



Department of Communications

**Bob Cozzie
Director**

**Testimony Before the
House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness
*Presented by: Mark Spross
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Chair Evans and members of the committee, my name is Mark Spross and I appear before you today representing the Oregon combined chapters of APCO-NENA to present an overview of the general operations of Clackamas County Communications where I serve as the Operations Manager.

Clackamas County Communications, also known as C-COM, is a consolidated 9-1-1 center providing emergency and non-emergency call taking along with emergency dispatching functions for a population of 321,430. We provide dispatch services to 14 police, fire and medical agencies. These agencies make up our user board and include the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office, Canby, Gladstone, Molalla, Oregon City, and Sandy Police Departments along with Clackamas Fire District #1, Canby, Colton, Estacada, Hoodland, Molalla and Sandy Fire Districts and Gladstone Fire Department. C-COM also holds several contracts to provide emergency dispatching services to agencies that do not make up our user board. Some examples include the United States Forest Service Law Enforcement Division, County Medical Examiner's Office, and Parole and Probation, to name a few. Clackamas County covers 1,879 square miles and is the third most populous county in the state with approximately 47 percent of our population living in urban locations. This puts Clackamas County in a unique position of having a broad mix of urban and rural calls.

In 2016, C-COM received 300,845 calls of which 121,432 were 9-1-1 emergency calls. C-COM is currently budgeted for 35 dispatch staff and 12 support and administrative employees. Although we are budgeted for 35 telecommunicators, we currently have 24 fully certified telecommunicators with 5 in various stages of training. Industry standards indicate that our center should be staffed with approximately 50 to 60 dispatchers to adequately handle all calls for service. Our telecommunicators go through an extensive training program which takes approximately 14-18 months to complete for full certification and includes required certification with the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST).

C-COM is a department of Clackamas County but receives no direct general fund support. The entire budget is made up of user fees, revenue from the 9-1-1 tax, or miscellaneous revenue which is received from contracts with agencies like US Forest Service or intergovernmental agreements with other county departments like Weighmasters or Community Corrections. The budget proposed for 2017-18 is \$8,465,816. This budget only covers the operations within our



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center and does not include what is needed to operate, maintain, and upgrade the main radio system within the county. C-COM works very closely with the Clackamas 800 Radio Group (C-800), which is an ORS 190 organization who maintains the radio system. Our organizations work on a shared radio network with Washington County and just recently passed a \$58.7 million dollar bond to fix and upgrade the current radio system and ensure interoperability with surrounding jurisdictions we use daily for emergency response. With only 19 percent of our budget covered by the 9-1-1 tax, our users are responsible to provide the remaining funds. At C-COM our users split their fees between police and fire with our police agencies paying 65% of the budget based on the population they serve and our fire agencies paying for 35% based on the previous three year average of their call volume. We consider ourselves lucky to have a very engaged and supportive user board that continually works to find appropriate funding for 9-1-1 operations. As the cost of providing emergency services continues to rise along with the cost of technology needed to support operations, our users are worried about how to balance the staffing and equipment needs they have within their agencies, while ensuring a properly staffed and equipped dispatch center.

As the manager of the center I am continually trying to balance my time looking at our overall operations while attempting to determine what we can bring in to support our users while meeting expectations, laws, governance, or rulings from our citizens, users, elected officials, and state and federal agencies.

Part of the expectations is the roll out of the Next Generation 9-1-1 network. In my opinion, NextGen 9-1-1 is the rebirth of the entire 9-1-1 system. Although I could spend a great deal of time talking about NextGen 9-1-1, the first part of this journey for us was the implementation of text to 9-1-1 in the Portland Metropolitan and Northern Coast area. C-COM was one of the first agencies to go live with text to 9-1-1 and was the first center to receive a live 9-1-1 text in Oregon. We certainly hope that anyone needing help will still call us on 9-1-1 since the ability to interact with the person needing assistance is much faster. We are excited to have another means for those needing help to reach us. We have already seen the benefit of text to 9-1-1 in our area. Two examples was a passenger in a vehicle reporting the driver as being intoxicated. We also had a much more serious incident with a domestic violence victim being kidnapped and driven to a remote area. The kidnapping started in Portland but the victim was able to text C-COM and gave us updated information on her location. We were able to send Deputies and intervened in an incident that would have ended terribly; where the suspect indicated he was going to sexually assault and seriously injure or kill the victim.

Although we have text to 9-1-1 available, we have a long way to go to have the right technology in place. Most citizens assume we get accurate location information when they call or text. This is not true. As a matter of fact, a citizen can get much more accurate information on their mobile



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device then we receive in the emergency 9-1-1 center. We also don't have the networks or technology in place today to receive or send information like crash data from vehicles to emergency responders or hospitals. We believe the NextGen network will update our 9-1-1 centers to enable us to provide better and faster lifesaving information to our citizens and public safety responders.

I could certainly share much more information about C-COM and 9-1-1 in Oregon but being mindful of your time, I will be happy to answer any questions you may have, or make myself available to provide additional information to the committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.