



STATE OF MICHIGAN

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EMERGENCY TELEPHONE SERVICE COMMITTEE  
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**Consumer Alert  
Internet Based Telephone Service and 9-1-1  
March 22, 2005**

Michigan residents and businesses that have purchased or are considering purchasing Internet based telephone services should be aware that not all such services provide access to the 9-1-1 network, or may provide a very limited level of 9-1-1 service that may not meet the consumer's expectations.

More than four hundred vendors are now selling Internet based telephone services, also known as Voice over Internet (VoI) or Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). These vendors include some cable television providers, telephone companies, established Internet Service Providers, and a host of new companies established specifically to provide these services.

Traditional wireline telephone systems route 9-1-1 calls to the designated Public Safety Answering Point (dispatch center) for the caller's location, and provide the emergency center with the caller's name, call back number, and location, even when the caller cannot speak. This may not be the case with all Internet based telephone services.

Consumers should ask the Internet telephone service provider whether the offer includes 9-1-1 service and, if so, if the calls are routed to the traditional 9-1-1 network. Some providers will state that 9-1-1 access is provided, but make it the responsibility of the customer to go on line and enter their name and address so the caller can be located in an emergency. Some providers will route the calls to call centers out of state, rather than to the caller's local dispatch center. Other providers will route the 9-1-1 calls to the local dispatch center, but not through the 9-1-1 network, so that the call-taker is not aware that the incoming call is of an emergency nature, and may not be able to prioritize it correctly.

If the sales person, brochure, or web site offering the Internet based telephone service does not mention 9-1-1, it is very likely that 9-1-1 service is NOT being provided at all.

If you are considering any telephone service that does not include traditional 9-1-1 service, make certain you are aware of whether 9-1-1 can be dialed from the system, exactly how the calls are handled, and develop a family or employee plan. Any person calling for emergency service from your telephone, including visitors, children, the elderly, and babysitters will have to know your address and be able to communicate it to emergency personnel.

The Emergency Telephone Service Committee was established in accordance with P. A. 79 of 1999. Its 21 member organizations work together to promote the successful development, implementation, and operation of 9-1-1 systems across the state of Michigan. For more information on Michigan's 9-1-1 system, visit: [www.michigan.gov/msp-etsc](http://www.michigan.gov/msp-etsc).

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