

9-1-1 Emergency Communications Service District FAQs

Q: Why do we need a 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Service District?

A: Our 9-1-1 center is underfunded, short-staffed, and outdated. It needs today's equipment and technology plus more dispatchers to ensure *ALL* calls are answered - and answered quickly. The national 9-1-1 standard is to dispatch 90% of calls within 60 seconds. Our center can no longer do that. Over the past 10 years, our dispatch rate dropped from 94% to 71% and continues to trend down. Some callers are asked to "please hold." Other callers get a busy signal.

Vote yes on 2-124 for equitable and sustainable funding to modernize and adequately staff our 9-1-1 Center. No one should get a busy signal or have to be put on hold when calling 9-1-1.

Q: What services does our 9-1-1 system provide?

A: The Corvallis Regional 9-1-1 Communications Center (CRCC) is the communications hub between we citizens of Benton County and all the first responders who strive to protect us, rescue us, save us. Our CRCC operates nonstop: 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Its dispatchers take our calls for help, process the information we provide, and then dispatch the appropriate fire, medical, or law enforcement services from one or more of the 10 first responder agencies in Benton County.

For each call for service, dispatchers must:

- Calm frantic callers.
- Determine the nature and extent of the emergency.
- Determine the location of the emergency.
- Prioritize the call.
- Dispatch the appropriate response – correct agency(ies), type of unit(s), and the number of responders.
- Maintain communications with the caller and with and between the responders until the situation clears.

Dispatchers are trained and certified to provide emergency medical instructions over the phone. If a call is a medical emergency the dispatcher stays on the line coaching the caller on what to do until help arrives.

Dispatchers are the safety line for first responders. They monitor and communicate with them in the field. They research and provide vital safety information such as whether the person being stopped by a police officer or deputy is wanted, or the vehicle is stolen. They serve as the communications hub if a responder is out of contact with others.

Dispatchers also answer the non-emergency line and take after-hours calls for numerous agencies including City and County offices. In this role dispatchers either take information or provide it on a diverse range of topics.

Q: Why isn't our current 9-1-1 system working as well as it should?

A: Our current 9-1-1 system was formed by an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) in 1983 and has remained mostly unchanged. In the 36 years since, the number of emergency calls dispatched has increased more than 132%, from 21,485 calls in 1983 to 49,990 calls in 2018. But the staff to handle all those calls has grown by just five people – less than 42%.

Today, 75% of 9-1-1 calls are from cellphones. Cellphone calls take up to three times longer to manage than landline calls. Landline calls display actual addresses immediately, so dispatchers instantly know exactly where to send responders. Not so with cellphone calls. Callers, especially when panicked, often don't know the location. Dispatchers must then use cell tower triangulation. But triangulation is imprecise and can be influenced by the caller's service provider.

With cellphones you also have many more people calling in about a single incident. Dispatchers can't assume a flood of calls is to report the same fire or active shooter incident. One of those calls coming in could be a heart attack happening elsewhere. Every call must be answered.

Another reason our 9-1-1 system is not working well is because our equipment is outdated. We are using technology over five years beyond its life expectancy, and we do not have software to manage cell phone calls effectively.

Funding under the Intergovernmental Agreement is inadequate and is assessed unequally. Some people pay a lot more than others for the same service. IGA money is short. It does not keep up with evolving technology. It does not hire needed dispatchers. It is *nonexistent* to replace a 9-1-1 tower if one fails.

Our 9-1-1 Center struggles with too few dispatchers, old technology, and not enough money. The current funding model is inadequate to keep up with community needs.

Q: If approved, how will this new 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Service District affect me?

A: Voting yes on 2-124 will ensure your call to 9-1-1 will be quickly answered, and the right first responders will be immediately dispatched to get you, your loved ones, or anyone in Benton County the emergency help needed. This new 9-1-1 Service District will provide the funding needed to staff and equip our 9-1-1 Center so that help is on its way within seconds. Every second saved can help save a life.

The maximum tax rate for this new 9-1-1 Service District would be set at \$0.65 per \$1,000 assessed value. At the maximum rate, a home assessed at \$200,000 would pay approximately \$130 per year or \$10.83 per month.

However, the initial tax rate will be less: \$0.45 per \$1,000 assessed value and will appear on your Benton County property tax bill. A home assessed at \$200,000 will pay approximately \$90 per year or \$7.50 per month.

Q: I'm a Corvallis resident paying Public Safety fees. Wouldn't this tax me twice?

A: No, it will not. When the Corvallis City Council established the Public Safety fees, it stipulated that if a 9-1-1 Service District were to be established, the Public Safety Fees paid monthly by Corvallis residents would be decreased by the same amount as the City's share of the 9-1-1 Service District revenue.

Your yes vote on 2-124 not only gets you a better 9-1-1 system; it also reduces your Public Safety Fees.

Q: How will the money be spent?

- A: Your yes vote on 2-124 will fund five dispatchers (up from three currently) plus one supervisor per shift. This will ensure dispatchers can:
- Answer *ALL* 9-1-1 calls - and do so quickly.
 - Meet, or exceed, the national standard of dispatching 90% of call within 60 seconds.
 - Monitor fire, emergency medical staff, and law enforcement radio constantly.
 - Mitigate risk through better training and supervision.
 - Improve customer service.

Your yes vote on 2-124, will also update equipment and technology to meet community needs not now being addressed. These include:

- Modern dispatch consoles with today's 9-1-1 computers and software.
- GPS technology to pinpoint caller locations.
- Contemporary capabilities such as text-to-911, picture-to-911, and video-to-911.
- More radio frequencies to accommodate all first responder radio traffic.

Additionally, a reserve fund will be created to ensure money is available to replace outdated or failing equipment and upgrades to ever-evolving technology.

Finally, *NO* additional administrative costs will be needed to run this 9-1-1 Service District. The new Service District will use existing administrative functions provided through the governments of Benton County and the City of Corvallis. The City of Corvallis currently administers all 9-1-1 services through a contract with other agencies.

If approved, the new 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Service District would be expected to provide the needed stability to operate the 9-1-1 center and serve all of Benton County for the next 15-20 years.

Q: Have these costs been properly analyzed?

- A: Yes. The City of Corvallis Finance Department analyzed the budget and proposal to ensure its funding model will meet Service District objectives. A [3-year Financial Feasibility Statement](#), as required by state law, has been developed and is available for public review.

Q: How can I learn more?

- A: Contact your elected officials (County Commissioners, Mayors, City Councilors, Sheriff, District Attorney, Fire Chiefs in certain cities or rural districts) for more Measure 2-124 information.

Please note: Public employees, including dispatchers, police officers, firefighters and others working for Benton County or local governments in the County are prohibited by law from engaging in political advocacy while on the job during working hours or otherwise acting in their official capacity. This legal prohibition does not apply to elected officials.