

# TOP 10 QUESTIONS

## What to ask when making the switch to NextGen 9-1-1



**THE PACE OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE IS FAST. AND IT'S ONLY GETTING FASTER!**

**Technological advancements drive a near constant evolution of communication habits, creating unique challenges that require an accommodating and future-forward approach to first response.**

Emergency calling has evolved well beyond the traditional voice call, and the old E9-1-1 system is no longer able to support the needs of the future. Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) networks can support multi-media interactions such as text messages, images and video — a critical option for American Sign Language users. A NG9-1-1 system can also acquire and integrate metadata useful to call routing and handling, providing support for coordinated incident response and management.

As you begin the process of converting your communications center to NG9-1-1, you'll need to do a lot of research to find the ideal combination of features, benefits and price. What is the best way to invest in technology that supports your needs both today and in the future? This list of questions can provide Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) the crucial insight you need to avoid potential pitfalls.

### **1. What is the REAL cost?**

There are bargain-priced products on the market but remember — initial purchase price isn't everything. Make sure you read the fine print, and try to project the accrual of additional costs over the lifetime of the system. Find out the costs of:

- Software and hardware upgrades
- Licenses or required add-on software
- Ongoing maintenance and technical support

### **2. Does it truly meet NG9-1-1 standards?**

Many vendors refer to their products as “NG9-1-1 compliant” — but what does that really mean? Look for vendors that take part in NENA and APCO testing and requirements standards definition. Will components meet the standards required for communications on all platforms, including IP, as well as legacy and transitional systems?

### **3. Can it capture data from any device?**

Today, about 70% of 9-1-1 calls are now placed from wireless phones, and that percentage is growing. While nearly all PSAPs can assign some form of tracking data to inbound wireless calls, tomorrow's centers will need to be able to process text messages (SMS/ MMS), photos, videos, etc.

#### 4. Can it capture metadata?

NG9-1-1 ready communications centers are equipped to support new types of interactions, and should be prepared to handle the massive amounts of metadata tied to these interactions. This valuable information can aid law enforcement efforts to provide supporting evidence. Forward-thinking municipalities can also use metadata to make great advances in the management of human resources. For example, GPS location information could be used to populate real-time heat maps, allowing you to strategically position first responders in the most accident-prone intersections or crime-ridden neighborhoods.

#### 5. Can it process vehicle telemetry data?

Service providers like On-Star and Sirius XM expedite emergency response for millions of subscribers. As vehicle telemetry evolves, such services can provide automated information to first responders — like vehicle location, severity of the incident, portions of the cars that have sustained damage and even the condition of the occupants. The ability to handle and process this data quickly and efficiently can literally mean the difference between life and death.

#### 6. How easy is it to implement?

New communications equipment can sometimes mean downtime during conversion. But your 9-1-1 facility doesn't have time for that! Some vendors have the ability to implement new components side-by-side with legacy systems to mitigate transition issues. Make sure the vendor has a good track record with implementation and integration with your existing systems — particularly with meeting stated deadlines and providing ongoing support.

#### 7. How easy is it to integrate?

If your existing system uses a closed or proprietary product, now is the time to seriously consider a configuration that supports open standards, such as P25 or the coming DMR radio standards. Open architecture is the idea that any device, console, recorder, etc., should integrate easily and deliver the specified level of performance with no loss, regardless of manufacturer. You won't be restricted to the limitations of selecting just one brand to meet all your diverse call center needs; with an open architecture product, you have the freedom to cherry-pick the very best tools for the job.

#### 8. What happens when disaster strikes?

Mobility and flexibility are a must when configuring your new system. Should a disaster take out or overwhelm your primary PSAP, you need the flexibility to immediately migrate equipment and operations to keep dispatch operations humming. Look for technologies that ensure uninterrupted operations — such as a mobile console, base station, LTE, or satellite connectivity, as well as fully redundant back-up facilities.

#### 9. Can I evaluate dispatcher performance?

Keep an eye out for solutions that allow you to monitor and evaluate dispatchers on the fly. Can you listen in on calls in real-time? Can you easily monitor key performance metrics? You'll need the ability to verify that dispatchers meet specific standards for quality, such as those provided in the recently released NENA/APCO Standard for the Establishment of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Program for Public Safety Answering Points.

#### 10. Can I reliably migrate to IP?

When you upgrade to a NG9-1-1 ready system, it's also a good time to discuss migrating your analog networking to IP systems and connecting to your radio infrastructure via wired or wireless means. Both require you to trust that wireless and IP-based equipment have the consistency, redundancy and reliability of their wired counterparts.



Converting to NG9-1-1 requires forward-thinking partners that offer the perfect combination of features, benefits and price. Proven solutions from vendors such as HigherGround and Avtec can transform your PSAP into a modern, innovative and NG9-1-1 ready emergency communications center.



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