

DATE ISSUED: May 13, 2005

REPORT NO. 05-117

ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee
Agenda of May 18, 2005

SUBJECT: San Diego Police Department's "E9-1-1" System

SUMMARY

This is an informational item only. No action is required on the part of the Committee or the City Council.

BACKGROUND

The San Diego Police Department has partnered with the State of California and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to implement enhanced 9-1-1 services for wireless telephone users throughout the City of San Diego. This statewide project will create a system where wireless callers reporting an emergency via 9-1-1 will be connected immediately with the appropriate public safety agency, eliminating transfer calls routed through the California Highway Patrol and the associated time delays. In addition, global positioning will be added to capture physical locations of 9-1-1 callers to help emergency services locate them quickly without the need for voice communication. This report was requested by the PS&NS Committee Chair to update Council members on the status of the Police Department's program.

DISCUSSION

In accordance with FCC Order 94-102, the California 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Office launched this project to prepare all California public safety answering points (PSAP) to accommodate information delivered by wireless carriers under Phase I and Phase II of the Order. Phase I specifies the telephone number and receiving cell site or location sector of the 9-1-1 caller be delivered to the PSAP. Phase II adds a more precise location, usually within 50 to 100 meter accuracy or better, in the form of latitude and longitude coordinates, substantially enhancing the Phase I information.

As of May 9, 2005, San Diego Police Communications began receiving wireless 9-1-1 calls from Verizon wireless telephone customers. The Verizon wireless calls originating on freeways will continue to be answered by CHP Communications Center while all other calls in the city are routed directly to SDPD Communications Center. Most of the major wireless vendors, including Sprint and Cingular, have begun testing their cell sites for compatibility and will come online with the project in the near future. Our goal is to have all major wireless vendors online and operational with the city's 9-1-1 wireless program by June 1, 2005.

The State 9-1-1 program determines funding allotments based on the number of 9-1-1 calls the department answers annually. Typically, a department will replace or upgrade 9-1-1 equipment every five years. State 9-1-1 funds are distributed based on the anniversary date of the last upgrade. Most agencies incorporate costs related to wireless 9-1-1 with their overall upgrade.

The State 9-1-1 program has also made available a one-time funding allotment for the sole purpose of adding a Geographical Information System (GIS) to the SDPD 9-1-1 system. This GIS mapping is provided so wireless 9-1-1 calls can be plotted on a map enhancing the phone dispatcher's ability to get emergency services to the scene quickly and efficiently. The San Diego Police Department has been granted these additional funds to cover the cost of adding GIS mapping to our 9-1-1 dispatch center.

The San Diego Police Department actively used State 9-1-1 funds to pay for the necessary enhancements required to answer wireless 9-1-1 calls. Unfortunately, this program does not provide funds to cover personnel costs, only 9-1-1 related communications equipment. The implementation of this program will increase 9-1-1 telephone call volume by approximately twenty-five to forty percent. Based on recent call history, 9-1-1 calls will probably increase from 400,000 to between 500,000 and 700,000 calls annually. The impact of this increase means other lower priority calls will end up waiting longer to be answered. Historically, when callers become frustrated on non-emergency lines, they hang up and dial 9-1-1 for non-emergency calls, adding further volume to the total number of incoming 9-1-1 calls.

SUMMARY

The Police Department strongly supports the E911 Wireless Program. It enables dispatchers and police officers to quickly locate, via GPS and GIS mapping, an individual in need of emergency services, while reducing police response times. This program will enhance public safety for those citizens using wireless phones during emergency situations.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by:

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