

Freeholders Authorize First Major 9-1-1 Center Upgrade Since 2010

Improvements Being Made Despite No State 9-1-1 Funding

Hunterdon County's Freeholder Board authorized the necessary upgrade of high tech communications equipment at the County 9-1-1 Center, at the August 21st Freeholder meeting, even though the County has not received any monies from the state's phone tax supported 9-1-1 fund for the last 12 years.

Freeholder John E. Lanza, the Board's Public Safety liaison, stated at the meeting, "These upgrades are necessary to ensure our communication professionals are able to respond as efficiently as possible to any emergency call."

Freeholder Lanza had recently joined Congressman Leonard Lance and Federal Communications Commissioner Mike O'Rielly, at the Hunterdon County Communications Center, as part of the pair's effort to raise awareness that taxes dedicated to 9-1-1 systems are being diverted to other uses.

Mobile phone bills are taxed 90 cents per month specifically for 9-1-1 costs. In New Jersey that is \$130 million per year.

Lanza said, "New Jersey provides no funding, despite the fact that the taxpayers fork over \$130 million per year in phone taxes that are supposed to be exclusively used for 9-1-1 centers throughout the state."

During the tour of the center, Congressman Lance noted that since 2004, New Jersey has diverted about \$2 billion in fees charged to phone users putting the burden on property taxpayers for the costs of 9-1-1 centers. That is why he has sponsored federal legislation, "The 9-1-1 Fee Integrity Act," to stop the practice.

Lanza said, "The Freeholders greatly appreciate Commissioner O'Rielly and Congressman Lance bringing their efforts to stop the diversion of funds to Hunterdon County and will do all we can to help gain approval of the legislation."

The Freeholders awarded contracts through the state bid process for Radio Console Equipment to Zetron Inc. and for Radio Console Installation to PMC Associates of Hazlet, NJ.

Lanza pointed out, "Here in Hunterdon County, we know how important it is to maintain our 9-1-1 center at its highest possible level of effectiveness. We cannot wait for the state to correct its bad practices and will not shy away from making the necessary improvements. It is a lifesaving service.

Our County was the first in the state to offer county-wide 9-1-1 services and a central communications dispatch center back in 1976. We are proud of being first and proud of our team's outstanding record of service to our public."