

UTILITIES AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS ALERT

IS YOUR COMPANY E-911 COMPLIANT?

E-911 Laws Spreading

In 2009, the Commonwealth of Virginia became the latest of 16 states to enact laws that require (in certain circumstances) businesses that operate multi-line telephone systems to provide a heightened level of enhanced-911, or E-911, capability. In addition, several states, including Ohio and Pennsylvania, are in the process of drafting new E-911 laws and the Federal Communications Commission has been asked to adopt national E-911 rules.

Purpose of E-911 Laws

The purpose of most E-911 laws is to provide workers and visitors in large buildings, campuses, and the like, adequate protections when they make a 911 call. At present, many calls directed from large buildings often provide 911 call centers and first responders with potentially false information, such as providing the address of a main building or the billing address, and a number to a main telephone line, not the caller's actual location or phone number. As a result, police, ambulance and fire responders may have no ability to contact a caller, and no idea from what office, floor, or even building, an emergency call originates. Without this crucial information, response to 911 callers is often delayed, resulting potentially in greater injury to the caller.

Compliance

Compliance with E-911 laws not only protects employees, it also protects companies from liability risks. Companies with operations in multiple states must be mindful of existing regulations throughout the country, and determine to what extent their phone systems should satisfy these laws and best protect all employees.

The Utilities and Telecommunications Alert is intended to keep readers current on matters affecting utilities and telecommunications issues and is not intended to be legal advice. For more information on E-911 issues, contact Eric Schwalb at 202.659.6608 or eschwalb@eckertseamans.com, or any other attorney with whom you have been working.

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