



## 911 Surcharge - Frequently Asked Questions "FAQs"

We are determined to provide you with solid, substantial information on the request to increase the 911 Surcharge so that you can make an informed decision in August. Here is a Frequently Asked Question list that answers the majority of questions we are asked.

However, if you have questions that are not addressed here, please let us know and we will be happy to address them. Please, feel free to contact Mackinac County 911 Coordinator, Bryce Tracy by email [e911@mackinacounty.net](mailto:e911@mackinacounty.net) or by phone (906) 643-3391 for any further questions or clarifications. Thank you~

### **Mackinac County 911 Surcharge Funding FAQ** **Election Date: Primary Election - August 3, 2021**

#### **How is 911 in Mackinac County currently funded?**

911 is currently funded through a \$1.48 local surcharge and the Michigan 911 \$0.25 technical surcharge fund. The 911 program receives no funding from the general fund budget of Mackinac County.

#### **What is the official ballot language for the August 3<sup>rd</sup> primary election?**

##### ***MACKINAC COUNTY 911 SURCHARGE BALLOT PROPOSAL***

*Shall the County of Mackinac, Michigan, be authorized to assess a charge on all landline, wireless, and voice over internet protocol service users located in Mackinac County of up to \$2.50 per month, being a \$1.02 increase from \$1.48 to \$2.50 per month, to be used exclusively for the funding of 9-1-1 emergency telephone call answering and dispatch services within Mackinac County, including facilities, equipment, maintenance, and operating costs?*

YES ☐

NO ☐

#### **Why is 9-1-1 asking for more money and how much will it cost per year?**

Surcharge funding is the most common method of funding 911 services. It is considered the fairest, most equitable way to fund the costs associated with operating and maintaining emergency 911 services in the county. The current \$1.48 surcharge covers 60% of our current costs. We believe it is important for our 911 system, and our 911 Dispatch Center to have and maintain updated, supported equipment. We are requesting you to authorize an increase of a \$1.02, for a total surcharge of up to \$2.50. The increase in surcharge rate would allow us to purchase and maintain all of the equipment needed, and provide the best possible 911 services to you, for several years to come. This is the first time since 2002 that a 911 related issue has been on a ballot in Mackinac County.

**Why are we being asked to vote on this issue?**

As citizens of Mackinac County, you are the stakeholders of the services provided by Mackinac County 911. It is our responsibility to give you the facts and answer any questions about why we are requesting additional funding. At that point, each of you can make an informed decision on this issue. We understand that you are presented with a multitude of requests for money, and that many of them are for good cause. The funding comes out of your pocket, and we need to know if you agree that 911 Services should be funded in this manner.

**What exactly are the 911 charges listed on my telephone bill?**

Mackinac County collects the \$1.48 "local surcharge" you see on your telephone bill. That is what funds approximately 60% of our current costs. The other 40% is covered by the distribution of Michigan 911 \$0.25 technical surcharge funds which are collected from all users in Michigan, then distributed by equal formula to all counties throughout Michigan. The \$0.25 911 technical surcharge rate is also set forth by State Statute legislation.

**Once approved, how often can the rate be changed?**

The rate can only be changed once each year in the month of May by the Mackinac County Board of Commissioners. That approved rate, then goes into effect July 1st and it cannot exceed the amount approved by the County residents. Each May, the Commissioners will evaluate the required equipment, maintenance and evaluate the operational costs needed, and then base the increase or decrease on the current needs. The ballot language is specifically worded to identify an amount "up to" \$2.50 so once the capital expenditures are completed the surcharge can be backed down in the future as determined by the County Commissioners Board to a lower amount.

**Will this raise my taxes?**

No. The telephone surcharge is not part of county or city property tax dollars. This money is collected by your telephone company and can be used only for 911. The only change you would see is the amount of the current (Mackinac County 911) local surcharge on your phone bill.

**How are cellular telephones charged?**

The rates charged are based on the location of the billing address. Cell phones billed to addresses within Mackinac County will be charged the surcharge rate approved by voters. Cell phones billed outside of Mackinac County will be charged whatever rate that county has in place.

**I have a pre-paid cellular phone. How does this charge affect me?**

Michigan already requires pre-paid cellular providers to collect surcharges. That amount represents an average of all Michigan 911 surcharges, weighted by population. This amount will be sent by the telephone company to the State where it is then passed onto the counties in amounts based upon their local population. The current rate is a 5% of the point of sale price per purchase. That pre-paid cellular rate is also set by State Statute legislation.

**My business (large retail, hotel, resort, school, etc.) has a Business MLTS type phone system with multiple telephone lines. Do I have to pay the full rate for each line?**

No. The approved surcharge rate is applied to each of the first 10 lines on your account. After that, you pay one additional fee for the 11th through 20th line, another additional fee for the 21st through the 30th line, etc.

**Why do we need 911 Central Dispatch or 911 Services?**

By having 911 Services and a 911 Central Dispatch Center we cut costs and increase emergency response efficiency. Upon receiving an emergency call, 911 Central Dispatch coordinates the response to a single incident or to multiple incidents through a common interoperable communications system. Specialized equipment tells dispatchers where you are calling from, even if you are too ill to speak or are being assaulted and can only dial and or even text to "9-1-1". Other programs that support and help provide 911 enhanced services like "Smart 911" and "Mackinac County Emergency Alerting System" (EAS) are also important components of our system.

**What does the word "device" mean?**

The Michigan legislature specifically included the wording "all devices" in an attempt to allow for future inventions beyond cellular, land-line and VoIP telephones that may be created and would then be able to use 9-1-1 services. The all device wording allows for the assessing of surcharges on this new technology whenever it is developed. The ballot wording is written to conform to the new laws.

**Is every phone extension in my home considered a "device"?**

No. The surcharge is based on a per telephone number basis.