

North - East Regional Public Safety Communications Center Initiative: September 2005 Update

For Immediate Communication with Dispatch Center Staff and
Interested Police, Fire and EMS Employees

What is the North-East Regional Public Safety Communications Center Initiative?

The initiative is a collaborative effort between 8 cities and 5 fire districts/agencies to explore the feasibility of creating a new joint public agency to oversee and operate a regionalized dispatch center to serve police, fire and emergency service providers.

The Initiative was launched in 2004 by 5 cities (Kirkland, Mercer Island, Bellevue, Medina, Clyde Hill) and the Woodinville Fire and Life Safety District. An initial feasibility study completed in June 2004 found considerable common ground between those jurisdictions regarding the benefits and challenges of pursuing a regionalized dispatch agency.

A second phase of work is now underway on the Initiative. By the end of 2005, the goal is to have an agreed upon governance model and business plan.

There are now thirteen (13) jurisdictions participating in the project:

City of Bellevue	City of Redmond Fire
City of Clyde Hill	Woodinville Fire and Life Safety District
City of Kirkland	Shoreline Fire District
City of Medina	Northshore Fire District
City of Mercer Island	Eastside Fire and Rescue
City of Bothell	Fall City Fire District 27
City of Issaquah	

In addition, the Washington State Patrol is considering participating in some way, and the King County Sheriff's Department is actively monitoring the Initiative. Additional jurisdictions are welcome to participate.

See below for more **background information** on the Initiative.

What has happened on the Initiative in the last month?

The Steering Committee (consisting of representatives from all participating jurisdictions) has approved a Statement of Operating Values and Principles—attached—that will guide its decisions. This document (the “SOVP”) is a vision statement of sorts, describing how the participants would want to do business together and how they would want to treat their employees. You may note that the Initiative now has a new working name—“North East Regional” (etc.), rather than “Eastside Regional.” This change

reflects the geographic span of the participants—all of North King County and East King County fire agencies, and many of its included cities. It is still simply a working name, not a final decision. Similarly, the SOVP may be amended as the Initiative proceeds and more people – particularly dispatch center employees – provide feedback.

At the beginning of September, the management team from ValleyCom gave a presentation to participants regarding how that regionalized center operates.

Also in September, the consultant team met with the dispatch staff of the Kirkland communications center to get their feedback on the Initiative. The meeting was conducted without any managerial staff, and the feedback will be reported without attribution to the Steering Committee in October. A meeting was held with a few of the Bellevue communications center dispatch staff. In early October more members of the Bellevue communications team will be given another opportunity to meet with the consultants. An online survey is offered to supplement these meetings, understanding that many dispatchers may be unable to attend.

The four subcommittees of the Steering Committee (governance and finance; law enforcement; fire/EMS; and technology/facilities/operations) have been meeting regularly since August to begin working through the details of issues such as: What is the precise scope of services that a regionalized agency should provide? How should it be governed? How should the user fees be structured? The subcommittees reported their status at the September Steering Committee.

A tour of the ValleyCom facility occurred on Friday, September 30.

What is Happening Next?

The Steering Committee is scheduled to meet again on October 21. At that meeting, the governance and finance subcommittee will present its recommendations for the outline of a governance agreement and user fee formula. Also at that meeting, the fire/EMS and law enforcement subcommittees will report out with their recommendations for the detailed scope of services that the agency should provide. Finally, there will be a presentation of the costs of recently-constructed regionalized dispatch facilities.

For further information, see the project website at <http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/depart/cmo/eastsidedispatch.htm> .

Additional Background Information:

Why are we exploring the option of a regional dispatch center?

The benefits of regionalized dispatch, depending on how it is structured, could include:

- Increased efficiencies and economies scale
- Reduced costs overall
- Improved funding opportunities

- Higher levels of service
 - Greater “voice and vote” for those agencies receiving dispatch
- service in operating, financial and governance decisions

What would the new agency look like and when would it be created?

If implemented, the project would involve the consolidation of some of the public safety dispatch operations now operating in North East King County. Whether the project proceeds to implementation, who would be involved, how it would happen, when it would happen, and where it would happen are all issues that are not yet decided. All these issues are being examined in this current phase II work, which will be completed in 2005. If the project does proceed to implementation, the consolidation of dispatch agencies is not anticipated to begin before 2008 at the earliest.

The contact person for **(insert jurisdiction name)** is **(Name) (phone number)**.

Additional regular communications will be forthcoming, approximately monthly, to keep you informed about the progress of the study effort.