

Kari's Law, Ray Baum's Act, MLTS 911: What does it mean for your business?

These new 911 regulations have created some concerns and confusion in the enterprise. Is your organization prepared?

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What is Kari's Law?

Kari's Law came to be due to the tragic murder of Kari Hunt on December 1, 2013. Kari was at a local hotel with her three children for a visitation with her estranged husband when he had her trapped in the bathroom and repeatedly stabbed her. Kari's 9-year-old daughter attempted to dial 911 from the hotel phone 4 times, and the calls failed. She did not know that she was required to dial "9" in order to reach an outside line before dialing 911.

Kari's father, Hank Hunt, wanted to make sure that this kind of tragedy never happens again to anyone else. This became a nationwide movement that started out with an online petition that Hank had posted, to several states adopting Kari's Law, and eventually to the President's desk where it was signed into law on February 16, 2018, the 50th anniversary of the first 911 call made in the US.

So, what are the significant points of Kari's Law?

- **No Nine Needed.** No other digits should be required in order for someone attempting to directly dial 911 from an MLTS phone. No preceding digits or follow up digits.
- **On-site Notification.** When someone dials 911 from an MLTS site, notification of that 911 call should be made to onsite personnel that a 911 call has been dialed.
- **No Interference of a 911 Call.** If someone dials 911, the call should be routed directly to a certified public safety answering point (PSAP) and not intercepted.

On August 1, 2019, the FCC adopted a Report and Order that affects all businesses nationwide. In those official rulings, the FCC further defined the requirements for direct dialing to 911 and on-site notification. For the direct dialing requirement, it reads "... any person engaged in the business of installing, managing, or operating an MLTS may not do so unless the MLTS is configured so that a user may dial 911 directly (Federal Communications Commission. (2019))".

It needs to be made very clear that 911 calls may not be redirected to anyone other than a duly authorized PSAP as determined by state and local authorities. This has raised some interesting discussions in large campus environments. A topic for another time.

For the official notification requirement pertaining to businesses, the Report and Order reads as follows: “[...any person engaged in the business of installing, managing, or operating” MLTS for use in the United States] shall configure the system to provide a notification to a central location at the facility where the system is installed or to another person or organization regardless of location, if the system is able to be configured to provide notification without an improvement to the hardware or software of the system (Federal Communications Commission. (2019))”.

The primary purpose of this notification requirement is to make sure that when public safety-first responders arrive on site, that on-site personnel are able to provide any assistance required for access if needed. Open the gates, clear the path, open the doors, secure the elevators, provide basic first aid if required. Beyond that, the situational awareness provided on-site could be instrumental in initiating evacuation procedures, lockdown procedures, securing the scene, all of these other things can be taking place simultaneously while public safety is on the way.

Kari’s Law Effective Date

The Report and Order further clarified that “the effective date provision states that Kari’s Law “shall apply with respect to a multi-line telephone system that is manufactured, imported, offered for first sale or lease, first sold or leased, or installed after” February 16, 2020. ((Federal Communications Commission. (2019))).

What that means for the customer is that after February 16, 2020, any organization that installs a new MLTS system or modifies their communications systems in any way are also obligated to ensure that their communications systems do not prevent or hinder a person from dialing 911 directly. Also, when a user dials 911 from your organizations communications system, that someone in your organization is also notified so that they can provide any assistance required to get into the facility, etc. These notifications can be in the form of a PC based alert on the desktop, a SMS text message, email. Information on the alerts should include the extension number that dialed 911, location details and call back number.

So, to clarify, all **NEW** MLTS implementations after February 16, 2020 must comply with Kari’s Law. However, the law does NOT require organizations to ensure compliance on existing legacy systems. It is still highly recommended that customers do whatever they can to come into compliance regardless. Failure to be in compliance can raise some substantial risks for your organization and you may wish to seek legal counsel to determine a proper path forward for your organization.

What is Ray Baum’s Act Section 506?

Ray Baum’s Act was named after the late Oregon State representative Ray Baum who worked with the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) on telecommunications issues while in office. This new regulation is officially titled “Repack Airwaves Yielding Better Access for Users of Modern Services Act of 2018”. Ray Baum’s Act.

This act amends the Communications Act of 1934 to reauthorize appropriations for the FCC. As part of this reauthorization, section 506 of the law and subsequent FCC rulemaking require that phone systems transmit 911 calls to the appropriate PSAP with “dispatchable location” details.

In the FCC's proceedings, as defined in the law, "dispatchable location" is defined as "the street address of the calling party, and additional information such as room number, floor number, or similar information necessary to adequately identify the location of the calling party ((Federal Communications Commission. (2019)))". In some office environments, this could include building, floor number, wing, office, cubicle or other location information allowing first responders and in-building security personnel to reasonably determine the location of the person calling 911.

Ray Baum's Act Effective Dates

The rulings for compliance with Ray Baum's Act Section 506 are as follows:

Fixed MLTS Devices

- **Rule:** "We therefore conclude that providing dispatchable location for 911 calls from fixed MLTS devices used on-premises is readily achievable. We also conclude that dispatchable location from fixed MLTS devices should be provided automatically and that the street address associated with the fixed end-point should be validated ((Federal Communications Commission. (2019)))".

Compliance Date: January 6, 2021. "We conclude that a one-year timeframe is more reasonable to ensure timely implementation while affording affected parties reasonable time to take the necessary steps to come into compliance ((Federal Communications Commission. (2019)))".

Non-Fixed MLTS Devices

- **Rule:** "MLTS providers must convey automated dispatchable location for such devices when technically feasible but may rely on the MLTS end user to provide or confirm dispatchable location information manually, e.g., by responding to a system prompt ((Federal Communications Commission. (2019)))".

Compliance Date: January 6, 2022. "These requirements will take effect two years from the effective date of rules adopted in this order ((Federal Communications Commission. (2019)))".

Off-Premise 911 Devices

- **Rule:** "For off-premises 911 calls, the MLTS operator or manager must provide (1) dispatchable location, if technically feasible, or, otherwise, either (2) manually-updated dispatchable location, or (3) enhanced location information, which may be coordinate-based, consisting of the best available location that can be obtained from any available technology or combination of technologies at reasonable cost ((Federal Communications Commission. (2019)))".

Compliance Date: January 6, 2022. "This requirement will take effect two years from the effective date of rules adopted by this order ((Federal Communications Commission. (2019)))".

The Impact on the Enterprise

Both Ray Baum's Act and Kari's Law instill new federal regulations that in some states may have already existed, and enterprises in those areas are likely to be compliant already. Having these regulations federalized in my opinion provides more clarity for large enterprise clients with facilities all over the country on what their legal responsibilities are. And helps provide for consistency on a national level.

In our current environment, enterprises are seeing a mixed bag of telephony environments, and in a lot of cases, a significant shift to softphones and wireless and remote work-at-home employees. These things can make tracking location increasingly more difficult. As Next Generation 911 (NG911) becomes more prevalent and solutions are more widely available, this location tracking becomes more easily able to achieve.

For the enterprise, becoming compliant with these new regulations can have an impact on a businesses bottom line, or have an affect on other operating expenses. Lack of understanding or education on how 911 works and what resources are available to the enterprise has allowed some organizations to fall prey to the scare tactics used by some companies to force customers in to investing way more than is required to address the current issue, and not preparing the customers properly for NG911.

Failure to be in compliance does introduce some risks at a minimum for regulatory violations. At the maximum, not being in compliance opens up your organization and those employees, customers, visitors, etc., to the risk that individuals may not be able to reach emergency services in the event those potentially life-saving services are required.

To download and read the FCC Report and Order on Ray Baum's Act and Kari's Law, click here.

<https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-19-76A1.pdf>.

Tim Kenyon, ENP (Emergency Number Professional) has been involved in public safety software development and consultancy for over 25 years. Representing industry leaders in 911 and NG911 product development. Tim is also the current Southeast Delegate of the NENA National Institute Board (NIB). Several products that Tim has been involved in over the years are still very actively in use today.