

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)/Broadband Phones

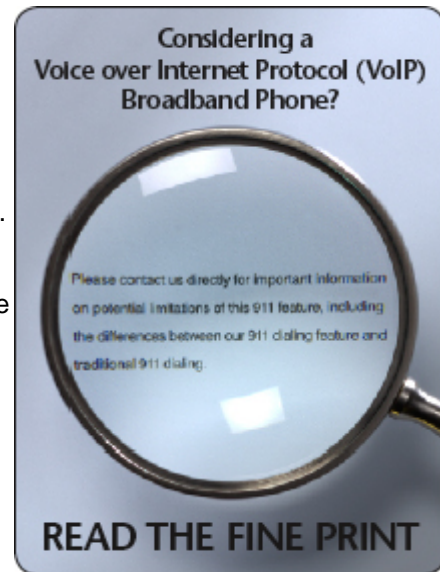
There are several service providers who now offer **Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) / Broadband Phone** service to their customers. This service is attractive to people because they can now have voice service using their Internet Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) connection, and no longer need a dedicated telephone line to make phone calls. They also are provided with long distance service at no charge. Given the attractiveness of this service, people may not stop to think about drawbacks to the service, such as the fact that Enhanced 9-1-1 (E9-1-1) may not work for VoIP/Broadband phones.

Citizens have come to rely on E9-1-1 service, and have an expectation that this service will be available from any phone.

The features of E9-1-1 include:

(These features may not be available for all VoIP/Broadband Phones.)

- Routing of 9-1-1 calls to the correct 9-1-1 Center over a dedicated 9-1-1 network.
- Display of the caller's telephone number at the 9-1-1 Center.
- Display of the caller's location at the 9-1-1 Center.



9-1-1 MAY NOT WORK FOR VoIP/Broadband Phones

Concerns About VoIP/Broadband Phones

- **A VoIP/Broadband Phone WILL LOOK LIKE ANY OTHER TELEPHONE.** Even if the phone's owner understands the 9-1-1 issue, visitors or others will expect the phone to provide them with access to E9-1-1 service when they call 9-1-1 in an emergency.
- **The VoIP/Broadband Phone MAY NOT BE CAPABLE OF PLACING A 9-1-1 CALL.** The caller may receive a "service not available" recording.
- **The VoIP/Broadband Phone 9-1-1 CALL MAY NOT ROUTE OVER THE DEDICATED 9-1-1 NETWORK.** This call will compete with all other calls in the public switched telephone network. VoIP/Broadband 9-1-1 calls are currently forwarded to a ten-digit number, which may or may not be answered at a 9-1-1 center.
- **VoIP/Broadband Phone TRAFFIC ON TODAY'S INTERNET CAN BE SLOWED BY VIRUSES, WORMS, AND OTHER CYBER ATTACKS.** This could affect the ability of a VoIP/Broadband call to get through the network to reach a 9-1-1 center.
- **VoIP/Broadband Phone 9-1-1 CALLS MAY NOT BE ANSWERED WITH THE SAME PRIORITY AS OTHER 9-1-1 CALLS.** VoIP/Broadband phone calls that are received on ten-digit telephone lines instead of the dedicated 9-1-1 network may not be answered at the same

priority as 9-1-1 calls.

- **A VoIP/Broadband Phone 9-1-1 CALL MAY NOT GO TO THE CORRECT 9-1-1 CENTER.** Wireline and wireless 9-1-1 calls are routed to a 9-1-1 Center based on the caller's location. A nationwide VoIP/Broadband network typically will have only one access point to the public switched telephone network, and the 9-1-1 call will then need to be routed to a 9-1-1 center anywhere in North America. There have been cases where VoIP/Broadband 9-1-1 calls have been routed several states away from the location of the caller.
- **CALLER INFORMATION MAY NOT BE DISPLAYED AT THE 9-1-1 CENTER FOR VoIP/Broadband Phone 9-1-1 CALLS.** There is a possibility that the caller's phone number and address may not automatically display. The caller must be able to provide their location before help can be sent.
- **THERE IS NO FUNDING SOURCE FOR VoIP/Broadband Phone 9-1-1 SERVICE.** Governments are currently not authorized to assess a 9-1-1 tax on VoIP/Broadband phones. Any service provided to these phones will need to be funded with the 9-1-1 taxes on wireline and wireless phones. Eventually, this will jeopardize the funding of the entire E9-1-1 system.

Read the Fine Print

Some VoIP/Broadband Phone service providers do inform their customers about the limitations of Enhanced 9-1-1 service when they subscribe to VoIP/Broadband Phone service. Before you sign up for a VoIP/Broadband Phone, King County 9-1-1 Responders encourage you to read all 9-1-1 information so you clearly understand the 9-1-1 capabilities of VoIP/Broadband Phone service. King County 9-1-1 is concerned that in the excitement over new, low-cost telephone service, individuals may not be aware of the differences between VoIP/Broadband Phone 9-1-1 service and traditional Enhanced 9-1-1 service available on wireline and wireless phones.

When considering switching from traditional wireline phone service to VoIP/Broadband Phone service, be an informed consumer. Anyone who is thinking about switching to VoIP/Broadband Phone service needs to read the fine print and realize that the 9-1-1 service they have come to rely on may not be available for this new phone service.

Reference Document

-  [Voice over Internet Protocol \(VoIP\)/Broadband Phone Public Safety Message](#) (1,021 KB PDF - 3 pages)