

911-056

Cuming County Dispatch Center
200 S Lincoln St. Rm. 301
West Point, NE 68788



TO: Nebraska Public Service Commission

FROM: Nicole Lund, E911 Dispatch Supervisor

DATE: May 9, 2012

RE: Expansion of PSAP Eligible Expenses for Wireless Enhanced 911 Funding

The Commission has requested PSAPs to comment on costs related to salaries for persons responsible for receipt and processing of 911 calls and to inform the Commission on the percentage of the dispatcher's time is spent processing 911 calls. While I understand the Commission's desire to know this, it is not really a measurable figure to obtain.

The PSAP I work in has one dispatcher on at a time with the exception of shift over lap at times which then results in two dispatchers on duty together for two hours. That one dispatcher is responsible for answering all emergency and non emergency calls in Cuming County for four volunteer fire and rescue departments, four police departments and the sheriff's office. We have three 911 lines, two administrative lines that are just for the dispatch and then three other administrative lines that ring into the dispatch center for us to answer. There have been times that all three 911 lines and the two administrative lines (which serve also serve as roll over 911 lines in case all three 911 lines are busy) have all been ringing at the same time. Meaning that one dispatcher has to answer those five calls and process them as quickly and efficiently as possible. Times like that you could say 100% of the dispatcher's time is spent processing 911 calls. While processing those calls, that one dispatcher also needs to be dispatching the appropriate help to those callers. The dispatcher has to answer all those calls and can't assume that they are all about the same incident or that any one call is more or less important than the next. We also get emergency calls on our non emergency lines. For instance, we had a woman call on a police non emergency line when her husband was having a heart attack because she didn't want "to make a big fuss, it's not like the house is on fire." This illustrates that just because the call didn't come in as a 911 call, you can't assume it's not an emergency. That being said, you also can't assume that all 911 calls are emergencies.

The fact remains that 911 Dispatchers, Telecommunicators, Operators, Call Takers or whatever term you use to describe what we do, we need to always be ready for whatever is on the other end of that phone call. To have the personnel capable of handling all sorts of calls and emergencies takes funding, training and funding for training. The PSAP I work in doesn't have all the bells and whistles (we don't even have CAD) and we don't need them to function and do our job properly. We do however need funding to maintain the equipment, replace it as is



needed and pay the personnel. With people dropping their land line phones, that surcharge fund is shrinking.

Dispatchers in the Cuming County PSAP are also responsible for entering warrants, maintaining warrant files, running criminal histories, driving records and license plates inquiries for all of the law enforcement officers in the county. We are not jailors so at least we don't have to try and juggle that task as well. However, when the phone rings, especially a 911 line, whatever the dispatcher is doing is ceased immediately so that phone call is answered promptly. I guess what I'm saying is that although there are many functions we carry out, answering 911 is at the top of the list. So it might not always consume all of our time because we can't predict when the call will come in, but when it does come in it is our absolute focus.

Cuming County has five full time dispatchers and one part time dispatcher. The combined salaries equate to \$158,060.00 budgeted for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. This does not account for any over time that is put in when a dispatcher has to stay because of a call they are handling or having to come in when something extraordinary happens that one dispatcher just can't handle alone which is generally generated by a 911 call. Cuming County's wireless ratio was 57% but increased to 67% in the most recent application for funding submitted to the Commission. At 57% this would equate to \$90,094 in eligible dispatch costs and at 67% it would equate to \$105,900.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and please understand that 911 dispatching is not a normal, predictable job that just anyone can do. It takes knowledge, training, flexibility, empathy, nerves of steel and countless other attributes so when we're asked to explain what we do or how much of our time is spent doing something, it's not necessarily measurable or explainable.

Sincerely,

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