

State of 911

Webinar Series

State of 911 Webinar FAQ: Enhancing 911 Operations & Technology for Safer Streets

January 21, 2025

ENHANCING 911 OPERATIONS: The Role of 911 in Highway Safety

The following answers are provided by:

- Rick Birt – Director, D.C. Highway Safety Office, Governor’s Highway Safety Association (GHSA)
- April Heinze, ENP, CMCP – VP, Chief of 911 Operations, National Emergency Number Association (NENA)
- Ty Wooten, ENP – Director of Government Affairs, International Academies of Emergency Dispatch (IAED)

Do you think highway safety offices are starting to learn more about post-crash care? And if so, are they even thinking that 911 is a role in that?

I think it's all the above, Brian. I mean, I think there's certainly an acknowledgment now, particularly as we've all moved to the safe system approach, that 911 is that launch pad to post-crash care. Now again, what do we do with 911? I think that's where we're all still learning. And I think we're learning together. And so that's why I encourage folks to come with your wish list, to do an environmental scan as you look at how your agency responds to a crash and think about where those opportunities for improvement are. That's gonna help your Highway Safety Office better understand the circumstances in which you're working, better understand the dynamics of post-crash care, and also better position your agency to receive funding. That's one of the great things about our relationship with the Highway Safety Office is that we come with funding. And so we're able to provide, you know, one-time funding to address short-term challenges, ongoing funding for longer-term projects.

And so there really is an opportunity to not only build camaraderie, which I do think, as you described, kind of has to start from square one, that first part of the relationship, but then can blossom into something that's really been beneficial. And I so appreciate our 911 director being such a great partner now to our office as we think about, again, our shared vision of reducing roadway trauma, injury, and fatalities, and 911's got to be a part of that.

Did you see the light bulbs going off with regard to 911's involvement at the GHSA post-crash care summit?

Yeah, I definitely thought it was very beneficial for 911 to have the conversations. It was interesting how many of the vehicle manufacturers were not aware of where 911 was at.

I would add that, you know, I think that there were a lot of folks in the summit that we had in DC a few months ago, you know, a lot of them were from the Highway Safety Administrations from the States, and the number of them who didn't quite understand all of the aspects that 911 touches relative to the safety of the roadways. I think everybody kind of fixates on that one aspect of post-crash care. But when you begin to, you know, peel back the layers of the onion to understand that there are so many aspects that we touch on a daily basis, whether it's, you know, every wheel that we turn, whether it's for a crash or not, is, you know, having an impact on traffic and safety on our roadways.

And I think, you know, getting them to kind of see that is an important aspect, and understanding the capabilities of what 911 can do through things like emergency medical dispatch and other protocol use—that was kind of important and exciting for them to have those light bulbs go off at that moment.

TECHNOLOGY FOR SAFER STREETS: Utilizing Waze Data in 911 Center Operations

The following answers are provided by:

- Rodger Mann, Chief Innovation Officer, North Central Texas 911

Is the information you're showing (Waze data, cameras, etc.) within your CAD system, or is it separate?

Yeah, good question. What I showed today was integrated into our dispatch maps. That's what we use for our call-handling equipment. So it's the map that's gonna show caller location, and all the different GIS data types are available on the map.

Our CAD vendors in our region—we don't oversee the CAD—so there are CAD vendors that do different things in terms of the feed and how we push into Waze. The platforms we use are agnostic to GIS platforms, so we can push in open-source data or data through ESRI streams.

We chose to use what's called GeoEvent Server, which allows us to manipulate different services like rest services that come into the system. And we can control exactly what type of data elements we push into that system. So in Waze, we take the feed, we get all the data elements into our server in our GIS server, and then we can basically just filter out the events that we think and that our call takers think is the most pertinent for them to do their job.

Are you using computer vision AI on video feeds for real-time collision detection or identifying wrong-way drivers and pedestrians?

Great question. We aren't. NCT is not right now. I believe that the DOT is looking at that technology along with our Council of Governments Transportation Department. So that's—that there's more to come there. At the moment, we don't monitor that.

Are you working with the State Highway Safety Office or engaging beyond your Council of Governments?

Yeah. Good question, Brian. That's actually why I wanted to come up to you guys at NENA SVP, because that's something that I'm really interested in doing. A Council of Governments works very closely with the traffic management centers, and we'd like to do a lot more with NHTSA. We'd like to also incorporate wrong-way driving. It's been a very—it's had a very big impact in this region. We've seen some awful incidents.

So that is something we're trying to understand and incorporate into the system. We're hoping that we can push it through a FEMA feed that would come through the IPAWS system, so we can actually proactively monitor those events and then alert first responders. But that is something we are looking at.