

Kent County Dispatch Authority Explores Next Generation Network Provider

Next Generation 9-1-1 services are becoming increasingly popular for 9-1-1 centers across the United States, moving away from traditional copper wire telephone providers like AT&T to high speed fiber network providers.

The change is part of the planned transition from the current nationwide 9-1-1 network, which is over forty (40) years old, to high speed fiber and IP connectivity. This will permit 9-1-1 centers, known as Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) to accept and process a wide variety of communications devices used by the American public. The transition plan has taken over ten years to begin to implement using ANSI standards developed by the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) which addresses both legacy telephone networks and their interface to new IP based networks.

The change will allow the 9-1-1 network to process incoming Text Messaging to 9-1-1 and later on to accept and process streaming video and other services. In the future, map information imbedded in the new IP network will allow wireless calls to 9-1-1 to be routed more accurately route to the correct PSAP using the location of the wireless device's coordinates (Spatial Routing) to improve location accuracy and improve public safety response time. Additionally, the PFN network will allow PSAPs to share hosted technology and systems and platforms providing greater reliability and survivability of 9-1- services to our residents.

In the past two years all the counties in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan has completed the transition process of moving from old copper wire pairs servicing PSAPs to all fiber, IP networking through a contract with Peninsula Fiber Network (PFN) which is a recognize 9-1-1 provider in Michigan.

Kent County Dispatch Authority is currently evaluating, along with neighboring 9-1-1 system in surrounding counties, the transition to PFN as well. The project if approved by the KCDA Board and the Kent County Board of Commissioner is estimated to be completed in the 4th Q of 2016.

KCDA recently signed a \$600,000 contract to upgrade the current Airbus VESTA Patriot 9-1-1 phone system to Airbus VESTA 4, which is Next Generation capable, the high speed network enhancement provided by PFN fits in well with KCDA's plan for new 9-1-1 capabilities for our PSAPs and for the residents of Kent County.