



# THE STOUFFER REPORT

**Senator Bill Stouffer**  
Senate District 21

**For the Week of:**  
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**Capitol Building, Room 332**  
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## Who Should Pay for 9-1-1 Calls?

Most Missourians know to dial 9-1-1 when they are in need of help. More and more of these emergency calls are being made from cell phones rather than landline telephones. One-third of calls to 9-1-1 centers nationwide are made from wireless communication devices. Cell phones are becoming part of our every day routine — approximately two-thirds of all Americans use some type of wireless communication device.

So, who pays for these emergency calls and upgrades to 9-1-1 emergency centers? Many counties charge a fee to landline users in order to help fund 9-1-1 services. Cell phone users often pay a smaller fee or nothing at all to local governments for these same services. However, most cell phone users pay state fees that help subsidize local 9-1-1 centers. Even though some cell phone users are paying state fees, 9-1-1 officials say it's not enough to fully fund services to Missourians. As more people switch from landlines to cell phones, revenues for 9-1-1 services are dropping. Local communities, including those in mid-Missouri, are facing financial hardships to maintain and improve their 9-1-1 systems.

Most improvements to 9-1-1 technology have been paid for by surcharges — both from landline accounts and applicable cell phone accounts throughout the state. The 9-1-1 surcharges are used to maintain a constant flow of information and instruct operators on modern technology. In 1998, the Missouri General Assembly passed legislation calling for a statewide monthly surcharge on wireless communications services to support 9-1-1, subject to voter approval. In 1999 and 2002, voters defeated these two referendums seeking a 50-cent monthly tax on wireless phones to help pay for the statewide 9-1-1 system. Increasing fees to landline users to cover the increased cost associated with cell phone calls does not make sense.

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A House Interim Committee to Evaluate the 9-1-1 System (made up of representatives from around the state) has been busy working to assess current 9-1-1 capabilities in Missouri, including evaluating shortfalls within the current system and addressing possible solutions for such deficiencies, as well as ensuring the system's interoperability. The committee is charged with creating a solution that would meet the needs of not only the urban areas but the portions of the state of Missouri that are not currently served (or served effectively) by 9-1-1. The last hearing for the committee is set for mid-October, and the committee will submit a report of their findings to the full House soon after.

Here are some statistics you should know about 9-1-1 services in our state (statistics from the Mid-America Regional Council [MARC]):

- 17 counties currently have no 9-1-1 service
- 6 counties are currently in the process of installing 9-1-1 service
- 91 counties currently have 9-1-1 service
- 56 of those 91 counties currently have wireless 9-1-1 capabilities

Several options have been brought before lawmakers in attempt to upgrade our state's 9-1-1 system including: allowing a statewide surcharge on wireless communication devices that would maintain and enhance 9-1-1 system operations as well as provide for a state grant fund to assist smaller communities and rural parts of the state to install and operate 9-1-1 services; or enabling counties and cities to levy a surcharge on wireless devices operated by customers in their jurisdictions, similar to the 9-1-1 surcharge on landline phones — allowing communities willing to tax themselves to raise revenues to maintain quality 9-1-1 services.

With additional funding, 9-1-1 emergency systems could implement map and photo location programs (already established in some areas of the state), which are just part of the upgrades to some 9-1-1 communication centers. Another future upgrade will include the capabilities to send video from your cell phone to 9-1-1 call centers as well as text messaging. That is what a portion of the funds (surcharges) are for — to continuously upgrade the 9-1-1 call centers and system and better protect the citizens of this state.

For more information about 9-1-1 surcharges or 9-1-1 communication centers throughout our state, visit the Office of Administration's Information Security Management Web site at <http://www.911.oa.mo.gov/>. And if you have questions or comments about any other issue, please call my office toll free (866) 768-3987 or send me an e-mail at [bstouffer@senate.mo.gov](mailto:bstouffer@senate.mo.gov).

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