

### **A Next Generation 911 Network**

Trends in communications mobility and convergence have put the 9-1-1 system at a crossroads. New wireless and VoIP technologies have underscored the limitations of the current 9-1-1 infrastructure. The nation's 9-1-1 system, based on decades-old technology, cannot handle increasingly mobile communications, and the progressively more popular digital and Internet based communications that enable text, voice, images, and video to become increasingly commonplace in personal communications. Yet our nation's emergency call-takers are being asked to do one of the most important jobs in our society using communication technology that most businesses have moved far beyond. Simply put, we are relying up increasingly outdated analog technology in an overwhelmingly digital world.

There is now a growing consensus on the shortcomings of the present 9-1-1 system and the need for a new, more capable system. Taking advantage of advances in information and communications technologies can mean a more feature rich IP-enabled emergency response system. Many business, government, and public safety communications systems are transitioning to VoIP and IP-based networks because they are more efficient, cost-effective, and enable convergence of voice and data in entirely new ways. These technologies enable major advances in the ability of all users and public safety responders to send or receive critical information to, from and beyond the emergency services network, thus making possible a set of potentially life-saving advances in emergency services.

### **The benefits of transitioning to an IP-based emergency network**

America's emergency service leaders are actively working toward the development of a feature rich IP-enabled emergency response system. By migrating to such an IP-based emergency network, 911 calls might oneday include:

- **Automatic language preferences.** By pre-selecting a user's language preference, an emergency call could be automatically routed to a call taker that speaks the caller's native language, potentially saving time and saving lives.
- **Information on a caller's medical status.** If consumers choose to pre-enter vital medical information (e.g., whether an Alzheimer patient lives at the registered location; the heart medicine a subscriber uses), call takers and emergency responders could access critical information that could make the difference between life and death.
- **Maps and other location specific information.** Call takers could access maps of commercial buildings or notes about hazardous on-site chemicals – data that could prove critical to emergency responders.
- **Ensure that all 911 calls can be answered.** During Katrina, some 36 PSAPs went down and couldn't answer 911 calls. An IP enabled emergency network allows overflow calls to be rerouted just like a modern call center. For massive emergencies, such overflow could be critical. An IP network also allows nomadic 911 calltakers to plug and take calls from a remote location in an emergency.

The IP technology needed to transform existing 911 networks into next-generation networks is already available. Legislation pending in both the House and Senate, and cosponsored by the E911 Caucus co-chairs, not only focus on accelerating workable solutions for today, but also on accelerating the transition to a next generation IP-based emergency network capable of a host of breakthrough emergency enhancements. (S. 1063 and H.R. 2418) build on the FCC's swift VoIP E911 action by harnessing the power of IP communications to help unleash these breakthrough emergency advances by encouraging a migration to an emergency network based on Internet Protocol.