

PSAP Enrollment in the TSP Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How does a PSAP enroll in the TSP program?

A. The first step the PSAP administrator should take is to consult with the telecommunications service provider to determine the per-line cost of TSP coverage. From this, the administrator can determine how many lines to cover. The administrator then contacts the FCC to serve as its federal sponsor, using the information provided below. Next, the administrator contacts the NCS on its web-site to establish an account, and fills out the TSP application. All of this can be done electronically on NCS's TSP web-page. Once the NCS has approved the application, the PSAP notifies the service provider and requests TSP coverage.

FCC TSP email address: tspinfo@fcc.gov

NCS TSP email address: tsp@ncs.gov

Q. How long does this process take?

A. The FCC and NCS have committed to providing sponsorship and approval, in most cases, within one week of the request. This is a substantially quicker approval time, as compared to the 30 days allotted under current rules. The 911 Service Provider providing 911 service also needs time to issue service orders to place TSP on the 911 circuits. This time frame would depend on the number of circuits and the number of service orders required to add the service to the records. This could take up to another 30 days for PSAPs with a large number of circuits.

Q. How much does it cost to participate in the TSP program?

A. It depends on the telecommunications service provider and the number of lines covered. Typically, a service provider has a one-time charge for each line selected as well as a monthly per line charge. The one-time charge for a local line is typically about \$100. The monthly per-line charge is typically \$3. It should be noted, however, that each service provider has its own price list, and therefore, a user must consult with its service provider in order to determine the actual cost of TSP coverage. In most instances the service provider has filed tariffs for TSP services. PSAPs are eligible for Level 3 restoration priority on the number of lines it needs to place in the priority restoration program. It is recommended that TSP users seek coverage for only a portion of their lines – enough to provide essential coverage during the immediate crisis.

Q. Does a user such as a PSAP need to purchase TSP coverage for all of its telecommunications lines?

A. No. In fact, most TSP users seek coverage for only a portion of their lines. This keeps the cost of coverage more affordable. For example, a PSAP with 10 lines to its 9-1-1 tandem may wish to purchase TSP coverage for only three lines. The PSAP needs to be aware of their network configuration and systems operation. For example, some 911 tandems utilize “most idle” hunting arrangements whereby an incoming 911 call is delivered to the PSAP on the 911 line that has been idle the longest. Also, the 911 tandem may make only two attempts to deliver the call before invoking the alternate routing feature. In the example above of 10 lines and only 3 with TSP then there is a chance a call would not be delivered on the 3 circuits that have TSP that were restored in a crisis. While it keeps the costs down it may not adequately cover the PSAP. PSAPs are encouraged to have in depth discussions with their 911 Service Provider to fully understand their system. This would keep the cost of coverage down considerably, yet provide essential coverage during a crisis. Using this approach, there may be temporary circumstances in which there would be a diminished communications capability (for example, having only 3 of 10 lines in service). However, PSAPs need to weigh this against the possibility of having no service at all if they do not register for the TSP program and, therefore, receive no priority restoration treatment. Backhoes taking out lines into the PSAP is more commonplace than flooding or sabotage. When such ordinary instances occur that impact 911 service to PSAPs it is critical the TSP services be in place to expedite restoration. Furthermore, when TSP is on all the lines into the PSAP it can be used as a tool to assist the telecommunications service providers in maintaining route and facility diversity for PSAP circuits. TSP can be instrumental in maintaining the diversity that can minimize the impact to PSAPs should disaster strike.

Q. During a crisis, how long will it take to have service restored for the lines covered by the TSP program?

A. It depends on the extent of the damage to the critical telecommunications infrastructure and the amount of resources (personnel and spare parts) available to the telecommunications service provider to repair the damage. In any event, the service provider must restore all Federal TSP-designated lines before any others. This is a legal requirement. It should be noted that the TSP program played a critical role in the rapid restoration of telecommunications services in Lower Manhattan following the attacks on the World Trade Center in September 2001. Despite the extensive damage to the infrastructure, the telecommunications services supporting the New York Stock Exchange, for example, were back in operation in three days. Normally, the PSAP experiences service outages such as construction projects cutting a main communication feed into the PSAP or central office isolations caused by more traditional means of

service disruptions. TSP is essential under these conditions in order to ensure priority restoration for 911.

Q. If a PSAP service contract requires the service provider to restore its service within a specified time frame (e.g., within 24 hours), should it still consider TSP coverage?

A. Yes. In accordance with FCC rules, service providers must restore TSP-designated lines before any others, regardless of whether their service contracts specify restoration time frames. Without TSP coverage, telecommunications service providers will restore all Federal TSP lines first, commercial customers' lines which have contract-designated restoration periods next, and then all other lines. In a post September 2001 world, it is too great a risk to leave our nation's critical 9-1-1 infrastructure exposed in this manner. Many telecommunications service providers who provide 911 service assure the PSAPs that they will work quickly to restore 911 in times of outage. Generally PSAP voice circuits from the 911 tandem to the PSAP are easily identifiable within service provider provisioning systems, as they carry unique nomenclature that identifies them as 911 voice. However, the 911 data circuits used to pull location information are not so readily identified. These circuits usually carry standard analog data circuit identifiers and cannot be discerned from non-911 analog data circuits. The busy out circuits are also important to PSAP operation, as they redirect the 911 calls to another destination in case the PSAP has all 911 lines busy or must abandon the PSAP. When the busy out circuit is inoperable the PSAP cannot effect a redirect of 911 calls and must call the service provider providing the 911 service and request the service provider effect the redirect. It is generally recommended all PSAP voice circuits and data circuits carry TSP designation. If the PSAP can afford it, they should also do the busy out circuits. There are generally two 911 data circuits per PSAP and one busy out circuit per each tandem 911 line group. In those cases where a PSAP is served by only one 911 tandem, then there is only one busy out circuit. A PSAP served by two tandems would have two busy out circuits.

04/24/03