

## NG911: A national overview

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GovWin's final blog in a series dedicated to National Public Safety Telecommunications Week focuses on next generation 911 (NG911). According to the [Federal Communications Commission](#), it is estimated that nearly 70 percent of all 911 calls are placed from wireless phones, and this number continues to rise. With the increase of cell phone usage and the addition of other data types such as text messages and VoIP calls, public safety answering points (PSAPs) are beginning the transition to NG911, which is capable of handling the increasing cell phone use and other communication methods.

The [Department of Transportation](#) (DOT) has been working on a national NG911 pilot program in order to design a network that can handle text, data, images and video, all of which cannot be processed by the nation's current 911 network. The DOT Intelligent Transportation Systems Joint Program Office (ITS) is harnessing a variety of technologies and seeking to address each communications method with its designs and trials. The research and approach used by the ITS is focused on designing an NG911 system that can be utilized across the country as a standard by which PSAPs can develop their own system.

The DOT is not the only federal agency working toward the goal of creating a national standard for NG911. The Federal Communications Commission issued a notice of inquiry (NOI) on December 21, 2010 to receive comments from the public and vendors on NG911 ideas and solutions. The goal of the NOI was to initiate a proceeding to address how NG911 can be utilized by the public in order to acquire emergency assistance through means other than landline telephone calls. Giving the public the ability to send a video or photo in an emergency situation, or a text message when a phone call is not possible, could save lives and give first responders more information to work with.

Last month, [GovWin attended and reported](#) on the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) 911 Goes to Washington conference, in which the FCC panel sought to promote NG911. In order to build out a nationwide system, it was stressed that the federal government must provide the necessary funding. There was also mention of the NOI the FCC issued, and that responses had been overwhelming. The next step in this process may be to develop a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) and additional NOIs.

Developing a national standard for NG911 will not happen overnight, especially considering the complicated and expensive nature of the system. Once the FCC has formulated an NPRM and received additional information from the vendor community, national standards can begin to take shape. The process must be thought out and include all funding possibilities, including grants. Vendors need to continue to work with the federal government on these standards in order to develop a framework for an NG911 system that can ultimately strengthen the nation's 911 network and save lives