



9-1-1 Surcharge

FAQS

WHAT IS BEING ASKED?

Muskegon Central Dispatch 9-1-1 receives a monthly surcharge on all devices that can access 9-1-1 for funding emergency dispatch operations. On November 6, residents will be asked to increase the current 9-1-1 surcharge from \$0.42 – one of the lowest in the state – up to \$2.75 per month to improve vital public safety communication infrastructure. If approved, the surcharge rate is set annually, not to exceed \$2.75 per month without voter approval.

WHY IS THIS FUNDING NECESSARY?

Our current funding can no longer keep pace with the operational demands of technology, increased call volumes and Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG 9-1-1) requirements. Additionally, our dispatch center and public safety agencies operate on radio components that are aging and experiencing failures; by year's end, they will be difficult to service or repair. Without addressing this aging radio infrastructure, our 28 public safety agencies will become a radio island, making communications with other responders outside the County extremely difficult.

Increased funding for emergency dispatch operations is crucial for the continued safety of our citizens and public safety responders. New radios and a radio network, technology upgrades for hardware and software, building communication infrastructure and a capital replacement fund are crucial to 9-1-1 operations. Muskegon Central Dispatch 9-1-1 is committed to delivering reliable and efficient service to our citizens and visitors – and to ensuring the safety of our first responders. In an emergency, when seconds count, having equipment that is no longer supported or repairable could lead to system outages – and that could be the difference between life and death.

HOW WILL THE FUNDS BE USED?

Local surcharge funds collected can be only used for the specific purpose of constructing, operating and maintaining the 9-1-1 systems. By law, surcharge funds cannot be used for any other governmental purpose and are restricted to the exclusive delivery of 9-1-1 service. Local surcharge funds are under the direct control of Muskegon Central Dispatch 9-1-1. If passed, the increased surcharge funds will be used for:

- **Radio:** Transitioning to 800 MHz radios, which is the same system used in 74 out of 83 Michigan counties, as well as by the Michigan State Police. Joining the statewide communication system will provide greater radio coverage, redundancy, enhanced voice communication and other improvements.
- **MDCs:** Like our radios, the mobile data computers used by public safety responders are no longer serviceable, and parts are not available. MDCs are instrumental in the day-to-day operations for dispatching and updating 9-1-1 calls, and access to important data for responders.
- **Building Infrastructure:** Dispatch will face building infrastructure costs as our current leased space is not equipped to house the new 800 MHz equipment, new radio towers and NG9-1-1 equipment. MCD 9-1-1 has outgrown the current space, which can no longer support operational needs.
- **Revolving Capital Replacement Fund:** Establish a capital replacement fund to ensure replacement of required equipment. Replacement funds are required for radios, MDCs, data storage, off-site backup equipment, phones, software, NG9-1-1 technology and associated maintenance costs.
- **Fiber Optic Backup:** Securing a fiber backup is essential and will provide the necessary redundancy for the fiber optic network currently utilized by public safety entities within the county. A redundant solution will provide continuous, seamless connectivity for public safety agencies in case of a service interruption to the current fiber optic lines.

WHY ARE YOU ASKING FOR THIS AMOUNT?

If approved, the amount requested will cover replacing or upgrading essential radio infrastructure and other components essential in maintaining the quality of service our citizens expect and ensure the safety of our responders. These projects over a 10-year period will cost approximately \$25 million.

WHO WILL THE SURCHARGE APPLY TO?

All landlines, mobile phones and other devices subscribed to a Muskegon County address and capable of accessing 9-1-1 will be assessed a monthly surcharge.

For users with multiple lines (such as a business), the surcharge is only assessed on the first 10 lines individually, and then prorated for each additional 10 lines. For example, if a business owns 100 phone lines, the surcharge assessment on 19 phones lines (the first 10 lines are counted, leaving 90 lines remaining; $90 \div 10 = 9$ lines; $9 + 10 = 19$ total lines assessed).

WHEN WILL THIS AMOUNT TAKE EFFECT?

Collections could start July 1, 2019, with full collections beginning October 1, 2019, if approved by the voters.

WILL THIS AMOUNT EVER CHANGE?

If approved, the surcharge rate is set annually, not to exceed \$2.75 per month without voter approval. MCD can set the surcharge at a lower rate depending on funding needs.

WHY DO WE NEED A NEW RADIO SYSTEM?

Our current radio system utilizes outdated technology that will be difficult to repair by the end of the year. Some public safety departments are using mobile and portable radios that face the same challenge. It's like listening to cassette tapes when everyone else has switched to MP3s. Switching to a 800 MHz radio system will allow for better coverage for responders, additional talk channels and the ability to communicate effectively with first responders in surrounding counties. Having a quality, reliable communication infrastructure is crucial in delivering first-rate public safety service to Muskegon County residents and visitors.

The public safety teams in our communities will become a radio island if we remain with the current VHF analog network. Communications is the number one priority during any critical incident. It must be reliable, redundant and sustainable. It must also allow Muskegon County first responders to communicate with peers from other municipalities, counties and the state to ensure the safety of our citizens and responders.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE SURCHARGE DOESN'T PASS?

Without an increase to the current surcharge, none of these crucial public safety projects will be possible. MCD 9-1-1 and public safety agencies will continue to use outdated radio technology that will hinder our abilities to provide efficient, reliable and vital communication between the citizens and visitors within our communities. Our current dispatch center will not accommodate the growing operational and technology needs, which will limit our ability to meet the demands of citizens and the agencies served.

The current MDCs are no longer serviceable, limiting the efficient responses of our public safety responders. Without a revolving capital replacement fund, MCD 9-1-1 and public safety responders will continue to work with essential equipment that is outdated and no longer serviceable, and at risk of failure.

WHEN WILL THE NEW SYSTEM BE IN PLACE?

Given the scope of the proposed projects, it could take two or more years until everything is purchased, tested, installed and ready for use. Given the experience of surrounding counties that have already switched, we anticipate the earliest date will be fall of 2020.

ELECTION DAY

Nov. 6, 2018

MORE QUESTIONS?

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