



To: Members of the House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness
From: Margie Moulin, Director of Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon (ECSO)
Date: March 7, 2017
RE: Overview of 9-1-1 in Jackson County Oregon

Introduction:

Chair Evans, Members of the committee. My name is Margie Moulin, and I am the Director of Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon (ECSO), which is the 9-1-1 call center and police and fire dispatch Center for all of Jackson County and Crater Lake National Park.

Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon (ECSO)

ECSO answers both 9-1-1 and non-emergent calls, and provides dispatching services to 30 public safety agencies, including the Cities of Medford, Ashland, Central Point, Butte Falls, Eagle Point, Jacksonville, Phoenix, Talent and Rogue River, as well as the Jackson County Sheriff's Department. We also dispatch for all of the fire departments within Jackson County, and have contracts Southern Oregon University, Crater Lake National Park, and USFS, BLM, OLCC, and the Oregon Department of Forestry.

ECSO is governed under ORS 190, with an Intergovernmental Council consisting of representatives from each of our jurisdictions, and a Chief Executives Officer Board. The Chief Executives Officers Board is the ultimate governing authority comprised from our five largest agencies, and two at large members.

We currently have 51 employees, 39 of which are Telecommunicators. All of our Telecommunicators are cross-trained to handle 9-1-1 and non-emergent lines, as well as dispatching for Law, Fire & EMS Agencies.

During 2016, we handled just over 427,000 calls, 111,737 of which were calls to 9-1-1.

Our call volume has increased by 26% in 6 years. This year I have asked our budget committee for approval to increase our staff by one. If approved, this will add a 40th Telecommunicator to our staff to help with the increased workload.

ECSO is funded primarily by the police and fire agencies that subscribe for our dispatching services. Fifteen percent of our current budget is derived from the 9-1-1 tax; Seventy-six percent by subscriber fees and the remaining nine percent from other revenue such as public private partnerships, or public records requests.



Consolidation

Prior to 2010, Jackson County had multiple PSAP's. By 2004, there were only two, Rogue Valley Consolidated Communications (RVCCOM), serving the cities of Medford and Ashland, and Southern Oregon Regional Communications (SORC), serving the rest of the county. Consolidation discussions occurred for over 30 years in Jackson County before plans began in 2008 to work on bringing the two centers together into a single, consolidated 911 PSAP for the entire county.

Consolidating was a result of a lot of hard work, strong relationship building, and commitment from our Public Safety entities to make it work. Neither center had a facility large enough to house a consolidated center, nor did either center have a modern, essential service rated facility that could maintain its integrity during an event such as an earthquake. To enable us to consolidate, Jackson County built a facility to house the two PSAP's while consolidation efforts continued. In November 2009, SORC moved into the new building, quickly followed by RVCCOM in February of 2010. On July 1, 2010, the two entities merged, becoming a single, consolidated 9-1-1 PSAP and Dispatch center for the entire county, and for Crater Lake National Park.

There were many challenges to consolidation. Costs were part of the consideration. All entities had hoped to see a cost savings, however, moving to a new facility as a consolidated entity added costs for which the entities had not previously been solely responsible. The two PSAPs had different funding models, different governance, and different expectations of duties. As the two combined, philosophies had to merge, and training was extensive. There were many cultural differences, and direct oversight varied between the two entities.

Ultimately, consolidation occurred organically due to the commitment of all of the involved public safety agencies, regardless of cost. Some agencies have seen a cost savings, but several have seen increases due to facility costs that were previously shared with other tenants in the same facility.

Looking Forward:

As we look to the future, we have many challenges to face, not only at ECSO, but also in all 9-1-1 PSAP's.

Currently, ECSO is working with both Josephine and Klamath Counties to implement the ability to text 9-1-1 in Southern Oregon. We expect to go live with text to 9-1-1 by the end of April. It is highly important to provide this service to our citizens, and we look forward to following the example set by our colleagues in the northern section of the state by adding this ability.



It is also imperative to look for way to stabilize our funding. ECSO's public safety partner agencies struggle with having to pay such a large portion of our funding, and try to balance that with their own needs for more police officers, firefighters and medics as activity levels continue to rise.

Our Council is currently discussing funding options, such as the possibility of pursuing a special district, asking the taxpayers to help pay for our services, removing some of the financial burden from our public safety agencies.

In addition, since the FCC mandated narrow banding of our VHF frequencies, our agencies have experienced a loss in radio coverage throughout Jackson County. Along with this, our radio infrastructure is outdated and needs replacement. We are currently working with a consultant to provide us with a conceptual design to replace our radio system and provide adequate coverage for all of public safety in Jackson County. We expect this cost to fall somewhere near \$20 million.

We are also preparing for Next Gen 9-1-1. Text to 9-1-1 is only a portion of what is coming. In the future, we still need to determine how we will deal with the ability to receive pictures, video, and more. It is already difficult to find employees due to the high stress of our jobs. Throughout Oregon, and across the nation, our profession is working to determine the impact pictures and video will have on our staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions."