

Senator Ellis Supports Upgrade of 911 Systems

Hopefully, you will never need to dial 9-1-1. However, if you do, you deserve the peace of mind of knowing that help is on the way. Alaskans should be confident that help is not only on its way, but quickly on its way to the right place. It wasn't very long ago when we heard the terrible story of an Eagle River woman who bled and suffered for 48 minutes while police and first responders tried to find her home. Incidents like that should not occur.

Because I don't want a repeat of that horrible incident, I am supporting Senator Bunde's Senate Bill 100 for Enhanced 911. An "enhanced" 911 system utilizes GPS (Global Positioning System) technology to track an individual's telephone number. This technology allows 911 calls to be routed to answering centers based on their location, and provides the capability for automatic location identification (ALI) of the call – including those calls made on cellular phones. When a call is made to 911 -the location of the caller will be found almost immediately. This enhanced system would allow first responders to locate and reach an emergency situation faster, and more accurately.

Municipalities cannot afford to fund enhanced 911 on their own. SB 100, enhanced 911, would allow municipalities to fund 911 services via a surcharge on telephone lines. This surcharge is currently capped at 50 cents per line per month. This legislation would cap the maximum amount \$2 per phone line per month. This comes down to an additional \$1.50 per phone number, per month. I am very sensitive to any increased expense for Alaskans living on a fixed income, but I truly believe that \$1.50 a month is a small price to pay for the knowledge that firefighters, police and paramedics will be able to respond more quickly than ever before to an accident or emergency.

The passage of this bill will mean safer cities for all Alaskans. SB 100 can save the critical minutes between a 911 call and a response, and by so doing, save a life.