

News Release



August 27, 2014
Release Number: 3817

Tri-County 9-1-1 Leaders Asking Citizens to Help Address Internet Phone Concerns

Staff at area 9-1-1 centers, including those in Charleston, Berkeley and Dorchester counties, noticed an issue with the increasingly popular Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) or internet phone service. Leaders are asking citizens to update their providers with a current address to avoid any problems with locating a caller during an emergency situation.

The VoIP service allows consumers to make and receive calls to and from traditional phone numbers using a high-speed Internet connection. VoIP services are portable and because the device can be used from virtually any Internet connection anywhere, the location of the caller may not be determined automatically. The only address associated with a VoIP call is the address of the bill, or what the service provider has entered into the system. This can cause an issue if the address is listed incorrectly.

Portability raises a number of challenges for the emergency services community. Although the FCC has taken action to make sure that emergency calls from these VoIP services will get through to the appropriate public safety authorities, there are still possible differences between VoIP 9-1-1 and traditional wire-line 9-1-1 service.

Tips for consumers using VoIP service:

- Confirm you have a VoIP service through your provider. Often a “bundle” service will likely come with VoIP phone. Also, some specific companies such as “Vonage” or “Magic Jack” are solely VoIP providers.
- Update address information in the event you move locations.
- If the power goes out, you might lose the ability to make or receive phone calls. Consider using a secondary power supply or traditional phone line for backup purposes.

To get more information about VoIP telephone service and 9-1-1 emergency dialing you can visit the Federal Communications Commission website at this address: <http://www.fcc.gov/guides/voip-and-9-1-1-service>

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