

## **The Development and Implementation of 9-1-1 in McLennan County**

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**2025**

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I am honored to have served as a member of the McLennan County Emergency Assistance District since 2005. I represent the fire departments in the county. It has been a privilege to serve our community and continue to improve 9-1-1 for our citizens. When I was elected to this role, I was the Police and Fire Chief of the City of Lacy Lakeview. We had a dispatch center, and it was one of the PSAP's (public safety answering point) in the county. When McLennan County began talking about this new national emergency telephone number in 1986, I was a public safety officer (police and fire) for the City of Woodway. Our chief, Yost Zakhary, was very much involved with this development and implementation of 9-1-1 to McLennan County. We witnessed, firsthand, the process, and many of our officers were involved with the addressing component.

The purpose of this writing is to record, in one document, the history of the district, and how it all came about from the beginning. I want to thank current Executive Director Jesse Harrison, and our Finance and Administration Manager, Ray Guest, for their assistance with finding the archive documents. I also want to thank Yost Zakhary, now City Manager for the City of Bellmead, Steve Ostrom, and Jim Menefee, for their insight into those critical days in 1986 and 1987 when they were instrumental in this process. Yost Zakhary was the first President of the Board of Managers as a municipal representative, and Steve Ostrom (retired), who was the Fire Chief for the City of Robinson, was the county fire representative. Jim Menefee was the Volunteer Fire Chief of Lorena VFD.

For McLennan County, it all began in 1986. Citing from a document titled "9-1-1 Emergency telephone Number, General Information City of Waco November 11, 1986" we find that the City of Waco's Mayor, LaNelle McNamara, reported:

Basically, 9-1-1 is a three-digit telephone number which gives the public direct access to an emergency answering center that dispatches Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical assistance. The concept being that 9-1-1 is easy to remember, fast to dial, and it eliminates the time and necessity of searching for the correct seven-digit telephone number. At this time, over 45 million people in more than 675 cities and towns across the United States are served by 9-1-1. In Texas, Austin, San Antonio, Corpus Christi, Bryan-College Station, Harris County, and Tarrant County have 9-1-1 numbers in operation. Moreover, the following counties are now implementing 9-1-1

systems: Cameron, Lubbock, Montgomery, Potter-Randall, and Smith. Wichita and Hidalgo Counties have 9-1-1 on their November ballots.

I find this information very interesting, and I am grateful for the insight of our leaders from the City of Waco in 1986 who decided to move forward with the 9-1-1 implementation. For all the history we have found, the City of Waco spearheaded 9-1-1 for McLennan County.

From my personal knowledge, I remember Lieutenant Maggie Becker, Woodway Public Safety, coming back from a meeting and telling us that Woodway should join this initiative of 9-1-1. Chief Zakhary immediately got on board and began attending meetings with Waco and McLennan County Judge Raymond Matkin. Where exactly in this timeline this occurred, I cannot be precise, but I am certain this was in 1986.

Included with the archive information are several newspaper articles in 1986. From the Waco Citizen (a private newspaper) "City Studies 9-1-1 Emergency Number" dated December 12, 1986. Caryll F. Beer, Southwestern Bell's state 9-1-1 coordinator estimated the cost to implement 9-1-1 in the county would be \$485,000.00. At that time, it was estimated there were 86,000 telephone customers (cell phones were not a part of the original 9-1-1 system yet). Funny, how now, our cell phone customers outnumber landline customers. From the newspaper at Baylor University, the Baylor Lariat "Waco City Council Investigates 9-1-1 Emergency telephone number" dated December 14, 1986. Waco Administrative Assistant Kim Gartside submitted a proposal to the city council concerning the need for 9-1-1 in the county. It included cost estimates and several options. Again, Southwestern Bell, the major telephone provider, provided a booklet titled "Questions and Answers about 9-1-1". An editorial was written in the December 7, 1986, edition of the Waco Tribune Herald titled "making digits work for Waco", supported the 9-1-1 effort. In the December 12, 1986, edition of the Waco Tribune Herald, a letter to the editor from Steven L. Little in Lorena supported and encouraged the implementation of 9-1-1.

The next document we find is dated December 5, 1986, titled "9-1-1 information sheet". This document referenced a Waco City Council Meeting dated December 9, 1986, where Kim Gartside, Waco Administrative Assistance and Caryll F. Beer, Southwest Bell state 9-1-1 coordinator, presented information on proposed 9-1-1 system. Two VHS video tapes were presented to the council regarding 9-1-1. I have searched for these video tapes but have not located them yet.

The Board of Managers was formed at the 9-1-1 District Board of Manager meeting on April 2, 1987. City of Waco Administrative Assistant Kim Gartside introduced the board members: LaNelle McNamara (Waco), Raymond Matkin (County), Jim Lewis (County), Steve Ostrom (County Fire Departments), Yousry Zakhary (Woodway), and Jerry Baker (Southwestern Bell). Mr. Zakhary was appointed as the presiding officer and Raymond

Matkin as the secretary. The Texas Health and Safety Code establishes the composition of the district: HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE; TITLE 9. SAFETY; SUBTITLE B. EMERGENCIES; CHAPTER 772. LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS.

Sec. 772.306. BOARD OF MANAGERS. (a) A district is governed by a board of managers.

(b) If the most populous municipality in the district has a population of more than 140,000, the board consists of:

- (1) one member for each county in the district appointed by the commissioner's court of each county;
- (2) two members appointed by the governing body of the most populous municipality in the district;
- (3) one member appointed by the governing body of the second most populous municipality in the district;
- (4) one member appointed as provided by this section to represent the other municipalities located in whole or part in the district; and
- (5) one member appointed by the principal service supplier (*AT&T*).

**(CURRENT BOARD COMPOSITION)**

(c) If Subsection (b) does not apply to a district, the board consists of:

- (1) the following members representing the county or counties in the district:
  - (A) if the district contains only one county, two members appointed by the commissioner's court of the county;
  - (B) if the district originally contained only one county but contains more than one county when the appointment is made, two members appointed by the commissioner's court of the county in which the district was originally located, and one member appointed by the commissioner's court of each other county in the district; or
  - (C) if the district originally contained more than one county and the district contains more than one county when the appointment is made, one member appointed by the commissioner's court of each county in the district;
- (2) two members appointed jointly by the majority vote of the municipalities voting on the appointment and located in whole or in part in the district;

(3) one member appointed jointly by the volunteer fire departments operating wholly or partly in the district, with the appointment process coordinated by the county fire marshal or marshals of the county or counties in the district; and

(4) one member appointed by the principal service supplier.

### **McLennan County 9-1-1 Emergency Assistance District**

#### **Board Members Past and Present**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Service Years</b>	<b>Number of Years Served</b>
<b>Yousry Zakhary *</b>	Municipalities	1987 - 2018	31
<b>LaNelle McNamara *</b>	Municipalities	1987 - 2004	17
<b>Steve Ostrom *</b>	MCFPA	1987 - 1999	12
<b>Raymond Matkin *</b>	McLennan County	1987 - 1997	10
<b>Jim Lewis *</b>	McLennan County	1987 - 1988	1
<b>Jerry Baker *</b>	AT&T / Southwestern Bell	1987 - 1988	11
* Denotes original 6 Board Members.			
<b>Bob Davis</b>	AT&T / Southwestern Bell	1988 - 1992	4
<b>Ralph White</b>	McLennan County	1988 - 1993	5
<b>Erin Davis</b>	AT&T / Southwestern Bell	1992 - 1999	7
<b>Dwayne Moore</b>	McLennan County	1993 - 2005	12
<b>Steve Hendrick</b>	McLennan County	1997 - 2019	22

<b>Reese Knight</b>	MCFPA	1999 - 2005	6
<b>Mike Kirksey</b>	AT&T / Southwestern Bell	1999 - 2000	1
<b>Michael Mellina</b>	AT&T / Southwestern Bell	2000 - 2011	11
<b>Dr. John Knue</b>	Municipalities	2004 - 2020	16
<b>Robert Wasson</b>	McLennan County	2005 - 2015	10
<b>Dennis Stapleton</b>	MCFPA	2005 - ACTIVE	20
<b>Elio Smythe</b>	AT&T / Southwestern Bell	2011 - 2018	7
<b>Frank Patterson</b>	McLennan County	2015 - ACTIVE	10
<b>Bret Crook</b>	Municipalities	2018 - 2023	5
<b>Ben Perry</b>	McLennan County	2019 - 2025	6
<b>Debbie Keel</b>	AT&T / Southwestern Bell	2019 - 2021	3
<b>Jim Devlin</b>	Municipalities	2020 - ACTIVE	5
<b>Miles Henderson</b>	AT&T / Southwestern Bell	2022 - ACTIVE	3
<b>Ryan Holt</b>	Municipalities	2023 - ACTIVE	2
<b>D.L. Wilson</b>	McLennan County	2025 - ACTIVE	

**Executive Directors:****1. Tony Ball**

Hired May 13, 1988

Deceased January 28, 1996 (still active as Director at time of passing).

**2. Carl Dorton**

Hired July 12, 1996

Retired – January 1, 2015

**3. Jesse Harrison**

Hired February 11, 2015

**Buildings of MCEAD:****1. 6701 Sanger Avenue, Waco Texas 76710**

Sanger Plaza. Corner of Sanger Ave. and Melrose Dr. The district had a small office in the building. Rented. During Tony Ball's administration, and later, Carl Dorton's administration.

**2. 4525 Lake Shore Dr, Waco Texas 76710**

The Woods Office Park. The district moved into this facility in 2001. Owned. During Carl Dorton's administration.

**3. 107 Burnett Court, Woodway Texas 76712.**

The district designed and built this facility in 2013 and moved in 2014. Owned. During Carl Dorton's administration.

**4. 109 Burnett Court, Woodway Texas 76712.**

In 2019, the district constructed a back-up PSAP building that is an EF-5 tornado rated building. Owned. During Jesse Harrison's administration.

## **Significant Milestones:**

- April 1987 - Board of Managers established
- December 16, 1989 – the first 9-1-1 call answered in McLennan County at the Waco PD communication center.
- 1996 - first cellular 9-1-1 phone call received by McLennan County
- November 2, 2000 - the first wireless 9-1-1 call that displayed the location of the cell tower and call back number of people dialing 9-1-1 was answered at the Waco PSAP from a Nextel Partners cell phone.
- July 29, 2003 - the first wireless 9-1-1 call that displayed the Latitude/Longitude coordinates of the caller's physical location so it can be mapped was answered at Lacy Lakeview PSAP from a T-Mobile cell phone.
- January 7, 2004 - the first wireless Phase II 9-1-1 call mapped accurately to within 10 meters of caller's location received at Waco PSAP from a Nextel Partners cell phone.
- 2005 - received first Voice Over Internet (VoIP) 9-1-1 call.
- April 1, 2008 - the first 9-1-1 call answered at a "satellite" PSAP when Robinson Police Department answered a 9-1-1 call that was processed on customer premise equipment (CPE) located at the Waco Police Department PSAP. Networking the PSAPs together is the first step in the implementation of Next Generation 9-1-1 call processing.
- 2009 – added the District's first fully redundant back-up PSAP (located at McLennan County Sheriff's Office).
- 2012 – purchased land for construction of new multi-purpose facility (construction completed in late 2013; took occupancy in early 2014).
- 2013 – purchase and installation of CPE Equipment, software, and on-site services in conjunction with Waco PD's move to new facility.
- January 1, 2015 – Executive Director Carl Dorton retired.
- February 11, 2015 – Jesse Harrison hired as Executive Director.
- 2016 - Migrated from telephone company 9-1-1 database to a third-party database provider which allowed District access and maintenance of 9-1-1 database records.
- 2017 - Deployed a wireless VPN network to serve as a back-up to the existing PSAP network.
- 2018 – Implemented Text to 9-1-1 which allowed for texts from wireless phones to be sent directly to 9-1-1.
- 2019 - Completed the construction of a hardened back-up PSAP that can withstand an EF-5 rated tornado. The facility can be used as a back-up for all other PSAPs in the county and for training 9-1-1 call-takers.
- 2019 - Deployed a new area network connecting our two main PSAP sites with remote PSAP sites. This helped improve call delivery and eliminated single points of failure from the selective router to the PSAPs.

- 2020 - Added redundant servers for each PSAP at the back-up PSAP which provided each PSAP the ability to login using their home PSAP login credentials.
- 2023 - Through a grant from McLennan County, radios were installed at eight workstations at the back-up PSAP. Prior to the new radios, each PSAP had to bring portable/handheld radios.
- 2024 - Migrated from legacy selective routing of 9-1-1 calls to a NextGen core routing network. This network is more redundant than the previous network and provides improved accuracy for routing of wireless 9-1-1 calls.

## History of 9-1-1

- 1937 Great Britain designated 9-9-9 as its nation-wide emergency reporting number. Several European countries followed suit.
- 1967 The United States President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice recommended the establishment of a single emergency telephone number for the U.S.
- 1968 American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) designated the digits "9-1-1" available for national implementation.
- 1968 The first 9-1-1 call in the USA was made on February 16, 1968, in Haleyville, Alabama. Alabama Speaker of the House Rankin Fite made the call from Haleyville City Hall to U.S. Representative Tom Bevill at the city's police station, marking the beginning of the universal emergency number.
- 1973 The White House's Office of Telecommunication Policy issued a national policy statement that recognized the benefits of a 9-1-1 number and encouraged its nation-wide adoption.
- 1974 Passage of the Emergency Medical Service Act further focused national attention on 9-1-1.

- 1976      The Office of Telecommunication Policy was reorganized as the National Telecommunications Information Administration and placed under the authority of the Department of Commerce.
- 1981      Due to federal budget cutbacks, the last national 9-1-1 conference was held in St. Louis, Missouri. Subsequently, the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) was formed as a nonprofit agency to assist in 9-1-1 system planning and implementation.
- 1984      The State of Texas passed the Emergency Telephone Number Act (Article 1432e, Corporations Code). This legislation evolved from Harris County creating a bill about 9-1-1 for a county over 2 million population, then Tarrant County for over 840,000 population, and finally, Potter-Randall Counties for over 75,000 population. Hence, the Act is applicable only to counties of 75,000 or more population. Austin, San Antonio, and Corpus Christi established their 9-1-1 systems prior to the legislation's passage. According to 1985 figures, McLennan County has an estimated population of 184,949.
- 1989      The 71st Texas Legislature significantly advanced the administration of emergency communications by codifying the enabling statutes for state and local administration of 9-1-1 service into the Texas Health and Safety Code, specifically Chapters 771 and 772. This legislation consolidated existing laws and established key provisions for 9-1-1 operations.

## **Municipality Composition of McLennan County in 1986**

1. City of Bellmead
2. City of Beverly Hills
3. City of Bruceville-Eddy
4. City of Crawford
5. City of Gholson
6. City of Golinda
7. City of Hallsburg
8. City of Hewitt
9. City of Lacy Lakeview
10. City of Leroy
11. City of Lorena
12. City of Mart
13. City of McGregor
14. City of Moody
15. City of Northcrest (merged with Lacy Lakeview in 1998)
16. City of Riesel
17. City of Robinson
18. City of Ross
19. City of Valley Mills
20. City of West
21. City of Waco
22. City of Woodway

## **McLennan County Fire Departments in 1986**

1. Axtell/Elk VFD
2. Bellmead FD
3. Beverly Hills VFD
4. Bruceville-Eddy VFD
5. Chalk Bluff VFD
6. China Spring VFD
7. Crawford VFD
8. Downsville VFD
9. Elm Mott VFD
10. Golinda VFD (Falls Co., but some of city is inside McLennan County)
11. Gholson VFD
12. Hallsburg VFD
13. Hewitt VFD
14. Lacy Lakeview VFD
15. Leroy/Gerald/Tours VFD
16. Lorena VFD
17. Mart VFD
18. McGregor VFD
19. Moody VFD
20. Northcrest VFD
21. Riesel VFD
22. Robinson VFD
23. Ross VFD
24. Speegleville VFD
25. Waco FD
26. West VFD
27. Woodway Public Safety

## **Emergency Medical Service (EMS) in McLennan County 1986**

- Daniel Emergency Medical Service had a contract with: Bellmead, Woodway, Hewitt, Beverly Hills, Robinson, Lacy-Lakeview, Northcrest, and Waco.
- Bruceville Volunteer EMS
- Mart EMS
- McGregor Volunteer EMS
- West Volunteer EMS

## **Areas of Responsibility for Emergency Calls**

The 22 municipalities, 27 fire departments, and the EMS providers worked together to determine the areas of responsibility. This was accomplished by placing a map down on a table and hand drawing the boundaries.

The fire departments were exploring forming an ESD (Emergency Services District). Some (Lorena and Robinson) were thinking if they had a larger non-incorporated area of responsibility, their ESD funds would be larger; however, the ESD project did not proceed.

Many of the fire districts were developed following the ISD (independent school districts') boundaries. For areas not initially covered, the fire departments would mutually agree to the new boundaries. For example, Golinda VFD is in Falls County. A small area of the City of Golinda is in McLennan County. Valley Mills VFD, which is in Bosque County, accepted a very large area of non-incorporated land in northwest McLennan County. McGregor VFD accepted the largest area with over 75 square miles.

Based on the first responders' input, the District developed a Master Street Address Guide which was used to route a 9-1-1 to the correct PSAP and display the designated first responders for the physical address of the call.

## **PSAPs (Public Service Answering Points) in 1986**

1. McLennan County Sheriff's office (all other county's VFDs, also)
2. City of Waco Police Department (Waco Fire Dept., also)
3. City of Beverly Hills Police Department (Beverly Hills VFD, also)
4. City of Hewitt Police Department (Hewitt VFD, also)
5. City of Robinson Police Department (Robinson VFD, also)
6. City of Woodway Public Safety Department

Added circa 1998:

1. City of Bellmead Police Department (Bellmead VFD also)
2. City of Lacy Lakeview Police Department (Northcrest PD and VFD, also)

## **PSAPs (Public Service Answering Points) in 2025**

1. City of Waco Police Department (Waco PD, FD, Sheriff's Office, 13 county fire departments)
2. City of Bellmead (PD, FD)
3. City of Hewitt (PD, FD)
4. City of Lacy Lakeview (PD, VFD)
5. City of McGregor (PD, VFD and Moody PD, VFD, Crawford PD and VFD)
6. City of Robinson (PD, VFD)
7. City of Woodway (PD, FD, Lorena PD and VFD, Beverly Hills PD and VFD)
8. AMR ambulance (not funded by MCEAD)