

The 911 Coordinating Council is aware that many PSAPs across the state are nearing end of life on their current Customer Premise Equipment (CPE). Several PSAPs have inquired as to a direction they should follow in replacing their existing CPE. The Coordinating Council would offer the following advice.

The Coordinating Council recommends that CPE purchases be postponed if at all possible until such time as standards and specifications are determined. It is anticipated that these standards will be available by March of 2014.

The Coordinating Council is working on an interim hosted solution that would alleviate the need for a PSAP to purchase equipment. This hosted solution would be a subscription type service offered by a telephone company where the PSAP would subscribe to the hosted call handling software solution and would connect via a network connection to the hosted equipment. This would eliminate the danger of purchased equipment being made obsolete by network design standards and specifications and would allow the PSAP to remain open to the potential cost savings of regionally hosted equipment and services when NG911 standards are completed.

Any new investments in CPE should probably include contract language to protect the investment. The Coordinating Council would recommend that the following four suggestions be incorporated into any contracts with CPE vendors/manufacturers:

1. Ensure that the hardware and software of your CPE equipment will meet nationally recognized Next Generation standards. A great deal of work is occurring to ensure there will be adopted standards on which manufacturers can build. National organizations such as NENA, APCO and ESIF are working with manufactures to agree on NG standard interfaces to the IP network and to new types of services that will become available. Responsible CPE manufacturers should develop solutions that would only require minor software modifications to adopt these interface standards. It could be very costly to discover that major modifications are required to revamp their products, so most manufacturers are taking an active part in these forums.
2. Consider contract language that states "the vendor/manufacturer will support i3 interfaces as ratified by ESIF and APCO and NENA." Most vendor/manufacturers will probably agree to meet these standards when defined - but at what cost remains to be determined:
3. To protect your PSAP from unknown costly upgrades, consider adding contract language that states, "the price of the NG upgrade will not exceed 25 percent (or other negotiated percentage, i.e., 5 percent, 10 percent) of purchase value." Be aware that maintenance contracts may not include the costs of software enhancement, hardware additions or labor required to add NG features.
4. Many CPE manufacturers are being sold to other companies with existing CPE

brands. As a result, some future hazards might include: manufacturers discontinuing hardware support; software enhancements forcing hardware upgrade to a different platform or purchase of new equipment before obsolescence. PSAPS might consider a contract negotiation including a signature from an officer of the vendor/manufacturer and a "guarantee in writing that the product to be purchased will be supported (hardware maintenance and software enhancements) over the next 10 years (or other negotiated timeframe i.e., five years, eight years).

If vendors/manufacturers are willing to incorporate these considerations in a contract, CPE purchases should be well-protected.