

**Can I call 9-1-1 from my VoIP telephone when I am traveling?**

If you have 9-1-1 activated and have the ability to travel with your VoIP telephone service then you may dial 9-1-1 regardless of where you are physically. However, the call will be routed to the 9-1-1 center for your location as designated on your customer profile. So, if you travel with your VoIP phone it would be best to use another phone to report an emergency.

**Do service outages affect my ability to call 9-1-1?**

Just as a cordless phone will not work during power outages, neither will your VoIP telephone. Also, you may not be able to make calls if your broadband service provider experiences an outage.

**Should I keep my traditional phone?**

Having traditional phone will assure 9-1-1 access and phone service during power outages.

**Can I make a test 9-1-1 call from my VoIP phone?**

Of course, but before doing so call the 9-1-1 Platoon Leader at 610-344-5100 to make certain the 9-1-1 center is not too busy with emergency calls.

Chester County  
Department of Emergency Services  
601 Westtown Road, Suite 012  
West Chester, PA 19382

**Chester County  
Department  
of  
Emergency Services**

9-1-1 Communications Center

**Voice Over Internet  
Protocol  
(VoIP)**

610-344-5000  
[www.chesco.org/des](http://www.chesco.org/des)

## **What is Voice over Internet Protocol and how does it work?**

Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) also referred to as "Broadband Phone", "Voice on the Net (VON)", "Digital Telephone," "Internet Phone," and "Net Phone" utilized the Internet as a method of voice communications much like a traditional telephone.

To take advantage of VoIP, you must have a broadband (high speed) Internet connection and special equipment that connects your phone to your broadband connection. This equipment is often a separate device provided by the VoIP service provider, into which your telephone connects. Several VoIP service providers are starting to offer telephones with this equipment built in.

VoIP, in many ways, looks and works just like a regular phone. The biggest difference is how our voice moves from one phone to another. Traditional telephone, for the most part, uses analog technology and is a single pathway over a Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN). VoIP uses digital technology and may take many paths, either over the Internet or a private network, to reach the called party. At the receiving end, the digital signals are reassembled and converted back into voice signals.

## **VoIP and 9-1-1**

When dialing 9-1-1 using a traditional telephone the call is sent over a dedicated 9-1-1 network that sends the call to the appropriate 9-1-1 center with location and callback number information attached. VoIP handles 9-1-1 calls differently. Currently, there are three ways in which VoIP service providers handle 9-1-1 calls:

- No 9-1-1 calling option is available
- Basic 9-1-1 is available. The call is sent to the appropriate 9-1-1 center, but the *location and callback number are not attached.*
- Enhanced 9-1-1 is provided. The call is routed over a dedicated 9-1-1 network, with the caller's location and callback number.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Can I dial 9-1-1 from my VoIP Phone?**

As mentioned previously, some service providers automatically provide 9-1-1 dialing service, some offer optional 9-1-1 dialing as an add-on service, and some do not support 9-1-1 dialing. It is *critical* that you are aware of exactly what 9-1-1 capability your VoIP service provides.

### **How do I know what level of 9-1-1 service I have with my VoIP phone?**

You need to research the features of your phone and carefully read the information provided by your service provider.

### **How is my call routed to the correct 9-1-1 center?**

When you sign up for VoIP service, which provides Basic or Enhanced 9-1-1 service, you will be required to complete a form and provide your physical address. When you dial 9-1-1, your call is routed from the computer network to the appropriate 9-1-1 network.

### **Do I need to notify anyone if I move?**

Yes, when you move, you must update your new location with your service provider.

### **Do I need to let my family and guests know that I have changed by phone service?**

It is very important that anyone who may need to use your phone is aware of the differences between a traditional phone and VoIP. Babysitters, children, and guests should know what service is available.