



PRESS RELEASE

Kari's Law Requires Direct Access to 9-1-1 by September 1st, 2017

Kilgore, TX, August 3, 2017: Owners of multi-line telephone systems (MLTS) in Texas are now required to provide direct-dial access to 9-1-1 without having to dial an additional digit such as 9 first before getting an outside line. Business service users (BSUs) of MLTS have until September 1, 2017 to comply. Senate Bill 788, also known as Kari's Law, which requires direct access to 9-1-1, was signed into law by Governor Greg Abbott on May 15, 2015. On March 1, 2016 the Commission on State Emergency Communications adopted Rule 251.16 (Direct Access to 9-1-1 Service) to implement Kari's Law.

"I signed Kari's Law to ensure that all Texans have the ability to access 9-1-1 services no matter where they find themselves during an emergency," said Governor Abbott. "This important change to Texas law is only as good as the compliance that follows. The use of multi-line telephone systems should not impede on anyone's ability to make a life-saving phone call, and I am urging all business service users employing an MLTS to ensure they are compliant. Lives depend on your cooperation."

The law represents a culmination of efforts in the aftermath of the murder of Kari Hunt in a motel room in Marshall, Texas who was attacked by her estranged husband. Kari's 9-year-old daughter tried to call 9-1-1 for help four times from the motel room phone. Unfortunately, the call never went through, because she did not know to first dial "9" for an outbound line before dialing 9-1-1. Tragically, Kari died before help could arrive.

Since Kari's death, her father Hank Hunt and his family have made it their mission to educate the public and elected officials across the country about the need to change multi-line phone systems to provide direct access to 9-1-1. Their concerns were heard by representatives of the Texas 9-1-1 authorities, elected officials in Texas, the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Texas was the third state to enact a Kari's Law. The states of Illinois, Maryland, Tennessee and New York City have passed similar legislation.

MLTS owners must do their diligence and provide direct access to 9-1-1 and comply with Kari's Law. If the existing MLTS cannot be re-programmed or replaced to meet the direct access requirement, a one-year waiver shall be granted upon timely submission of an affidavit. Business owners should contact their MLTS provider to learn if their phone system is compliant. Some new phone systems need to be reprogrammed (not replaced) and costs, if any, should be minimal. For more information on the history of Kari's Law, the requirements to comply or to request a waiver, please visit www.texas911.org. For questions, you may contact Melinda Crockom with the Commission on State Emergency Communications at 512-305-6928 or melinda.crockom@csec.texas.gov, or ETCOG's Director of Public Safety, Stephanie Heffner, at 903-218-6461 or stephanie.heffner@etcog.org.

About ETCOG

The East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) is a voluntary association of counties, cities, school districts and special districts within the fourteen-county East Texas region. ETCOG assists local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. Established in 1970, ETCOG, either directly, or through its contractors, provides programs and services for East Texas seniors, employers, and job seekers. ETCOG and its contractors also build the 9-1-1 emergency call delivery system, provide peace officer training and homeland security planning services; and deliver rural transportation services, business finance programs, and environmental grant funding for the region.