

RESCUING 9-1-1 TOOLKIT

1. SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE
2. SAMPLE TALKING POINTS
3. SAMPLE OP ED
4. SAMPLE LETTER TO STATE LAWMAKER

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

County Contact

xxx.xxx.xxxx

email address

September xx, 2016

Mark Lavigne

518.465.1473

mlavigne@nysac.org

ADVOCATES KICK-OFF STATEWIDE CAMPAIGN TO BOOST SUPPORT FOR 9-1-1 SERVICES

A statewide coalition of advocates composed of county leaders, emergency planners, and first responders announced a public awareness effort dubbed *Rescuing 911*, designed to raise awareness that county-operated 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.

Please include county specific information here, such as: the number of calls your county 9-1-1- Call Center received.

[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 9-1-1 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.

Potentially include a locally produced video featuring your county.

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.

“Rescuing 911 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.

#

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. www.nysac.org

SAMPLE TALKING POINTS



BACKGROUND

- A statewide coalition of advocates composed of county leaders, emergency planners, and first responders have 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.
- 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.

The effort has a Twitter account: **@Rescuing911**; and

Additional details can be secured by visiting:

www.nysac.org/rescuing911.

- In the early 1960's emergency phone calls came through dedicated phone lines into the homes, and workers would then notify the fire department.
- In 1968, the United States designated 9-1-1 as the universal telephone number for emergency assistance.
- As these emergency call services were consolidated under 9-1-1, the function was taken over by the state police.

- In New York State, our 9-1-1 systems have evolved with technology, but the administration and the costs for the 9-1-1 program have evolved as well.

MAGNITUDE & REGIONAL SPECIFICS

- Today, most of the state's 9-1-1 emergency communication systems are operated and funded at the county level.
- Collectively, dispatchers across New York State receive **20 million calls** per year (including NYC).

Please insert your county data here:

- XXXX County's call center received nearly xxx,xxx calls on approximately xxx,xxx incidences.

Other county examples for reference are:

- Dutchess County's call center received nearly 235,000 calls on nearly 121,000 incidences.
- In Central New York's Onondaga County, call volumes topped one-half million – 570,000.
- Last year in Rensselaer County the 9-1-1 call center received 600,000 calls on 150,000 incidences.
- In the Western New York counties of Erie and Niagara Counties; 575,000 and 321,000 respectively – or nearly 900,000 calls combined.
- Monroe County received 1.1 million calls for assistance.

TECHNOLOGY UPGRADES & RESOURCES

- For all of these calls, our emergency dispatch centers still are unable to pinpoint the specific location of a person using a cell phone to dial 9-1-1.
- Counties face challenges with basic radio communication interoperability, and new technology upgrades are costly, complex and take a long time to implement.
- The cost of providing this level of service is borne by local taxpayers in the counties where the 911 call centers are located.
- Of the counties we surveyed, 15 have upgraded their systems in 2015 or 2016.
- They fund these projects through a combination of state grants; county general funds; and bonding, in affect a borrowing financed by taxpayers over a period of time.

NEXT GENERATION 9-1-1 & CURRENT FUNDING STREAMS

- It is expected that the FCC will soon mandate 911 centers to support “Next Generation 911” or NG911. NG911 involves the latest 911 technology, including upgrades for pinpointing the exact location of cell phone callers and translating text messages at a 911 Center.
- The price tag in New York State for NG9-1-1 is expected to be \$2.2 billion over the next 10 years.
- Until counties have access to a dedicated revenue stream to help pay for system upgrades and new communications equipment, becoming NG 9-1-1 capable will still be out of reach for many areas.
- The oldest and most common form of funding for 9-1-1 services is a surcharge on telephone subscribers within a designated service area. The fee is collected by the telephone service provider, who then remits it to the state.
- NYS currently collects this surcharge on landlines and cellphone contracts, but not on pre-paid cell phones. NYSAC estimates 1/3 of all cell phones are pre-paid, however these phones do not pay the \$1.20 state surcharge or the \$.30 local surcharge

DIALOGUE IS UNDERWAY AND POTENTIAL OPTIONS ARE BEING EXPLORED

- State and local governments should ensure that surcharges are applied fairly across all devices capable of accessing 9-1-1 services.
- All counties should have the same authority to charge a local public safety 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-9-1-1 services. The \$.30 local surcharge on annual cell phone contracts and the \$.35 surcharge on landline phones are the only funds that finance 9-1-1 centers in the state.
- Expand counties' access to 9-1-1 surcharge revenues. Counties should be able to access funding that is collected by the State's Public Safety Surcharge to pay for operating expenses, debt, and other 9-1-1 center associated costs.
- 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.
- 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.

SAMPLE OP-ED

Byline: Name and title

RESCUING 911

A distress call to all New Yorkers: Minutes Matter, NY's 9-1-1 Systems Ready for Upgrade.

(384 Words)

Times have changed since the nation's first 9-1-1 emergency call was made in a small Alabama town in 1968. In 2015, more than 20 million emergency calls were placed to 9-1-1 call centers across New York.

Today, at a time when the public expects service providers to be at the leading edge of technological advancements, many of New York's 9-1-1 systems, and the county officials responsible for maintaining them, are having difficulty keeping up with the costs and pace of progress in the essential field of emergency response.

In response to this growing concern, a statewide coalition of advocates comprised of county leaders, emergency planners, and first responders have launched an initiative, called *Rescuing 911*, to raise awareness that 9-1-1 call centers across New York State are facing escalating call volumes with aging systems. They have taken to social media and created a Twitter handle @Rescuing911 as well as a website: www.nysac.org/rescuing911.

In the 1960s emergency phone calls came through dedicated phone lines into the homes, and workers would then notify the fire or police departments. 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. Nearly \$1 billion is spent annually to fund call center operations in New York.

The federal government has recognized the need to adapt these new technologies and they are requiring states and localities to adopt new Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) standards. The enhanced technology will, for example, enable 9-1-1 call centers to pinpoint the location of a caller who is using a cellular phone and translate text messages. This is significant as, according to a 2015 Pew Research Center poll, 92 percent of adults own cell phones. And of these adults, 97 percent of them use text messaging.

Equipment and technology costs associated with New York's NG911 services are expected to approach \$2.2 billion over the next 10-years. NG911 will be out of reach for many areas of the state, unless counties have access to a dedicated revenue stream, which includes the ability to charge all phone lines equally, to help pay for the system upgrades and new communications equipment.

For more information, visit <http://www.nysac.org/rescuing911> or follow the campaign on Twitter – @Rescuing911 .

SAMPLE LETTER TO STATE LAWMAKERS

Dear Senator/Assembly Member,

As you may know counties control most of the 9-1-1 call centers, or Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) where 9-1-1 calls are handled by trained dispatch personnel. From a PSAP, dispatchers direct local police stations, sheriff's road patrol, EMS, State Troopers, Park Police and other agencies to the location of the call, depending on the nature of the emergency.

Our 9-1-1 emergency communication systems have saved many lives and is a core component to public safety services in New York, but much of New York's 9-1-1 infrastructure is under stress due to demand and outdated technologies. In addition, Federal standards are requiring states to build Next Generation 9-1-1 systems that have the capacity to receive information from a variety of electronic devices in various forms including text messages and images.

The public's perceptions and expectations do not match some of our current 9-1-1 call center capabilities. Counties face challenges with basic radio communication interoperability, and new technology upgrades are costly, complex, and take time to implement. The cost of fully transitioning to Next Generation 9-1-1 across the state is expected to be \$2.2 billion over the coming years, and current revenues are not adequate for making these upgrades.

As we prepare for the upcoming Legislative Session, we need your help. We need to ensure that state and county officials are working together to dedicate adequate funding for meeting the demands of 9-1-1 emergency services today and into the future. And we ask for your help in strengthening our emergency communication network Statewide.

Respectfully submitted,

County Official

What New Yorkers Need to Know About 9-1-1

- 1** 9-1-1 will soon celebrate its 50th anniversary – much has changed since 1968.
- 2** County governments are financially and functionally responsible for today's 9-1-1 systems.
- 3** In 2015, more than 20 million emergency calls were placed to 9-1-1 Call Centers across New York.
- 4** Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) systems will use enhanced capabilities to pinpoint caller location and translate text messages.
- 5** It is estimated that Next Generation 9-1-1 technology upgrades will cost approximately \$2.2 billion over the next 10-years.

Visit www.nysac.org/rescuing911 to learn more about this critical issue



@rescuing911



NYSAC
NEW YORK STATE
ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

@NYSCounties