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Over 4 million Emergency Calls a Year for Help

Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network Celebrated 35 Years

The largest 9-1-1 system in Texas, serving approximately 5.6 million citizens in Harris and Fort Bend Counties including the City of Houston recently celebrated its 35th anniversary.

Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network (GHC 9-1-1), one of the largest 9-1-1 systems in the United States, continues to serve its citizens by providing the communication link between the citizens needing emergency assistance and emergency service providers—law enforcement, fire, and medical personnel. There are over 1,200 9-1-1 call takers within the GHC 9-1-1 territory answering over 4.0 million calls a year for two counties (Harris and Ft. Bend), 49 cities and over 156 law enforcement, fire and EMS response.

During May 1983, The Texas State Legislature authorized the creation of a communications district in the Harris County area for the purpose of providing emergency number service to its citizens**.** On November of that year, the voters ratified its creation by an 82.5 percent margin, the highest voter approval in the area's history. Each day an average of 11,000 calls are placed to 9-1-1 with over 80% of those calls from wireless phones.

GHC 9-1-1 celebrated the establishment of 9-1-1 service along with public safety representatives and its Board of Managers. Special recognition was given to former chairman, Tom Bass (who also served as former Harris County Commissioner) and Joe Russo, a local businessman who was instrumental in the creation of the 9-1-1 district. Also, the local area fire departments were vital in promoting the importance of the 9-1-1 system. Mr. Russo, thought it was important to have one universal phone number instead multiple phone numbers for emergency services.

GHC 9-1-1 was one of the first major metropolitan areas in the United States
to provide text to 9-1-1 service, allowing residents to contact 9-1-1
when it is not possible to make a voice call.

On January 27, 1986, 9-1-1 emergency service became available to citizens of the Harris County area, and soon after the Network began serving Fort Bend County.

"The GHC 9-1-1 Staff and its Board of Managers are dedicated to providing the most modern, technologically advanced 9-1-1 system in the nation, for the citizens that its serves, at one of the nation's lowest 9-1-1 service fees" said Lavergne Schwender, executive director.

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GHC 9-1-1 is an excellent example of an approach to efficient, reliable public safety services with an eye to call taker training, professional growth, technological development, and community involvement. For 35 years, GHC 9-1-1 has helped to lead the way in mission-critical, emergency communications technology. They have demonstrated that balancing operations and technology is the key to preparing for future technologies. This is evident with the following examples of their most recent accomplishments:

- First major metropolitan area in the United States to provide text to 9-1-1 service, allowing residents to contact 9-1-1 when it is not possible to make a voice call.
- Implementation of Next Generation 9-1-1 solutions and systems to prepare call centers to better serve our community.
- Implementation of beneficial sign up services for residents to assist during emergencies.
- A deep commitment to public education and 9-1-1 call center training at the local, state, and national levels.
- 2013—First major metropolitan area in the United States to provide Phase II wireless location with all wireless carriers.

For more information about GHC 9-1-1 and the area that it serves, please go to www.911.org or like us on Facebook and follow/or on Twitter.

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**GHC 9-1-1 Board Chairman
Russell Rau and Joe Russo**

**GHC 9-1-1 Staff and Board
of Managers**

**GHC 9-1-1 Executive
Director**

GHC 9-1-1 Operations Staff