NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release:

East Central Emergency Network Announces Upgrade to 9-1-1 System

BLOOMSBURG, PA – The Commissioners of Columbia and Montour Counties are excited to announce that the East Central Emergency Network (ECEN) has successfully migrated 9-1-1 call traffic to the Commonwealth's Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) network. Legacy analog phone circuits have been removed, and 9-1-1 calls originating within Columbia and Montour Counties, as well as portions of Northumberland, Lycoming, and Sullivan Counties now flow to dispatchers through a digital, internet protocol-based fiber optic network.

In response to landline and wireless telephone technology that has evolved rapidly since the first 9-1-1 system was created in the late 1960s, this next generation of 9-1-1 service replaces antiquated infrastructure that has been in place for decades, as part of a statewide and nationwide effort to improve 9-1-1 service and call delivery. One key benefit to this upgrade is a reduction in time it takes for a call to be answered by dispatchers. Because 9-1-1 calls are no longer traversing through analog phone switches and networks, calls are delivered to the 9-1-1 center at more efficient speeds, meaning callers will hear fewer rings before a dispatcher answers.

Along with a reduction in call delivery speed is an improvement in routing of 9-1-1 calls, and delivery of the caller's location to dispatchers. In the analog telephone network, wireless 9-1-1 calls are routed to their appropriate dispatch centers based on the location of the cell tower that phone is using. Because of this, calls made along jurisdictional boundaries are often misrouted, which requires the dispatcher to transfer the caller to their appropriate dispatch center, further delaying the dispatch of emergency responders. In NG9-1-1, wireless and landline calls are routed based on geospatial location, using addressing and mapping data aggregated by the County's Geographic Information Services department, resulting in improved accuracy of call delivery.

This improved system also adds redundancy and resiliency to the area's 9-1-1 system. In the event of a call overload, phone network outage from natural or human-caused disasters, or problems within the 9-1-1 center, calls will continue to be answered. The system can automatically route calls to surrounding 9-1-1 centers, who have procedures in place to handle calls from their neighbors. The system also allows dispatchers to seamlessly transfer 9-1-1 calls and call data to other dispatch centers within the Commonwealth, such as for an incident occurring out of the area.

The 7-year, $137 million statewide Next Generation 9-1-1 project is fully funded by the $1.65 9-1-1 surcharge consumers in Pennsylvania are assessed on communications services capable of contacting 9-1-1.

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The East Central Emergency Network is a consolidated public safety answering point (PSAP) for 9-1-1 calls and emergency services, proudly serving Columbia and Montour Counties of PA.