



The Resource

The Colorado 9-1-1 Resource Center

Volume 2, Issue 1

Quick Calendar

Upcoming Resource Center Update meetings:

Feb 17: Steamboat

Feb 19: Fairplay

Feb 22: Trinidad

Feb 24: Cortez

For more details, visit the Resource Center web site.

Come to the meeting in your area to learn what's happening in Colorado and to tell us what we can do to serve you better!

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TracFone Withdraws Petition to the PUC

TracFone Wireless has withdrawn a petition to the Colorado Public Utilities Commission to be designated as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier. The petition came as part of an effort by TracFone to participate in a federal grant program called Lifeline, which allows telephone service providers to supply telephone service to qualifying low income individuals and receive compensation from the federal government.

In order to qualify, TracFone was required by the FCC to be designated as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) by the regulating body in each state it wished to offer the service. In Colorado, this body is the PUC, but TracFone also sent requests to

individual 9-1-1 Authorities in Colorado requesting that they sign forms confirming that TracFone provides 9-1-1 service in their service area.

An intervention was filed in the PUC proceeding on behalf of several Colorado 9-1-1 Authorities, stating that designation of TracFone as an ETC would not be in the public interest. The concern expressed in the intervention was that since TracFone does not remit 9-1-1 surcharges to local 9-1-1 authorities, as conventional telephone companies, VoIP companies, contract wireless providers, and some prepaid providers do, then it would be detrimental to the citizens of Colorado for customers to be

drawn from those companies to TracFone by use of the Lifeline program. Carriers already participating in the Lifeline program in Colorado are remitting surcharges. TracFone's response to the intervention was that state law does not require them to remit 9-1-1 surcharges.

Prior to a formal decision by the PUC on the matter, TracFone has withdrawn their petition to be declared an ETC, citing draft legislation pending that, if introduced, would clarify the issue of whether or not prepaid cell phone providers are required to remit surcharges.

This means that, for now, TracFone is not pursuing participation in the Lifeline program in Colorado.

State APCO/NENA Conference a Success

The Colorado chapters of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials and the National Emergency Number Association held a well-attended multi-track training and vender conference in Longmont in early October. The keynote opening speaker was Nathan Lee, of the Denise Amber Lee Foundation, a non-profit that exists to improve training standards and financial

support for 9-1-1 call centers.

Four educational tracks offered a variety of presentations of interest to professionals in different roles within the 9-1-1 team. Presentations included topics such as the use of



Nathan Lee

translators in 9-1-1 calls, building a training program, effective hiring, an update on the Colorado TERT project, and more.

Vendors were well-represented at the trade show portion of the conference on October 9, with three or four dozen vendors present to discuss their products and services with attendees.

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New Product: Auto-Dialer or Not?

The rollout of GPS-enabled emergency devices continues, and one of the latest entries has created some debate in the 9-1-1 community nationwide. EmFinders sells a wristwatch-like device that contains a small cell phone. The idea is that you put it on someone who is likely to get lost, like an Alzheimer’s patient who is known to wander. In the even the person wanders off, the customer calls EmFinders, who then calls the cell phone in the device and activates it. The device then dials 9-1-1 and delivers a pre-recorded message to the local 9-1-1 call center. The idea is that the call center will receive Phase II data along with the pre-recorded message and can use that information to locate the lost individual.

This plan sounds an awful lot like an auto-dialer to many 9-1-1

professionals, something that is illegal in many jurisdictions. Because the device has to be activated remotely, however, it may not be considered an auto-dialer under many existing ordinances or statutes.

Other GPS devices already available to consumers, like those marketed by OnStar or Zoombak, deliver GPS coordinates to a corporate call center, and then a live operator from that call center contacts the appropriate PSAP. There is concern that the model of delivering a pre-recorded message to the local PSAP could cause confusion.

Another concern is that the device relies on local Phase II cellular 9-1-1 technology, which is not consistently available nationwide. Since the website marketing this device does not provide any caveat concerning the universal availability of Phase II

9-1-1 service, the feeling of some in the 9-1-1 community is that the company may be creating unrealistic expectations for its customers.

Finally, it should be noted that since the device can only call 9-1-1, it is essentially the same classification as a non-service initialized cell phone, meaning that it is unknown if the company will be remitting 9-1-1 surcharges to help pay for the service that is so essential to its business plan.



The EmFinder EmSeeQ



“Advocacy groups exist both for the expansion of sunshine laws and for the protection of individual privacy. Where these two goals conflict, a tug-of-war can result.”

9-1-1 and Open Records: A Question of Privacy vs. Accountability

It’s become a familiar story now. A celebrity is involved in a public safety call for service and they or someone else calls 9-1-1. In almost no time at all, that 9-1-1 call is being played on the news and is available to the entire world on the Internet. Most people would be infuriated by such a breach of privacy, but little is said if a celebrity is involved.

But what if it’s just an average citizen? Where does a person’s right to privacy concerning one of their most vulnerable moments trump the public’s right to know? Does someone calling 9-1-1 have the right to expect that their call will be kept private?

Legally, in Colorado, the answer is usually no. As in most states, open records statutes in Colorado make no specific exception for 9-1-1 calls. Colorado law states that records

custodians can withhold records if releasing them would be “contrary to the public interest,” an exception vague enough that it is likely not relied upon frequently. Otherwise, calls related to ongoing investigations can be withheld or redacted, as can calls of a medical nature, but the requirements are complex. When in doubt, 9-1-1 records custodians should consult their legal counsel.

Legal questions aside, however, when is it **right** or **wrong** to release a 9-1-1 call or CAD record to the media or an interested individual? Does the caller have any right to restrict their private information?

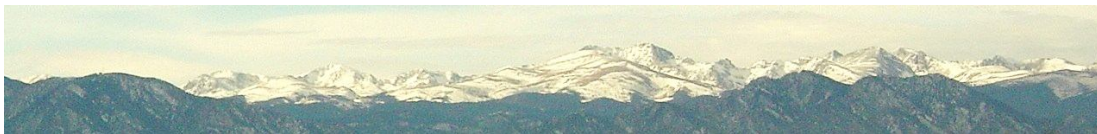
Open records advocates argue that recordings of 9-1-1 calls and radio dispatches are an important way to evaluate the effectiveness of local emergency services. The Society for

Professional Journalists have made their opposition known to efforts to restrict public broadcast of 9-1-1 recordings, regardless of the reason.

Proponents of caller privacy have argued that free access to 9-1-1 records would have a “chilling effect” on the use of the 9-1-1 system. Will people be less willing to use 9-1-1 in emergencies or be honest during the course of the call if they know that anything they say may be played on TV or the radio or made available on the Internet later?

Advocacy groups exist both for the expansion of sunshine laws and for the protection of individual privacy. Where these two goals conflict, a tug-of-war can result. Only time will tell if the result will be a different balance between accountability and privacy than we have now.

PSAP Spotlight: City of Thornton



A view of only **part** of the horizon visible from the windows at the City of Thornton 9-1-1 Communications Center

The City of Thornton played host to the Colorado 9-1-1 Resource Center's Annual 9-1-1 Summit in November, allowing a few attendees the opportunity to visit their dispatch center. In addition to being a state of the art dispatch center staffed with highly trained professionals, the dispatch center boasts what may be the nicest view from a Public Safety Answering

Point in Colorado.

Do you remember the days when PSAPs were always in basements and windowless? Thornton Communications is an example of the modern concept of the dispatch center, which should be a pleasant place to work as well as secure.

Also on the horizon, according to manager Mike Wallace, ENP, are

expansion plans, which may result in dispatch personnel losing this view, at least temporarily, while construction is completed.

If your PSAP has a nicer view than this, let everyone see it! Send me your pictures and a brief description of your PSAP to be highlighted here!

director@co9-1-1resourcecenter.org



Resource Center Launches Online Discussion Forum

<http://co911rc.forumsplace.com/>

The Colorado 9-1-1 Resource Center has launched an online discussion forum for 9-1-1 professionals to ask questions, share ideas, and find answers. The discussion forum, found at the address above, allows individuals to post topics for discussion and others to respond. Clicking the

subscribe link at the bottom of the page will allow you to receive email notifications of new topics and responses. Online polls can also be posted.

It is the Resource Center's hope that the forum will be a place where 9-1-1

professionals in Colorado and come together and discuss issues, support each other, and share their knowledge. It will also be a helpful online tool to supplement efforts toward creation of a State 9-1-1 Plan or other collaborative efforts.

Check it out!

"It will also be a helpful online tool to supplement efforts toward creation of a State 9-1-1 Plan or other collaborative efforts."

9-1-1 Goes to Denver

Every March, the National Emergency Number Association holds a 9-1-1 Goes to Washington event, designed to make it easier for local 9-1-1 professionals from around the country to come to Washington, DC and meet with their Senators and Representatives to talk about 9-1-1 related issues specific to their State. While NENA provides participants with talking points to share with their

legislators, local professionals are free to discuss whatever issues are important to them back home.

The event has been very successful, and has lead professionals in several states to mimic the event at the state level, facilitating local 9-1-1 professionals to come to their state capitol while the legislation is in session to talk to their state senators and representatives.

The Colorado 9-1-1 Resource Center is happy to announce the 1st Annual 9-1-1 Goes to Denver day. Come to Denver, meet with your senators and representatives, and let them know what's going on at your PSAP back home!

Details and dates are still being set. Watch the Resource Center website for further information!





Serving Those Who Serve

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Colorado 9-1-1 Resource Center is committed to 9-1-1 Emergency Communications throughout the State of Colorado. To foster a single point of information dissemination, to provide facilitation and coordination for all Authority Boards and Public Safety Answering Points within the state so that they may provide state-of-the-art 9-1-1 systems to their citizens.

The Colorado 9-1-1
Resource Center

Unless otherwise attributed, all content herein was written by Daryl Branson, Executive Director of the Colorado 9-1-1 Resource Center, and the opinions represented may not reflect the opinions of the Resource Center's Board of Directors.

Colorado 9-1-1 Resource Center
PO Box 272470
Fort Collins, CO 80527-2470

voice: 1-970-372-0545
toll free: 1-866-332-3082
fax: 1-970-744-2254
Email: director@co9-1-1resourcecenter.org

Visit us on the web!

www.co9-1-1resourcecenter.org

"...if the perception that dispatcher training is lax nationally continues, dispatchers may become the first public safety professional to have nationally mandated training standards."

Is a National Training Standard Mandate for Dispatchers Coming?

Everyone in the industry knows the story. A dispatch center processing tens of thousands of 9-1-1 calls per year, dispatching hundreds of thousands of calls for service, becomes known for only one badly handled call. Suddenly, the thousands of lives saved by the dispatch center no longer matter. All that matters is the audio of the bad 9-1-1 call being played on the air, transcripts being published in the paper, and lawsuits being filed.

There is no question that incidents of mishandled calls do occur. As long as there are human beings involved in the process, mistakes will be inevitable. Part of the PSAP manager's job is to reduce the frequency of those incidents as much as possible.

But what if the public doesn't think that's happening? There seems to be growing pressure toward legislation aimed at standardizing dispatch training at the national level. Poorly handled calls (or what the media perceives were poorly handled calls) are highlighted on the evening news and increasingly reporters are looking at training standards at the dispatch centers. Organizations like the Denise Amber Lee Foundation, and even industry organizations such as the NENA and APCO, are becoming forces for change in this area. Congresswoman Anna Eshoo of California, founder and co-chair of the Congressional E-911 Caucus, has announced that she plans on holding hearings on the issue.

Colorado is one of 18 states that has no minimum training standards or

certification requirements for public safety dispatchers. Obstacles to setting standards have been determining what those minimum standards should be, coming up with a way to pay for it so that it does not represent an undue burden to already-struggling local agencies, and determining how it would be implemented in a way that wouldn't create insurmountable staffing issues back home.

Training standards for other public safety professions are not set at the national level. However, if the perception that dispatcher training is lax nationally continues, dispatchers may become the first public safety professional to have nationally mandated training standards.