

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## ESHB 1938

---

C 54 L 91

C 329 L 91

*Synopsis As Enacted*

**Brief Description:** Creating a state-wide enhanced 911 network.

By House Committee on Energy & Utilities (originally sponsored by Representatives Fraser, Grant, May, Winsley, Roland, Riley, Miller, Phillips, O'Brien, Rasmussen, Sheldon, Basich, Ogden, Orr, Bray, Pruitt and Sprengle).

House Committee on Energy & Utilities  
House Committee on Revenue  
Senate Committee on Energy & Utilities  
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

**Background:** Enhanced 911 (E911) is an emergency communications system whereby the caller can readily access law enforcement, fire, and medical assistance. The enhanced feature is an immediate display of the caller's location, which enables response even if the caller is not able to utter a word after dialing 911. In contrast, basic 911 requires the caller to describe his or her location to the 911 operator.

The system is in place in populous areas and not in many rural areas. Current law allows county residents to fund emergency communications systems through a voter approved tax of up to 50 cents per month which is added to each resident's phone bill. This amount adequately funds E911 systems in populous counties but not in sparsely settled counties. Adequate funding of rural E911 would require taxes that have been considered prohibitive. Some subsidy by populous counties to more rural counties may be necessary to fund a statewide E911 system.

E911 is available to 76 percent of the phone lines in the state and basic 911 to 18 percent of the lines. Six percent of the lines have no 911 coverage. The area served is quite another picture. E911 covers 18 percent of the state, 911 covers 50 percent of the state, and 32 percent has no 911 coverage. This illustrates the concentration of telephone lines, chiefly in the Puget Sound area.

The 1990 Legislature directed the Utilities and Transportation Commission to study statewide implementation

of E911 and the commission found implementation feasible and achievable with a minimum of additional state bureaucracy. The commission recommended continuation of the telephone line tax as a funding source. The study estimated \$16.5 million to implement and a \$6 million per year subsidy to operate E911 statewide. The commission estimated a needed subsidy initially of 20 cents per telephone line per month to implement the system. A lower subsidy would maintain statewide operation after implementation.

**Summary:** The director of the Department of Community Development, through a State Enhanced 911 Coordinator, shall coordinate and facilitate implementation and operation of E911 statewide.

A State Enhanced 911 Coordination Office is established, headed by the Enhanced 911 Coordinator. The coordinator will coordinate and facilitate statewide implementation and operation of E911, assisted by the Enhanced 911 Advisory Committee, made up of relevant professionals. The advisory committee dissolves December 31, 2000.

Counties, singly or jointly, shall establish E911 by 1998. Counties shall provide funding up to the amount produced by a 50 cent per month telephone line tax or the amount necessary to fully fund E911 in the county, whichever is less. The county may provide its E911 funding by the excise tax on telephone lines or by other means selected by the county.

Beginning January 1, 1992, an additional excise tax is levied statewide, also on telephone lines, for statewide implementation of E911. This additional tax will fund E911 in rural areas. For the first year, the tax is set at 20 cents per month. Thereafter, the Department of Community Development will recommend the level of the tax to be set by the Utilities and Transportation Commission. The tax may not exceed 20 cents per month per line until 1998, when the tax limit is reduced to 10 cents per month. The proceeds will be deposited in an Enhanced 911 Account created in the treasury, to be administered by the Enhanced 911 Coordinator for statewide implementation of E911.

With limited exceptions, telecommunications companies and businesses with branch exchanges providing consolidated communications systems and related services are not subject to liability in conjunction with providing these services. Providing information to enable public health or public safety agencies to respond to E911 calls is not a privacy violation.

All provisions of this bill except the liability and privacy exemption provisions are referred as a referendum to the voters at the next general election in November 1991. (The provisions referred as Referendum Bill 42 have been assigned C 54 L 91; the other provisions have been assigned C 329 L 91.)

***Votes on Final Passage:***

House	51	47	
Senate	44	3	(Senate amended)
House			(House refused to concur)

Conference Committee

Senate	44	4
House	64	34

***Effective:*** July 28, 1991 (Sections 7 and 8)

Other sections contained in Referendum Bill 42, upon voter approval at next general election.