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, Niagara, Oneida, Oswego, Schoharie, and St. Lawrence) who wish to implement this surcharge from doing so. This surcharge, like the \$1.20, should be applied evenly across all user devices, including pre-paid phones.