WHEN SECONDS COUNT

The History of Oregon's 9-1-1 Program
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Oregon's 9-1-1 Program

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In order to fully understand and appreciate Oregon's effort to implement a statewide emergency telephone system, it is necessary to learn the background of 9-1-1 in the United States and to obtain a basic overview of how 9-1-1 works. So, we begin with a short history lesson.

HISTORY

What is 9-1-1?
Nine-one-one is a three digit telephone number which can provide the American public with direct access to an emergency answering center.

It is the number that has been designated for reporting an emergency and requesting assistance in many communities in the United States that have modified their existing emergency reporting systems to accommodate the number. Nine-one-one is thus intended to become a nationwide emergency telephone number, as a public service with the primary objective of preserving life and property. Ideally, this means that eventually, nearly every American citizen and visitor to the country who has access to a telephone could summon aid by dialing this simple three-digit number, regardless of location, familiarity with an area, time of day, or type of emergency.

Of course, such an ideal situation does not exist at this time. Rather, in keeping with the belief that local governments should maintain the responsibility for determining and responding to their own emergency service needs, the philosophy has traditionally been to make 9-1-1 available to any community or municipality electing to install it. It is hoped, however, that the value and benefits of a single emergency telephone number will receive sufficient recognition across the country to bring about the nationwide implementation of 9-1-1.
The concept of a common emergency telephone number is not new. It had been discussed in this country for some time before the first system became operational in 1968. Similar systems have been in service in several European countries for many years.

How Did the Idea Develop? Origin of Concept Was in Europe

Great Britain was the first country to establish a universal emergency telephone number. Since 1937 any individual in the United Kingdom has been able to dial 999, receive a prompt response, and have his or her request for assistance (police, fire, ambulance) quickly and efficiently directed to the proper agency. In developing similar systems, Belgium has adopted 900 as its uniform emergency number. Denmark has provided 000, and in Sweden the caller dials 90 000. Several of these systems are directed primarily toward the provision of emergency medical services. Other countries which have provided three or two-digit emergency numbers, either universally or for large population segments, include West Germany; Caracas, Venezuela, which developed its system in 1963 with the help of the United States; and Winnipeg, Canada, where the system has been in service since 1959. Canada is currently developing a national system utilizing 9-1-1 and Japan has implemented 1-1-9 throughout their country.
Although the selection of the particular agency to act as the answering center may differ from country to country or within a country, the concept of a single number received at a central reporting agency has been well accepted and has proven in practice to be an effective component of the total emergency response mechanism in these countries.

Introduction in the United States

In January of 1968, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company announced that within its serving areas the digits 9-1-1 were available for installation on a national scale as the single emergency telephone number. Although numerous public safety officials and individuals at various government organizational levels had long expressed keen interest in the establishment of such a number, the AT&T announcement was primarily prompted by the 1967 recommendation of The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice that "wherever practical a single (police emergency) number should be established at least within a metropolitan area and preferably over the entire United States."

Further stimulus toward the creation of a nationwide number was provided by the Commission on Civil Disorders and the Federal Communications Commission which urged the telephone industry to
provide a three-digit emergency telephone number. These various recommendations had in turn received impetus from growing public concern over the increase in crimes, accidents, and medical emergencies and from Federal Government awareness that current emergency reporting methods were inadequate and that in a population as large and as mobile as ours, a common emergency number made sense.

In response to these concerns, the Federal Government in March of 1973, through the Office of Telecommunications Policy, Executive Office of the President, issued National Policy Bulletin Number 73-1 endorsing the concept of 9-1-1 and urging its nationwide implementation. A full text of the policy has been included in this document as Appendix A, located on page 33.

The choice of the specific number 9-1-1 was based primarily on cost factors, the comparative ease with which telephone company equipment could be modified to accept the number and on other considerations which indicated that the combination of the digits 9-1-1 would be easily remembered and dialed by most persons.

THE 9-1-1 SYSTEM

How Does 9-1-1 Work?

Telephones are connected to each other through switching centers
called central offices. The digits dialed instruct the switching equipment what connections are desired. Such switching is made by the digits dialed. Central offices are designated by their three-digit code (i.e. 664-XXXX). A central office code can serve up to 10,000 numbers and often serves as a single exchange in small communities or as a part of many central offices serving a large metropolitan area. Such central offices are often located geographically in different areas of a community. In many cases, however, such central office or offices serve as a wire center and each wire center serves a precise geographical area.

The limits of such are known as wire center boundaries. There is generally a fair degree of consistency between wire center boundaries, or if you will, central office boundaries, and the communities or areas served (the jurisdictional boundary). For example, the telephone service area surrounding Medford has a corresponding central office service area referred to as the Medford exchange. Over the years, however, because of annexation, incorporation, etc., boundaries have changed. At the same time, office boundaries can shift for telephone service reasons but generally are much more rigid than the jurisdictional boundaries because of the tremendous installation cost of the cable system. Such boundaries generally shrink because of higher concentration of people, developments, new arrangements, etc. Rarely do the central office boundaries expand. Nevertheless, any change of central office boundaries is a major undertaking and accompanied
by many allied programs. Such changes are expensive and will only be done in rare situations. Central office boundaries, therefore, have been established to fill telephone requirements and until the advent of 9-1-1, inconsistencies between central office and jurisdictional boundaries have not proven a problem. Nine-one-one is in all respects a telephone number. Granted it is a unique telephone number, but nevertheless it is a special three-digit number. Therefore, the 9-1-1 call can only be directed to one place within an area or in some cases one place per central office boundary. This is dependent upon the kind of switching equipment and switching arrangements presently installed.

What is the Function of the 9-1-1 Emergency Answering Center?

The primary function of the 9-1-1 emergency answering center is to receive emergency calls. What the center does with the emergency call after it has been received, however, is subject to a great deal of variation depending upon local requirements. Basically, the center may either handle dispatch for all the calls it receives or transfer or relay calls to the appropriate agency which then assumes responsibility for dispatching. The following are the three most common answering center arrangements:

Centralized Reception - Decentralized Dispatch (Relay). 9-1-1 calls are directed to a centralized answering center where the operator obtains all necessary information from the caller and then
calls the appropriate response agency and relays the information. In this type of arrangement, the caller is not usually held on the line and never speaks directly to the responding agency.

Centralized Reception - Decentralized Dispatch (Transfer). 9-1-1 calls are received at a central answering center and, after the operator ascertains the nature and location of the emergency, the call is transferred to the appropriate service agency. This arrangement allows the caller to speak directly to the public safety agency. The operator can stay on the line during the transfer and will be able to coordinate multiple agency responses if necessary.

Centralized Reception - Centralized Dispatch. All 9-1-1 calls come into a centralized communications center which has the authority and the capability to dispatch emergency vehicles for the participating agencies. In small systems, the person who answers the phone and takes the call may also perform the dispatching function. Usually, however, there are separate dispatchers at the answering center who dispatch vehicles after receiving the appropriate information from the operator. These dispatchers may either be employees of the answering agency or representatives of the participating service agencies. Many communities already have centralized dispatch capability, with several agencies sharing a community-wide radio system. The advantage of a centralized dispatching system is the ability to save time by not having to
transfer or relay calls and to coordinate multiple agency responses.

BENEFITS OF 9-1-1

Why Should a Community Install 9-1-1?

There are a number of sound reasons why the installation of 9-1-1 benefits the entire community.

Only One Number

A person needing to summon emergency aid or report a crime, fire, or accident is often under severe emotional, and perhaps physical, stress. He or she may forget the proper seven-digit number to call. If a local telephone directory is handy, the caller may be presented with a confusing array of telephone numbers. If the caller is a stranger in the community, his or her plight is intensified because they may not even know the political jurisdiction in which they are located.

An Easy Number To Remember

9-1-1 is an especially easy number to remember. In times of emotional stress even a simple, well known, seven-digit number can be quickly forgotten or confused. Further, a short simple number
is easier for children, retarded or illiterate persons, and non-English speaking individuals to remember and use.

As the use of 9-1-1 in this country increases, so will the familiarity with the number increase, until dialing 9-1-1 becomes a nearly automatic response in the event of an emergency.

An Easy Number to Dial; Faster Access to Emergency Services

Because the digit 9 is located next to the "0" (operator) position on the telephone dial—the last position on the dial and known to most people—and 1 is the first position on the dial and is repeated in dialing 9-1-1, it is not a difficult number to dial and the possibility of misdialing is somewhat remote. On touch tone telephones, 9 is the last position on the third row of buttons and 1 is the first position in the first row—also simple locations for most persons to find. Ease of dialing or finding touch buttons is particularly important to the blind or someone needing to dial in the dark. And dialing a simple three-digit number is obviously easier and faster than dialing any seven-digit number.

Promotes Citizen Involvement

The ease with which 9-1-1 can be remembered and dialed, the potentially quick response by an emergency agency, and the very fact that a community chooses to provide its citizens with such a
system appear to have encouraged a less apathetic attitude on the part of the public. 9-1-1 thus seems to have very positive benefits to the community in increasing citizen awareness and acceptance of its public safety agencies and in promoting a sense of responsibility toward fellow citizens.

Of Special Benefit to Travelers and New Residents

Travelers are often in totally unfamiliar surroundings and thus in a particularly vulnerable position in the event of an emergency. The adoption of a nationwide telephone number has obvious advantages in providing these individuals with a greater sense of security.

Calls Received by Trained Personnel

The personnel receiving 9-1-1 calls have been especially trained in eliciting accurate and complete information from persons who may be distraught or who have difficulty communicating because of age (children and elderly citizens), language or other speech barriers. 9-1-1 answering center personnel are generally knowledgeable about the jurisdiction(s) they serve and of the larger region so that calls can be redirected if necessary. Handling requests for emergency assistance is the primary responsibility of persons who answer 9-1-1 calls.
Advantages to Public Safety and Other Emergency Agencies

A number of advantages accrue to public safety agencies through the provision of 9-1-1:

- Because the time from the detection of an incident to the time an agency is notified is potentially reduced through the use of 9-1-1, total response time can be reduced. This reduction can lead to the saving of lives and property.

- A higher degree of public confidence in the ability of its safety and emergency resources to serve its need.

- Because calls are received at a central answering point, better coordination between emergency agencies is possible. It is not difficult to imagine the value of such a capability to both the public and emergency resources when multiple services are required to handle a single incident.

- Priority calls are immediately identified when a 9-1-1 call comes in to the answering center. Whether or not all such calls are true emergencies greatly depends on an effective
and continuing public education program in the proper use of 9-1-1 and on the efficient disposition of nonemergency calls coming through on 9-1-1. Most communities have had little difficulty in educating their citizens to use 9-1-1 as an emergency number only.

- Better record-keeping procedures are possible and almost inherent in the initiation and operation of a 9-1-1 system. The ultimate worth of such data is of course dependent on the use to which a community chooses to put the statistics it has collected.

- Since 9-1-1 is inextricably linked to a community's communications system, improvements to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of that system may be suggested as planning for 9-1-1 proceeds. The more efficient a community's communications network, the more effective its response to the public it serves. Costly improvements involving sophisticated equipment are not, however, a necessary adjunct of 9-1-1. Many kinds of identified needs can be met at little or no additional cost to the community.
Implementation Process

Oregon's first 9-1-1 system became operational in March of 1971 in Milton-Freewater, located in the north-eastern part of the state. Other early 9-1-1 systems in Oregon were those in Toledo, Seaside and Hermiston. The years from 1971 to 1976 saw the development of fifteen 9-1-1 systems throughout Oregon. By 1980 this number had grown to 37.

Early 9-1-1 systems shared some common characteristics. Most were located in smaller, rather geographically isolated communities served by Pacific Northwest Bell Telephone Company. Total elapsed time from initial system planning to full system implementation averaged about nine months. Early systems were initiated by fire, police, and city/county administrators in about equal proportions. In many cases it appears that there was a close correspondence between city or county jurisdictional boundaries and telephone exchange boundaries. In some cases, 9-1-1 may have been facilitated by pre-existing joint agreements covering public safety dispatching or other services that made 9-1-1 planning and installation straightforward and uncontroversial.
By the end of 1981, a total of 89 systems were in operation, and five counties were 100% completed. They were Morrow, Jackson, Multnomah, Washington, and Polk. Keep in mind that all 89 of these early systems were implemented between March of 1971 and December of 1981 (over 10 years) without the benefit of a state mandate.

Legislation

For years public and private safety agencies, as well as local governments, have done well to stall the nationwide implementation of 9-1-1. The concept we've just discussed of one three-digit universal emergency telephone number for accessing police, fire, or medical assistance seems like such good common sense that one wonders what would happen if the general public heard first-hand the reasons, excuses, and questionable justifications that are given by many agencies as reasons to not implement 9-1-1 for their community.

Oregon has heard them all. And, as early as 1975, saw the need to pursue a statewide implementation of 9-1-1 through legislation enacted as a means of overcoming the lack of cooperation and absolute refusal on the parts of many to pursue active implementation.
Early legislation attempts in Oregon are summarized as follows:

1975 - SJR 42 called for the Public Utility Commissioner to apply for federal grants to fund the investigation of the feasibility and desirability of implementing 9-1-1 emergency telephone service throughout the state. The measure failed to generate the support necessary to get it out of committee by the time the legislature adjourned.

1977 - SB 774 called for the statewide implementation of 9-1-1 by 31 December 1982, with preliminary plans due 31 January 1979, and final plans due 31 January 1981. The program would have been coordinated by the Public Utility Commissioner with the advice and assistance of the State Attorney General.

The measure failed due to lack of support by the telephone utilities and public and private safety agencies. No funding mechanism was provided to local government or telephone utilities as a means of financially supporting implementation.

1979 - HB 2210 would have required that counties establish 9-1-1 emergency telephone systems before 1 January 1985. Preliminary plans would have been required by 1 January 1982, with final plans due by 1 July 1983. The program would have been coordinated by the State Health Division.
Measure failed due to lack of support by the telephone utilities, public and private safety agencies, and local governments. Again, no funding mechanism was proposed to support the cost of implementation.

It was becoming quite clear that several key elements were missing...or not adequately addressed...leading to the continued failure of these legislative proposals. The elements identified were:

1. A system for funding implementation equitable to both telephone utilities and implementing agencies alike.

2. The need to address all safety agencies, public and private alike. All agencies within the state must participate.

3. The time frame for implementation must be realistic and attainable.

4. A mechanism must be created which will require all agencies affected by 9-1-1 implementation to "come together" to create a plan for their system which they must all "sign on" to.
5. The legislation must have "teeth" to compel compliance should local government fail to comply within the timeframe established.

In laying the groundwork for Oregon's current statute, it is important to note that in many instances, 9-1-1 legislation is offered or proposed as a means of satisfying the failure of local government in developing their own plan. Such is the case in Oregon.

Clackamas County, Oregon lies just south and east of the City of Portland, our largest city. Some characteristics of the county are:

- Population: 248,200 People
- Area: 1,879 square miles
- Incorporated Cities: 16*
- City Police Departments: 8
- City Fire Department: 5
- Rural Fire Districts: 13
- Ambulance Services: 6
- Telephone Companies: 10
- Central Office/Wire Centers: 31

* Includes a part of the cities of Portland and Tualatin.
Add to the above the County Sheriff's Office, the Oregon State Police, and the Oregon Department of Forestry, and the usual problems develop. All of the one-line descriptions for why 9-1-1 won't work are heard. Loss of local control; it's too expensive; it just won't work here, we'll lose local identity; we don't trust the other agencies, just to name a few.

Unhappy with progress made over almost ten years of active planning, the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners, in 1979, commissioned a 9-1-1 Task Force to study the problem and to report back their recommendation for establishing 9-1-1 countywide. The Task Force, within a short period of time, identified that the only way to establish 9-1-1 countywide was through state legislation.

A member of the Task Force was Ed Lindquist, who at the time was not only a Fire Captain with Clackamas County Fire District #1, but a member of the Oregon House of Representatives.

Ed was approached by the Task Force and asked if he would sponsor a bill to be introduced during the 1981 session which would mandate the implementation of 9-1-1 in Oregon. He said yes, and the rest is history.

One of the requirements was to find someone with experience in 9-1-1 implementation and legislation to assist in drafting a bill.
They found such a person in Maury Astley, Executive Vice President of the Oregon Independent Telephone Association. Maury's experience before coming to Oregon included six years as 9-1-1 Coordinator for General Telephone in the State of California together with four years on the California State 9-1-1 Advisory Committee. Because of his background, Maury proved to be an invaluable asset to Oregon legislators interested in drafting a successful mandate.

With Lindquist able to relate to and anticipate the needs of the public and private safety agencies, as well as cities, counties, and other governmental agencies, and Astley able to identify the specific requirements for statewide implementation, the necessary forum to assemble a workable bill was established. Equally important to the success or failure of the bill was the support of Pacific Northwest Bell through their Public Affairs Representative, Gary Wilhelms, who served as a member of the Oregon House of Representatives from 1973-1979, House Minority Whip in 1977, and House Minority Leader in 1979. Between Astley and Wilhelms, all telephone utilities in Oregon were represented.

With all fronts covered (public and private safety agencies, local government, and telephone utilities), and everyone involved in support of a statewide mandate, House Bill 3178 was born, and 31 July 1981 signed into law by the Honorable Governor Victor Atiyeh.
Oregon Law

Oregon's mandate calls for the statewide implementation of 9-1-1 by 1 January 1991.

It requires that all public and private safety agencies must participate, and further defines a public or private safety agency as being "any unit of state or local government, a special-purpose district or a private firm which provides or has the authority to provide fire-fighting, police, ambulance, or emergency medical services."

* Requires a preliminary plan by 1 January 1987.

* Requires a final plan by 1 July 1988.

* Requires that the emergency telephone system include, at a minimum, a 24-hour communications capability; central dispatch, or relay, or transfer of 9-1-1 calls received by the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), and a minimum of two 9-1-1 circuits from each telephone company central office.

* Requires that telephone utilities convert pay phones to coin-free access by or before a 9-1-1 telephone system is implemented.
Requires that preliminary or final plans submitted to the state be accompanied with the written approval of the governing bodies of all public and private safety agencies within the proposed area of service.

Provides that the Emergency Management Division may prepare a final plan for a "local jurisdiction" which fails to file a final plan by 1 July 1988.

The funding element of the statute is a 3% telephone tax imposed on the exchange access charge. Collected monthly by the telephone utilities through their monthly billing, the funds are then directed to the Oregon Department of Revenue which routes the funds to a dedicated Emergency Communications Account. The balance of the fund is administered in total on a quarterly basis with the following disbursements identified by statute:

The State Department of Revenue is eligible to receive 1% of the account balance at distribution, or actual expense, whichever is less, of their cost to administer their role in the program.

The State Emergency Management Division is eligible to receive 3% of the account balance at distribution, or actual expense, whichever is less, of their cost to administer their role in the program.
* The telephone utilities are eligible to receive on request their cost of:

1. Modifying central office switching and trunking equipment for 9-1-1 services.

2. Conversion of pay station telephones to provide coin-free access.

3. Collection of the 3% tax itself.

Items (1) and (2) must first be audited by the Public Utility Commissioner before payment can be authorized.

Once all of the above disbursements are made, the balance of the account is distributed in total to cities based on their incorporated population, and to counties based on their unincorporated population.

The statute then directs that the cities and counties distribute the funds to public and private safety agencies within each city or county.
The statute dedicates the funds, and any interest that might be derived from investment of them, to four areas identified as planning, installation, operation, and improvement of emergency telephone systems.

The tax was established on 1 January 1982 and is scheduled to expire no later than 1 January 1992, unless modified by legislative action.

The key elements of the statute most attributable to its success are:

* Statute applies to all agencies affected by 9-1-1 implementation. No one was left out.

* The mandate (nine years, 1 January 1982 - 1 January 1991) is reasonable and achievable.

* Minimal technical standards are required.

* State's role is one of providing assistance and stimulation. Local governments are responsible for implementation during first nine years.
* All governing bodies of all public and private safety agencies must "sign on" to their implementation plan or the state cannot consider the plan for approval. Forces participation and consensus.

* Funding mechanism is provided (3% telephone excise tax) which dedicates funds to planning, installation, operation, and improvement of 9-1-1 system.

* Funds automatically go to the cities and counties for distribution to public and private safety agencies within each city or county. No unnecessary bureaucratic hoops to jump through before receiving funds.

There are many different views on 9-1-1 legislation both pro and con, but one thing is clear, to be successful, the legislative effort must include all affected agencies and involve commitment to resolving each other's problems at the forefront of the process or failure is imminent.
The Oregon 9-1-1 Program

Immediately after HB 3178 became law, the staff of the Executive Department, Emergency Management Division, began preparation for developing the 9-1-1 implementation plan for Oregon.

A 9-1-1 Rules Committee was appointed in February of 1982, charged with the responsibility of providing the Administrator of the Emergency Management Division with advice and guidance relating to the development of rules to establish the framework for Oregon's public and private safety agencies to utilize in planning and implementing their respective 9-1-1 systems. The committee was made up of representatives from the League of Oregon Cities, Association of Oregon Counties, Pacific Northwest Bell Telephone Company, Oregon Independent Telephone Association, Oregon State Police, and several representatives of local government involved in providing emergency services affected by the new 9-1-1 statute. Many of the committee members had been directly involved in the creation of the state law and were staffed on the committee specifically to maintain continuity in the process of developing a new state program from within the newly established body of law.
Between March and July of 1982, it became quite clear that the committee felt the development of rules for the sake of writing rules was unnecessary and would have the effect of putting an immediate roadblock in the way of local planning committees. The committee felt the law was specific enough regarding the timelines required and planning document parameters necessary to accomplish plan development but yet loose enough to allow local discretion and maximum latitude for local government to develop their plans.

Instead of developing rules, the committee concentrated its efforts on the selection criteria for hiring a program coordinator and necessary clerical support staff. They also issued a strong recommendation to the administrator of the Emergency Management Division that a Coordinator's Handbook, or "cookbook" of sorts, be developed to cover all aspects of planning, installing, operating, and improving 9-1-1 systems in Oregon. By developing the handbook and in addition a public information brochure, it was felt that rules could be a "last resort" approach to providing local officials the guidance necessary to implement their system.

Equally important was the recommendation that a series of statewide workshops be held throughout the state to address the central elements of the new law and to answer the growing number of questions regarding 9-1-1 and its now mandated effect on Oregon's public and private safety agencies.
By the end of July, 1982, Oregon's first 9-1-1 Program Coordinator and Clerical Specialist were employed and working to address the immediate concerns of the Rules Committee. Between August and December, 1982, significant program accomplishments included the following tasks:

* Reorganized the Oregon 9-1-1 Rules Committee and changed their name to the Oregon 9-1-1 Advisory Committee.

* Conducted a review of the letters of intent filed with the Emergency Management Division in 1982.

* Conducted a series of seven all-day workshops on 9-1-1 planning and implementation. Workshops were held in Wilsonville, Eugene, Bend, Ontario, Pendleton, Gold Beach, and Klamath Falls.

* Developed guideline for new Coordinator's Handbook and Public Information Brochure.

* Developed informational handouts explaining the new law and answering most common questions relative to 9-1-1 systems in general.
The philosophy of the Oregon 9-1-1 Program was developed on the basis that systems should be established by local planning groups who are best prepared to meet and address local problems unique to the area where the plan is being developed. The state's role was established to be a resource for guidance and planning assistance as well as a credible, neutral source for obtaining help in resolving local conflicts. In response to early questions about the lack of rules, the program pledged to stay out of the way of local government in order to give local planning committees maximum latitude in developing their own "game plan" to implement 9-1-1 without running into state-imposed roadblocks such as rules.

The tradeoff for this liberal approach to managing the program effort was the understanding expressed to all parties that this posture would remain so long as Oregon's public and private safety agencies used common sense in their approach to planning systems and that guidance recommended by the Oregon Emergency Management Division's 9-1-1 Program be followed in recognition of their statewide implementation mandate. Through close coordination with planning groups established around the state and by developing a standard approach to system planning addressed in the Coordinator's Handbook issued in August of 1983, Oregon's success rate with implementations has been second to none.
How Implementation Occurs

In Oregon, an implementation occurs through the sequence of the following events:

1. Planning Committee established.

2. Committee develops goals and objectives.

3. Committee collects existing emergency access system data.

4. Committee develops system alternatives.

5. Committee develops consensus for a single alternative.

6. Committee writes plan.

7. Committee circulates plan to obtain the written approvals of the governing bodies of all public and private safety agencies affected by the plan. (Note: Oregon Law requires that all governing bodies provide their written approval of the plan before receiving state approval of the plan.)

8. Once state approval is granted, an order is placed with the responsible telephone utility.
9. System implementation takes place.

While the above implementation steps have been greatly simplified, the process generally takes approximately nine (9) to twelve (12) months if no extenuating circumstances are encountered. Local politics, lack of cooperation, and unwilling public and private safety heads can stall the process indefinitely.

Implementation Progress

As of March 1989, Oregon's implementation effort was better than 75% completed, with 223 of 296 central office switching facilities completed and providing 9-1-1 services.

Of Oregon's 36 counties, 23 are 100% completed. They are:

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Of 241 cities, 175 are covered by 9-1-1 systems.
Fifty-two (52) primary public safety answering points exist in Oregon to provide over 2.3 million of Oregon's 2.6 million citizens with emergency response assistance via 9-1-1 emergency telephone systems.

Conclusion

The entire subject of 9-1-1 promotes many public service issues but none more significant than the "public interest" aspect which so often is forgotten when system planning and even the eventual operation of the system resumes.

Because 9-1-1 telephone systems are unique to a designated telephone exchange area and affect all citizens with telephones who live and work within the telephone exchange area served, system changes or problems have a more wide ranging concern than many other types of public service.

Oregon's commitment to quality in its public safety services is furthered through its endeavor to mandate 9-1-1 telephone service throughout the state.

By January 1, 1991, citizens needing emergency assistance need only remember 9-1-1...WHEN SECONDS COUNT.