

# Recap of New Jersey NENA state conference

Posted At : April 25, 2011 11:03 AM | Posted By : Evan Halperin

Related Categories: Technology Trends, Homeland Security, Justice/Public Safety & Homeland Security, Grants, Emerging Technologies, State & Local

Last week, the [New Jersey chapter of the National Emergency Numbers Association \(NENA\)](#) held its annual spring conference, which covered a variety of topics, including a session hosted by GovWin on federal public safety grants and local state grant programs within New Jersey. The goals of the conference included providing a refresh and information on the status of 9-1-1 throughout the state, using dispatchers to "catch the bad guy," updates on next generation 9-1-1 (NG911), and the importance of 9-1-1 technology.

The conference began with former New York firefighter Captain Alfredo Fuentes giving a chilling recollection of his experience on 9/11 nearly a decade ago. Captain Fuentes has been a consultant and provided his expertise on a number of emergency situations including the Oklahoma City bombing and natural disasters like Puerto Rico's Hurricane Hugo in 1989. Captain Fuentes' account of 9/11 provided a stirring realization that dispatchers have a significant job to do in times of crisis, and improving 9-1-1 response and capabilities will only make those jobs easier. With new technological capabilities like NG911 on the horizon, it will be more important than ever to hire dispatchers who are capable and able to think outside the box.

One of the first sessions was hosted by the New Jersey Office of Emergency Telecommunications Services' (OETS) Director Craig Reiner, who provided an update on the state's 9-1-1 systems as well as radio communications system. New Jersey recently established two new boards: the Public Safety Communications Commission and the Public Safety Communications Advisory Council. The commission has approximately 12 members and will likely meet sporadically throughout the year, while the council is scheduled to meet more often and discuss both NG911 and statewide radio communications. The creation of these two groups will be important for the future of the state's NG911 planning and development, though due to the costs of NG911, the state does not plan to replace each public safety answering point's (PSAPs) customer-premise equipment (CPE). Essentially, the state would like each PSAP to complete upgrades on its own and then move forward with a statewide NG911 system. Future meetings of these new groups will determine how the state will proceed, including the possibility of a request for information (RFI) for an NG911 system.

Other sessions included an NG911 update and technology details from Chris Galahan of NICE Systems and Jeff Visger of VPI. VPI is a NENA Next Generation Partner Program (NGPP). NGPP was created in order to work with NENA on emerging 911 services technologies and provide a way to discuss these new technologies. The ultimate goal is moving toward NG911 across the country. VPI is joined by nearly 50 members representing service providers, allied public safety associations, several 9-1-1 authorities, and state 9-1-1 offices and vendors.

## GovWin's Take

Next generation 911 is something everyone at the NENA conference can agree is a future necessity. Implementing NG911 across New Jersey will be essential in allowing every citizen to submit pictures, videos, text messages and other data. All of this additional data will enable dispatchers and first responders to obtain every bit of information possible on a given emergency. The main issue with moving forward with implementation is money. Funding is only available through grants, and GovWin presented a number of these options during the grants session. If agencies can make a case for these public safety grants, the agencies can begin local upgrades to PSAP locations in hopes that the state eventually obtains funding on its own to connect and develop a statewide system. Funding for 9-1-1 will continue, but in order to move toward NG911, even more funding will be needed.