

**ARKANSAS BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE ON LOCAL 911 SYSTEMS  
(ACT 1171 OF 2013)  
JOINT COMMITTEE ON ADVANCED COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
MEETING JOINTLY**

**May 8, 2014  
MINUTES**

The Arkansas Blue Ribbon Committee on Local 911 Systems and the Joint Committee on Advanced Communications and Information Technology met jointly on Thursday, May 8, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Members of the Arkansas Blue Ribbon Committee on Local 911 Systems present were Senator Linda Chesterfield, Senate Chair, and Representative Harold Copenhaver, House Vice Chair. Also present were Senator Bill Sample, Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Advanced Communications and Information Technology, and Senator Bobby Pierce. Also attending was Representative Bruce Cozart.

Non-Legislative Committee members present were Yell County Judge Mark Thone, Cabot Mayor Bill Cypert, Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM) Director David Maxwell, Consumer members Todd Woerpel, and Joel Hoggard.

**Call to Order**

Senator Chesterfield called the meeting order.

**Opening Comments - Senator Linda Chesterfield and Senator Bill Sample**

Senator Chesterfield discussed the goal of the committee, which is to focus on working together to study and determine ways to coordinate comprehensive 911 emergency services throughout the state. Senator Sample welcomed legislators and city leaders who were attending the meeting. Representative Copenhaver stressed the importance of implementing 911 services in underserved areas within the state.

**Discussion of the Emergency Response Process Implemented by the Towns of Mayflower and Vilonia during the April 27, 2014 Tornado**

Mayflower Mayor Randy Holland and Vilonia Mayor James Firestone were unable to attend. Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM) Director, David Maxwell was recognized for comments. Mr. Maxwell described work currently underway between ADEM and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in assessing infrastructure damage from the recent storms. Legislators discussed the need for additional safe rooms and shelters in schools throughout the state.

Maumelle Mayor Mike Watson was recognized for comments. Mayor Watson discussed Maumelle's siren warning system and explained that tornado warning sirens are designed to be heard outside. He explained that the cities of Maumelle and Cabot have vendor-based warning systems known as "Code Red", which the cities pay a fee to maintain. The system automatically sends warning alerts via phone call, text message,

and/or e-mail to citizens who sign-up on a voluntary basis. The notifications are sent when a weather warning is issued by The National Weather Service.

Hot Springs Assistant City Manager Lance Spicer was recognized for comments. Mr. Spicer said the City of Hot Springs initiated the Code Red warning system in 2008, along with a siren system in the downtown area.

Hot Springs Storm Water Manager Max Sestilli discussed warnings issued to cell phones based on a cell phone user's location. He explained that a new phone application allows a cell phone owner's existing location to be recognized for an alert for the current position of the cell phone.

City of Cabot Mayor Bill Cypert was recognized for comments. Mayor Cypert explained that the city's siren system is aging and is expensive to maintain. The City is encouraging citizens to sign-up for the Code Red system, which will eventually allow the aging siren system to be eliminated.

Yell County Judge Mark Thone was recognized for comments. Mayor Thone said the Code Red system is not currently available in his county because large portions of the county are rural and without cell phone signal accessibility. The county is working to add additional cell phone towers.

Senator Chesterfield discussed issues the committee is tasked to resolve, particularly the lack of access to broadband connectivity throughout the state. She explained that the committee will need to complete its work by the end of 2014 because a report is to be submitted to the Governor and the legislature on or before September 1, 2014.

Garland County Director of Emergency Management Bo Robertson was recognized for comments. Mr. Robertson said the county is searching for methods to alert citizens out in the county because there is a lack of comprehensive cell phone service, plus the inefficiency of sirens in rural areas.

Senator Chesterfield recognized ADEM Chief Information Officer and Communications Division Director Ken Gibson for comments. Mr. Gibson discussed the statewide notification system. ADEM uses the system to integrate with the Emergency Alert System (EAS) system and the NOAA weather system to transmit warnings. Mr. Gibson said the notification system is available to counties upon request. It has the capability of transmitting any type of message or alert, similar to the types of messages used for an Amber alert.

David Maxwell was asked to determine the number of safe rooms located in schools across the state and provide that list to the committee.

Senator Chesterfield recognized Geographic Information Officer Shelby Johnson for comments. Mr. Johnson told the legislators that Faulkner, Pulaski and White counties have good mapping data in place, which helped support the emergency responders during the recent disasters. He said this type of data also helps in the recovery process and for insurance purposes and damage assessment.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:28 a.m.