

**Washington County  
Measure No. 34-243**

**Washington County Emergency Communications System  
Bond Measure**

The current 911 emergency communications system for Washington County was built in the early 1990s as a result of a multi-agency effort to assist the public in quickly receiving aid from law enforcement, fire and rescue, and emergency ambulance providers countywide.

**Who uses the emergency communications system?**

When a call for help is made to 911, the communications system allows dispatchers to get all necessary responders to the caller's location as quickly as possible. The system also provides a vital link among these first responders as they coordinate, request backup or get aid to victims. The system is used by every city police department, the County Sheriff's Office, all fire and rescue responders and all emergency medical and ambulance service providers countywide. The system is run by the Washington County Consolidated Communications Agency (WCCCA), also known as 911 dispatch, in a County-owned facility.

**Why does the system need to be updated?**

Three key factors are prompting the need for system and facilities upgrades:

- *Changes in Emergency Communications Technology* – Equipment composing the current system is aging and reaching the end of its serviceable life. The system has worked for decades, but now manufacturers no longer make key parts because they have transitioned to newer technology, and finding quality used parts for the current system has become increasingly difficult.
- *A Growing Demand for Emergency Services* – Population and emergency call volume are anticipated to increase over the coming decades. Updated equipment and room for expanded facilities would enable the 911 dispatch center to remain effective. By using bond funding to locate 911 emergency communications dispatchers with other County facilities, the County could more efficiently address overall space requirements.
- *A Need to Improve Reliability during Major Disasters* – The emergency communications system is designed, built and maintained to a much higher standard than consumer telecommunications. The system must continue to work reliably even when a storm, earthquake or other major emergency causes landline or cell phone networks to overload or fail. Updating equipment and strengthening facilities would improve the reliability of the system during severe weather, major earthquakes and other hazards.

**How much would the system transition and facilities improvements cost using bond funding?**

The proposal would raise an estimated \$77 million for County emergency communication and response facilities, including the replacement of analog radios currently used by first responders countywide. These funds would be generated through the County's issuance of general obligation bonds that are expected to be paid over less than 21 years.

**How much would this measure cost property taxpayers?**

The projected levy rate is not expected to exceed 8¢ per \$1,000 of assessed value. The actual rate may vary depending on changes in bond interest rates and assessed values. This rate would be levied over less than 21 years. A typical homeowner would pay about \$20 in 2016. This assumes an average assessed value (not market value) of \$255,408.

**More information?**

Call Washington County at 503-846-8685 or visit the emergency communications system bond measure website at: <http://wcemergencycommunications.blogspot.com>