

News from the Oklahoma Corporation Commission

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Can You Find Me Now?

Corporation Commission approves plan to ensure answer is "yes" when calling 911 from a cellular phone

(Oklahoma City) The Oklahoma Corporation Commission today approved an agreement setting in place tariffs to pay for technology that will enable 911 call centers to trace cellular phone calls to a specific, correct location.

Commission Chairman Denise Bode says there are real-life horror stories in Oklahoma and in other states involving incidents in which emergency personnel could not find those needing help because the 911 call was made from a cellular phone.

"Because cellular phones work so differently from so-called 'land line' phones, many times there's no telling what the 911 operator will see on her screen as a location for the caller, or even just where the 911 call will go," explained Bode. "There have been cases where the emergency call has been routed to a 911 center in a completely different state.

"There is a way to fix the problem, but the question that had to be settled was how to pay for it," continued Bode. "Today's agreement answers that question."

Commission Vice Chair Bob Anthony said the agreement is the result of months of hard work by Commission staff, SBC-Oklahoma and representatives of local governments in Oklahoma.

"In response to concerns expressed by local governments, the Commission stopped SBC's attempt to place a per-call charge on all cellular phone calls to 911," said Anthony. "We then urged all parties to the case to work with Commission staff to see if an agreement could be reached acceptable to all. It's been a long, hard road that's stretched out over a year, and all involved should be congratulated for their perseverance and dedication in this matter."

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Commissioner Jeff Cloud called the agreement "a win-win."

"This agreement opens the door to the technology needed to ensure 9-1-1 services work properly in our ever-increasing wireless society, while at the same time providing a fair way of paying for them," said Cloud. "Local governments that were justifiably concerned about the financial burden if they would have been charged for each cellular 9-1-1 call report their concerns have been addressed, and as a 9-1-1 service provider, SBC can get

on with the job at hand.”

SBC had filed a tariff request with the Oklahoma Corporation Commission in October, 2002 that would have charged 9-1-1 operations 23 cents for each cellular 911 call received, as well as a one-time charge of \$3,900. The tariff request was suspended by the Commission in November 2002.

Today’s agreement removes the per-call charge and bases the charges on the method traditionally used to charge 9-1-1 operations, based on population.

There are two phases to the plan. Phase 1 involves equipment that will allow emergency personnel to trace a cellular phone call to the nearest tower, and record the number for callback. The cost for this will be a monthly fee of \$8.12 per 1,000 population, and a one-time charge of \$101.54 per 1,000 population.

Phase 2 will give emergency personnel the ability to locate the caller to within 50 feet of the caller’s actual location. The cost will be an additional \$2.71 per 1,000 population, and a one-time charge of \$87.31 per 1,000 population.

Just when the phases will be implemented is up to each 9-1-1 operation.

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