

PSAP Enrollment in the TSP Program Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How does a PSAP enroll in the TSP program?

A. First the PSAP administrator should evaluate its telecommunications services and consult with its telecommunications service provider to determine which lines to cover. The administrator then contacts the FCC for sponsorship via email at: tspinfo@fcc.gov. After receiving notification and confirmation that the FCC has received the request and will act as the sponsor, the administrator contacts the NCS on its web-site (<http://tsp.ncs.gov>) to establish an account, and fills out the TSP application via the internet. Once the NCS has approved the application, the PSAP administrator notifies the service provider and requests TSP coverage.

Q. How long does this process take?

A. The FCC and NCS have committed to complete the sponsorship and approval process, in most cases, within one week of the request. This is substantially less than the 30 days allotted under current rules. The telecommunications service provider also needs time to issue service orders and make the changes in its records to enable the priority service. The amount of time the service provider needs depends on the number of circuits and service orders.

Q. How much does it cost to participate in the TSP program?

A. It depends on the telecommunications service provider and the number of lines covered. Typically, a service provider has a one-time charge for each line selected as well as a monthly per-line charge. The one-time charge for a local line is typically about \$100. The monthly per-line charge is typically \$3. Each service provider has its own price list, and therefore, a user should consult with its service provider in order to determine the actual cost of TSP coverage.

Some TSP users reduce the cost of TSP by seeking coverage on only a portion of their lines, enough to provide essential coverage during an immediate crisis. Others seek to reduce the initial up-front cost by seeking coverage of a portion of their lines initially, followed by subsequent orders until complete coverage is achieved.

Q. Does a user such as a PSAP need to purchase TSP coverage for all of its telecommunications lines?

A. No. Many TSP users seek coverage for only a portion of their lines. This keeps the cost of coverage more affordable. For example, a PSAP with ten lines to its 9-1-1 tandem may wish to purchase TSP coverage for only five lines. This would keep the cost of coverage down considerably, yet provide essential coverage during a crisis. Using this approach, there may be temporary circumstances in which there would be a diminished communications capability (e.g., in this case only five of the ten lines may be in service). Nevertheless, temporary operation at a reduced level is far better than being out of service altogether.

Q. During a crisis how long will it take to have service restored for the lines covered by the TSP program?

A. It depends on the extent of the damage to the critical telecommunications infrastructure and the amount of resources (personnel and spare parts) available to the telecommunications service provider to repair the damage. In any event, the service provider must restore all TSP-designated lines before any others. This is a legal requirement. A good example of how quickly restoration can be made under the TSP program is the situation in Lower Manhattan following the attacks on the World Trade Center in September 2001. Despite the extensive damage to the infrastructure, the telecommunications services supporting the New York Stock Exchange, for example, were back in operation in three days.

Q. If a PSAP service contract requires the service provider to restore its service within a specified time frame (e.g., within 24 hours), should it still consider TSP coverage?

A. Yes. Restoration priority, as specified in the TSP program, over-rides all special restoration contract terms. As a result, a PSAP with special service restoration contract terms, but without TSP, would have to: (1) wait until all TSP-designated lines are restored and (2) compete for telecommunications service provider repair resources with all others that have special service restoration contract terms. The only way a 9-1-1 center can be certain it will receive priority restoration is by participating in the TSP program.

Q. Does TSP restoration only apply to situations in which the federal government has declared an emergency?

No. Under the TSP program, there is no requirement for any authority (federal, state, or local) to declare an emergency or disaster. TSP priority restoration applies at all times. When any TSP-designated service is disrupted it goes to the front of the line for

restoration, regardless of the cause of the outage --- whether it was caused by a hurricane, flood, terrorist attack, or backhoe.

Q. Are there TSP priority levels higher than what a 9-1-1 center would qualify for? If so, why is it important for 9-1-1 centers to participate in TSP?

A. There are five TSP priority restoration levels. 9-1-1 centers qualify for level 3, which includes communications lines necessary for public health, safety, and maintenance of law and order. The only priority levels that are higher (levels 1 and 2) include national security leadership and certain high level military communications lines. Of the nearly 200 million lines in the nation, fewer than 25,000 lines have been assigned a TSP priority level of 1 or 2.

If a 9-1-1 center does not register its lines in the TSP program, its telecommunications service provider cannot restore its lines until all TSP lines in priority levels 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 have been restored. More importantly, the 9-1-1 center's lines would have to compete with all other (non-TSP) lines for telecommunications service provider maintenance and repair resources. During major disasters, all telecommunications customers would likely be clamoring for service restoration, thereby severely overextending the telecommunications service providers' maintenance and repair resources. Under these circumstances, the only way a 9-1-1 center can be certain it will receive priority restoration is by participating in the TSP program.

06/16/03