

# **Calhoun County Consolidated Dispatch (Calhoun County 9-1-1) Funding FAQs**

We are determined to provide you with accurate information on the request to change the way 911 is funded so that you can make an informed decision in November. Here is a Frequently Asked Question list that answers the majority of questions we are asked. However, if you have questions that are not addressed here, please let us know and we will be happy to address them. Please feel free to contact Executive Director Richard Feole at [rfeole@calhouncountymi.gov](mailto:rfeole@calhouncountymi.gov) for any further questions or clarifications.

Thank you.

## **Calhoun County 911 Funding FAQ**

**Election Date: November 3, 2020**

### **How is Calhoun County currently funded?**

Calhoun County 911 is currently funded through a \$.60 local surcharge and a portion of the State 911 \$.25 surcharge. A majority of the funding comes from a Calls for Service formula that was established in 2013. Each city, village, township, Calhoun County and NHBP Tribal government pays a percentage of the remaining funding needed based on the percentage of calls for service required in their jurisdiction.

### **What is the official ballot language for the November election?**

#### ***911 SURCHARGE BALLOT PROPOSAL***

Shall Calhoun County be authorized to assess a surcharge on all devices capable of accessing the 911 system located in Calhoun County of up to \$3.00 per month for a period of ten (10) years, commencing July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2031, both inclusive, to be used exclusively for the funding of 911 emergency telephone call answering and dispatch services within Calhoun County, including facilities, equipment and maintenance, and operating costs?

### **Why is 9-1-1 asking for this and how much will it cost per year?**

Surcharge funding is the most common method of funding a 9-1-1 center. It is considered the fairest, most equitable way to fund the cost of operating and maintaining an emergency call center. If this proposal is approved, the charges paid by each municipality would be eliminated. This would allow the municipalities to use these dedicated general fund revenues on other valuable services. It is important for a 911 center to have updated, supported equipment and well-trained staff and this funding will ensure that Calhoun County 9-1-1 will have that. The proposal will allow up to \$3 per phone device per month to be collected. The amount is set by the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners each year, based on the budget needs of the 911 Center. It is expected to be approximately \$2.30 initially. Calhoun County 9-1-1 will collect the same amount as currently, just a different method.

### **Why are we being asked to vote on this issue?**

As citizens of Calhoun County, you are the stakeholders of Calhoun County 911. It is our responsibility to give you the facts and answer any questions about why we are requesting the change in funding. At that point, each of you can make an informed decision on this issue. We understand that you are presented with a multitude of requests for money, and that many of them are for good cause. The funding comes out of your pocket, and we need to know if you agree that 911 should be funded in this manner.

**What exactly are the 911 charges listed on my telephone bill?**

Calhoun County currently collects the \$.60 local surcharge that you see on your telephone bill. The State of Michigan also collects \$.25 per month on each phone. That money funds the State 911 office, provides training funds for Counties that apply for it and distributes some of it amongst all Michigan Counties.

**Once approved, how often can the rate be changed?**

The rate can only be changed once each May. The amount to be collected is then submitted to all phone carriers and is effective July 1 until the following May 31<sup>st</sup>. It cannot exceed the amount approved by the County residents. The ballot language is specifically worded to identify an amount “**up to**” \$3.00.

**Will this raise my taxes?**

No. The telephone surcharge is not part of county property tax dollars. This money is collected by your telephone company and can be used only for 9-1-1. The only change you would see is the amount of the Calhoun County 911 surcharge on your phone bill.

**How are cellular telephones charged?**

The rates charged are based on the location of the billing address. Cell phones billed to addresses within Calhoun County will be charged the surcharge rate approved by voters. Cell phones billed outside of Calhoun County will be charged whatever rate that county has in place.

**I have a pre-paid cellular phone. How does this charge affect me?**

Michigan already requires pre-paid cellular providers to collect surcharges. That amount represents an average of all Michigan 911 surcharges, weighted by population. This amount will be sent by the telephone company to the State where it is then passed onto the counties in amounts based upon their local population.

**My business (school, etc.) has a Centrex type phone system with multiple lines. Do I have to pay the full rate for each line?**

No. The surcharge is applied to each of the first 10 lines on your account. After that you pay one additional fee for the 11th through 20th line, another additional fee for the 21st through the 30th line, etc.

**Why do we need a 9-1-1 Central Dispatch?**

By having a 9-1-1 central dispatch center we cut costs and increase efficiency. A 9-1-1 Central Dispatch coordinates the response to a single incident or to multiple incidents through a common communications system. Specialized equipment tells dispatchers where you are calling from, even if you are too ill to speak or are not able to talk and can only dial “9-1-1”. In 2010, Calhoun County consolidated the 3 dispatch centers within the county. The sharing of equipment and staff have saved the citizens of Calhoun County money. The

cost of operating the current consolidated dispatch center is still less today than it was operating three dispatch centers over 12 years ago.

**What does the word “device” mean?**

The Michigan legislature specifically included the wording “all devices” in an attempt to allow for future inventions beyond cellular, land-line and VoIP telephones that may be created and would then be able to use 9-1-1 services. The all device wording allows for the assessing of surcharges on this new technology whenever it is developed. The ballot wording is written to conform to the new laws.

**Is every extension in my home considered a “device”?**

No. The surcharge is based on a per telephone number basis.