

NENA Standard for 9-1-1 Call Processing

Abstract: This NENA Standard is intended to provide a model Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the handling of calls received by Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) and to ensure consistency in the processing of emergency and nonemergency calls across jurisdictional boundaries. The document provides guidance for implementing the standard's normative requirements as well as recommendations for those operational call handling areas that should be governed by local policy.



NENA Standard for 9-1-1 Call Processing

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Prepared by:

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1 Executive Overview

This standard was developed to facilitate the processing of 9-1-1 calls by Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) and to serve as a basis for the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Use of this document standardizes the method of call handling across jurisdictional boundaries. This will provide consistency in the processing of emergency and non-emergency calls and improve service to the public. The standard went through a review process to include new technology, updated benchmarks, record keeping, and high impact events. The standard also expands to include processing of non-emergency calls, which often come into the same centers and can include emergencies.

While reviewing the previous version of this standard, it was clear that more data needs to be collected and evaluated to help support the accuracy of suggested benchmarks for call processing. This standard includes the current recommendation of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1225 that 90% of all 9-1-1 calls be answered within 15 seconds and 95% answered within 20 seconds. Efforts are ongoing to collect data from various states and provinces to validate this recommendation or to establish new recommendations based on industry standards. The remaining call taking standards (e.g., order of answering priority, answering statement protocols, information gathering, transfer) have been updated to reflect PSAP best practices.

Normative requirements (e.g., SHALL, MUST) and recommendations (e.g., SHOULD, MAY) in this standard are indicated by the appearance of the applicable term in uppercase letters. Identical terms in lowercase letters have no special significance beyond normal usage.

The standards defined within this document are intended as a minimum operational SOP. PSAPs SHOULD develop local policies as appropriate.

Table of Contents

1	EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW	2
2	DOCUMENT CONVENTIONS	6
2.1	DOCUMENT TERMINOLOGY	6
2.2	NENA INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR) AND ANTITRUST POLICY	6
2.3	REASON FOR ISSUE/REISSUE	7
3	9-1-1 CALL ANSWERING	7
3.1	DOCUMENTATION	7
3.2	SOURCE DIFFERENTIATION AND INCIDENT TYPOLOGY	8
4	CALL TAKING STANDARDS	8
4.1	STANDARD FOR ANSWERING 9-1-1 CALLS.....	8
4.1.1	Order of Answering Priority.....	9
4.1.2	Standard Answering Protocol — 9-1-1 Lines.....	9
4.1.3	Standard Answering Protocol — Text-to-9-1-1 / Real-Time Text (RTT) / Rich Communication Service (RCS)	9
4.1.4	Standard Answering Protocol — Non-Emergency Lines	10
5	9-1-1 CALL PROCESSING.....	10
5.1	STANDARD FOR PROCESSING CALLS.....	10
5.2	MINIMUM STANDARD FOR INFORMATION GATHERING.....	11
5.2.1	Location/Callback Verification	11
5.3	TRANSFERRING EMERGENCY CALLS.....	11
5.4	SPECIAL CALL HANDLING	11
5.4.1	Abandoned Call.....	12
5.4.2	Disconnected Calls	12
5.4.3	Non-Responsive Calls	12
5.4.4	Silent Calls.....	13
5.5	INDICATED EMERGENCY.....	13
5.5.1	Misdialed Calls	14
5.5.2	Misrouted 9-1-1 Calls	14
5.5.3	Intentional Misuse of 9-1-1	14
5.5.4	Alternate Routed 9-1-1 Calls	14
5.5.5	Foreign Language 9-1-1 Calls	15
5.5.6	Redundant Calls.....	15
5.6	AUTOMATED CALL PROCESSING.....	15
5.6.1	Automated Call Processing.....	15
5.6.2	Artificial Intelligence Machine Learning(AI ML) for Non-Emergency Lines.....	15
5.6.3	Alternate Reporting Methods	15
5.7	INCOMPLETE OR NO DATA	16
5.7.1	Location Information Failure	16
5.7.2	Local Number Portability.....	16
5.7.3	Caller Contact Information Failure.....	16
5.7.4	Non-Service Initialized / Non-Subscribed Identity (NSI)	16
5.7.5	Incorrect or Missing Database Information	17
5.8	TROUBLE REPORTS	17

5.8.1	Equipment or Network Problems	17
6	EMERGENCY CALL PROCESSING PROTOCOLS	17
6.1	IMPLEMENTATION	17
6.2	ONGOING MAINTENANCE / REVIEW	18
7	HIGH IMPACT EVENTS.....	19
8	IMPACTS AND CONSIDERATIONS.....	19
8.1	OPERATIONS IMPACTS SUMMARY	19
8.2	TECHNICAL IMPACTS SUMMARY	20
8.3	SECURITY IMPACTS SUMMARY	20
8.4	RECOMMENDATION FOR ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORK.....	20
8.5	ANTICIPATED TIMELINE.....	21
8.6	COST FACTORS	21
8.7	ADDITIONAL IMPACTS (NON-COST RELATED).....	22
9	ABBREVIATIONS, TERMS, AND DEFINITIONS	22
10	RECOMMENDED READING AND REFERENCES.....	27
11	APPENDICES	29
11.1	APPENDIX A — CALL PROCESS DIAGRAM	29
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	31
	SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:.....	32

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- Conformity with criteria or standards promulgated by various agencies,
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2 Document Conventions

NENA: The 9-1-1 Association improves 9-1-1 through research, standards development, training, education, outreach, and advocacy. Our vision is a public made safer and more secure through universally-available state-of-the-art 9-1-1 systems and better-trained 9-1-1 professionals. Learn more at <https://www.nena.org>.

2.1 Document Terminology

This section defines keywords, as they should be interpreted in NENA documents. The form of emphasis (UPPER CASE) shall be consistent and exclusive throughout the document. Any of these words used in lower case and not emphasized do not have special significance beyond normal usage.

1. **MUST, SHALL, REQUIRED:** These terms mean that the definition is a normative (absolute) requirement of the specification.
2. **MUST NOT:** This phrase, or the phrase "SHALL NOT", means that the definition is an absolute prohibition of the specification.
3. **SHOULD:** This word, or the adjective "RECOMMENDED", means that there may exist valid reasons in particular circumstances to ignore a particular item, but the full implications must be understood and carefully weighed before choosing a different course.
4. **SHOULD NOT:** This phrase, or the phrase "NOT RECOMMENDED" means that there may exist valid reasons in particular circumstances when the particular behavior is acceptable or even useful, but the full implications should be understood and the case carefully weighed before implementing any behavior described with this label.
5. **MAY:** This word, or the adjective "OPTIONAL", means that an item is truly optional. One vendor may choose to include the item because a particular marketplace requires it or because the vendor feels that it enhances the product while another vendor may omit the same item. An implementation which does not include a particular option "must" be prepared to interoperate with another implementation which does include the option, though perhaps with reduced functionality. In the same vein an implementation which does include a particular option "must" be prepared to interoperate with another implementation which does not include the option (except, of course, for the feature the option provides.)

These definitions are based on IETF RFC 2119 [2].

2.2 NENA Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Antitrust Policy

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2.3 Reason for Issue/Reissue

NENA reserves the right to modify this document. Upon revision, the reason(s) will be provided in the table below.

Document Number	Approval Date	Reason For Issue/Reissue
NENA-STA-020.1-2020	April 16, 2020	Initial Document
NENA-STA-020.2-2026	August 12, 2026	This document was updated and reissued to ensure content is current with industry changes and advancements.

3 9-1-1 Call Answering

3.1 Documentation

All 9-1-1 calls for services and any attempt by an agency to provide service, regardless of the type of service, SHALL be documented by the agency.

With the proliferation of Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) systems common in public safety agencies today, documentation of calls for service is essential for three reasons:

First, by establishing an agency-specific policy of documentation on all calls for service, agency administrators will be in a better position of defending, not only requests for additional funding and/or personnel with true and accurate workload measures, but will also enhance their legal position in defending themselves and their agencies against

service-related litigation surrounding an agency's alleged failure to respond to 9-1-1 dialed calls.

Second, by agency administrators providing clear guidance to the communications personnel on this key service-related issue, their staff will benefit from the "cover" provided by management in issuing policy statements and/or procedural guidelines. Clearly, experience has shown that it is the absence of clear policy statements and/or procedural guidelines that enhances successful litigation against government agencies.

Third, by establishing a policy of documentation on all calls for service, the agency can provide critical information on the sequence of factual events using audio and electronic elements such as files, call details, recordings, voice, and radio transmissions associated with the incident.

3.2 Source Differentiation and Incident Typology

Agency administrators should have sufficient statistical data on hand to provide their executive level management teams with accurate constituent calls for service information.

CAD and phone systems should be programmed to accept standardized source data for statistical purposes, and specific event codes SHOULD be developed to address all call types; examples of event codes can be found in Public Safety Communications Common Incident Type for Data Exchange, APCO 2.103 [3].

Accurate descriptors of call types should be developed. Lacking call types that properly discriminate one data element from another makes analysis of calls for service data, such as silent or abandoned/hang up, difficult. Examples of various call types are given in section 5.4 of this document.

4 Call Taking Standards

4.1 Standard for Answering 9-1-1 Calls

Ninety percent (90%) of all 9-1-1 calls, including Teletypewriter (TTY) / Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), text messages, and other direct to PSAP alerts arriving at the PSAP SHALL be answered within ($\leq$) fifteen (15) seconds. Ninety-five (95%) of all 9-1-1 calls SHOULD be answered within ($\leq$) twenty (20) seconds. A call flow diagram with these call answering intervals is available in Section 11.1 Appendix A — Call Process Diagram.

The application of the standard for answering 9-1-1 calls SHALL begin at the time of Call Arrival and extend to the time of Call Answer at the point when two-way communication can begin.

The interval between Call Arrival and Call Answer should be evaluated, at a minimum, for each preceding month using a full month of data. Determining if a PSAP has successfully

met the call interval metric of 90% in 15 seconds (and 95% in 20 seconds), should be based upon the one-month evaluation. A PSAP or Emergency Communication Center SHOULD measure this metric monthly using data from previous months. A PSAP or ECC SHOULD also measure abandoned calls and keep records.

4.1.1 Order of Answering Priority

It is the responsibility of on-duty telecommunicators to answer all incoming calls. All calls will be answered in order of priority:

1. Calls received on 9-1-1 or Alternate Emergency Access Numbers (AEAN) or technological equivalent
2. Calls received on non-emergency lines
3. Calls received on administrative and/or internal phone lines

4.1.2 Standard Answering Protocol — 9-1-1 Lines

All 9-1-1 lines at a primary PSAP SHALL be answered with the phrase “9-1-1” (“Nine One One”). Agencies MAY elect to precede “9-1-1” with their agency name. Agencies SHALL ask and verify the location of the caller first. Additionally, agencies MAY include other elements in the greeting or initial interaction, such as the type of emergency, the operator’s identification, or a notification that the call is being recorded. These optional elements SHOULD be tailored to agency policies.

4.1.3 Standard Answering Protocol — Text-to-9-1-1 / Real-Time Text (RTT) / Rich Communication Service (RCS)

Text messaging, as defined in the NENA Information Document for Handling Text-to-9-1-1 Text Message Calls in the PSAP, NENA-INF-007 [4], is a simple term for the sending of brief, electronic messages between two or more mobile phones or fixed or portable devices. RTT/RCS is defined in the NENA PSAP Readiness for RTT Information Document, NENA-INF-042 [5], as technology that allows consumers to send and receive text characters as they are typed, as well as other simultaneous media. When a Text-to-9-1-1 or RTT/RCS call is received at the PSAP, local policy may dictate whether an automated response is returned to the caller. Local policy may also determine appropriate preset responses to expedite communication with the caller. NENA-INF-007 [4] recommends that shorthand and/or abbreviations be avoided when communicating with a caller via text message.

As stated in NENA-INF-007 [4], when a text-to-9-1-1/RTT/RCS call is received, the telecommunicators will need to continue with standard information gathering practices that include, at minimum, the following:

- address or exact location of the incident
- caller’s name and callback number

- type of emergency
- time of occurrence
- hazards
- identity of those involved and their location

If a PSAP is not fully equipped to handle RTT, the text call will be processed as a Text-to-9-1-1 or TTY call. If a Canadian PSAP does not support RTT and believes that a call should be processed by text-based communication, PSAPs have the option to utilize Text-to-9-1-1.

4.1.4 Standard Answering Protocol — Non-Emergency Lines

When answering non-emergency lines, the answering agency **SHOULD** be clearly identified to the caller. Multi-agency centers **MAY** elect to answer with a generic identifier instead of a specific agency name.

Examples include the following:

- County dispatch, Operator Name/Number
- Agency name, may I help you

5 9-1-1 Call Processing

5.1 Standard for Processing Calls

Emergency calls involving an imminent threat to life, serious injury, or significant risk to property (e.g., structure fires, active violence, hazardous materials, or in-progress crimes) **SHOULD** be processed and dispatchable within 60 seconds. All other emergency calls **SHOULD** be processed and dispatchable within 90 seconds. An agency may utilize pre-alerts (e.g., early notification of location and information to responders indicating a call for service is in progress).

9-1-1 call processing begins when 2-way communication is initiated with the caller. The 9-1-1 call is considered dispatchable when it has been processed to the point that essential information, as determined by PSAP or ECC policy (e.g., location, incident type, urgency, caller information) has been verified and is sufficient to notify responders. It is then considered processed once critical information—such as incident type, location, severity, and any life-safety risk—has been collected and verified to meet criteria for classification and prioritization.

If the call must be transferred to another PSAP or ECC, the transfer **SHOULD** occur immediately upon determining the appropriate agency.

A PSAP or ECC **SHOULD** measure this metric on a weekly or daily basis for a more detailed analysis.

5.2 Minimum Standard for Information Gathering

The agency SHALL obtain and document basic information for emergency calls. At a minimum, this information SHALL include: the location of the incident, and SHOULD include callback number, nature of the emergency, and caller identity.

5.2.1 Location/Callback Verification

The telecommunicator SHALL verify all location information received and conveyed about the emergency in order to obtain the most accurate dispatchable location for emergency services response. A verified location is one where the telecommunicator has actively confirmed the accuracy of the call-provided location by prompting the caller to repeat or confirm the information back. The telecommunicator SHALL verify the caller's callback information by requesting their phone number and validating against the information received via the call handling equipment. If the number provided by the caller matches the number displayed by the call handling equipment, the number SHALL be considered verified. If the caller provides a different callback number than received on the call handling equipment, the caller SHALL be asked to repeat it again. The callback number SHALL be documented.

5.3 Transferring Emergency Calls

When calls need to be transferred to another PSAP or ECC, the telecommunicator SHALL advise the caller that they are being transferred to another PSAP or ECC and advise the caller to stay on the line while the call is being transferred. For example, "Please stay on the line; I am connecting you with (name of the agency)." The telecommunicator SHALL then initiate the transfer without delay. The telecommunicator SHALL stay on the line to provide critical call information to the telecommunicator receiving the transfer (a.k.a., "warm transfer" or "attended transfer"). If necessary, the transferring telecommunicator SHOULD relay the pertinent information, including, but not limited to:

- location
- callback number
- nature of the call
- known safety information

A local or regional policy MAY exist between primary and secondary PSAPs, or agencies that participate in a regional system, that addresses unattended call transfers; however, NENA recommends against unattended transfers.

5.4 Special Call Handling

Telecommunicators SHALL attempt to contact the caller based on available technology and local policy, regardless of the type or source, for all abandoned, disconnected, silent, or non-responsive 9-1-1 calls for service. These attempts SHALL be documented per local policy. This can be done by either Text to 9-1-1 / Real-Time Text (RTT) and/or initiating a

voice call. The method used will vary depending on the circumstance and the original method of contact. Consideration may be given to using both methods. Telecommunicators SHOULD consider in some situations, repeated callback attempts could put callers at risk depending on the known circumstances of the call.

5.4.1 Abandoned Call

If a valid callback number is available, the telecommunicator SHOULD attempt to reestablish contact once, at a minimum, based on local policy. Contact should be attempted in the manner it was initiated (i.e., text, voice, TTY), depending on agency capability and policy. A second attempt MAY be made, and other methods of contact MAY be considered. Telecommunicators may be able to utilize local resources, at the direction of their agency, to attempt to locate callback numbers or locations associated with a known number. Local policy will dictate leaving voicemail or text messages.

PSAPs SHOULD track the percentage of abandoned calls both inside and outside of High Impact Event periods. This data should be documented on a monthly basis with call answer times.

Automatic Abandoned Callback Technology is a solution that MAY be used to assist in reducing the workload by automating the process of contacting abandoned 9-1-1 callers and verifying if they intended to call 9-1-1.

5.4.2 Disconnected Calls

A Disconnected Call occurs when the call disconnects prematurely, after the call has been received at the PSAP or answered by the telecommunicator. If a valid callback number is available, the telecommunicator SHOULD attempt to reestablish contact once, at a minimum, based on local policy. Contact should also be attempted in the manner it was initiated (i.e., text, voice, TTY), depending on agency capability and policy. If a second attempt is made, different methods of contact may be considered.

5.4.3 Non-Responsive Calls

A Non-Responsive Call is an open voice line call or a non-voice communication where the caller is not responding to the telecommunicator. All Non-Responsive calls MUST be interrogated with a TTY/TDD to determine if the caller is attempting to report an emergency using a special communications device for individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, or have speech disabilities. Attempts can also be made, utilizing text, RTT9-1-1, or other methods, to make contact with callers, based on local policies and capabilities.

On a Non-Responsive Call, if the telecommunicator hears background noises that indicate an emergency is occurring, such as domestic violence or difficulty breathing, the telecommunicator SHALL initiate the appropriate response. The telecommunicator SHOULD

continue to monitor the open line until contact is established or the call is disconnected. If the call is disconnected, the telecommunicator **SHOULD** attempt to reestablish contact once, at a minimum, to determine if assistance is needed. The telecommunicator may use an alternate method of contact, if available, to attempt reestablishing a connection with the caller (e.g., text for a voice call). If no direct contact (e.g., line busy, no answer, voice mail) is made after the initial attempt, any additional attempts to contact the caller **SHOULD** be made in accordance with local policy.

Note: There may be wireless devices that have a data subscription plan only. The telecommunicator will not be able to complete voice contact but may receive a network recording that the device is unable to receive a voice call.

A Non-Responsive Call in which there is no background noise **SHALL** be treated as a Silent Call.

If service is not needed, the telecommunicator **SHALL** document appropriately to include with whom they spoke, the reason 9-1-1 was dialed (e.g., accidental, misdial), and any other explanatory or “intuitive” observations discerned from the telecommunicator’s exchange with the caller. A service disposition code **SHOULD** be added to the call record for statistical analysis and documentation.

If in doubt as to the veracity of the caller’s claim that 9-1-1 was inadvertently dialed, or that emergency services are not needed, a public safety response **SHOULD** be initiated, in accordance with local policy, to verify the caller is not in a threatening situation (i.e., welfare check).

5.4.4 Silent Calls

In compliance with Public Law 101-336, also known as the Americans with Disabilities Act, all Silent Calls **SHALL** be interrogated with a TTY/TDD to determine if the caller is attempting to report an emergency using a special communications device for individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, or have speech disabilities. Additional attempts can also be made, utilizing text/RTT 9-1-1 or other methods, to make contact with the caller, based on local policies and capabilities.

5.5 Indicated Emergency

Any evidence of an emergency situation (e.g., background noises) requires that the telecommunicator **SHALL** initiate efforts to recontact the caller to determine the nature of the incident and an accurate location for appropriate public safety response, according to SOPs established by the local agency. If attempts to contact the caller are unsuccessful, a public safety response **SHALL** be initiated based on the best location available and subject to local response policy. In the event that an emergency is clearly indicated, extraordinary attempts **SHALL** be made to locate the caller following a disconnected 9-1-1 call, regardless

of call type. The telecommunicator may need to contact the appropriate provider to obtain a valid callback number or subscriber name.

5.5.1 Misdialed Calls

A call is classified as a 9-1-1 misdial when the caller stays on the line and confirms the call was accidental and/or unintentional. The telecommunicator, at a minimum, **SHOULD** verify the location of the caller and attempt to verify that the call is actually a misdial. Any additional follow-up **SHOULD** be in accordance with local policy.

5.5.2 Misrouted 9-1-1 Calls

Calls may be received at a PSAP that are intended for another PSAP. These calls **SHOULD** be transferred to the PSAP having jurisdiction for the location of the emergency, if possible and appropriate, after advising the caller of the transfer. Direct transfer capability or other enhanced transfer/relay methods to other PSAPs **SHOULD** be available to the telecommunicator. Contact information of neighboring PSAPs bordering the PSAP jurisdiction **SHOULD** be made available on a frequently called number list or by single button transfer for ease of operation. Out-of-area PSAP contact information may be found in the NENA Enhanced PSAP Registry and Census (EPRC) [6] or via the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) [7].

Telecommunicators should be aware that a misroute may be the result of a technical failure of the 9-1-1 system, or it may be a designated alternate route. Telecommunicators should be prepared to process a call that cannot be routed to its correct destination in accordance with local policy.

5.5.3 Intentional Misuse of 9-1-1

There are many types of intentional misuses of 9-1-1. Calls may be received at a PSAP that are malicious in nature (harassing, prank, swatting, DoS, etc.). Depending on the severity or frequency, operations of the PSAP could be negatively impacted. Telecommunicators should be aware of these types of calls and be prepared to process them according to local policy. Policy steps may include the following:

1. Processing the call as legitimate until proven otherwise
2. Contacting the appropriate provider for caller information
3. Notifying appropriate personnel of the event
4. Determining an appropriate response
5. Reviewing agency records for information on previous related incidents

5.5.4 Alternate Routed 9-1-1 Calls

Alternate routed calls are activated either automatically or manually when 9-1-1 calls cannot be delivered by the 9-1-1 network to the appropriate primary PSAP. Calls of this type are those routed to another PSAP based upon the Policy Routing Rules of the original

receiving PSAP, the existing alternate routes established by legacy PSAPs, or those which are default routed. These calls **SHOULD** be transferred to the PSAP having jurisdiction for the location of the emergency, if possible and appropriate, after advising the caller of the transfer. If the PSAP having jurisdiction is unable to receive the call, the call **SHALL** be processed by the PSAP that received the call, and pertinent information relayed to the PSAP having jurisdiction in a timely manner.

5.5.5 Foreign Language 9-1-1 Calls

Telecommunicators **SHOULD** have access to foreign language translation services to assist with processing calls received via voice, text, RTT, or video.

5.5.6 Redundant Calls

Redundant calls occur when several calls have been received on the same incident. Each call **SHALL** be evaluated as a unique call to ensure that all relevant information is obtained, to include the following: location, identity of the caller, callback number, and nature of the emergency.

5.6 Automated Call Processing

5.6.1 Automated Call Processing

Where operationally beneficial, PSAPs **MAY** consider automation of certain calls, such as alarms, with such options as ASAP services or similar methods to improve call taker answering and processing efficiency.

5.6.2 Artificial Intelligence Machine Learning(AIML) for Non-Emergency Lines

Agencies can improve operations by supplementing PSAP call processing with artificial intelligence platforms to divert non-emergency calls and use the system for question and answer to process the call. Systems should validate the call is non-emergency. Ideally, the system should detect an emergency situation and redirect the caller appropriately.

5.6.3 Alternate Reporting Methods

As included in NENA STA-030.1-2025 NENA Standard for Nonconventional Means of Communicating with E-911 [8]. Application and sensor data are very dependent on vendor specifications and individual PSAP operations. At a minimum, location data **SHOULD** be established for each product providing emergency notifications. Information received **SHOULD** be processed according to PSAP or ECC policy for the method in which it is received, via 9-1-1 lines, non-emergency, or third-party application.

Applications

These can be agency-based for reporting non-emergency incidents or specifically for emergency reporting, such as those used for school or religious facility notifications.

Local governments may have applications for reporting non-emergency incidents or information sharing.

Schools may use applications for reporting active assailants or similar high acuity incidents.

Sensor Data

Data may also be received via radio talk groups/resources. In addition to applications, schools and local governments may also use sensors to detect gunshots, active assailants, traffic conditions, weather events, and more.

5.7 Incomplete or No Data

5.7.1 Location Information Failure

In the event of a failure to provide a caller location, an attempt to determine the location (ALI or PIDF-LO) from which the call originated SHOULD be made through reverse look-up, where permitted, or by contacting the telecommunications service provider, in accordance with local policy.

5.7.2 Local Number Portability

PSAPs might have difficulty determining the provider for a caller. Telecommunicators should be aware of the local number portability system that allows consumers and businesses to keep their phone number when switching providers, which supports consumer choice and competition in the communications market. The transfer or “porting” of numbers between carriers is done by a neutral third party called the Local Number Portability Administrator. Telecommunicators may need to contact multiple carriers to obtain caller information.

5.7.3 Caller Contact Information Failure

All agencies SHOULD have a method of documenting and reporting errors related to caller information, location data, and call delivery to their service providers.

5.7.4 Non-Service Initialized / Non-Subscribed Identity (NSI)

Non-Service Initialized (NSI) refers to a mobile device that lacks a valid service contract with any Commercial Mobile Radio Service provider. As a result, NSI devices may not have an associated subscriber name or address, do not provide a call-back number, and may not transmit location information.

Despite these limitations, emergency calls may still be received from NSI devices. Some of these may originate from medical alert systems provided by third-party vendors that are not affiliated with a CMRS provider.

All NSI calls SHALL be challenged with TDD activation to ensure accessibility and verify whether the caller may be using a TTY-compatible device.

Emergency calls from NSI devices **MUST** be processed based on the information available to the call taker, using standard protocols and procedures.

5.7.5 Incorrect or Missing Database Information

If information associated with a 9-1-1 call (e.g., location, address, ANI/ALI data, or other database records) is found to be incorrect, incomplete, inconsistent, or missing, the telecommunicator **SHALL** ensure that the appropriate report is completed and forwarded for correction in accordance with local policy.

5.8 Trouble Reports

5.8.1 Equipment or Network Problems

All 9-1-1 call processing problems **SHOULD** be reported immediately according to local policy. A trouble report **SHALL** be submitted to the 9-1-1 System Service Provider or appropriate supplier.

6 Emergency Call Processing Protocols

A PSAP or ECC's governing or authoritative body **SHALL**, at a minimum, establish and maintain operational standards governing the use of call taking protocols. These standards **MUST** be implemented in collaboration with stakeholders, including representatives from law enforcement, fire, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and other relevant public safety and community services.

6.1 Implementation

When a PSAP or ECC is adopting emergency call processing protocols they **MUST** take the following into consideration:

- Each **SHALL** adopt or develop call taking guidelines in the form of a protocol, policy, or procedure for all types of public safety services provided.
- Each **SHALL** adopt or develop approved telecommunicator training, certification, and recertification processes for the appropriate call taking protocol(s) with minimum requirements defined for each process.
- Each **SHOULD** establish a process requiring telecommunicators to maintain their proficiency and/or certifications and correctly apply the appropriate call taking protocols for every emergency call.
- Call taking protocols **SHOULD** be approved by the emergency call center's governing or authoritative body, as applicable.
- Call taking protocols **SHOULD** be supported through evidence-based research and outcome studies where available, and, where practicable, be externally validated by an outside standard setting organization.

- The telecommunicator recertification process SHOULD include minimum continuing education requirements and performance appraisal with a formal assessment of knowledge and skills after a predefined period of time (e.g., every 2 years).
- 9-1-1 and emergency communication centers SHALL have written policies and procedures governing proper use of, and compliance with, call taking protocols.
- Adopted call taking protocols SHOULD be used for every call for service.
- Call taking protocols SHALL contain questions to facilitate correct call categorization and prioritization.
- Call taking protocols SHALL provide a specific, reproducible set of agency-approved codes for classifying calls and assigning a response, with tiered response levels and response types associated with each code.
- Call taking protocols SHOULD contain instructions that are designed to provide specific, safe, and appropriate actions for the layperson caller in order to promote the safety, welfare, and successful outcome of the call for service.
- Each agency SHOULD establish contingency plans for large-scale incidents and disasters, which may include temporary suspension of established call taking protocols.

6.2 Ongoing Maintenance / Review

Once emergency call processing protocols have been implemented a PSAP or ECC SHOULD:

- Establish a continuous quality improvement process for evaluating protocol compliance, including each area of the protocol used (e.g., address verification, chief complaint or incident type identification, caller interrogation questions, caller instructions, call classification and coding, and overall case compliance).
- Measure protocol compliance by auditing a random sampling of cases from each telecommunicator, sufficient in size to represent or closely approximate a representative sample of all cases handled by the center.
- Establish a process of tracking compliance scores for individual call takers and dispatchers, and for the center as a whole.
- Establish a process of regularly reviewing calls for compliance to protocol, and providing feedback on an equally regular basis to individual telecommunicators.
- Establish a continuing education program based on the results of case audits, center performance reports, and any other topics relevant to the ongoing professional development of the telecommunicator staff.

For additional information on developing a quality assurance/quality improvement program, PSAPs should review the Standard for the Establishment of a Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Program for Public Safety Answering Points, APCO/NENA ANS 1.107[9].

7 High Impact Events

A High Impact Event refers to a critical incident that significantly affects public safety, infrastructure, or emergency response operations. These events require rapid coordination, data integration, and effective communication among 9-1-1 dispatch centers, first responders, and government agencies.

It is important to note that not all surges in activity qualify as High Impact Events. Routine or predictable occurrences should not be categorized as such. These include the following:

- daily commuter traffic
- public events (e.g., concerts, sporting events, recreational activities)
- seasonal influxes (e.g., tourism, conventions, retail surges)
- other events as determined by the PSAP or ECC's governing or authoritative body, as applicable.

Staffing SHOULD be proactively managed to accommodate these transient events. They should not justify deviations from standard call processing procedures nor be excluded from established call answering and processing benchmarks.

PSAPs SHOULD develop clearly defined procedures for High Impact Events. Even agencies that rarely experience such events should be prepared through contingency planning.

Note: High Impact Events SHOULD not be included in performance reporting used to evaluate compliance with industry benchmarks (e.g., call answering times and processing times).

8 Impacts and Considerations

8.1 Operations Impacts Summary

The Operations Impacts of using a standardized, structured approach to call processing in 9-1-1 and emergency communication centers include an evaluation of existing job position descriptions, training requirements, and performance evaluation instruments. In addition, it provides the ability for existing systems and processes to capture individual operator-level compliance with established call taking and response protocols and resolves other equally important operational issues.

Agencies must develop and employ a predetermined plan for assigning specific responder types, resources, and response modes (hot or cold), based on the prioritization levels determined by the PSAP's call taking protocols. Development of such a plan will involve input, oversight, and approval from all department heads of affected public safety

agencies. Agencies will need to evaluate the impact of any change in plans on costs, response times, status of available resources, and service levels provided.

8.2 Technical Impacts Summary

The Technical Impacts of using a standardized, structured approach to call taking in 9-1-1 and emergency communication centers may vary. For example, if an emergency communication center chooses to utilize a hard copy version of a protocol system, the technical implications are minimal. If, however, an emergency communication center chooses to implement software versions of a protocol system, then preexisting computer and network systems may be affected.

Agencies choosing to implement software versions of a protocol system must ensure that existing systems are assessed for compatibility, so that any additional interfaces or network modifications are considered prior to software integration.

Management information systems vary in how statistics are defined, captured, and reported. Agencies should review existing management information systems and applications to determine the impact of implementing this call answering standard and the call processing events described in this standard and NG9-1-1 Call Processing Metrics Standard, NENA-STA-019 [8].

8.3 Security Impacts Summary

The processing of 9-1-1 calls in a Next Generation environment introduces many new cybersecurity mechanisms that will impact network and PSAP operations. These changes to current practice are most significant:

- All transactions must be protected with authentication, authorization, integrity protection, and privacy mechanisms specified in NENA i3 Standard for Next Generation 9-1-1, NENA STA-010 [11], and NENA Security for Next Generation 9-1-1 Standard (NG-SEC), NENA-STA-040[12].
- Common authentication (single sign-on) and common rights management/authorization functions are used for ALL elements in the network.

Of necessity, PSAPs will be connected, indirectly through the Emergency Services IP Network (ESInet), to the global internet in order to accept calls. This means that PSAPs may experience deliberate Denial of Service (DoS) attacks on their systems. NG9-1-1 systems must manage and protect against a multitude of vulnerabilities. This will require constant vigilance to create a secure and reliable operating environment. NG9-1-1 systems must have robust detection and mitigation mechanisms to deal with such attacks.

8.4 Recommendation for Additional Development Work

The call answering and processing metrics in this standard are based on earlier NENA and NFPA documents. However, this working group found no scientific basis for their selection.

Therefore, we recommend engaging the public safety community to design and conduct a study on these metrics. The results would provide factual data to support or refine appropriate values. Call answering and processing data SHOULD be continuously collected and evaluated by all states and provinces, to ensure continued relevance and accuracy. This working group suggests studies should be conducted on a yearly basis to evaluate and provide accurate metrics.

Due to disparities in national laws and regulations, it may be beneficial to tailor a call processing standard to meet those requirements. This document can be used as a template for addressing those specific requirements. This still creates a framework in providing some consistency in how a 9-1-1 call is processed, regardless of the state or province from which the call is made.

8.5 Anticipated Timeline

Many agencies may have already implemented the provisions contained in earlier versions of this standard. In the event there are provisions that have not yet been implemented, this standard should be adopted and implemented as soon as practical.

8.6 Cost Factors

There are costs associated with the implementation of this standard such as a quality assurance program. Typical costs associated with implementation of this standard include, but are not limited to, the following:

- purchase of a commercial protocol system
- development of an agency-specific protocol system
- initial trainer and telecommunicator training on the use of the protocol system
- QA processes and the personnel required to perform this function
- ongoing telecommunicator training
- recertification of telecommunicators
- integration and interfacing with current computer and network systems (if applicable)
- initial and ongoing consultation with responder agencies
- public education
- recurring costs (software licensing, maintenance agreements, hardware/software media updates)

Costs are associated with the implementation or upgrading of management information systems to properly measure call handling performance.

8.7 Additional Impacts (non-cost related)

The information or requirements contained in this NENA document may impact the legal statutes for states that have incorporated NENA standards with key performance indicators into their 9-1-1 legislation, based on the analysis of the authoring group.

9 Abbreviations, Terms, and Definitions

See the NENA Knowledge Base (NENAbk) [1] for a Glossary of terms and abbreviations used in NENA documents. Abbreviations and terms used in this document are listed below with their definitions.

Term or Abbreviation (Expansion)	Definition / Description
Abandoned Call	An emergency Call in which the caller disconnects before the Call can be answered by the PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point).
ACD (Automatic Call Distributor)	Equipment that automatically distributes incoming calls to available PSAP attendants in the order the calls are received, or queues calls until an attendant becomes available.
AEAN (Alternate Emergency Access Number)	A 10-digit unlisted number, answered on a 24/7 basis, used to receive VoIP calls until these calls can be delivered to the selective router serving the PSAP. After E9-1-1 implementation, these lines should only be used for specific routing circumstances. It can also be utilized to receive misrouted calls from other PSAPs not within the selective routing service area, operator-assisted emergency calls, default-routed wireless calls, calls routed to the PSAP via private call centers, and calls relayed from telecommunications relay services. Caller identification should be included as an option.
ALI (Automatic Location Identification)	The automatic display at the PSAP of the caller's telephone number, the address/location of the telephone, and supplementary emergency services information of the location from which a call originates.
Auto Greeting	Prerecorded localized message played upon initial connection to the individual telecommunicator; this is a convenience feature to standardize call answering. (e.g., "You have reached 9-1-1, please stay on the line.").
Call Answer	The condition when a call is delivered to and acknowledged by a telecommunicator (or an auto greeting), and two-way communication can begin.

Term or Abbreviation (Expansion)	Definition / Description
Call Arrival	The condition when a call is presented to the PSAP CPE, which may include acknowledgement by an auto greeting.
CAD (Computer-Aided Dispatch)	A computer-based system that aids PSAP Telecommunicators by automating selected dispatching and record keeping activities.
Disconnected Call	A call placed to 9-1-1 in which the call is prematurely terminated after the call is received at the PSAP (for example, an ACD queue) or after being answered by the PSAP telecommunicator. Possible reasons for these calls to disconnect include: (1) Caller establishes contact but caller's situation safety demands disconnecting (e.g., kidnapping); (2) caller encounters a signal problem (e.g., mobile network coverage is lost); (3) caller encounters problems with mobile device (e.g., low battery on phone).
DoS (Denial of Service)	A type of cyber-attack intended to overwhelm the resources of the target PSAP and deny the ability of legitimate users of the target to use the normal service the target provides.
ECC (Emergency Communications Center)	A facility designated to receive and process requests for emergency assistance, which may include 9-1-1 calls, determine the appropriate emergency response based on available resources, and coordinate the emergency response according to a specific operational policy.
ECRF (Emergency Call Routing Function)	A functional element in NGCS (Next Generation Core Services) which is a LoST (Location-to-Service Translation) protocol server where location information (either civic address or geo-coordinates) and a Service URN serve as input to a mapping function that returns a URI used to route an emergency call toward the appropriate PSAP for the caller's location or towards a responder agency.
EMS (Emergency Medical Service)	A service providing out-of-hospital acute care and transport to definitive care, to patients with illnesses and injuries which the patient believes constitute a medical emergency.
ESInet (Emergency Services IP Network)	A managed IP network that is used for emergency services communications, and which can be shared by all public safety agencies. It provides the IP transport infrastructure upon which independent application platforms and core services can be deployed, including, but not restricted to, those necessary for

Term or Abbreviation (Expansion)	Definition / Description
	providing NG9-1-1 services. ESInets may be constructed from a mix of dedicated and shared facilities. ESInets may be interconnected at local, regional, state, federal, national, and international levels to form an IP-based internetwork (network of networks). The term ESInet designates the network, not the services that ride on the network.
ESRP (Emergency Service Routing Proxy)	An i3 functional element which is a SIP proxy server that selects the next hop routing within the ESInet based on location and policy. There is an ESRP on the edge of the ESInet. There is usually an ESRP at the entrance to an NG9-1-1 PSAP. There may be one or more intermediate ESRPs between them.
FCC (Federal Communications Commission)	An independent U.S. government agency overseen by Congress, the commission is the United States' primary authority for communications law, regulation, and technological innovation. The FCC regulates interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories.
Misrouted Call	A Call routed to a PSAP that should not have received it due to a provisioning error (for example in the ECRF, in the PRF, or the LIS) or other misconfigurations.
NENA (National Emergency Number Association)	Referred to as "The 9-1-1 Association", NENA (National Emergency Number Association) is fully dedicated to the continued improvement and modernization of the 9-1-1 emergency communication system. NENA's approach includes research, standards development, training, education, certification, outreach, and advocacy through communication with stakeholders. As an ANSI-accredited Standards Developer, NENA works with 9-1-1 professionals, public policy leaders, emergency services and telecommunications industry partners, like-minded public safety associations, and more. Current NENA activities center on awareness, documentation, and implementation for Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) and international three-digit emergency communication systems. NENA's worldwide members join with the emergency response community in striving to protect human life, preserve property, and maintain the security of all communities.

Term or Abbreviation (Expansion)	Definition / Description
NFPA (National Fire Protection Association)	A global self-funded nonprofit organization, established in 1896, devoted to eliminating death, injury, property and economic loss due to fire, electrical and related hazards. Delivers information and knowledge through more than 300 consensus codes and standards, research, training, education, outreach and advocacy; and by partnering with others who share an interest in furthering their mission.
NG9-1-1 (Next Generation 9-1-1)	An IP-based system comprised of hardware, software, data, and operational policies and procedures that: (A) provides standardized interfaces from emergency call and message services to support emergency communications; (B) processes all types of emergency calls, including voice, data, and multimedia information; (C) acquires and integrates additional emergency call data useful to call routing and handling; (D) delivers the emergency calls, messages, and data to the appropriate public safety answering point and other appropriate emergency entities; (E) supports data or video communications needs for coordinated incident response and management.
Non-Responsive Call	Someone has dialed 9-1-1, and the call has been successfully answered by the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) telecommunicator; the caller did not speak; there is audio on the line such as music, yelling, and/or ambient background noises can be heard (on a voice call); however, a caller is not responding to the PSAP telecommunicator. On non-voice communications, the caller does not respond to prompting by the PSAP telecommunicator.
NSI (Non-Service Initiated)	A mobile device for which there is no valid service contract with any CMRS provider. As such, NSI devices have no associated subscriber name and address, do not provide a call-back number, and may not provide location.
PIDF-LO (Presence Information Data)	An extension to PIDF that contains location information.

Term or Abbreviation (Expansion)	Definition / Description
Format – Location Object)	
PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point)	A physical or virtual entity where 9-1-1 calls are delivered by the 9-1-1 Service Provider.
RCS (Rich Communications Services)	An upgraded messaging protocol that enhances traditional text messages (SMS) with features like high-resolution media sharing, read receipts, typing indicators, and interactive buttons.
RTT (Real-Time Text)	A text transmission that is character at a time, as in TTY. Technology that allows consumers to send and receive Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) RFC 4103 text characters, as they are typed, as well as audio simultaneously.
Silent Call	A call placed to 9-1-1 that has successfully passed through the 9-1-1 network and has been answered by a 9-1-1 telecommunicator. Aside from the 9-1-1 telecommunicator, no voice communication is heard from the caller's end of the emergency call. The presence of ambient (background) noise (e.g., music, crying, yelling) is not detectable. The telecommunicator is unable to discern that there is someone at the other end of the call.
SIP (Session Initiation Protocol)	A protocol specified by the IETF (RFC 3261) that defines a method for establishing multimedia sessions over the Internet. Used as the call signaling protocol in VoIP, NENA i2, and NENA i3.
TTY (Teletypewriter)	A device or application used to send or receive communication character by character using Baudot signaling. Also known as TDD (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf).
URI	An identifier consisting of a sequence of characters matching the syntax rule that is named <URI> in RFC 3986. It enables uniform identification of resources via a set of naming schemes. A URI can be further classified as a locator, a name, or both. The term "Uniform Resource Locator" (URL) refers to the subset of URIs that, in addition to identifying a resource, provides a means of locating the resource by describing its primary access mechanism (e.g., its network "location"). The term "Uniform Resource Name" (URN) has been used historically to refer to both URIs under the

Term or Abbreviation (Expansion)	Definition / Description
	"urn" scheme [RFC 2141], which are required to remain globally unique and persistent even when the resource ceases to exist or becomes unavailable, and to any other URI with the properties of a name. An example of a URI that is neither a URL nor a URN is sip:psap@example.com.

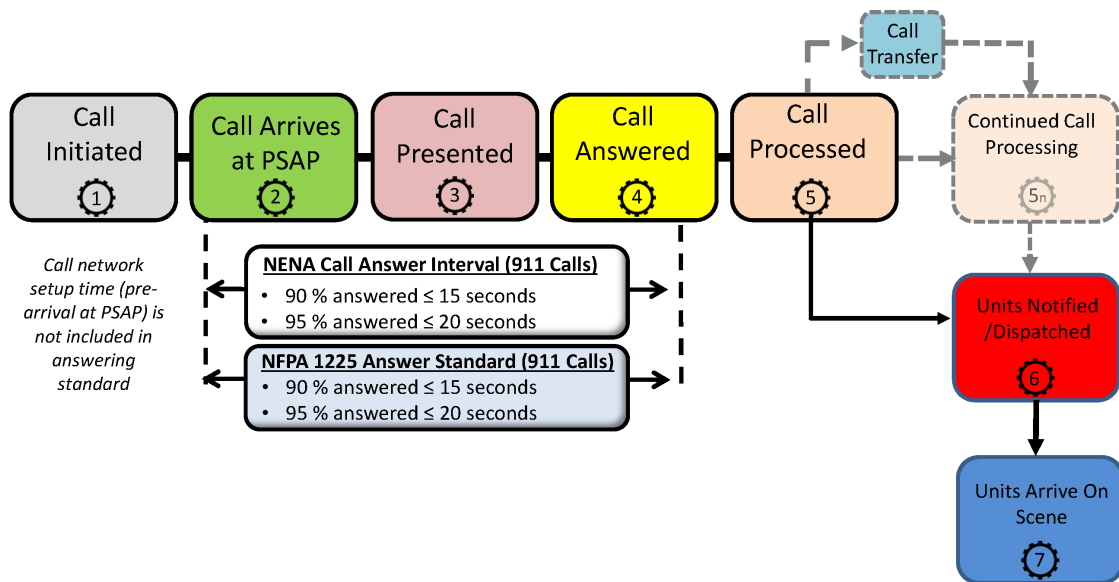
10 Recommended Reading and References

- [1] National Emergency Number Association. "NENA Knowledge Base Glossary." Updated August 20, 2025. <https://kb.nena.org/wiki/Category:Glossary>.
- [2] Internet Engineering Task Force. *Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels*. S. Bradner. [RFC 2119](#), March 1997.
- [3] Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials International. *Public Safety Communications Common Incident Types for Data Exchange*. [APCO 2.103.2-2019](#). Daytona Beach, FL: APCO, approved October 18, 2019.
- [4] National Emergency Number Association. *NENA Information Document for Handling in the PSAP*. [NENA-INF-007.1-2013](#). Alexandria, VA: NENA, approved October 9, 2013.
- [5] National Emergency Number Association. *NENA PSAP Readiness for Real-Time Text (RTT) Information Document*. [NENA-INF-042.1-2021](#). Alexandria, VA: NENA, approved January 20, 2021.
- [6] National Emergency Number Association. *NENA Enhanced PSAP Registry and Census (EPRC) 2.0*. <https://eprc-nena.hub.arcgis.com/pages/nena-eprc>.
- [7] National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System. <http://nlets.org>
- [8] National Emergency Number Association. *NENA Standard for the Non-Conventional Means of Communicating with E9-1-1*. [NENA-STA-030.1-2025](#). Alexandria, VA: NENA, approved August 13, 2025.
- [9] Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials International and National Emergency Number Association. *Standard for the Establishment of a Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Program for Public Safety Answering Points*. [APCO/NENA ANS 1.107.1-2015](#). Daytona Beach, FL: APCO, approved April 2, 2015.
- [10] National Emergency Number Association. *NG9-1-1 Call Processing Metrics Standard*. [NENA-STA-019.2-2022](#). Alexandria, VA: NENA, approved September 21, 2022.
- [11] National Emergency Number Association. *NENA i3 Standard for Next Generation 9-1-1*. [NENA-STA-010.3-2021](#). Alexandria, VA: NENA, approved July 12, 2021.

- [12] National Emergency Number Association. *NENA Security for Next Generation 9-1-1 Standard (NG-SEC)*. [NENA-STA-040.2-2024 \(originally 75-001, v1\)](#). Alexandria, VA: NENA, approved October 28, 2024.

11 Appendices

11.1 Appendix A — Call Process Diagram



- The NFPA standard (NFPA 1225) is included here for context of other industry measurements. Dispatch measurements for NFPA excludes calls where EMD, language line services, hazmat assistance are rendered. Police events are not included in the dispatching standard.
- NENA Call Answer Interval is further clarified that calls should be answered in Less Than or Equal to either 15 seconds or 20 seconds as appropriate.
- Units Notified is defined as either audible voicing of units via radio or the instant in time when a CAD system is marking units assigned to a single specific emergency event.
- The PSAP or ECC defines what the jurisdiction considers to be an emergency call when applying the call answer standard.
- All operational steps in the lifecycle of a 9-1-1 call are provided for referential purposes only.

Appendix B — Wireless Service Providers Emergency Contact Information

PSAP service level agreements should include the contact information details, or can be found on the NENA Company Identifier Program web page at <https://companyid.nena.org>. This information should be made available to telecommunicators to obtain immediate information associated with an emergency call.

Wireless service provider contact information changes periodically, therefore, PSAPs SHOULD review quarterly and update as necessary.

(Sample – insert 24x7 emergency contact information [voice and fax] for your jurisdiction in the table below)

Table 11-1 Wireless Service Providers Emergency Contact Information

Carrier	24x7 Telephone number(s)
ALLTEL (ACIW)	
AT&T Mobility (ATTMO)	
Budget Mobile	
Consumer Cellular	
H2O Wireless/Locust Communication	
Jitterbug	
MetroPCS	
Peerless Network Operations Center (PLNW)	
Pocket Communications	
Simple Mobile	
Sprint/Nextel	
Telesource/Terracom	
T-Mobile/MetroPCS	
Tracfone	
US Cellular	
Verizon (VZW)	
Virgin Mobile	

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