

Report of
**The Governor's Commission on
9-1-1 System Modernization and
Balanced Funding Model**



2014

Executive Summary

Members of the Governor's Commission on 9-1-1 System Modernization and Balanced Funding Model met and adopted the following mission:

The mission of the Governor's Commission on 9-1-1 System Modernization and Balanced Funding Model is to make recommendations for updating Georgia's 9-1-1 funding structure and regulatory statutes to reflect current and evolving technology; and to improve the delivery of 9-1-1 service to the citizens and visitors of the state.

In subsequent meetings the members met in full Commission and in two subcommittees and in one study group to determine how the State should address the changing environment of 9-1-1 emergency communications. The subcommittees and study group addressed three major areas:

1. Funding;
2. Standards for 9-1-1 call center operation; and
3. Implementation of Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1).

Funding

The original funding structure for 9-1-1 in Georgia, as elsewhere, was a surcharge added to the bill for landline phone service. The advent of wireless service initially produced some additional surcharge revenue for 9-1-1 services, but recent changes in consumer behavior have resulted in a reduction in the number of landlines, with a trend starting to develop toward the use of more internet-based communications. The costs to operate 9-1-1 public safety answering points (PSAPs) that were upgraded over the last two decades to handle wireless phone calls grew faster than revenue increased.

The current funding model in use in Georgia is based on a flat fee structure, with some variations between types of telephone service (see table on the following page). This current funding model is somewhat fragmented in terms of rates and applicability; and as technology evolves a 9-1-1 fee based on a percentage of a bill may prove to be more practical than 9-1-1 fee based on a flat rate. Additionally, commercial wireless service supplier cost recovery represents an adverse fiscal impact to the effectiveness of the fee.

With the implementation of next generation 9-1-1 service it is very likely that the 9-1-1 funding model will have to undergo additional changes; just as a next generation 9-1-1 system will look very different from the current enhanced 9-1-1 system, an effective next generation 9-1-1 funding model will necessarily look very different from the current funding model. However, until such a system is developed and implemented, and the parameters of end user interface are fully identified, developing a modern and comprehensive funding model applicable to next generation 9-1-1 is premature. In the interim, the Commission recommends adjusting the current model for use during the transition period to next generation 9-1-1 service.

Georgia 9-1-1 Monthly Surcharge Rates (2013)

Telephone Service Type	Funding Source	Amount	Collected by:	Distributed to:
Wire (traditional telephone)	Surcharge; applied to each telephone service subscription	Up to \$1.50 per month	Individual Local Governments	Individual Local Governments
VoIP	Surcharge; applied to each telephone service subscription	Up to \$1.50 per month	Individual Local Governments	Individual Local Governments
Wireless, post-paid (Phase I)	Surcharge; applied to each wireless communications connection	Up to \$1.00 per month	Individual Local Governments	Individual Local Governments
OR				
Wireless, post-paid (Phase II)	Surcharge; applied to each wireless communications connection	Up to \$1.50 per month	Individual Local Governments	Individual Local Governments
Wireless, pre-paid (Phase I/II)	Surcharge; applied to each retail transaction	\$0.75 per transaction	State Government	Individual Local Governments, with a provision for non-allocated amounts defaulting to the State

Standards for 9-1-1 PSAP operation

Virtually every 9-1-1 communications center in the state has a differing level of financial, personnel, and technological resources. Similarly, training and standards differ widely. The Commission recognized the need for increased training for 9-1-1 personnel, as well as the value of uniform standards. Making full use of new telecommunications systems and upgrading to digital capabilities will require additional training for Public Safety Communications Officers. Many public safety answering points (PSAP) in Georgia and other states rely on analog technology that is unable to receive newer digital communications, text messages, and video. As systems are upgraded, the demands on Telecommunicators will expand in terms of their skills, knowledge, and abilities. The procedures and protocols for PSAP operations will need to be standardized and the training programs for those employees will need to be more rigorous and uniform across the state.

The Commission also recognized the value in the development of standards for 9-1-1 professionals that align with the standards set for other public safety agencies and personnel. To that end, standards for initial and recurring training, as well as standards by which individual 9-1-1 PSAPs could be evaluated and recognized in accordance with a tier system of relative capabilities, are viewed by the Commission as important steps in improving the delivery of 9-1-1 service to the citizens and visitors of the state.

Implementation of Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1)

Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) represents a fundamental change in the way the public will access emergency services via 9-1-1. An Internet Protocol-based network will replace the current networks of E9-1-1 switched circuits, increasing both the means by which the public can access 9-1-1 and the type of information that can be sent to first responders via 9-1-1. NG9-1-1 is the next step in the evolution of public access to emergency services.

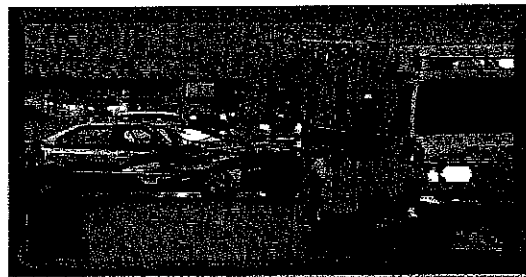
A number of states are in the process of implementing Next Generation 9-1-1 service (NG9-1-1). Georgia is one of a number of states that will need to systemically address the need to provide its citizens with the capability to obtain emergency services using a variety of network capable devices. It is also important that emergency response be made available to those travelling through the state, using the same communication features that they are familiar with in their home states.

Summary Recommendations

- I. The Commission made eight recommendations concerning funding. Below are two of the recommendations that require changes in legislation:

- a. The present inequity in pre-paid wireless rates should be eliminated. Thus, the cap on all wireless services should be set at \$1.50 (O.C.G.A. §46-5-134, O.C.G.A. §46-5-134.2); and
 - b. Cost recovery for wireless providers should not be paid out of the 9-1-1 fee. The provider should have the option to bill separately for cost recovery or include it within their general rate (O.C.G.A. §46-5-134).
- II. The Commission made eight recommendations concerning standards. Below are two of the recommendations that require changes in legislation:
- c. Revise O.C.G.A. §35-8-23 to include a reflection of the six-month deadline to complete the basic communications officer certification process, as currently stated in P.O.S.T. rule 464-16-.01; and
 - d. Require any public safety communications center which employs communications officers to perform non-communications functions (jailer, clerk, etc.) have at least two people on-duty at all times.
- III. The Commission recommended that consolidation should be promoted where such instances allow cost-savings, meet the needs of participating political subdivisions and help ensure reliable and uniform access to emergency services by citizens and visitors to the state.
- IV. The Commission made one recommendation concerning next generation 9-1-1 service:
- A statewide emergency communications board (SECB) should be named and empowered to develop a plan to implement the establishment of a statewide next generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) ESInet; to include the provision of NG9-1-1 service to subscribing local jurisdiction; and that such implementation would include the establishment of necessary rules, regulations and policies for the sustainment and ongoing management of such ESInet(s) and NG9-1-1 services to be delivered to 9-1-1 PSAPs within local jurisdictions.
- V. The Commission recommended that centralized state audits be conducted, on a triennial basis, of all telephone service suppliers conducting business within Georgia and who are required by law to remit 9-1-1 surcharges to the State or any political subdivision of the State.

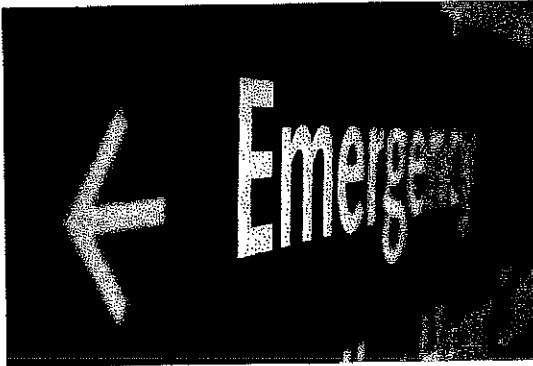
- VI. The Commission recommended that minimum standards be established and mandated regarding continuing training for Communication Officers and initial training for Communication Directors; and that, if established, a state emergency communications board can, in conjunction with the 9-1-1 professional associations, establish a voluntary 9-1-1 PSAP recognition program.



9-1-1 Service in Georgia

The three-digit telephone number 9-1-1 is the universal emergency telephone number throughout the United States. In the 1950s, the National Association of Fire Chiefs recommended that a single number be established for reporting fires. A decade later, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice expanded on the idea and suggested that a single number be used to report any emergency situation.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) met with the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) in 1967 to determine the best way to provide emergency communications. A year later, AT&T designated the digits 9-1-1 as the emergency code throughout the United States since this combination had never been used in any telecommunications service system as an area or service code.



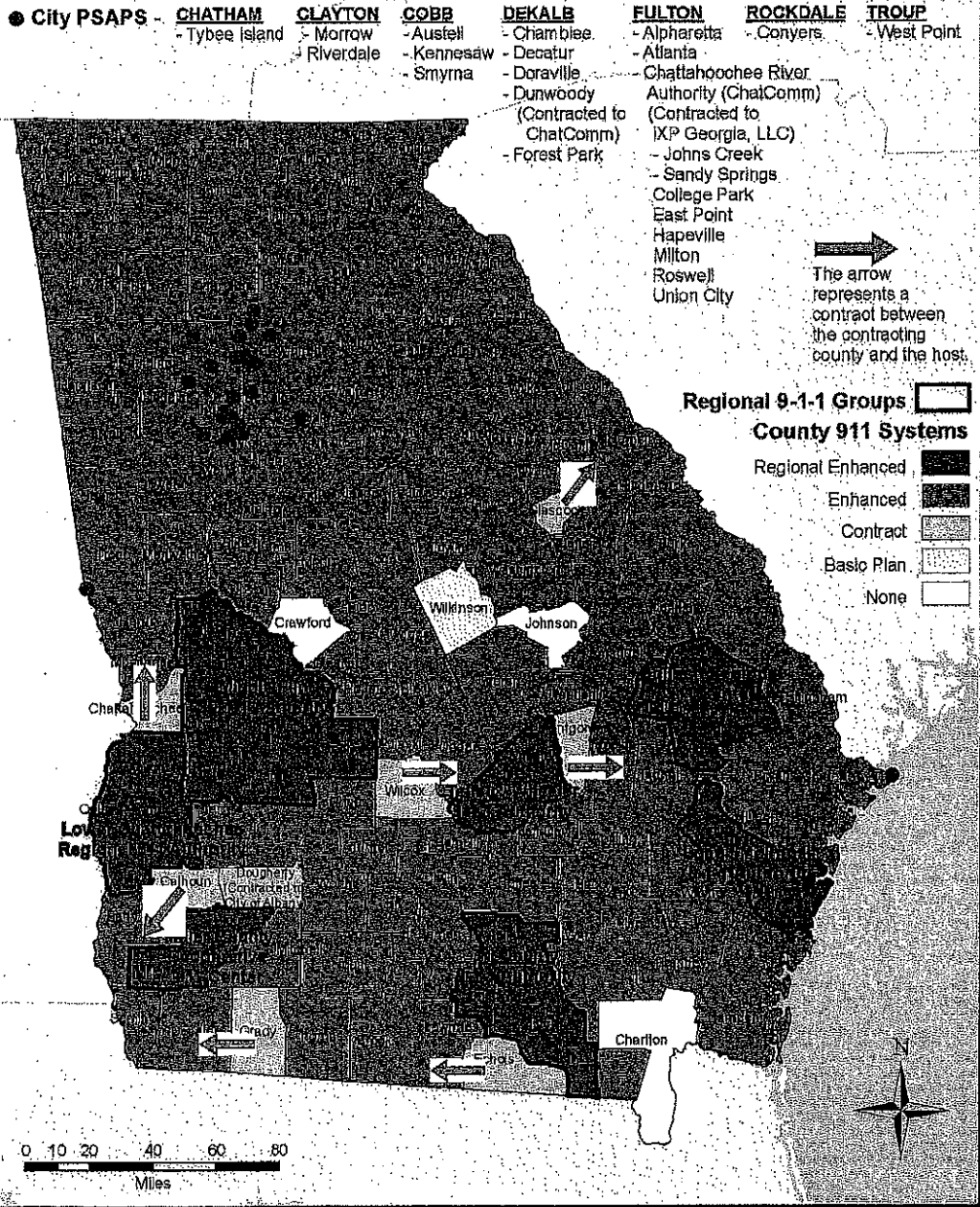
Georgia's 9-1-1 system, a combination of locally implemented and managed 9-1-1 systems, was established in 1977. Local governments provide 9-1-1 service to their constituents and the public in a similar manner to the provision of other local emergency services (law enforcement, fire protection, etc.). This decentralized approach allows local governments the opportunity to exercise control over the service they provide, as well as integrate the actual 9-1-1 service and 9-1-1 public safety answering point (PSAP) into the local emergency response framework.

To assist with the provision of 9-1-1 service the Georgia General Assembly passed the "Georgia Emergency Telephone Number 9-1-1 Service Act of 1977" with the intent of encouraging local governments to provide 9-1-1 service to the public. The Act allows local governments to impose a surcharge on telephone service customers as a means of collecting revenue to fund the implementation and ongoing operation of 9-1-1 systems. The Act has been amended on occasion since its inception; however, despite significant changes in communications technology, the basic funding model has remained unchanged since the creation of the Act.

Since 1977 most local governments in Georgia have elected to provide 9-1-1 service to the public. This process has been a phased approach, with local governments implementing and upgrading 9-1-1 service in accordance with their own respective needs and capabilities. The map on the following page illustrates the current status of 9-1-1 service provision in Georgia:



9-1-1 Implementation Status



9-1-1 System Modernization and Balanced Funding Model

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal created the Governor's Commission on 9-1-1 System Modernization and Balanced Funding Model by executive order for the purpose of making recommendations for updating the funding model to reflect current and evolving technology. Governor Deal appointed eleven members to the Commission, including Mr. Charley English, Director of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency/Homeland Security (GEMA), to chair the Commission. Appendix A provides the membership of the Commission, the subcommittees, and the study group.

The Commission produced a list of twelve objectives for its deliberations:

Objective 1

Identify a specific, achievable mission statement.

Objective 2

Identify 9-1-1 system parameters.

Objective 3

Identify valid 9-1-1 expenditures.

Objective 4

Identify sufficient revenue source(s) to pay for the costs of providing 9-1-1 service.

Objective 5

Identify mechanism of collection with regards to funding attachment.

Objective 6

Identify ways to ensure full compliance with regards to collections.

Objective 7

Identify ways to demonstrate the worth of expenditure of funds.

Objective 8

Identify possible efficiencies and inefficiencies related to the provision of 9-1-1 service.

Objective 9

Identify impact of 3-1-1 use on demands for service/call volume to 9-1-1.

Objective 10

Identify potential future technology including the emerging NG9-1-1 standards, and assess the potential need for NG9-1-1 implementation.

Objective 11

Identify appropriate/necessary 9-1-1 system management training and/or minimum standards.

Objective 12

Identify appropriate/necessary role of the State.

Chairman English appointed two subcommittees and one study group to develop recommendations that were then reported to the full Commission. The subcommittees and study group were:

- **Funding Subcommittee**, which produced recommended funding model changes;
- **Standards Subcommittee**, which produced recommendations on training personnel and service delivery; and
- **Next Generation 9-1-1 Study Group**, which produced recommendations on the adoption of NG9-1-1.

Members of the Commission served on one or more of these subcommittees and the study group based on their interest and expertise. Each subcommittee met over a period of several months and consulted outside experts for advice and information as needed. Each subcommittee circulated a draft of their recommendations and received comments. Then the chairperson of each subcommittee presented final written recommendations at a meeting of the full Committee. A discussion followed with questions from Committee members and responses from the chair, subcommittee members, and outside experts. A vote on the recommendations occurred at subsequent meetings. This process provided multiple opportunities for input from all Commission members and others involved in the effort.

The Commission's Funding Recommendations

Changes to the way people communicate through telecommunications systems presents challenges to the existing 9-1-1 system. The funding structure in Georgia, as elsewhere, originally was a surcharge added to the bill for wireline (landline) phone service. The advent of wireless services and the proliferation of providers of phone services resulted in additional service agreements between customers and service providers. When wireless services first experienced an increase in customer base, customers often maintained a wireline phone at home and thus had two service agreements, paying the surcharge on both. Initially, the additional surcharge revenue increased the funding available for 9-1-1 services, but recent changes in consumer behavior have resulted in a reduction in the number of landlines, with a trend starting to develop toward the use of more internet-based communications. The costs to operate 9-1-1 public safety answering points (PSAPs) that were upgraded over the last two decades to handle wireless phone calls grew faster than revenue increased.

Recommendation 1

The 9-1-1 fee should be equitable in that it is attached to every access point that has the ability to transfer 9-1-1 communications to a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). This should include services provided by out-of-state companies to Georgia businesses and residents.

Recommendation 2

The 9-1-1 fee should be calculated as a flat rate, but consideration should be given to a percentage-based fee as an option to the current flat fee for a future funding model.

Recommendation 3

The 9-1-1 fee should be the same on all types of services; thus, the cap on all wireless and prepaid services should be set at \$1.50.

Recommendation 4

The rate should be uniform on all jurisdictions levying the fee.

Recommendation 5

The allocation of 9-1-1 revenues to PSAPs should continue to be based upon the billing address of the customer with the exception of prepaid wireless.

Recommendation 6

Cost recovery for wireless providers should not be paid out of the 9-1-1 fee. The provider should have the option to bill separately for cost recovery or include it within their general rate.

Recommendation 7

Providers should be audited at least once every three years. The audits should be centralized through a state entity, provided that such entity is given the legal authority and resources to conduct the audits. Local governments benefiting from the audits should pay their proportionate share of the cost of conducting the audits and the centralized entity's costs of administering the

audit program. All service providers legally responsible for collecting the 9-1-1 fees from their Georgia customers should register with the entity that has auditing oversight.

Recommendation 8

Georgia's Congressional Delegation should be encouraged to support changes to federal law that would require out-of-state companies to collect and remit the 9-1-1 fee from their Georgia customers.

The Commission's Standards Recommendations

Each public safety communications center in Georgia is unique. Many are autonomous agencies with a Director who answers directly to the Board of Commissioners while others are under the management of the Fire, Police, or Sheriff's department. There are single discipline agencies, consolidated agencies, multi-county agencies. Most counties use Enhanced 9-1-1 technology, but some counties still lack even basic 9-1-1 service. The majority of the state laws that govern E-911 have to do with funding, the telecommunications and wireless industries and have very little to do with actual 9-1-1 operations or standards. As a result, the service received by the public varies greatly from one county to the next. In an attempt to provide every citizen of and visitor to Georgia with substantially equal service; the Commission makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

Use data obtained through Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) Occupational Analysis (and resulting standard) to revise and expand the Basic Communication Course curriculum at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center to include the information covered in APCO ANSI 3 103.1-2010 "Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators."

Recommendation 2

Make updated course material available electronically through the appropriate training or regulatory entity.

Recommendation 3

Encourage Public Safety Emergency Communications Centers to adhere to national standards, such as those published by the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials, the National Emergency Number Association, and the National Fire Protection Association. (See also Recommendation #8).

Recommendation 4

Revise O.C.G.A. §35-8-23 to include the six-month deadline, as currently stated in P.O.S.T. rule 464-16-01.

Recommendation 5

Mandate continuing education for Communications Officers and provide funding and personnel to support the development of continuing education for Communications Officers to meet the 24-hour APCO National Standard.

Recommendation 6

Mandate training for new Communication Directors within one year of appointment/start date and provide funding for curriculum design and training delivery.

Recommendation 7

Establish a State Emergency Communications Board to examine public safety communications centers and award tier recognitions. The Board should include representatives from the 9-1-1 Directors Association, GEMA, and the Georgia Chapters of APCO and NENA.

Recommendation 8

Require any public safety communications center where communications officers perform non-communications functions (jailer, clerk, etc.) to have at least two people on duty at all times.

The Commission's Next Generation 9-1-1 Recommendation

NG-9-1-1 is a system of Emergency Services IP networks (ESI nets) that are interconnected to 9-1-1 PSAPs. NG9-1-1 service includes call processing capabilities for features such as voice calls, text messages, pictures, video and other data. Mandates to communication carriers by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) have been a driving force in 9-1-1 development and evolution. Additionally, consumers are demanding access to 9-1-1 through such means as text-to-9-1-1; and, as IP-based communications capabilities expand in the consumer market, the demand for related NG9-1-1 services will increase.

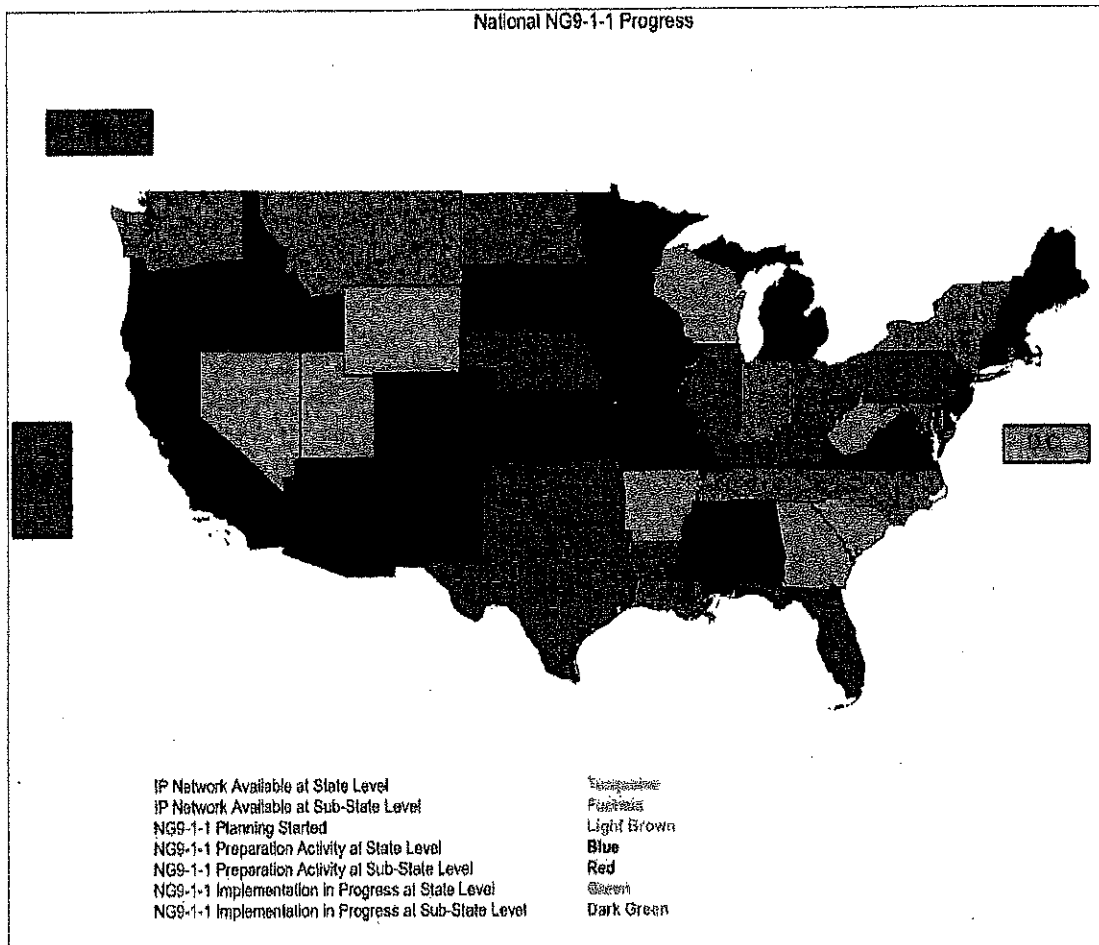
Recommendation 1

Establish a State Emergency Communications Board (SECB) to assist agencies in meeting current and emerging technological challenges.

The board's function should include the development, implementation and coordination of a statewide NG9-1-1 Emergency Service IP network (ESInet).

NG9-1-1 Perspective: Nationwide

A number of states have begun the process of implementing NG9-1-1 services. The map below illustrates States' respective progress on NG9-1-1 implementation. Those colored gray, including Georgia, have not yet formally started the process of implementing NG9-1-1 services at the state level.



Source: National Emergency Number Association (NENA)