



PRESS RELEASE

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Businesses Required to Configure Phones to Provide Direct Access to 9-1-1

Businesses with a multiline phone system in the state of Texas will soon be required to provide direct access to 9-1-1 service without having to dial an additional digit or code first.

Senate Bill 788, also known as Kari's Law, was signed by Governor Greg Abbott on Friday, May 15, 2015 and signifies an important day for the 9-1-1 industry and Texas citizens: requiring direct dial 9-1-1 without the need for dialing an extra number or code to access an outside line. The new law takes effect immediately, however, businesses have until September 1, 2016 to update their phone systems, or file for a waiver as required by the new law.

This law is the result of an incident in late 2013 in Marshall, Texas when a nine-year old girl tried to call 9-1-1 from a hotel room because her mother, Kari Hunt, was being attacked by her estranged husband. Tragically, the child was unable to reach the 9-1-1 call center because she did not know to dial '9' first to get an outside line, and her mother died. Since his daughter's death, Hank Hunt and his family have made it their mission to educate the public and elected officials across the country about the need to change phone systems at hotels and other businesses.

Many 9-1-1 entities across the state of Texas and the Texas Legislature played an active part to see this law become a reality, so that something like the tragedy in Marshall, Texas never happens again.

"We teach children to dial 9-1-1 in an emergency; that's easy. We don't teach them that, depending on their location, they may have to dial a "9" to get an outside line," said Beth English.

Realizing that this situation could have happened anywhere, many people took interest in the mission and joined to work closely with stakeholders to craft legislation and to educate Texas legislators about this tragedy, and to urge passage of the bill.

There are now four governmental bodies that require direct dial 9-1-1. The very first time Kari's Law was enacted was in Suffolk Co., New York. Texas is now the third state to pass Kari's Law. The states of Illinois and Maryland have also passed legislation to enact Kari's Law.

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In many cases, this change to phone systems can be done by reprogramming the phone system. Locally, we encourage motel and hotel owners to ensure that their phone systems can directly access 9-1-1 before the September 1, 2016 deadline. The 9-1-1 entities across the state of Texas will be monitoring the implementation of Kari's law.

For more information on Kari's Law go to: <https://www.facebook.com/changeitforkari>.

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