

February 1, 2025

Report of Statewide Text to 911 Deployment

To:

The Louisiana State Senate
Commerce, Consumer Protection, and International Affairs Committee
Post Office Box 94183
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

From:

The Louisiana 9-1-1 Directors Consortium and Louisiana Chapters of APCO and NENA

INTRODUCTION:

Pursuant to Senate Resolution No. 178 (SR 178) by Senator Beth Mizell (Dist. 12), the Communications Districts of the State of Louisiana (Districts) hereby submit a report on statewide deployment of “Text to 911” capability to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and International Affairs, and the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library of the Louisiana Legislature. This report includes information from all parishes within the State of Louisiana.

This report documents the status of all parishes on their ability to accept text messaging as a viable method of requesting emergency services, as of the requested target date of December 31, 2024.

The report further breaks down the list of parishes not receiving text messaging, into two (2) categories: those in the process of implementing text messaging; and those which have not begun the process as of the drafting of this report. Additionally, the report will discuss the obstacles and challenges faced by those Districts which were not able to meet the intent of SR 178.

BACKGROUND:

The Louisiana 911 Directors Consortium and the Louisiana Chapters of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) and the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) were received a copy of SR 178 through the US Postal Service, in June 2024. Consortium leadership immediately disseminated the document to our membership, and discussed it during our regularly scheduled meetings on July 18, 2024.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS:

In order to better understand the process of integrating this technology into existing operations and hardware/software platforms, this section will discuss the steps necessary for a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) to implement the capability necessary to receive text messaging for the request of emergency services.

Once a District decides to move forward with receipt of text messaging, the first step is to determine which method their District will use. In general, there are two (2) solutions a PSAP can take. In the first, the PSAP integrates text messaging directly into its 911 call handling system, and the second is when a PSAP uses a third-party, web-based application to process text messages.

Typically, the integration method is preferred because the text message conversation takes place on the same platform as other traditional 911 requests for service. This allows the telecommunicator to focus on one (1) screen for all incoming requests for service, and it allows for other telecommunicators in the PSAP to monitor what is being said in the text conversation. This method also enables the text conversation to be integrated easily into the documentation of the requests for faster dispatching of response units. Furthermore, the

record of all requests for service (both text and traditional telephony) are all stored in one location, allowing for more efficient data management and ease of reporting. Some drawbacks to this approach are that it generally takes longer to implement and it is more expensive. Unless the PSAP purchased their 911 call handling system with this capability, it will require hardware and software upgrades.

In the second method, using a web-based application independent of their 911 call handling system, the application is typically installed on a separate workstation from the dedicated 911 call handling system. This may require investment in additional hardware (workstations and monitors). The records for these requests for service are normally stored by the vendor on an offsite (cloud) storage server. The benefits of this approach are no costly upgrades to the parish's 911 call handling system, and the implementation time frame is quicker. The major drawback to this method is that the attention of the telecommunicator processing the incoming requests for service is now split between two (2) systems. Additionally, this third-party application method is usually ***not integrated*** into the 911 call handling system, which can add time to call processing, thus potentially delaying the dispatch of first responders. Finally, the data of the text conversation is stored offsite, requiring leadership and supervision to search two (2) different systems to find information about calls.

Once the method is selected, services must be procured. In the integration method, the parish will typically contact their 911 equipment vendor and request a quote for text messaging services. Often times this will require an upgrade to their current 911 equipment. Depending on the age and type of the system, this can add significant time to the implementation process. Procurement procedures and project costs also add delays to the implementation process, with some upgrades requiring a public bid or a formal request for proposal.

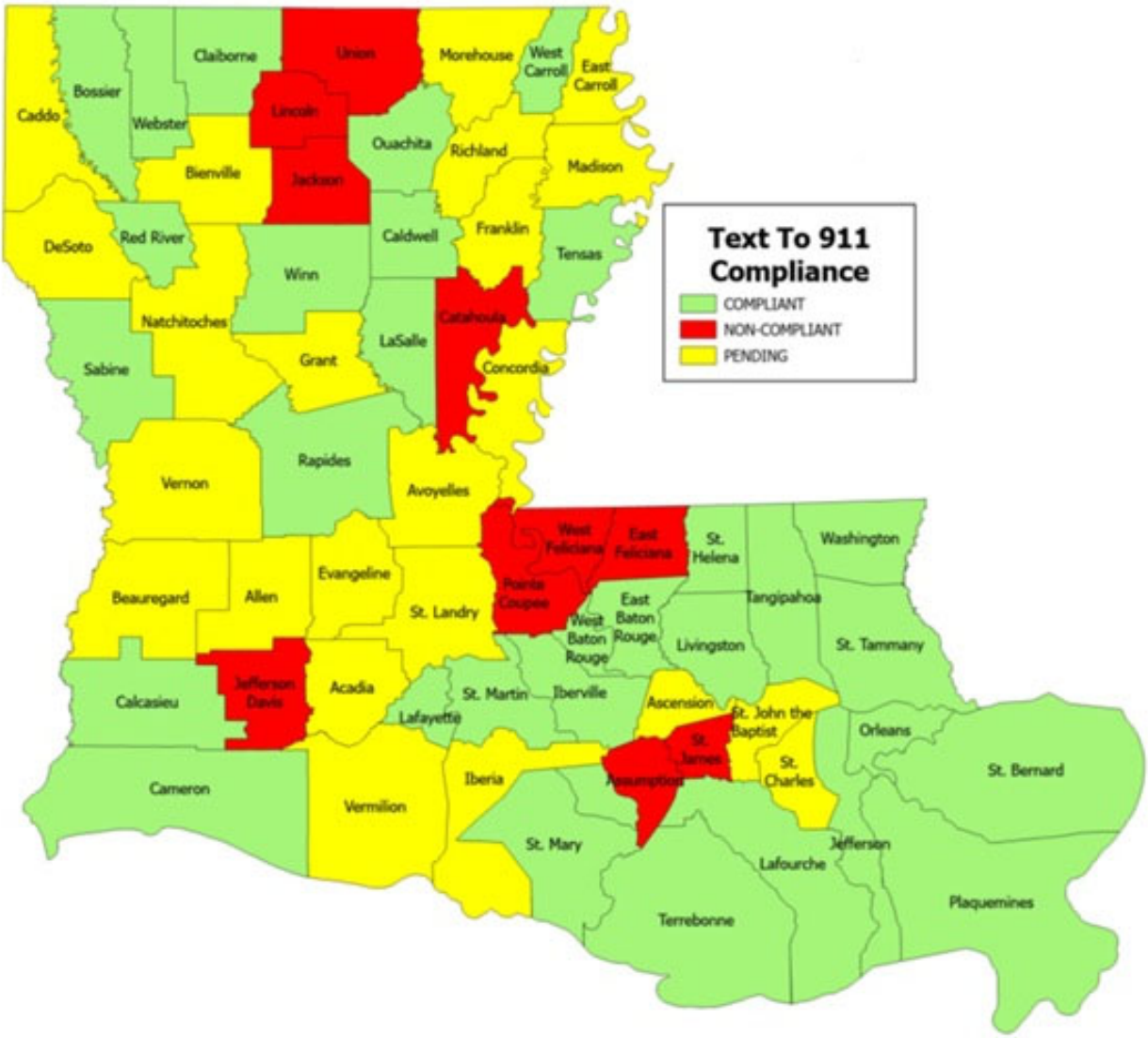
In the web-based application method, there are several vendors providing text capabilities. A Director will need to determine which service best fits their District's needs and begin the procurement process. Since equipment upgrades are not necessary, this method is usually quicker.

Once the method is purchased and installed, the District must then notify the three (3) major wireless providers, AT&T, T-Mobile and Verizon, that its PSAP can process text messaging and request the carriers to turn on text messaging in their jurisdiction. Once the request has been processed, testing with each carrier will be scheduled, and once testing is completed text messaging will be considered fully implemented.

The final step for the District is to notify the Federal Communications Commission that its PSAP is now accepting text messaging as a viable method of requesting emergency services. It is currently taking approximately six (6) months for Louisiana PSAPs to navigate this process and sometimes longer if equipment upgrades are required.

PARISH PROGRESS:

As mentioned in SR 178, at the end of 2023 there were twenty-five (25) parishes in Louisiana capable of receiving text messaging to request emergency services. As of December 31, 2024, there were thirty-one (31) parishes using this technology; these are shaded in green. There are twenty-three (23) parishes (shaded in yellow) in the process of implementing text messaging in their respective jurisdictions. The remaining ten (10) parishes have not begun the implementation process and are shaded in red.



Parishes currently accepting text messaging:

Bossier	Calcasieu	Caldwell	Cameron
Claiborne	E. Baton Rouge	Iberville	Jefferson
LaSalle	Lafayette	Lafourche	Livingston
Orleans	Ouachita	Plaquemines	Rapides
Red River	Sabine	St. Bernard	St. Helena
St. Martin	St. Mary	St. Tammany	Tangipahoa
Tensas	Terrebonne	Washington	Webster
W. Baton Rouge	W. Carroll	Winn	

Parishes in the implementation process:

Acadia	Allen	Ascension	Avoyelles
Beauregard	Bienville	Caddo	Concordia
DeSoto	E. Carroll	Evangeline	Franklin
Grant	Iberia	Madison	Morehouse
Natchitoches	Richland	St. Charles	St. John
St. Landry	Vernon	Vermilion	

Parishes with no immediate plans for implementation:

Assumption	Catahoula	E. Feliciana	Jackson
Jefferson Davis	Lincoln	St. James	Union
Pointe Coupee	W. Feliciana		

OBSTACLES & CHALLENGES:

The parishes currently implementing this technology and those that have begun the process face some obstacles and challenges. The biggest challenges for the twenty-three (23) parishes in the implementation phase was the time frame stipulated in SR 178. With less than six (6) months to navigate the process, a number of the parishes simply ran out of time, as the recommended timeline did not allow for the aforementioned planning phase, and was an unplanned for expense for many Districts. As discussed in the Implementation Process section, there are a number of obstacles which can delay progress. The most common among these parishes was upgrading their current 911 call handling systems to accept text messaging, which can take several months to a year to accomplish. On the positive side there are a few parishes in this group that should be ready to accept text messaging within a few months, and the remainder ready by the end of 2025.

For the group of ten (10) parishes that have not begun the implementation process the most common obstacle was funding. Without sufficient funding the majority of this group cannot move past the planning phase. Some Districts in this group were waiting for their new budget cycle to begin the process, others simply do not have the money; opting instead to maintain current legacy systems instead of investing in newer, more costly ones. Also of note, the State Legislature has not approved an increase in wireless surcharge fees (which help fund the

Districts and emergency communications technology) since 2016. The 911 Directors Consortium and the Louisiana Chapters of APCO and NENA are continually reaching out to these parishes in an effort to aid in researching low-cost options to allow them to move forward.

SUMMARY:

Since June of 2024 the Louisiana 911 Directors Consortium and the Louisiana Chapters of APCO and NENA have been working with the state's PSAPs to strive for compliance with SR 178. Over the past six (6) months, vendors presented solutions to our members, working diligently to help Districts meet the intent of this legislation. However, implementation of text messaging in a PSAP takes a considerable amount of time to accomplish. Of the six (6) parishes that met the requirements since our 2023 Annual Commerce Report (submitted in May 2024), the majority had already begun the process prior to the passing of SR 178. Based on conversations with Directors of PSAPs that are in compliance, or are about to come into compliance, it is taking an average of six (6) to eight (8) months to complete the process.

Lack of funding is a primary concern for all Districts as they strive to advance emergency communications technology to meet the expectations of citizens, first responders and law makers. As an example, Districts across the state had an over thirty percent (30%) decrease in pre-paid wireless fees over the last twelve-month period which has exasperated the situation. It is our understanding from the Department of Revenue that certain vendor(s) are not remitting fees as required in LA R.S. 33:9109.1, and we are projecting a statewide revenue deficient of over five million dollars. We are working with the Department of Revenue on this issue, but we may require assistance from the Louisiana Legislature to ensure the legally appropriated funding is directed toward Districts to provide the emergency communications our citizens expect.

As noted in the report, we expect to have fifty-four (54) parishes online with text messaging by the end of 2025. And we will continue to work with the remaining parishes to bring them into the fold as quickly as possible. The Resolution, and the very short implementation timeline, caught many or our Directors by surprise, especially since the request came in the middle of our budget year. We look forward to future opportunities to partner with the Senate Commerce Committee on issues like Text to 9-1-1 or any other advanced emergency communications technology, offering our technical assistance.

BOTTOM LINE:

The Louisiana 911 Directors Consortium and the Louisiana Chapters of APCO and NENA will continue to work with the parishes not in compliance with SR 178 until such time as all parishes can provide their jurisdictions with text messaging services.