

Amanda Price
Commissioner

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STATE OF ALASKA



Department of
Public Safety

Anchorage, Alaska

PRESS RELEASE

DPS Moves Forward with Wireless 9-1-1 Implementation and Consolidation of Emergency Communication Services

The State of Alaska to bring consistent 9-1-1 services to all Alaskans

January 7, 2020 (ANCHORAGE) – Two major initiatives, Wireless 9-1-1 and consolidation of emergency communication services, are underway to greatly improve law enforcement services to all Alaskans. The Department of Public Safety (DPS) is providing a one-year courtesy heads up to telecommunication companies statewide that a formal request for the implementation of Wireless 9-1-1 will occur. Under Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules, a wireless carrier has six months to deploy the enhanced capabilities when the formal request is made.

The ability to call 9-1-1 from a wireless (cellular) telephone and have a reliable call back number as well as location provided to the emergency services dispatcher is an essential component in providing public safety services. If the call drops, having a call back number is essential in gathering the nature of the emergency as well as staying in contact with the caller for up to date information exchange. Having a caller's location, especially for callers off the road system, is crucial in finding an incident location and appropriately directing law enforcement, fire, rescue or emergency medical responders.

Wireless 9-1-1 has been implemented in many boroughs and municipalities as a result of formal requests to wireless carriers. While this service may be available in populated areas, 80% of Alaska's geography lacks this important technology.

The purpose of this heads up is to allow for carriers to conduct upgrades along with their already-scheduled maintenance at their remote cellular tower locations. This will reduce financial strain on the carriers while they work to meet FCC Wireless 9-1-1 requirements.

In support of the effort to bring Wireless 9-1-1 services to all of Alaska, DPS is building an Emergency Communications Center (ECC) in Anchorage to consolidate its communications

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operations from existing locations in Wasilla, Soldotna and Ketchikan. The consolidation effort is expected to be completed in two years. DPS expects the consolidation effort to significantly reduce annual operating costs.

The Anchorage ECC will complement the existing DPS ECC in Fairbanks and be capable of receiving emergency calls and dispatching DPS resources statewide. The centers will leverage existing statewide radio communications capability, the new wireless 9-1-1 system as well as a computer aided dispatch (CAD) system. The geographic diversity ensures continuous operations of DPS's emergency communications services in the event of a regional disaster, such as an earthquake. Implementing the CAD system and the upgrade to Wireless 9-1-1 allows for increased officer safety and better public safety services to all Alaskans.

The new CAD system will utilize geographic information from local jurisdictions as well as topographic maps to display calls for service and to dispatch the appropriate resources. The two DPS emergency communications centers are primarily for DPS operations. They will be secondary to existing local jurisdiction 9-1-1 call centers.

"Public Safety for all Alaskans is being addressed with this major telecommunications upgrade and the consolidation of dispatch services," said Commissioner Amanda Price, Department of Public Safety. "In addition to being a significant improvement in our ability to provide comprehensive public safety services to rural Alaska, these efforts will benefit every person that recreates in, or traverses, our immense backcountry."

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