Enhanced 911 Board Announces
Second Statewide Text to 911 Trial for Emergency Help
Four-Month Trial Period for Sprint Wireless Customers
Begins Today

December 3, 2012
Montpelier, Vt. – Beginning today, Sprint Wireless customers can send a text message to 911 from locations in Vermont for emergency help as part of an initial four-month trial to test the potential of this technology.

The Williston Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) will accept 911 text messages from Sprint Wireless customers as the result of collaboration among the Vermont Enhanced 911 Board, Sprint Wireless and Intrado. Intrado, a Colorado based emergency communications technology provider, manages the next-generation 911 software that enables text messaging in the Williston PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point).

All text messages to 911 originating from a Sprint Wireless device in Vermont will be routed to the Williston PSAP.

According to David Tucker, Executive Director of the Enhanced 911 Board, this is the second such trial launched during 2012. "We learned a lot from the original text to 911 trial in Vermont, including that this new technology can save lives. The fact that a large number of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing already use Sprint as their preferred carrier means we will be better able to provide access for that population to the Vermont 911 system as a result of this trial with Sprint."

"The success of our first trial caused us to reach out to other carriers and we are very pleased that Sprint has stepped forward to participate. Ultimately, it will be important to get all of the wireless carriers that provide service in Vermont to do the same."

"As a Deaf Vermonter, I'm so proud of our state's leadership in testing text-to-911 services, which is especially important for the Vermont Deaf and hard of hearing communities", said Keri Darling, Director/Trainer for Deaf Vermonters Advocacy Services. "Texting has been an integral part of my daily life and for so many others who cannot use a regular voice phone. This is an important and big step towards providing access to emergency services for all Vermonters."

"Sprint is always looking for ways to bring new products and services to its customers that will help improve their everyday lives and is pleased to participate in this trial program with the State of Vermont," said Mike Ellis, national director-Sprint Relay Services. "The possibility of sending a text message to 911 can offer an alternative to the deaf and hard-of-hearing during emergencies and Sprint looks forward to working with Vermont in testing and evaluating the service."

"Sprint and the State of Vermont have been very collaborative to bring this life saving capability to the citizens of Vermont and Intrado is honored to be a part of this effort", said Dami Hummel, vice president and general manager of Intrado's Mobility division.

Tucker explained that there are several parameters that users should be aware of before sending an emergency text message to 911:

- Customers should use the texting option only when a voice call to 911 is not an option. Text messaging is considered a "best efforts" service and there is no guarantee a text message will be sent, delivered or received in a timely manner, if at all.

- Sending a text to 911 may take longer than a voice call because someone must enter the text, send it through the system and then the 911 call taker has to enter a text response and send it back. Time is critical in a life-threatening emergency, and customers should be aware of this difference.

- Providing location information and the nature of the emergency in the first message is imperative. The Williston PSAP will not be able to access the cell phone location or speak with the person who is sending the text, and will need to convey the texter's location to local first responders.

- Text abbreviations and slang should never be used so that the intent of the dialog can be as clear as possible.

- Customers must be in range of cell towers in Vermont. If customers are outside or near the edge of the state, the message may not reach the Williston PSAP.

- Texts to 911 have the same 160 character limit as other text messages.

- Sprint Wireless customers must have mobile phones that are capable of sending text messages.

- The texting function should only be used for emergency situations that require a response from police, fire or emergency medical services. Consumers are reminded this is part of an experimental trial to evaluate a new technology and, in the event of an actual emergency, should also consider alternate forms of contacting 911.