

1 Introduced by Senate Committee on Government Operations
2 Referred to Committee on
3 Date:
4 Subject: Emergency communications; E-911 Board; dispatch services
5 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to expand the
6 jurisdiction of the Enhanced 911 Board to include development,
7 implementation, and supervision of regional emergency dispatch services.

8 An act relating to the modernization of emergency communications in
9 Vermont

10 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

11 Sec. 1. TITLE

12 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Vermont Emergency
13 Communications Modernization Act of 2023.

14 Sec. 2. FINDINGS AND INTENT

15 (a) The General Assembly finds:

16 (1) Protecting public safety and welfare is an essential function of State
17 government.

18 (2) A comprehensive and effective emergency communications system
19 comprises both an emergency call system and an emergency dispatch system.

1 (3) Since 1994, the Enhanced 911 Board has successfully overseen the
2 development and implementation of a nationally recognized, statewide
3 Enhanced 911 system.

4 (4) The State has struggled, however, for many years to develop,
5 maintain, and equitably finance a regional emergency dispatch system.

6 (5) As stated in the 1974 report from the Governor’s Commission on the
7 Administration of Justice, “Police communications as presently structured in
8 Vermont demonstrate more than any other component of law enforcement the
9 dearth of planning and coordination that exists throughout the system.
10 Duplication fostered by this absence of planning is proving costly in terms of
11 efficiency as well as money.” See the Regional Dispatch Working Group
12 Report, dated December 1, 2022, for a brief history of past efforts to improve
13 emergency communications.

14 (6) There are currently more than 45 dispatch centers in the State,
15 including two State-run public safety answering points, that provide
16 dispatching services for hundreds of local, largely volunteer first responders,
17 such as fire, ambulance, rescue, and law enforcement agencies.

18 (7) In several areas of the State, regional dispatch centers have designed,
19 funded, and implemented exceptional systems that practically ensure every 911
20 caller in their respective catchment areas receives timely and appropriate
21 emergency response services.

1 (8) Some municipalities rely on the dispatching services offered by the
2 two regional public safety answering points operated by the Vermont State
3 Police in Williston and Westminster, and do not pay directly for those services.

4 (9) Nearly all dispatch centers struggle with staff recruitment and
5 retention. These staffing shortages jeopardize the reliability of emergency
6 communications and exacerbate the stress on existing personnel who provide
7 the critical link between caller and responder.

8 (10) The General Assembly established the Regional Dispatch Working
9 Group in 2022 to make recommendations regarding a new regional dispatch
10 model, including a mechanism for transitioning to and equitably financing that
11 model.

12 (11) In retrospect, the Working Group was not given sufficient time and
13 resources to accomplish its tasks. Despite this, the Working Group made
14 substantial and effective progress with further framing the issues, underscoring
15 the challenges, and compiling significant historical and current data that will
16 underpin the State’s future efforts to build a statewide emergency
17 communications system.

18 (b) It is the intent of the General Assembly to draw upon the expertise and
19 successes of the E-911 Board and the existing dispatch centers for the purpose
20 of creating a reliable, high quality, secure, interoperable, cost-effective
21 statewide emergency communications system overseen and managed at the

1 State level, and to do so in a manner that does not disrupt or in any way
2 jeopardize the exceptional dispatch services currently in place.

3 Sec. 3. 30 V.S.A. chapter 87 is amended to read:

4 CHAPTER 87: ~~ENHANCED 911~~; EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

5 SERVICES

6 § 7050. PURPOSE

7 Protecting public safety and welfare is an essential function of State
8 government and, to that end, it is the purpose of this chapter to establish a
9 statewide, reliable, state of the art emergency communications system that is
10 equitably and sustainably financed and universally accessible by all persons
11 throughout the State.

12 § 7051. DEFINITIONS

13 As used in this chapter:

14 (1) “Automatic location identification” or “ALI” means the system
15 capability to identify automatically the geographical location of the electronic
16 device being used by the caller to summon assistance and to provide that
17 location information to an appropriate device located at any public safety
18 answering point for the purpose of sending emergency assistance.

19 (2) “ALI “database” or “database” means a derivative, verified set of
20 records which contain at a minimum a telephone number and location

1 identification for each unique building or publicly used facility within a
2 defined geographic area in Vermont.

3 (3) “Automatic number identification” or “ANI” means the system
4 capability to identify automatically the calling telephone number and to
5 provide a display of that number at any public safety answering point.

6 (4) “Board” means the Vermont ~~Enhanced 911~~ Emergency
7 Communications Board established under section 7053 of this title.

8 (5) “Caller” means a person or an automated device calling on behalf of
9 a person.

10 (6) “Director” means the Executive Director for the statewide ~~Enhanced~~
11 911 emergency communications system.

12 (7) “Dispatch center” means a facility that provides regional emergency
13 dispatch services and may also be a public safety answering point.

14 (8) “Dispatchable location” means the location information delivered to
15 the public safety answering point with a 911 call.

16 (9) “Emergency call system” or “Enhanced 911 system” means a system
17 consisting of devices with the capability to determine the location and identity
18 of a caller that initiates communication for the purpose of summoning
19 assistance in the case of an emergency. In most cases, summoning assistance
20 will occur when a caller dials the digits 9-1-1 on a telephone, mobile phone, or

1 other IP-enabled service, or by a communication technology designed for the
2 purpose of summoning assistance in the case of an emergency.

3 (10) “Emergency communications system” or “system” means a system
4 that comprises an integrated emergency call system and an emergency dispatch
5 system.

6 (11) “Emergency dispatch system” means the system for receiving calls
7 from the Enhanced 911 system and requesting emergency response services
8 from police, fire, emergency medical services, public safety service, or other
9 designated provider of emergency response services.

10 ~~(8)~~(12) “Emergency response services” means fire, police, medical, and
11 other services of an emergency nature as identified by the Board.

12 (13) “Enterprise communications system” means any networked
13 communication system serving two or more stations or living units within an
14 enterprise and includes circuit-switched networks, such as multi-line telephone
15 systems or legacy enterprise communications systems, IP-enabled service, and
16 cloud-based technology.

17 ~~(9)~~(14) “IP-enabled service” means a service, device, or application that
18 makes use of Internet protocol, or IP, and ~~which~~ that is capable of entering the
19 digits 9-1-1 or otherwise contacting the emergency 911 system. IP-enabled
20 service includes ~~voiceover~~ voice over IP and other services, devices, or

1 applications provided through or using wire line, cable, wireless, or satellite or
2 other facilities.

3 ~~(10)~~(15) “Municipality” means any city, town, incorporated village,
4 unorganized town, gore, grant, or other political subdivision of the State.

5 ~~(11)~~(16) “Other methods of locating caller” means those commercially
6 available technologies designed to provide the location information of callers
7 when a call is initiated to access emergency 911 services regardless of the type
8 of device that is used.

9 ~~(12)~~(17) “Public safety answering point” means a facility with the
10 capability to receive emergency calls, operated on a 24-hour basis, assigned the
11 responsibility of receiving 911 calls and dispatching, transferring, or relaying
12 emergency 911 calls to other public safety agencies or private safety agencies.

13 ~~(13)~~(18) “Selective routing” means a telecommunications switching
14 system that enables all 911 calls originating from within a defined
15 geographical region to be answered at a predesignated public service
16 answering point.

17 ~~(14)~~ “Dispatchable Location” means the location information delivered
18 to the public safety answering point with a 911 call.

19 ~~(15)~~ “Enterprise Communications Systems (ECS)” means any
20 networked communication system serving two or more stations, or living units,
21 within an enterprise. ECS includes circuit-switched networks, such as multi-

1 ~~line telephone systems or legacy ECS, IP-enabled service, and cloud-based~~
2 ~~technology.~~

3 (~~16~~)(19) “Station” means a telephone handset, customer ~~premise~~
4 premises equipment (~~CPE~~), or calling device that is capable of initiating a call
5 to 911.

6 § 7052. VERMONT ~~ENHANCED 911~~ EMERGENCY

7 COMMUNICATIONS BOARD

8 (a) The Vermont ~~Enhanced 911~~ Emergency Communications Board is
9 established to develop, implement, and supervise the operation of the statewide
10 ~~Enhanced 911~~ emergency communications system.

11 (b) The Board shall consist of nine members: one county law enforcement
12 officer elected by the membership of the Vermont State Sheriffs’ Association;
13 one municipal law enforcement officer elected by the Vermont Association of
14 Chiefs of Police; one official of a municipality; a firefighter; an emergency
15 medical services provider; a Department of Public Safety representative; and
16 three members of the public. Board members shall be appointed by the
17 Governor to three-year terms, except that the Governor shall stagger initial
18 appointments so that the terms of no more than four members expire during a
19 calendar year. In appointing Board members, the Governor shall give due
20 consideration to the different geographical regions of the State, and the need

1 for balance between rural and urban areas. Board members shall serve at the
2 pleasure of the Governor.

3 (c) Members who are not State employees or not otherwise compensated in
4 the course of their employment shall receive per diem compensation and
5 expense reimbursement for meetings in accordance with the provisions of 32
6 V.S.A. § 1010. Members who receive per diem shall receive compensation for
7 no more than 12 meetings per year.

8 (d) The Governor shall annually appoint a member to serve as Board chair
9 and a member to serve as Board vice chair. The Board shall hold at least four
10 regular meetings a year. Meetings of the Board may be held at any time or
11 place within Vermont upon call of the Chair or a majority of the members,
12 after reasonable notice to the other members and shall be held at such times
13 and places as in the judgment of the Board will best serve the convenience of
14 all parties in interest. The Board shall adopt rules and procedures with respect
15 to the conduct of its meetings and other affairs. Membership on the Board
16 does not constitute the holding of an office for any purpose, and members of
17 the Board shall not be required to take and file oaths of office before serving
18 on the Board. A member of the Board shall not be disqualified from holding
19 any public office or employment, and shall not forfeit any office or
20 employment, by reason of their appointment to the Board, notwithstanding any
21 statute, ordinance, or charter to the contrary.

1 (e) The Board shall appoint, subject to the approval of the Governor, the
2 Executive Director who shall hold office at the pleasure of the Board. ~~He or~~
3 ~~she~~ The Director shall perform such duties as may be assigned by the Board.
4 The ~~Executive~~ Director is entitled to compensation, as established by law, and
5 reimbursement for the expenses within the amounts available by appropriation.
6 The ~~Executive~~ Director may, with the approval of the Board, hire employees,
7 agents, and consultants and prescribe their duties.

8 § 7053. BOARD; RESPONSIBILITIES AND POWERS

9 (a) The Board shall be the single governmental agency responsible for
10 ~~statewide Enhanced 911~~ the emergency communications system. To the extent
11 feasible, the Board shall consult with the Agency of Human Services, the
12 Department of Public Safety, the Department of Public Service, and local
13 community service providers on the development of policies, system design,
14 standards, and procedures. The Board shall develop designs, standards, and
15 procedures and shall adopt rules on the following:

16 (1) The technical and operational standards for public safety answering
17 points and dispatch centers.

18 (2) The system database standards and procedures for developing and
19 maintaining the database. The system database shall be the property of the
20 Board.

1 (3) Statewide, locatable means of identifying customer location, such as
2 addressing, geo-coding, or other methods of locating the caller.

3 (4) Standards and procedures to ensure system and database security,
4 resiliency, and interoperability.

5 ~~(b)-(d)~~ [Repealed.]

6 ~~(e)~~(b) The Board is authorized:

7 (1) to make or cause to be made studies of any aspect of the ~~Enhanced~~
8 911 emergency communications system, including service, operations,
9 training, database development, and public awareness;

10 (2) to accept and use in the name of the State, subject to review and
11 approval by the Joint Fiscal Committee, any and all donations or grants, both
12 real and personal, from any governmental unit or public agency or from any
13 institution, person, firm, or corporation, consistent with the rules established by
14 the Board and the purpose or conditions of the donation or grant; and

15 (3) to exercise all powers and conduct such activities as are necessary in
16 carrying out the Board’s responsibilities in fulfilling the purposes of this
17 chapter.

18 ~~(f)~~(c) The Board shall adopt such rules as are necessary to carry out the
19 purposes of this chapter, including, where appropriate, imposing reasonable
20 fines or sanctions against persons that do not adhere to applicable Board rules.

21 ~~(g), (h)~~ [Repealed.]

1 § 7054. ~~FUNDING~~ EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS FUND

2 (a) The ~~Enhanced 911~~ Emergency Communications Fund is created as a
3 special fund subject to the provisions of 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 5.
4 Balances in the Fund on June 30 of each year shall carry forward and shall not
5 revert to the General Fund.

6 (b) The General Assembly shall annually review and approve an amount to
7 be transferred by the universal service fiscal agent to the ~~Enhanced 911~~ Fund
8 and shall appropriate some or all of that amount for expenditures related to
9 providing ~~Enhanced 911~~ emergency communications services.

10 (c) Into the ~~Enhanced 911~~ Fund shall be deposited monies transferred from
11 the universal service fiscal agent, any State or federal funds appropriated to the
12 Fund by the General Assembly, any taxes specifically required by law to be
13 deposited into the Fund, and any grants or gifts received by the State for the
14 benefit of the ~~Enhanced 911~~ emergency communications system.

15 (d) Disbursements from the ~~Enhanced 911~~ Fund shall be made by the State
16 Treasurer on warrants drawn by the Director solely for the purposes specified
17 in this chapter. The Director may issue such warrants pursuant to contracts or
18 grants.

19 (e) Disbursements may be made for:

1 (1) nonrecurring costs, including establishing public safety answering
2 points, dispatch centers, purchasing network equipment and software,
3 developing databases, and providing for initial training and public education;

4 (2) recurring costs, including network access fees and other telephone
5 charges, software, equipment, database management and improvement, public
6 education, ongoing training, and equipment maintenance;

7 (3) expenses of the Board and the Department of Public Service incurred
8 under this chapter;

9 (4) costs solely attributable to statewide public safety answering point
10 and dispatch center operations; and

11 (5) costs attributable to demonstration projects designed to enhance the
12 delivery of emergency 911 and other emergency services, including dispatch
13 services.

14 ~~(f) Disbursements may not be made for:~~

15 ~~(1) personnel costs for emergency dispatch answering points;~~

16 ~~(2) construction, purchase, renovation, or furnishings for buildings at~~
17 ~~emergency dispatch points;~~

18 ~~(3) two-way radios; and~~

19 ~~(4) vehicles and associated equipment.~~

20 § 7055. TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY COORDINATION

1 (a) Every telecommunications company under the jurisdiction of the Public
2 Utility Commission offering access to the public network shall make available,
3 in accordance with rules adopted by the Public Utility Commission, the
4 universal emergency telephone number 911 for use by the public in seeking
5 assistance from fire, police, medical, and other emergency service providers
6 through a public safety answering point.

7 (b) Every local exchange telecommunications provider shall provide the
8 ANI and any other information required by rules adopted under section 7053
9 of this title to the Board, or to any administrator of the Enhanced 911 database,
10 for purposes of maintaining the Enhanced 911 database. Each such provider
11 shall be responsible for updating the information at a frequency specified by
12 such rules. All persons receiving confidential information under this section,
13 as defined by the Public Utility Commission, shall use it solely for the
14 purposes of providing emergency 911 services, and shall not disclose such
15 confidential information for any other purpose.

16 (c) Each local exchange telecommunications company, cellular company,
17 and mobile or personal communications service company within the State shall
18 designate a person to coordinate with and provide all relevant information to
19 the Enhanced 911 Board and Public Utility Commission in carrying out the
20 purposes of the chapter.

1 (d) Wire line and nonwire cellular carriers certificated to provide service in
2 the State shall provide ANI signaling which identifies geographical location as
3 well as cell site address for cellular 911 calls. Personal communications
4 networks and any future mobile or personal communications systems shall also
5 be required to identify the location of the caller. The telephone company shall
6 provide ANI signaling which identifies the name of the carrier and identify the
7 type of service as cellular, mobile, or personal communications as part of the
8 ALI along with a screen message that advises the call answerer to verify the
9 location of the reported emergency. Telecommunication providers of mobile
10 wireless, IP-enabled, and other communication services ~~which~~ that have
11 systems with the capability to send data related to the location of the caller
12 with the call or transmission instead of relying on location data otherwise
13 contained in the ALI database shall provide this data with calls or
14 transmissions for the sole purpose of enabling the emergency 911 system to
15 locate an individual seeking emergency services. Location data shall be
16 provided in accordance with relevant national standards for next generation 9-
17 1-1 technology.

18 (e) Each local exchange telecommunications provider in the State shall file
19 with the Public Utility Commission tariffs for each service element necessary
20 for the provision of Enhanced 911 services. The Public Utility Commission
21 shall review each company’s proposed tariff, and shall ensure that tariffs for

1 each necessary basic service element are effective within six months of filing.
2 The Department of Public Service, by rule or emergency rule, may establish
3 the basic service elements that each company must provide for in tariffs. Such
4 tariffs must be filed with the Public Utility Commission within 60 days after
5 the basic service elements are established by the Department of Public Service.

6 § 7056. MUNICIPAL COOPERATION; ENHANCED ANI/ALI

7 CAPABILITY

8 (a) Each municipality, by its legislative body, may participate in the
9 Enhanced 911 system. Municipalities choosing to participate shall identify all
10 building locations and other public and private locations frequented by the
11 public and shall cooperate in the development and maintenance of the
12 necessary databases. The Board shall work with municipalities to identify
13 nonmonetary incentives designed to streamline and reduce the administrative
14 burdens imposed by this requirement. Any municipality that changes its
15 system for addresses shall ensure that the modified address system is consistent
16 with the standards established by the Board.

17 (b) After the effective date of this chapter, any municipality that changes its
18 system for addresses shall ensure that the modified address system is consistent
19 with the standards established by the Board.

20 (e)-(e) [Repealed.]

21 § 7057. ENTERPRISE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

1 Any enterprise communications system shall provide to those end users the
2 same level of 911 service that other end users receive and shall provide ANI
3 signaling, station identification data, including dispatchable location, and
4 updates to Enhanced 911 databases under rules adopted by the Board. The
5 Board may waive the provisions of this section for any enterprise
6 communications system, provided that in the judgment of the Board, the owner
7 of the system is actively engaged in becoming compliant with this section, is
8 likely to comply with this section in a reasonable amount of time, and will do
9 so in accordance with standards and procedures adopted by the Board by rule.

10 § 7058. PAY TELEPHONES

11 Each provider or other owner or lessee of a pay station telephone shall
12 permit a caller to dial 911 without first inserting a coin or paying any other
13 charge. The provider or other owner or lessee shall prominently display on
14 each notice advising callers to dial 911 in an emergency and that deposit of a
15 coin is not required.

16 § 7059. CONFIDENTIALITY OF SYSTEM INFORMATION

17 (a)(1) A person shall not access, use, or disclose to any other person any
18 individually identifiable information contained in the system database created
19 under subdivision 7053(a)(4) of this title, including any customer or user ALI
20 or ANI information, except in accordance with rules adopted by the Board and
21 for the purpose of:

- 1 (A) responding to emergency calls;
- 2 (B) system maintenance and quality control under the direction of the
3 Director;
- 4 (C) investigation, by law enforcement personnel, of false or
5 intentionally misleading reports of incidents requiring emergency services;
- 6 (D) assisting in the implementation of a statewide emergency
7 notification system;
- 8 (E) provision of emergency dispatch services by public safety
9 answering points in other states that are under contract with local law
10 enforcement and emergency response organizations; or
- 11 (F) coordinating with state and local service providers for the
12 provision of emergency dispatch services that serve individuals with a
13 disability, elders, and other populations with special needs.
- 14 (2) No person shall use customer ALI or ANI information to create
15 special 911 databases for any private purpose or any public purpose
16 unauthorized by this chapter.
- 17 (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section,
18 customer ALI or ANI information obtained in the course of responding to an
19 emergency call may be included in an incident report prepared by emergency
20 response personnel, in accordance with rules adopted by the Board.

1 (c) Information relating to customer name, address, and any other specific
2 customer information collected, organized, acquired, or held by the Board, the
3 entity operating a public safety answering point or dispatch center or
4 administering the ~~Enhanced 911~~ emergency communications database, or
5 emergency service provider is not public information and is exempt from
6 ~~disclosure under 1 V.S.A. chapter 5, subchapter 3~~ public inspection and
7 copying under the Public Records Act.

8 (d) If a municipality has adopted conventional street addressing for
9 Enhanced 911 addressing purposes, the municipality shall ensure that an
10 individual who so requests will not have ~~his or her~~ the individual's street
11 address and name linked in a municipal public record, but the individual shall
12 be required to provide a mailing address. The request required by this
13 subsection shall be in writing and shall be filed with the municipal clerk.
14 Requests under this subsection shall be confidential. A form shall be prepared
15 by the Board and made generally available to the public by which the
16 confidentiality option established by this subsection may be exercised.

17 (e) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, no person acting
18 on behalf of the State of Vermont or any political subdivision of the State shall
19 require an individual to disclose ~~his or her~~ the individual's Enhanced 911
20 address, provided that the individual furnishes ~~his or her~~ an alternative mailing
21 address.

1 § 7060. LIMITATION OF LIABILITY

2 No person shall be liable in any suit for civil damages who in good faith
3 receives, develops, collects, or processes information for the ~~Enhanced 911~~
4 emergency communications database or develops, designs, adopts, establishes,
5 installs, participates in, implements, maintains, or provides access to telephone,
6 mobile, or IP-enabled service for the purpose of helping persons obtain
7 emergency assistance in accordance with this chapter unless such action
8 constitutes gross negligence or an intentional tort. In addition, no provider of
9 telephone, mobile, or other IP-enabled service or a provider’s respective
10 employees, directors, officers, assigns, affiliates, or agents shall be liable for
11 civil damages in connection with the release of customer information to any
12 governmental entity, including any public safety answering point or dispatch
13 center, as required under this chapter.

14 § 7061. ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

15 (a) The Board may file a civil action for injunctive relief in the Civil
16 Division of the Washington County Superior Court to enforce a provision of
17 this chapter or a rule adopted by the Board under this chapter. The ~~court~~ Court
18 shall award the Board its costs and reasonable attorney’s fees in the event that
19 the Board prevails in an action under this subsection.

1 (b) A person who violates the provisions of section 7059 of this title shall
2 be imprisoned not more than one year or fined not more than \$10,000.00, or
3 both.

4 (c) An aggrieved individual may maintain an action in the Civil Division of
5 Superior Court for damages, injunctive relief, costs, and attorney’s fees against
6 any person who intentionally or with gross negligence violates any provision
7 of, or rules adopted under, section 7059 or subsection 7055(b) of this title.

8 § 7062. DISPATCH SERVICES; COST SHARING

9 [Placeholder; see Sec. 4]

10 § 7063. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE

11 (a) The Board, in consultation with the Secretary of Administration, shall
12 develop procedures and best practices for agency cooperation and coordination
13 on matters of overlapping jurisdiction. The primary purpose of this section is
14 to ensure the Board has access to information related to its oversight and
15 management authority under this subchapter, including any relevant
16 information maintained by the Department of Public Service, the Department
17 of Public Safety, and the Agency of Digital Services.

18 (b) Nothing in this section shall be construed to waive any privilege or
19 protection otherwise afforded information by law due solely to the fact that the
20 information is shared with the Board pursuant to this section.

21 Sec. 4. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS MODERNIZATION

1 PROCESS

2 (a) Oversight. The E-911 Board shall oversee the transition to the
3 statewide emergency communications system contemplated by this act. The
4 Executive Director may retain or employ technical experts and other officers,
5 agents, employees, and contractors as are necessary to give effect to the act’s
6 purposes.

7 (b) Fund. There is created a special fund in the State Treasury to be known
8 as the Emergency Communications Transition Fund, which shall be
9 administered by the E-911 Board. The Board may authorize disbursements
10 from the Fund to carry out the purposes of this section. The Fund shall be
11 composed of any monies transferred or appropriated to the Fund by the
12 General Assembly or received from any other source, public or private, subject
13 to the provisions of 32 V.S.A. 5. Unexpended balances and any earnings shall
14 remain in the Fund for use in accord with the purposes of this section until July
15 1, 2026, at which time the Fund shall cease to exist and any remaining balance
16 shall be transferred to the Emergency Communications Fund established in 30
17 V.S.A. § 7054.

18 (c) Advisory committee.

19 (1) An Emergency Communications Advisory Committee is established
20 to make recommendations to and advise the Board on the transition process
21 established in this section. The Committee shall comprise technology experts

1 and public safety stakeholders to focus on critical aspects of a statewide
2 emergency communications system. Members shall include:

3 (A) the Commissioner of Public Safety or designee;

4 (B) the Secretary of Digital Services or designee;

5 (C) the Commissioner of Public Service or designee;

6 (D) the Director of Radio Technology Services, Department of Public
7 Safety;

8 (E) the Vermont Statewide Interoperability Coordinator, Department
9 of Public Safety;

10 (F) the Director of Emergency Management, Department of Public
11 Safety;

12 (G) the Director of Emergency Preparedness, Response and Injury
13 Prevention, Department of Health;

14 (H) the Chair of the Regional Dispatch Working Group established
15 by the General Assembly in Act 185 of 2022;

16 (I) one member appointed by the Board, who shall not be an
17 employee or officer of the State at the time of appointment;

18 (J) one member appointed by the Speaker of the House who shall not
19 be a member of the General Assembly at the time of appointment and who

20 shall have expertise in the area of dispatching services; and

1 (K) one member appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees
2 who shall not be a member of the General Assembly at the time of the
3 appointment and who shall have expertise in the area of mental health services.

4 (2) Except for those members otherwise regularly employed by the
5 State, the compensation of the Committee’s members is that provided in 32
6 V.S.A. § 1010(a). All members, including members otherwise regularly
7 employed by the State, shall receive their actual and necessary expenses when
8 away from home or office upon their official duties under this section.

9 (3) The Board shall appoint a chair and vice chair. Meetings shall be
10 held at the call of the Chair or at the request of two members. A majority of
11 sitting members shall constitute a quorum, and action taken by the Committee
12 under this section may be authorized by a majority of the members present and
13 voting. The Committee may meet up to six times a year. Additional meetings
14 are subject to approval of the Board.

15 (4) The Advisory Committee shall cease to exist on July 1, 2027.

16 (d) *Transition process.* The transition to a statewide emergency
17 communications system shall occur in essentially three phases as specified in
18 this subsection; however, certain aspects of each phase may occur
19 simultaneously as deemed appropriate by the Board.

1 (1) Data collection. The Board shall perform an analysis of existing
2 dispatch services in the State, including how they are financed, and the
3 technology used to support them. Accordingly, the Board shall:

4 (A) conduct an inventory of all existing dispatch infrastructure and
5 equipment, including facilities, hardware, software, applications, and land
6 mobile radio systems;

7 (B) determine the number of full-time and part-time personnel
8 currently performing dispatch services;

9 (C) identify the person at each dispatch center who is responsible for
10 coordinating and overseeing dispatch services;

11 (D) determine the current statewide budget for dispatching services,
12 taking into account all State and municipal appropriations and fees;

13 (E) map the communications “dead zones” in the State, taking into
14 consideration all cell towers that are part of the FirstNet statewide public safety
15 radio access network; cellular mapping efforts conducted by the Department of
16 Public Service; and the results of any propagation studies undertaken by the
17 Board; and

18 (F) conduct a community needs assessment with the assistance of the
19 Vermont League of Cities and Towns to determine where and to what extent
20 there are gaps in dispatch services or significant challenges to the delivery of
21 dispatch services.

1 (2) Design. The Board shall design an equitably financed, regional
2 dispatch system that is part of a broader statewide emergency communications
3 system. Accordingly, the Board:

4 (A) shall establish technical standards and protocols that ensure an
5 interoperable and resilient emergency communications system;

6 (B) shall develop a technology lifecycle plan to ensure system and
7 database upgrades are timely, sufficiently financed, and properly managed;

8 (C) shall establish system and database security and cybersecurity
9 standards;

10 (D) shall develop a continuity of operations plan that encompasses
11 failover procedures and other system redundancies to ensure the continuous
12 performance of mission critical operations;

13 (E) shall establish initial training and continuing education standards
14 for emergency communications personnel, including recommended minimum
15 staffing levels at dispatch centers and other measures designed to support the
16 retention and wellbeing of dispatch personnel;

17 (F) shall develop a funding model for dispatch services that includes
18 an equitable cost-sharing formula that reflects a base rate and a rolling call
19 volume rate, as well as a process for collecting and distributing funds, subject
20 to approval by the General Assembly;

1 (G) shall develop a resource allocation plan that ensures dispatch
2 services are available in all regions of the State, including the establishment of
3 new dispatch centers or expanded capacity and capability of existing dispatch
4 centers, if deemed appropriate by the Board;

5 (H) shall establish a process for annually reviewing the budgets of
6 dispatch centers; and

7 (I) shall establish on or before July 1, 2024 at least one new dispatch
8 center that meets the design standards and protocols developed under this
9 subsection and that provides service in areas of the State that presently face
10 significant challenges with respect to reliably providing dispatch services

11 (3) *Implementation.* The Board shall seek to have a fully operational,
12 integrated emergency communications system on or before July 1, 2026. As
13 part of the implementation phase, the Board shall test, inspect, and adjust the
14 system to ensure it performs as required. Once the system is fully operational,
15 the Board shall continue to monitor and evaluate systemwide performance and
16 make improvements where needed.

17 (e) *Interagency cooperation.* It is essential that all departments in State
18 government with expertise in public safety and emergency management
19 services; information technology; and communications networks provide
20 timely and comprehensive data and assistance requested by the Board in
21 furtherance of its objectives under this section.

1 (f) Report. On or before January 15, 2024, and annually thereafter for three
2 consecutive years, the Board shall submit a status report to the General
3 Assembly and the Governor. The report shall include a summary of the
4 Board’s progress with the transition process described in this section, and may
5 include policy recommendations for improving and strengthening that process
6 or, more broadly, with regard to the oversight and management of the
7 emergency communications system established by this act. The initial report
8 of the Board shall include a recommended funding model for a statewide
9 emergency dispatch system as well a recommended regional governance model
10 applicable to all dispatch centers to support an coordinated, integrated
11 statewide emergency communications system.

12 Sec. 5. APPROPRIATION TRANSFER

13 Any unobligated funds remaining of the \$11,000,000.00 of one-time
14 General Funds appropriated by the General Assembly to the Department of
15 Public Safety for regional dispatch funding pursuant to 2022 Acts and
16 Resolves No. 185, Sec. B.1100, subsection (b), shall be transferred to the
17 Emergency Communications Transition Fund established in Sec. 4 of this act
18 and used for the purposes of that Fund.

19 Sec. 6. GRANT ADMINISTRATION REDESIGNATION

20 (a) Unless prohibited under federal law, the E-911 Board shall be
21 redesignated as the responsible entity for administering the \$9,000,000.00 in

1 Congressionally Directed Spending appropriated under the federal
2 Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, Public Law No. 117-328, to support
3 Vermont’s transition to a modernized, regional communications network.

4 (b) If federal law prohibits the redesignation specified in subsection (a) of
5 this section, then the Commissioner of Public Safety shall consult with the
6 Board on all grant disbursements.

7 Sec. 7. POSITIONS; APPROPRIATION

8 (a) The Executive Director of the E-911 Board is authorized to establish
9 new permanent classified positions to assist with the transition to and
10 continued oversight of the statewide emergency communications system
11 established by this act.

12 (b) There is appropriated to the E-911 Board from the General Fund in
13 fiscal year 2024 the sum of \$XXX for personal services and \$XXX for
14 operating expenses.

15 Sec. 8. 30 V.S.A. § 7501(b)(7) is amended to read:

16 (7) “Service location” means a business or residential geographic point
17 of contact of a telecommunications service for purposes of the Enhanced 911
18 network. The number of service locations in each exchange shall be
19 determined by the Department of Public Service in periodic updates to the
20 State Telecommunications Plan based on analysis of the locations in the
21 database of the Vermont ~~Enhanced 911~~ Emergency Communications Board.

1 Sec. 9. 30 V.S.A. § 7511(a)(1)(D) is amended to read:

2 (D) to support ~~Enhanced 911~~ emergency communications services in
3 the manner provided by section 7514 of this title; and

4 Sec. 10. 30 V.S.A. § 7514 is amended to read:

5 § 7514. ~~ENHANCED 911~~ EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

6 The fiscal agent shall make distributions to the State Treasurer, for deposit
7 into the ~~Enhanced 911 special fund~~ Emergency Communications Fund, as
8 annually directed by the General Assembly.

9 Sec. 11. CONFORMING REVISIONS

10 When preparing the Vermont Statutes Annotated for publication, the Office
11 of Legislative Council shall make the following revisions throughout the
12 statutes as needed for consistency with Sec. 3 of this act (establishing the
13 Vermont Emergency Communications Board), provided the revisions have no
14 other effect on the meaning of the affected statutes:

15 (1) replace “Enhanced 911 Board” or “E-911 Board” with “Emergency
16 Communications Board;”

17 (2) replace “Vermont Enhanced 911 Board” or “Vermont E-911 Board”
18 with “Vermont Emergency Communications Board;”

19 (3) revisions that are substantially similar to those described in
20 subdivisions (1) and (2) of this section.

21 Sec. 12. EFFECTIVE DATES

1 This act shall take effect on passage, except that Sec. 3 (establishing the
2 Vermont Emergency Communications Board); Secs. 8-10 (conforming
3 revisions related to the Vermont Universal Service Fund); and Sec. 11
4 (authority to make conforming statutory revisions) shall take effect on July 1,
5 2026.