

Testimony of Stephen Meer  
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United States Senate

Legislative Hearing on Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and the Future of 9-1-1  
Services

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Good afternoon and thank you Chairman Inouye. I am Stephen Meer, Chief Technology Officer and co-founder of Intrado Incorporated. I appreciate the invitation to testify today on the topic of bringing critical lifesaving capabilities that America's citizens will continue to expect from our nation's 9-1-1 system.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Senator Stevens in his new role as Co-Chair of the E9-1-1 Caucus. It is truly an honor to have his guidance and years of experience in such a pivotal role. Finally, I want to commend Senator Nelson, Senator Snowe and their staffs for their tireless effort and countless hours of work. Their legislation, Senate Bill 428, will make a significant contribution toward maintaining and improving upon emergency services.

For over a quarter of a century, telecommunications providers and public safety organizations have turned to Intrado for their emergency communications needs. Intrado provides the core of North America's 9-1-1 call routing, data management and communications infrastructure and is a central figure in the integration of multiple technologies that feed into the 9-1-1 system.

Intrado is a unique company in that we employ many former first responders and public safety communications professionals as well as leading-edge engineering and operations experts. I, myself, have served as a public safety call-taker, a dispatcher, communications supervisor, as well as a law enforcement officer and EMS responder. This combined experience provides those in our company with an insightful and appropriate perspective

on the issues facing 9-1-1 today, as well as valuable foresight into why and how the system must evolve.

With respect to Senate Bill 428, Intrado extends its full support for the efforts behind this critical public safety legislation. It is our belief, however, that additional policy elements are needed to ensure that the integrity of the 9-1-1 infrastructure is preserved.

### **Qualified Access**

While we applaud Congress for addressing access into the 9-1-1 network, we believe that the current system for qualifying entities works well and should largely be kept in place, but improvements for expediting access, once granted, could be made. This process, which involves the states, has ensured that the 9-1-1 network cannot be disabled or sabotaged by illegitimate or poorly managed enterprises or governments. Without standards, domestic or foreign service providers lacking appropriate systems practices could inadvertently gain access to America's 9-1-1 network. The consequences of failing to secure the infrastructure would not only impact citizens seeking assistance but would hamper efforts by first responders. Therefore, we recommend that Congress affirmatively ensure that the existing process for granting access into the 9-1-1 network be fundamentally maintained, regardless of the entity type seeking such access.

### **Liability Protection**

Our second recommendation is the inclusion of liability protection for all 9-1-1 providers. Denial of the same statutory immunity is fundamentally unfair. It creates disparity that

translates to a competitive and economic disadvantage and works as a disincentive to market entry. In order to encourage the migration to an IP-based system that will be able to accommodate all new and emerging technologies, a liability protection is a "must-have" for ensuring success.

In addition to these suggestions about the legislation, we offer the following:

### **Migration to an IP-Based 9-1-1 Network**

Intrado's vision for the next generation system is guided by our long held conviction that any communications delivery system or device accessing 9-1-1 must be able to take advantage of the most advanced emergency assistance available. We must continue to ensure the nation's emergency communications infrastructure has enhanced change-capacity and is resilient, secure, robust and always available. As such, future policy must require that the next generation 9-1-1 network be able to integrate new 9-1-1 call services, data and users into a single, redundant and interoperable system. The careful planning and execution needed to migrate from the current infrastructure to the next generation infrastructure can not be underestimated. We must not allow ourselves to be seduced by those who may claim they have the magic solution to this complex environment.

### **Automatic Location Service Requirements**

Our final point addresses the immediate challenge of automatically identifying the precise location of a person requesting emergency services.

With the advent of new and converged technologies comes the possibility for real degradation in E9-1-1 services. For many years, the traditional, wireline E9-1-1 system has provided emergency responders with the exact street address of the caller, enabling first responders to precisely locate the caller. With new technologies, the challenge becomes providing first responders with a meaningful address, including altitude, to allow them to know which door to kick in. Such fundamental public safety requirements are a part of a comprehensive 9-1-1 call continuum and must be included in future policy in order to preserve this level of service. Intrado believes the solution lies in establishing policy that is technology and device neutral to ensure that it does not need to be substantially modified every time a new technology or device is introduced.

In conclusion, IP brings substantial benefits over current networks, but history tells us it won't be the end-all, as new technologies will eventually supplant it. We can't continue, as we have historically, to deal with new technologies as they are introduced and thrust upon us. If we deal only with VoIP, we'll be back here in two years addressing the same issues. It is vital for policymakers to quickly and clearly define compliance requirements of the desired end-state that includes specific timelines. Anything short of that kind of clarity risks having a shortage of willing participants and a likelihood of ill-placed and ill-timed investment in the 9-1-1 infrastructure.

Please know that we are more than willing to act as a resource as you explore policies that would meet your goals and objectives. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify here today. I would be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.