

9-1-1 System Overview

The Metropolitan Emergency Services Board (MESB) was formed by the counties in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area over 35 years ago, to manage the 9-1-1 system at the regional level. The counties recognized that telephone company service areas crossed municipal and county boundaries and that it made sense to manage the 9-1-1 system as a single system.

The current 9-1-1 system is in transition from the legacy, analog telephone company-based system originally implemented in 1982, and moving toward a fully standard compliant Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) system; this transition will take several years. Though many of the NG9-1-1 technical and operational standards are complete, some important functions must still be defined by the national and international standards development organizations (e.g. National Emergency Number Assoc. (NENA), Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), and the Emergency Services Interconnect Forum (ESIF)). As the transition continues, the current 9-1-1 system now uses digital network facilities which utilize Internet Protocol (IP) transport, which is required in NG9-1-1, but still routes calls based on the street/address range tables originally established to support the legacy 9-1-1 system. Today, the system supports voice and text communications to 9-1-1. It is estimated to be another two to five years before a full, multi-media capable 9-1-1 system, envisioned in NG9-1-1 design standards, will be widely deployed and supported by the telecommunications service providers, including wireline, wireless, Internet-based communications, and smartphone app communications services.

Currently, there are 22 emergency communications centers (also known as Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) serving the ten-county metro area, including both the 18 primary PSAPs and the four secondary EMS PSAPs. Metro Transit is expected to come onto the metro region 9-1-1 system in third quarter 2019 as a primary PSAP.

The MESB works with the 9-1-1 service provider to ensure that 9-1-1 calls are routed to the correct 9-1-1 center, based on the location of the 9-1-1 caller. The MESB also works with telecommunications service providers to ensure 9-1-1 caller location information is determined accurately and delivered to the emergency communications center responsible for handling the call. This work includes monitoring service provider compliance with the MESB network and database standard requirements, and ensuring that telecommunications service providers have the information they need to properly identify caller location and the correct emergency communications center for that location. The MESB reviews and makes recommendations on the telecommunications service provider 9-1-1 plans required to be filed with the MN Public Utilities Commission. The MESB assists PSAPs in the investigation of 9-1-1 calls that were not delivered properly and maintains the consolidated 9-1-1 Plan that documents the configuration and operation of the metro area 9-1-1 system. Working with the State 9-1-1 Program Office, the MESB ensures that the operation of the metro 9-1-1 system is coordinated with the operation of the greater MN 9-1-1 system. All of the aforementioned work is done so that a 9-1-1 caller can confidently expect that the system will work for them when they need it, regardless of which telecommunications service provider they have chosen to use.

The MESB's 9-1-1 Technical Operations Committee (TOC) is composed of representatives appointed by each of the 22 primary and secondary PSAPs in the region. Most of the committee members are in management or leadership positions within their emergency communications center. The committee members provide input and recommendations, based on their experience as users of the system, to the MESB staff and Board regarding the management and operation of the metro area 9-1-1 system. This ensures that all metro area PSAPs have a voice in how the system operates, and that the Board and MESB staff have timely, accurate information on which to base policy and management decisions related to the 9-1-1 system. As the system migrates to NG9-1-1, the 9-1-1 TOC will become more actively involved in creating and reviewing standards.

MESB Region PSAPs

