

The Best Kept Secret in Public Safety: What Every PSAP Should Know About the Benefits of Phase I Wireless E9-1-1

By Lori Buerger

For leaders throughout America's public safety community, 1999 has been a year of decision. Faced with the opportunity, those with adequate funding mechanisms were forced to choose: To deploy Phase I Wireless E9-1-1 service, or not?

Some opted to lead the country in implementing Phase I. Multiple jurisdictions in Oregon and Colorado have successfully deployed, where today wireless customers and PSAP call takers are enjoying the benefits of Phase I service, including customer call-back number and cell site/sector of origination.

The majority of PSAP managers, however, including those with funding in place, have chosen not to implement Phase I. Some have stated that the benefits do not justify the price of Phase I deployment. Careful study of the differences between Phase 0 (basic wireless 911 service) versus Phase I, however, clearly demonstrate that the advantages of Phase I service extend much further than simply call-back number and cell site/sector of origination.

In fact, confusion surrounding Phase I has hindered widespread recognition of the full benefits of Phase I. These often-overlooked benefits include:

1. **Placement of Wireless Calls into the Emergency Call Queue.** Rather than wireless calls being handled on administrative lines (typically the case in Phase 0 environments), calls are handled by call-takers in the same manner and on the same equipment as wireline emergency calls.
2. **Selective Routing.** Calls can be routed directly to the most appropriate PSAP based on cell site of origination, rather than handled and transferred from a central call-taking facility (often the case in Phase 0).
3. **Default Routing.** One aspect of the implementation process is establishment of (and mutual agreement upon) robust default routing procedures in case of system failure.
4. **Fast call set-up times.** The Phase I deployments in Oregon and Colorado (which have utilized AT&T Wireless' recommended Non-Callpath-Associated Signalling [NCAS] solution) deliver impressive call-setup times of 6-8 seconds. Call set-up times are even faster in those areas where ISUP signalling is available.
5. **Call Statistics/Monthly Data Reports.** Most wireless carriers have contracted with vendors which will provide monthly statistical reporting to the PSAP manager, allowing better-informed decision-making regarding call routing, etc.
6. **Platform for Phase II Deployment.** Although technical and cost issues are still far from being resolved regarding Phase II E9-1-1, virtually all parties agree that all location technologies will require a technical backbone, like that provided by Phase I, for delivery of data to the PSAP. Therefore, despite hopes by some PSAPs to do so, Phase I isn't a step that can be skipped in favor of awaiting Phase II.

Delayed implementation of Phase I will mean only that both phases will be need to be deployed at a later date—Phase I will **not** be rendered unnecessary by the arrival of the Phase II deadline.

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