



February 15, 2019

The Nevada Chapter of APCO (Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials) represents 911 Emergency Communications Professionals throughout our great state. As leaders and representatives of the great State of Nevada, we write to seek your assistance with stopping the practice of 9-1-1 surcharge diversion.

Every day, thousands of Nevadans call 9-1-1 when the unthinkable occurs. They depend upon, expect, and most importantly deserve a 9-1-1 system that is reliable, accurate, and up to date with most current technologies. To ensure public confidence in this communications system, it is essential 9-1-1 call centers have the support and funding required to operate modern technologies and maintain well-trained public safety personnel.

In Nevada, this is typically done by adding a line item on individual phone bills for 9-1-1 service. This relatively small fee helps counties and localities support emergency calling services. In 2017, the Nevada Legislature passed SB 176 which required certain peace officers to wear portable event recording devices, aka Body Cameras. To fund this requirement, SB 176 authorized the diversion of 9-1-1 surcharges. Since the bills passing, counties in Nevada have already diverted \$1.3 Million away from 9-1-1 centers in order to fund these cameras. Not only is this practice unsafe and against the intention of the surcharge, it is deceptive in nature. Nevadans are being asked to support and pay for emergency calling services, but a significant subset of the fees being collected are being diverted elsewhere.

The push for Next Generation 911 services continues to not only grow, but will become necessary and expected by millions of Nevadans and the tens of millions of visitors we get each year. The ability to send and receive text messages, including pictures and multimedia messages, along with the ability to exactly pinpoint those in danger will not only enhance emergency calling capabilities, but will become necessary to respond to the ever evolving emergency situations we face. These technologies and upgrades will require a vast amount of effort and support to come to fruition, along with prudent and available funding.

While some counties are transitioning to those Next Generation 9-1-1 technologies, we have several counties and jurisdictions that are still not equipped with enhanced 9-1-1 services. Meaning, when a 9-1-1 call is placed, they receive only extremely basic location information and no cellular locations. They are faced with the same emergencies, the same calls, but are doing it with a quarter of the resources and the same expectations as those in other, more equipped counties. Rectifying this shortcoming, in those counties, **MUST** be a priority. The safety of our citizens and our first responders depend upon it.

If the counties in Nevada continue this practice of fee diversion, it will hinder these necessary digital age upgrades, prevent call centers from getting much needed funding to assist with staffing and training issues, and will continue to put citizens at risk.

Further, we are concerned that if the practice of diverting 9-1-1 fees away from emergency communications center continues, Nevada will become ineligible to receive millions of dollars in federal grant funding, which also aims to help modernize its 9-1-1 system. The 2004 legislation that created this federal 9-1-1 grant program requires applicants, as a prerequisite to receiving the grant, to certify that no portion of 9-1-1 fees imposed by any unit of government is or has been expended for any other purpose. (See 47 U.S.C. § 942(c)(2)). If, after receiving the grant, it is found that a unit of government misrepresented the facts or has since used any of its 9-1-1 funds for a non-9-1-1 purpose, then it must return the entire grant amount to the federal government. (See 47 U.S.C. § 942(c)(3)).

While we agree body cameras are something that is beneficial for all, utilizing funds designated for the 9-1-1 emergency communications system is not where it should be coming from.

Our organization urges the representatives from across the State of Nevada to cease the practice of surcharge diversion and in turn support their local 911 centers and the hundreds of communications professionals who are saving lives each and every day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Grogan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matthew Grogan
1st Vice President
Nevada APCO