

Pueblo, Colo., Closes in on Text-to-911 Capabilities

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(TNS) — The city of Pueblo, Colo., is one step closer to launching technology that will allow residents to send and receive text messages from emergency dispatchers, as well as send pictures and videos, after city council approved spending close to \$10,000 on a virtual private network for the 911 communications center.

A VPN connection is needed to send and receive 911 text messages through a new enhanced 911 telephone system, Laura Wittrup, the dispatch manager for the city, told council at its meeting Tuesday night. The city plans to do a test run of the text-to-911 service and hopes to launch it for public use beginning this fall, according to Wittrup.

There are a couple of technical things that still need to be taken care of before a test run can begin.

When the system is live, citizens will be able to send and receive text messages from dispatchers, as well as submit pictures and videos.

For instance, someone at a crash scene would be able to send a picture of what they're seeing, or someone could snap a picture of a suspect or suspicious person and send it to dispatch so law enforcement would be able to more easily recognize that individual.

In January, council gave the go-ahead to replace the city's 911 system with an updated model that will allow for the text-to-911 component.

Council unanimously approved an ordinance to spend \$434,000 for the replacement, maintenance and support of the city's emergency enhanced 911 telephone system.

The current system, installed in April 2010, was becoming costlier to maintain and is not capable of taking text messages to 911.

The city purchased the new 911 system from Solacom Technologies Inc.

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