



For Immediate Release

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Muskegon Central Dispatch 9-1-1 to Request Increased Public Safety Dispatch Funding

Increased surcharge will enhance public safety through technology upgrades

Muskegon, Michigan, August 22, 2018 – On the Nov. 6 ballot, residents of Muskegon County will be asked to increase the current 9-1-1 surcharge for radio equipment and technology upgrades needed to improve public safety communications.

At its July 17 meeting, the Muskegon County Board of Commissioners approved ballot language 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.

According to officials at Muskegon Central Dispatch, which handles 9-1-1 calls and emergency dispatch for the entire County, current funding can no longer keep pace with the demands of technology, call volumes, Next Generation 9-1-1 requirements and growth. Currently, the Dispatch Center and 28 public safety agencies operate on equipment that will be difficult to repair by the end of the year.

The increased surcharge would fund the move to a new 800 MHz radio network, including radios for public safety agencies throughout the County. It would also fund operations, technology upgrades for hardware, software and communication infrastructure, as well as establish capital replacement fund.

The majority of Michigan counties – 74 out of 83 – have migrated or are in the process of migrating to the statewide 800 MHz radio network. Muskegon County is one of the last remaining counties in Michigan using a legacy system.

“Without addressing this aging radio infrastructure, our public safety teams will be an island, making communication with other public safety responders from outside the County difficult,” said Whitehall Police Chief Roger Squiers, who also chairs the Muskegon County COPS Board. “Reliable communication is crucial to delivering effective and efficient emergency response service to our citizens, businesses and visitors – and ensuring the safety of our first responders.

“In an emergency, when seconds count, having less reliable equipment that is not repairable could mean the difference between life and death.”

Right now, all landlines, mobile phones and other devices subscribed to a Muskegon County address capable of placing 9-1-1 call are assessed a monthly charge of \$0.42, which is used to fund emergency 9-1-1 services. Last year, Muskegon Central Dispatch processed 166,509 emergency calls, sending police, fire and ambulance services to homes, businesses and schools throughout the County.

If approved this fall, the surcharge will increase to up to \$2.75 per month for subscribed devices. Pre-paid wireless devices-pay a state surcharge of 5 percent. For multiple line users, such as businesses, the surcharge is only assessed on the first 10 lines individually and then prorated for additional lines.

“It’s not enough to dial 9-1-1 and have your call answered and your situation addressed,” said Muskegon Charter Township Fire Chief Dave Glotzbach, who also chairs MCD’s Coordinating Committee.

“Ensuring optimum safety means the radio systems work cohesively so that our first responders are ready when a disaster or emergency strikes.

“We have seen over and over how important it is for multiple public safety agencies to be able to come together to confront a natural disaster or man-made emergency. The proposed increase will improve our ability to protect our community.”

Local surcharge funds collected can only be used for the specific propose of constructing, operating and maintaining 9-1-1 systems. If passed, the increased surcharge will be used to fund a number of projects, including:

- **Radio:** Transitioning to 800 MHz radios, which is the same system used by 74 out of 83 counties, in the state, including the Michigan State Police.
- **Mobile data computers:** The current mobile data computers used by public safety responders are out warranty-and replacement parts are not available. MDCs are instrumental in the day-to-day operations and updating 9-1-1 calls, and access to important data for responders.
- **Building infrastructure:** There will be building infrastructure costs as the current leased space in downtown Muskegon is not sufficient to house the new 800 MHz equipment, a radio tower and NG9-1-1 equipment.
- **Revolving capital replacement fund:** A capital fund to cover replacement costs for radios, computers, data storage, off-site backup equipment, phones, software and NG9-1-1 technology.
- **Fiber Optic Backup:** Securing a fiber optic backup will provide the necessary redundancy for the fiber optic network utilized used by all public safety entities within the county.

“For nearly 50 years, Muskegon Central Dispatch 9-1-1 has been proud to provide emergency dispatch services to the residents of Muskegon County,” said MCD Executive Director, Shawn Grabinski. “While our dispatchers and first responders have grown accustomed to navigating a radio system that has areas without coverage, limited talk channels and lack of communication with other public safety communities, our outdated radio network leaves our community vulnerable in a crisis.

“It’s already a struggle to communicate with many neighboring counties or the Michigan State Police, who have already migrated or are in process of migrating to an enhanced radio network. The increased surcharge will allow us to make much-needed operational infrastructure upgrades.”

If approved, collections could start beginning July 1, 2019, with full collections beginning Oct. 1, 2019.

For more information on the Muskegon Central Dispatch 9-1-1 surcharge, visit <https://mcd911.net/>.

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