



HOTEL INDUSTRY ADVISORY ON NEW LAWS IMPACTING TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

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1 Hotel Industry Advisory on New Federal Laws Impacting Telecommunication Systems

This document is intended to provide an overview of new U.S. federal 911 laws as related specifically to the hospitality industry. It is not a complete description of the laws, nor intended to provide a legal position or advice.

1.1 Overview

In August 2019, the FCC ruled on enforcement of new U.S. federal laws regarding 911 calls made from multi-line telephone systems having an important impact on the entire U.S. hotel industry.

Kari's Law was passed by congress on February 5, 2018, and signed into law by President Trump on February 16, 2018. Enforcement of Kari's Law began February 16, 2020. Kari's Law requires all phone systems to allow users to dial 911 directly, with or without a prefix, and the systems must report the "Dispatchable Location" of the caller to a location likely to be staffed (further details below).

Section 506 of **The RAY BAUM'S Act** was signed by President Trump on March 23, 2018. Enforcement of this law for fixed-line phones begins January 6, 2021, with additional requirements for non-fixed line (mobile, cordless, and relocatable) phones a year later. This law requires that all 911 calls include the "Dispatchable Location" of the caller as additional information provided to the 911 center.

It is important to note that state and local laws related to 911 and other emergency calls remain in force. Many states adopted laws based on Kari's Law over the past five years, and the new federal laws discussed here do not replace them; the more stringent applies so hoteliers must check local and state laws to determine which apply to specific properties.

1.2 Important Definitions:

The laws and related FCC rulings include the following important definitions:

Multi-line Telephone System (MLTS): A MLTS is any phone system where multiple phones share a path to outbound dialing. Phones in an MLTS can be fixed line (like most hotel rooms and admin phones), or non-fixed line (cordless or roaming Wi-Fi phones, or even cell phones that work with the MLTS).

Dispatchable Location: Dispatchable location is the location of the phone used to dial 911 from an MLTS. This must include the address of the building and enough additional information to allow first responders to go directly to the location of the caller.

- The FCC chose not to define what constitutes sufficient detail for dispatchable location, but instead leaves determination of sufficient detail for dispatchable location to the owner/operator of the MLTS, stating that the address of the building may be sufficient for small business, and suggesting "floor number and room number" for larger businesses such as hotels.
- We note that in the hotel environment, as was true before these laws, the need to provide first responders with access to the dispatchable location must be anticipated for certain restricted areas of the hotel, including the guest room.



2 Requirements of Kari's Law

Enforcement of Kari's Law began at the national level on February 16, 2020. The law and FCC ruling state:

- All MLTS must be pre-configured so calls to 911 can complete successfully from all MLTS whether the caller dials an access digit or not – so just dialing “911” must succeed. In hospitality we should add that PBX “class of service” must never restrict emergency calls, even if a room is vacant.
 - The law does clarify this requirement to apply to phones equipped with a dial pad and with dialing capability such as guest room phones, staff phones, house phones, etc. However, an emergency pool, exercise area, and other automatic ring-down phones are exempt.
- An immediate alert/notification (typically generated from the MLTS, call accounting system, or third party alerting system) must be made to a location within the business, or another person or location, which is likely to be staffed. The alert/notification must include:
 - A notice that a 911 call was made
 - A valid callback number for the caller placing the 911 call (this does not need to be a direct inward dialing number, it can be the caller's extension number)
 - The dispatchable location of the caller as defined in this document
 - The notification must not delay the 911 call in any way

Note that some legacy notification solutions in use today do not provide the alert or notification until after the call completes (i.e. when the caller hangs up). These systems are not compliant with the law, except as described below they are not required to be upgraded if already in use.

The FCC declined to require full-time staffing of the notification location, instead stating it must be a location where a person is “likely to see or hear” it.

This law applies to MLTS installed on or after the date of compliance – systems already in place do not need to be upgraded or replaced to comply. We note, however, that hoteliers must consider the potential ramifications of continuing to use a non-compliant solution.

There is a vague “technical feasibility” exclusion that we do not recommend hoteliers claim as a reason for not meeting the law when installing a new MLTS solution.

3 Requirements of Section 506 of The RAY BAUM's Act

Enforcement at the federal level begins January 6, 2021 for “fixed line” telephones in an MLTS, in other words, phones whose location is fixed within the hotel because they are physically connected to the MLTS (by wires, but not a SIP phone). There will be more discussion and clarification to cover “nonfixed-line” phones such as mobile phones, cordless phones, or SIP phones that can move around within the property but register to the PBX as a specific phone. Section 506 of the RAY BAUM's Act and a corresponding FCC ruling on fixed-line MLTS state:

- The dispatchable location must be transmitted to the PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point), also known as a 911 center, concurrent with the call and along with the now-standard location information such as business name and physical address.
- The FCC stated that the MLTS “industry” reported there are technologies that exist today to allow this but did not name these existing technologies other than a mention of “NENA i3.”
 - “i3” is a NENA SIP-specific solution and the only method mentioned by the FCC and has not been generally implemented by MLTS manufacturers nor the PSAPs (911 centers).

There are third party solution providers who can enable RAY BAUM's Act compliant transmission of dispatchable location to the PSAPs on older MLTS. A simple Internet search will give names of these providers. Additionally, HTNG is working to add these providers as members.

Note that the law states the dispatchable location must be delivered to the PSAP, but it does not address any requirement for the PSAP to receive it. Certain PSAPs will not likely be able to accommodate the additional dispatchable location data. This does not absolve the hotelier or MLTS owner/operator from compliance and remains a conundrum being addressed by several organizations including this HTNG workgroup.

Off-premises devices (OPX) associated with an MLTS are not defined as fixed line or non-fixed line, but must also provide to the appropriate PSAP automated dispatchable location if technically feasible; otherwise, they must provide either dispatchable location based on an end user manual update (i.e. registered location), or enhanced location information that meets the requirements.

Section 506 of the RAY BAUM's Act applies to MLTS installed on or after the enforcement date – systems already in place do not need to comply. Again, we remind hoteliers to consider the potential ramifications that may arise down the line of continuing to use a non-compliant solution.

4 Responsible Party

These laws and the FCC ruling related to them place new responsibilities on various parties with the MLTS manufacture, sale, installation, ownership and operation roles.

MLTS manufacturers:

- MLTS must be default configured by the manufacturer for compliance.
- Non-compliant systems cannot be manufactured or sold in the U.S. after the enforcement date for the law with which it will not comply.

MLTS resellers/installers:

- Compliance must be programmed and tested by the entity that configures, installs, or modifies the MLTS.
- Non-compliant systems cannot be “sold, leased or installed” after the enforcement date for the applicable law with which the MLTS does not comply.

MLTS owners/operators:

- It is specifically stated in the FCC ruling that the main responsibility for ensuring compliance is placed on the owner/operator of the MLTS. For most hotels, this means the hotelier. For fully-managed solutions, this may also include the provider of the managed service MLTS solution.



5 Conclusion

Kari's Law and Section 506 of the RAY BAUM's ACT are separate laws with distinct requirements and differing enforcement dates, as previously described in this document.

Based upon the latest publication of the law, however, the FCC clarifies for both laws the intent is not to create a financial burden to upgrade or replace PBX systems, so existing and in-place non-compliant systems do not need to be compliant until they are upgraded or replaced.

In conclusion, the overall consensus from the HTNG 911 Location Communication Workgroup is the difference in clarity between Kari's Law and the RAY BAUM's Act. Meaning, it appears the compliance requirements for Kari's Law are clear and concise, while the compliance requirements for RAY BAUM's Act are not, especially with regard to **dispatchable location**. Hoteliers will no doubt interpret this particular requirement in the strictest sense to error on the side of caution, while PBX and/or service providers may have a different interpretation.

Based upon the lack of clarity, we are in the process of reaching out to the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) for guidance. NENA has a membership of more than 15,000 members and is widely recognized as the experts in 911 standard setting. We anticipate that NENA's involvement in our workgroup will provide the proper guidance to get us further down the road to full clarity so that we can accomplish our goal of providing more concise information to the hospitality community.

Additional resources:

<https://www.fcc.gov/mlts-911-requirements>

<https://www.fcc.gov/911-dispatchable-location>