

Opening Remarks California State Senate Committee on Energy, Utilities and
Communications Hearing on Emerging Communications Technologies and Public
Safety Networks February 11, 2012 State Capitol Room 112

Chairman Padilla and distinguished committee members my name is Charles Cullen; I am the Technical Services Director for the Palo Alto Police Department and I serve as one of the representatives on the State 9-1-1 Advisory Board from the California Chapter of the National Emergency Number Association. The CALNENA President Cheri Lynn Rockwell is in Florida working with other 9-1-1 professionals on national standards. Thank you for providing the venue and opportunity to discuss the rapidly changing technology that impacts public safety and the challenges those technical changes present to the over 400 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) across California.

In 1976, when the Warren Act was enacted, 9-1-1 was established as wire line telephony based system and callers requested assistance from a static known location. That environment remained the same for nearly twenty-five years. In the 1990's the proliferation of cell phones necessitated a change in 9-1-1 technology to receive cellular calls and provide some location information with the calls. Over the past ten years the PSAPs, the State 9-1-1 Office, the CHP and the Commercial providers partnered to implement Phase II Wireless 9-1-1 throughout the State and, with a few exceptions, that service is ubiquitous in California. That project is an example of successful collaboration between a variety of stakeholders to implement a solution that benefits the residents of California and could serve as a model for a statewide NG9-1-1 project.

Technology has evolved over those ten years and now a myriad of devices have the potential to connect to 9-1-1 over an IP or NG network and provide not only audio capabilities but a variety of data including texting, video and digital photos. Implementation of a NG911 network is a primary goal of CTA and the State 9-1-1 Office and the Proposed NG9-1-1 Roadmap provides a well-conceived plan to achieve that goal. There are several major challenges to implementing a NG9-1-1 network, most notably funding, technology and governance.

It is clear from the financial data supplied by CTA that the SETNA fund revenue is declining and, if nothing changes, there will be a 40 million dollar deficit in fiscal 2014. The State 9-1-1 Office has proposed some policy changes that may reduce costs and the PSAPs support the efforts of the 9-1-1 Office to provide financial stability for equipment replacement. However, discussions with the CALNENA membership and with leaders from APCO and California Fire Chiefs Associations Communications Section prompted concerns in several areas.

The proposed lengthening of the equipment replacement lifecycle from five to seven years will severely limit the ability of PSAPs to keep technology current and could potentially burden centers with legacy technology until 2020 or beyond. Technology evolves at ever increasing rate and it seems counterintuitive to increase the replacement cycle. We are in a transition phase between the old analog 9-1-1 system and NG9-1-1. PSAPs should be able to purchase an interim solution that will not require a forklift upgrade when NG solutions become available.

Another concern is the proposed limitation on workstations and equipment. In the past the State Office has used a formula to calculate the number of workstations each PSAP requires based on call volume and provided the PSAP with a set funding amount. The PSAPs were then free to negotiate with the commercial providers for a solution that met their operational needs as long as it did not exceed the allotted funding. The new policy restricts that ability and would not allow any negotiation by the PSAPs for additional positions. We believe this restriction limits the flexibility of the PSAPs, could increase costs for the PSAP's parent agencies and potentially inhibits competition.

The migration to an IP based NG911 network will be the most significant change impacting PSAPs in the State of California since the advent of enhanced 9-1-1. The ability to transmit video, digital pictures and send texts has the potential to overwhelm the capacity of PSAPs to respond. Prioritizing how that information reaches 9-1-1 will be critical to maintaining operational integrity.

Texting, as anyone with teenage children knows, is one of the most efficient ways of communicating short messages. The 9-1-1 community recognizes that the capability to text 9-1-1 should be part of the emergency response system. The recent FCC announcement regarding major carrier support for a texting initiative and CTA's commitment to a pilot project are positive developments. There are a number of variables to be aware of. Once texting to 9-1-1 is available there is a high probability that many of those texts will be urgent in nature. Residents under duress or witnessing a crime may be able to text when they cannot place an audible call. Accurate routing of texts will be critical as the ability to transfer a misrouted text to another PSAP may not exist requiring the 9-1-1 calltaker to take down information and relay that information to the correct PSAP. In that scenario emergency response could be delayed. Insuring accurate routing and standard acceptance of text to 9-1-1 by California PSAPs could allay these concerns.

Governance and oversight are areas that may require legislative review. The Warren Act was passed in 1976 and, although it has been amended, it is still modeled on the analog wire line 9-1-1 system and should be updated to provide for the current, evolving technical environment. The SETNA Fund has served the State and the PSAPs well for a considerable period of time but revenue from the surcharge is declining. A statewide

NG911 network will require funding that appears to exceed the projected SETNA Fund resources even if the surcharge is raised to the maximum allowable rate.

CALNENA and the California PSAPs view the challenges presented by new technology as an opportunity to partner with other stakeholders to build an IP network and a 9-1-1 system that accommodates the broad variety of the communication devices capable of accessing 9-1-1 and enhances the service we provide to our communities. We are committed to working with our elected representatives, the State 9-1-1 Office and our commercial partners to meet the challenges ahead. Chairman Padilla and Committee members I thank you again for providing a forum to discuss these important issues.