



NEWS

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D. C. 20554

News Media Information 202 / 418-0500
Internet:
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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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NEWS MEDIA CONTACTS
FCC: Robin Pence (202) 418-0505
NCS: Steve Barrett (703)602-6211

Homeland Security: FCC and NCS Spearhead National Outreach Campaign to Secure Priority Restoration of Phone Service to 9-1-1 Centers in the Event of a National Crisis

Washington, DC – The Federal Communications Commission and the Department of Homeland Security’s National Communications System (NCS) launched today a nationwide campaign to help ensure that the nation’s 9-1-1 call centers (called Public Safety Answering Points – PSAPs) are registered in the Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) program to have their phone lines restored on a priority basis in the event of a national crisis or attack.

TSP is a federal program that provides for priority installation and restoration of the telecommunications lines that are considered critical to the nation’s security and emergency preparedness, especially in times of disaster.

The FCC and NCS also announced that the national organizations that represent PSAPs – the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), the National Association of State 9-1-1 Administrators (NASNA) and the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials, International (APCO) - are joining the FCC and NCS in this nationwide campaign to increase PSAP participation in the TSP program.

This action follows a joint letter to the organizations from Brenton C. Greene, Deputy Manager of the NCS, and Edmond J. Thomas, Chief of the FCC’s Office of Engineering and Technology, that called for a nationwide initiative to help educate PSAPs about the TSP program and to promote enrollment.

According to research conducted by the FCC and NCS, less than 10 percent of the nation’s approximately 7,500 9-1-1 call centers – or PSAPs – are currently participating in the TSP program. PSAP administrators who operate the nation’s 9-1-1 centers readily qualify for inclusion in the TSP program because their services are essential to the health and safety of American citizens.

Greene and Thomas said in their letter, “PSAP administrators provide services that are essential to the protection of life and property of American citizens, and we believe they should avail themselves of the benefits of the TSP program. Lack of participation could jeopardize the restoration of essential service provided by the PSAP administrators during times of disaster and could put citizens at substantial risk of injury or loss of property at times when they are most vulnerable.”

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APCO president Vincent R. Stile said, "APCO recognizes the importance of the TSP program to the quick and efficient restoration of critical infrastructure and encourages all public safety communications centers to be aware of and participate in this program."

NASNA president Evelyn Bailey said, "The National Association of State 9-1-1 Administrators recognizes that participation in the TSP program is a key component of homeland security. 9-1-1 operators were the first responders on September 11th. We must not become complacent. We must not assume that our 9-1-1 service provider or the telephone company will automatically give priority to 9-1-1 circuits if we haven't registered them with TSP. We urge 9-1-1 centers throughout the nation to be proactive and ensure participation in TSP."

NENA president John Melcher said, "NENA supports TSP as desirable and essential for quick restoration of 9-1-1 network trunking, as well as other critical PSAP mission related communications circuits. As 9-1-1 becomes even more important in today's world, this becomes critical."

The FCC established the TSP program in 1988 and NCS administers the program. The TSP program currently covers more than 50,000 of the nation's most critical lines. It has been instrumental in the timely restoration of key telecommunications lines in many disasters. Most notably, the TSP program played a crucial role in the restoration of telecommunications services to lower Manhattan following the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 by prioritizing the restoration efforts of the telecommunications carriers.

A fact sheet on the PSAP sign-up initiative follows.

Additional information on the TSP program, including how to enroll, may be found at <http://tsp.ncs.gov>. Information on how to obtain FCC sponsorship and how to enroll in TSP may be found at <http://www.fcc.gov/hspc/emergencytelecom.html>.

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Fact Sheet on Nationwide Outreach Campaign

FCC and NCS:

- The FCC announced it will be the federal TSP sponsor for all PSAP administrators (all non-federal organizations that request TSP coverage must have a federal sponsor.) The FCC will also help PSAP administrators apply for TSP coverage, review and help them submit applications to the NCS for processing.
- The FCC has developed initial guidelines to help PSAPs enroll in the TSP program. This information is now available at <http://www.fcc.gov/hspc/emergencytelecom.html>.
- NCS will expedite its processing of PSAP TSP applications. Current regulations allow NCS up to 30 days to process TSP applications. NCS has committed to processing all valid PSAP TSP applications within 14 days and expects to process the majority of them within 3 days.

APCO:

- Develop, in conjunction with industry standard setting bodies, additional industry-specific guidelines for PSAP managers to assist them in enrolling in the TSP program. APCO will make the document available by a link on its web site.
- Support special TSP sessions at APCO Homeland Security Symposiums.
- Develop a TSP outreach program for the APCO 9-1-1 Committee.
- Publish an article in the APCO membership newsletter – which reaches nearly 17,000 readers – to further raise awareness of the importance of PSAP TSP participation.
- Support TSP participation as a best practice for public safety communications organizations.
- Hold a special TSP informational session at the International APCO Conference in Indianapolis in August.

NASNA:

- Write to each 9-1-1 administrator within its 33-member states, endorsing participation in the TSP program and providing information to help enroll in the program.
- Follow-up with the PSAP administrators.
- Support special TSP presentations at upcoming NASNA meetings.

NENA:

- Distribute TSP informational materials and support a special TSP session at the Annual NENA Conference in Denver in June.
- Provide access to essential TSP information through links to the NENA web site.
- Publish an article in NENA's national newsletter – which has a readership of 16,000 – to further raise awareness of the importance of PSAP participation in the TSP program.
- Propose revisions to NENA Standards to reflect adequate levels of PSAP TSP participation.