

**U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Communications, Technology, and the Internet Subcommittee Hearing**

on

“Locating 911 Callers in a Wireless World”

**Russell Senate Office Building, Room 253
Washington, District of Columbia**

January 16, 2014

**Oral Testimony
from**

**Claude L. Stout
Executive Director**

Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc. (TDI)

Thank you for the opportunity to give this testimony. My testimony today will focus on the exciting possibilities that can come from improving our access to 9-1-1 services, more specifically, through new and emerging location identifying technologies. We highly applaud the FCC, APCO, NENA, CTIA, and the four major wireless carriers – Verizon, AT&T, Sprint, and T-Mobile USA for listening to consumer demands and collaboratively implementing for new accessible solutions in emergency services such as text to 9-1-1 and Next Generation 9-1-1.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Americans no longer rely on legacy TTYs and have moved on with everyone else to using broadband technologies for their communication needs, including access to emergency services. Today we use smart phones, tablets, videophones, captioned telephones or desktop computers. We can have direct communication with others that use the same devices we are using, for example – we use videophones to converse with each other in sign language. If we want to call someone that doesn't know how to sign, or does not use the same devices, we are able to call them indirectly by

using a Video Relay Service, Captioned Telephone Relay Services, or Internet Protocol Relay Service.

Many years ago, when deaf and hard of hearing people had to make an emergency call on the TTY, we had to dial 9-1-1 on a regular phone and then put the handset on an acoustic coupler in order to transmit and receive tones between the phone and the TTY. If we lose consciousness or just simply don't have the time or the ability to continue the phone call, we would just drop the handset, and leave it off the hook. Most 9-1-1 centers will still detect the originating telephone number and the physical address linked to that number. In the absence of any further information, the dispatcher would still verify the call by sending at least a police officer to the site of the incident.

There seems to be a consensus today that despite the new technologies, we simply cannot send accurate location details to the 9-1-1 center in an emergency. Current GPS and other triangulation systems available on most wireless devices (ie: pagers, phones or tablets) can only help 9-1-1 centers pinpoint our street level location to within 50 meters. However, if we live or work in multi-story buildings, the responders can only identify the building address, not the apartment or the office suite.

We have learned that there are companies working hard to improve location identifying technologies that not only can determine your location on a horizontal plane, known in the industry as the X-Y coordinates within 50 meters, but also pinpoint the vertical "Z" coordinate as well within three meters. This helps emergency responders to go directly to the floor and to the room inside the building where the 9-1-1 call originated. Callers using voice or text could just concentrate on giving a description of the emergency itself and not lose time on trying to describe the location. This would be a huge plus for anyone not familiar with their surroundings such as children, senior citizens, people with other disabilities, or people just travelling through and are unfamiliar with the territory. In the event that the caller was physically unable to provide further information due to a medical/physical condition or extenuating circumstances such as during a kidnapping or an escalating domestic violence scenario, help will be forthcoming much quicker. Those that do not have any disability will benefit from this new technology as

well.

We simply want the same capabilities like anyone else to initiate and participate fully in communications with emergency services. Like our family members and friends who can hear, we do pay local property taxes and federal taxes that support our local public safety services, and also pay subscriber fees to access the telephone networks as a conduit to emergency services. As 9-1-1 centers continue to rely on funding from these sources, so should we rely on them to be fully accessible to every single one of us in the communities across America.

Thank you.