

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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STATE OF MAINE  
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

MARK A. VANNOY  
CHAIRMAN

DAVID P. LITTELL  
COMMISSIONER

HARRY LANPHEAR  
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

January 15, 2015

Honorable David Woodsome, Senate Chair  
Honorable Mark N. Dion, House Chair  
Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

**Re: PUC NextGen911 Update Regarding Transferring 911 Calls Out of State**

Dear Senator Woodsome and Representative Dion:

By letter dated April 2, 2014, the Committee Chairs requested that the Commission, at the beginning of the 2015 session, provide an update in the form of a letter to the Committee on the progress in addressing the concerns raised by LD 1714, A Resolve to Study the Feasibility of Allowing Dispatchers to Transfer E911 Calls to Emergency Responders in Other States.

Background:

LD 1714 was introduced last session by Senator Flood. The bill would have directed the Department of Public Safety (DPS), with the assistance of the Commission, to convene a task force to study the feasibility of allowing E911 dispatchers in Maine to transfer emergency calls to emergency dispatchers in other states. The task force's findings and any necessary implementing legislation would have been reported back to the joint committee having jurisdiction over public safety. The situation that led to the bill involved a person visiting Maine calling 911 in Maine regarding an emergency situation in Vermont.

When Senator Flood testified on the bill, he noted that he had met with the Commission Staff and received information about how 911 calls in Maine were transferred to other states using the 911 system in place at that time and the additional capabilities that would be available once the new state-of-the-art Next Generation 911 (NG911) system that the Commission was implementing for the State of Maine was operational. Using the legacy 911 system, 911 calls were transferred to a 10 digit, 24 x 7 emergency number in another state but only the voice data could be transferred (i.e., the person verbally gave all the information related to the 911 emergency to the out-of-state jurisdiction). The Commission advised the Committee that transferring calls using the

NG911 system would be easier (there would be fewer steps involved) and the new system would also allow other data such as the location of the 911 caller, pictures and video to be transferred with the call to other NG911 capable public safety answering points (PSAPs) or other authorized entities such as trauma centers, emergency responders, and police departments.

The Commission also discussed an interim step that we had taken while the NG911 migration was underway. We noted that as emergency 911 systems were not yet connected to one another, finding the 24 x 7 emergency phone number for an out-of-state jurisdiction could be a challenge as there was not yet a master directory of emergency numbers matched with towns and PSAPs nationwide but that the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), a 911 standards setting entity, was in the early stages of building a voluntary nationwide directory to help PSAPs identify the proper number. We reached out to Vermont for its preferred 24 x 7 emergency number to be used to transfer a caller from Maine to Vermont's 911 system, regardless of the location of the emergency in Vermont, and directed Maine's PSAPs to build the number into their speed dial list. We advised the Committee that we would be building a global speed dial list in the NG911 system that would include the more frequently dialed emergency numbers out-of-state so PSAPs would have easy access to these numbers. Senator Flood then asked the Committee to move ought not to pass on the bill and asked that the Commission report back on any additional information once the NG911 migration had been completed. The Committee subsequently voted ought not to pass on the bill.

#### NG911:

The transition to the new NG911 system was completed in July 2014. Maine was one of the first states in the nation to deploy a statewide, end-to-end (i.e., includes all network and PSAP components) NG911 system. NG911 networks differ from existing systems in that they are designed to keep pace with the way people communicate today (voice, text messaging, video and pictures). NG911 increases the speed at which voice and data arrive at the PSAP, thereby improving service. More than 400 PSAP personnel received extensive training on the new software and equipment. In response to the issues raised by Senator Flood, we placed additional emphasis on how to transfer a call out-of-state in the new equipment transition training. Each PSAP was outfitted with state-of-the-art call taking workstations that include mapping to display the location of emergency calls. The leading edge technology utilizes Geographic Information System (GIS) to route calls to the right PSAP, provide the location of the caller and, based on that location, provide the appropriate police, fire and rescue response.

LD 1714 highlighted the need to provide more information to PSAPs regarding resources available to help transfer a caller to another 911 jurisdiction. NENA's PSAP Registry is a tool that PSAP personnel can now use to search online for other PSAPs and their 24 x 7 contact numbers, provided that the 911 call taker is a registered user of the registry. In order to take advantage of this resource, the Commission encouraged all Maine PSAPs to have their 911 call takers become registered users enabling them to search the database by town, state, or PSAP name to find 24 x 7 10-digit numbers to transfer a caller that is reporting an emergency out-of-state. The database is limited to those PSAPs that have voluntarily submitted data to the registry. Maine's emergency numbers have been included so that if the situation that gave rise to LD 1714 occurs to someone from Maine while in another state, the information will be readily available to facilitate the call transfer as quickly as possible. We also understand that NENA is aggressively working to get more PSAPs to submit their emergency

contact information into the database and that as a result more and more PSAPs nationwide are being added.

The Commission also created a new contact group in Maine's NG911 global speed dial list which provides the telephone numbers that may be used to transfer an emergency caller or emergency call information from Maine to the other New England states for an emergency response in that state.

The complete solution to this issue is the nationwide deployment of NG911. The New England States are leading the way in this initiative as they are all taking steps to implement NG911. The concept of NG911 is a network of networks, all operating on the same standard to allow a 911 call taker in one jurisdiction to search the network and find the correct PSAP for a town in another state or country and seamlessly transfer both the voice and other data to that system.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Mark A. Vannoy, Chairman  
On behalf of the Chairman and  
David P. Littell, Commissioner  
Maine Public Utilities Commission

Attachment

cc: Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee Members  
Patrick Flood  
Deirdre Schneider, Legislative Analyst

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State of Maine  
ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY

April 2, 2014

Thomas L. Welch, Chairman  
Public Utilities Commission  
18 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0018

Dear Chairman Welch:

During its work this session, the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology considered LD 1714 *A Resolve to Study the Feasibility of Allowing Dispatchers to Transfer E911 Calls to Emergency Responders in Other States*. At the request of the sponsor of the bill, Senator Flood, we voted the bill ought-not-to-pass.

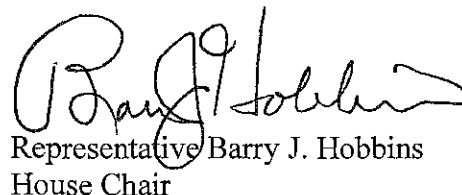
Senator Flood conveyed to the committee that he was impressed with the professional and rapid response of the commission regarding his concerns that emergency calls be immediately transferrable between states. He is under the impression, and so are we, that the State's transition to the NextGen E-911 system will improve the process and speed by which emergency calls are transferred between states.

It is our understanding that the transition to the Next Gen E-911 system will be completed later this year. We request that at the beginning of next session that the Public Utilities Commission, in the form of a letter, provide an update to this committee on the progress in addressing the concerns raised by Senator Flood when he sponsored LD 1714 *A Resolve to Study the Feasibility of Allowing Dispatchers to Transfer E-911 Calls to Emergency Responders in Other States*.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

  
Senator John J. Cleveland  
Senate Chair

  
Representative Barry J. Hobbs  
House Chair

c: Members, Joint Standing Committee On Energy, Utilities and Technology  
Sen. Patrick Flood  
✓ Paulina Collins, Public Utilities Commission  
Patrick Woodcock, Director, Governor's Energy Office