

140 West Street
6th Floor
New York, NY 10007
Tel (212) 519-4716
keefe.b.clemons@verizon.com



Keefe B. Clemons
General Counsel – Northeast Region

April 19, 2016

Edward Rath III
District 6
Old Erie County Hall
92 Franklin Street
Fourth Floor
Buffalo, N.Y. 14202
Email: edward.rath@erie.gov

Re: Erie County E-911 Outage

Dear Chairman Rath:

This letter responds to your request for additional information from Verizon regarding an interruption of E-911 service at certain Public Service Answering Points (“PSAPs”)¹ serving Erie County that occurred on March 30th 2016. The facts based on the information that is currently available are as follows.

On March 30, 2016 at 3:29 EDT, a power failure at Erie County’s host PSAP location in Buffalo, NY (“Node A”) caused a complete shutdown of the E911 equipment and all of the emergency call taking positions at that location.² Node A is the main host PSAP of Erie County’s Geo-Diverse 911 system. Within minutes of the power failure (3:32 EDT), and consistent with the network design, emergency calls were automatically re-routed from Node A to Node B in Cheektowaga, NY via the Lancaster 911 tandem, after attempts to complete calls to Node A were unsuccessful.

Efforts to directly route calls to Node B on a temporary basis, and to thereby bypass Node A, began at 4:53 EDT and were completed by 5:17 EDT. By 5:46 EDT, power was fully restored to Node A, and a few minutes later, incoming calls were again being successfully delivered to that node.

¹ A PSAP, or Public Service Answering Point, is a call center, generally operated by a state or municipal agency (in this case, Erie County) which is responsible for responding to emergency 911 calls. Such agencies subscribe to services offered by Verizon and other telecommunications companies that enable their PSAPs to receive 911 calls made from within the PSAPs’ service areas.

² The power failure was caused by the overheating of a universal power supply (“UPS”) at Node A.

The total duration of the Node A outage was 2 hours and 17 minutes. During that period, 183 calls were answered by the available call takers at Node B. In addition, 16 non-test calls were initially abandoned, but five of them called back and were answered.

During the outage all communications to and from node "A" failed, and some users on node "B" reported an inability to log in and receive calls. There are two different queues used in this system. There is an ACD Agent log in and a Ring Group Agent log in. Both user groups reported trouble logging into Node "B" during the event. This log in issue impacted the number of agents that were available to handle calls delivered to Node B. Verizon worked with West Corp, the CPE equipment manufacturer, and a fix was developed for the Ring Group Agent users. The installation of this fix is underway and system testing is being scheduled. Verizon also continues to work with West Corp, the call taker equipment manufacturer, to determine whether the abrupt loss of power caused unforeseen log in issues for the ACD Agent users.

Finally, in addition to the Agent login issues, call distribution to the available resources at the remote PSAPs did not perform as expected. Four PSAP's were available to take calls from the desired ring group (999) Amherst, Hamburg, Town of Tonawanda and Cheektowaga, however only Hamburg and Town of Tonawanda were able to take calls. We continue to assess the network and CPE performance to determine a root cause for this particular observation and the potential for a design improvement.

Since the outage, Verizon and its E911 vendor, West Inc., have been and continue to work closely with Erie County representatives to understand the root cause of this outage, and to implement modifications to Erie County's PSAPs that will help minimize the impact of any future power outages on the County's E911 system, and improve access to the E911 system operators.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions about this matter.

Sincerely,



Keefe B. Clemons

cc: Marlaine Hoffman, Deputy Director Information Services, Erie County
Steven Whipple, Chief of Staff – Republican Caucus, Erie County Legislature