



## 9-1-1 CALLS FROM MULTI-LINE TELEPHONE SYSTEMS

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### MULTI-LINE TELEPHONE SYSTEMS

A multi-line telephone system, such as a private branch exchange (PBX), typically used in business environments, allows companies and organizations to have many phones in one location or many phones on one phone switch serving more than one geographic location. The system is characterized by a central switch and a number of extensions and usually requires users to dial an extra digit (such as "9") to reach an outside phone connection.

### ISSUE

Does state law require multi-line telephone systems to be configured to allow users to dial 9-1-1 directly? If not, has any legislation ever been proposed in Connecticut to this effect? Do other states require direct dialing?

### SUMMARY

Connecticut does not require direct 9-1-1 dialing from multi-line telephone systems (MLTS), such as those used in hotels and offices. No legislation has ever been proposed to this effect.

In May, Texas became the first state to require direct dialing of 9-1-1 from multi-line telephone systems. The law was named "[Kari's Law](#)" law in honor of the Texas woman stabbed to death in a hotel bathroom while her daughter tried unsuccessfully to dial 9-1-1, not knowing she

needed to dial "9" first to get an outside line.

Illinois and Maryland have followed Texas' suit and passed similar legislation. The Illinois bill ([SB 3313](#)) took effect on July 1, 2015. Maryland's bill ([HB 1080](#)) will take effect on October 1, 2015.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has weighed in on the issue and reports that substantial progress has been made in addressing the problem.

## **CONNECTICUT LAW**

Connecticut does not require direct dialing of 9-1-1, and no legislation has ever been proposed to require this. But, a 2006 bill ([sSB 109](#)) would have required MLTS operators to make all reasonable efforts to ensure that 9-1-1 callers were aware of the proper procedures for calling for emergency assistance, such as first dialing the number "9" to make an outside call. The Senate did not take up the bill and recommitted it to the Public Safety Committee.

## **KARI'S LAW**

A new Texas law ([SB 788](#)) requires all businesses that provide telecommunications services through a privately or publicly owned controlled telephone switch to configure the system in a way that allows users to directly access 9-1-1 service by dialing 9-1-1 without an additional code, digit, prefix, postfix, or trunk-access code.

The law is named in honor of Kari Rene Hunt who was attacked and stabbed to death inside a Texas hotel bathroom in December 2013 by her estranged husband. Her nine-year old daughter tried repeatedly to dial 9-1-1 from the room phone but could not get through because she did not know that the hotel phone system required her to dial '9' first to get an outside line to place the call.

Multi-line telephone systems, such as the system in the hotel in question, do not allow users to dial 9-1-1 directly. The system waits for a caller who dials 9-1-1 to enter additional digits. If the caller does not enter additional digits, the system returns a message to the effect that the "call cannot be completed as dialed." This is what happened in the Kari Hunt case.

On May 13, Texas governor, Gregory Abbott signed "[Kari's Law](#)" to "ensure that whenever there is an emergency, any child and any adult who dials 911 is going to be able to connect with emergency personnel."

## **FCC**

In response to the Kari Hunt incident, the FCC launched an inquiry to determine the scope of the problem and encourage hotels, motels, and other buildings that use MLTS to ensure that direct 9-1-1 calling worked. It said its inquiry showed that "virtually every MLTS system in use today can be configured or re-configured to allow direct 911 dialing. . .and that modifying existing systems costs little to no money. . . .The biggest obstacle to solving the problem was a lack of awareness. . . ." According to the FCC, progress on fixing the problem has been substantial.

Simply by raising awareness, we are now on track to have solved this problem by the end of the year at 24 major hotel chains nationwide, from Radisson to the Ritz-Carlton. That's real improvement that keeps people safer. . . .Manufacturers and vendors of MLTS have also stepped up to the plate. Today, half of surveyed vendors ship all of their MLTS products with a default setting of direct 911 dialing, and all of them recommend that their products be set up to allow for direct 911 dialing (see FCC June 30, 2015 statement here: [http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily\\_Releases/Daily\\_Business/2015/db0630/DOC-334168A1.pdf](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2015/db0630/DOC-334168A1.pdf)).

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