

911 – What does it cost?

What exactly does my monthly surcharge pay for? It pays for the network, the equipment necessary to receive the 911 calls, the radio equipment needed to page and to allow the responders to communicate with each other while responding to the emergency, a mapping system to show where the call is located, and for managing the address data for the county. To date, we have been able to purchase a Computer Aided Dispatch system at both Oelwein and Fayette County Dispatch Centers, replace two base radios for Fire, EMS and Law Enforcement that were no longer effective, replace the radio console at the Oelwein Dispatch, install repeaters to improve paging and radio communications for Fire and EMS in the St. Lucas, Eldorado, Clermont and Elgin areas, purchase a new Law Enforcement base radio in West Union and move the old base radio station to the Oelwein tower to improve law enforcement communications in the southern part of the county where there was sporadic coverage in the past, and upgraded part of the 911 phone system at the Fayette County Dispatch. This was accomplished with careful planning and budgeting of the 911 surcharge funds. Each of these projects has enabled us to significantly improve our 911 service, but it is a continuous balance of maintenance and upgrades to manage a reliable 911 system. Factor in the cost to maintain the equipment and it is easy to see why the surcharge implemented in 1992 is not sufficient to support the funds needed to improve the infrastructure and keep pace with technological changes. We simply cannot afford to have 911 equipment that is unreliable or does not work.