Surcharge for Pre-Paid Wireless Service

In 2012, IL-NENA [Illinois Chapter of the National Emergency Number Association] and IL-APCO [Illinois Chapter of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials] brought forward a bill which was passed into legislation in Springfield. This legislation allows for a 9-1-1 surcharge on prepaid wireless phones and phone cards.

The purpose of this legislation is to help balance the costs associated with providing wireless 9-1-1 services to all citizens. With the down turn in the economy and the move to “pay as you go” phone services, the lion’s share of the cost to maintain the infrastructure of 9-1-1 that everyone uses should not be the sole obligation of those citizens who pay the surcharge because they have a contract for cellular phone service.

Several municipalities and 911 call centers also known as Public Safety Answering Points [PSAPs] have already received a few inquiries regarding the surcharge because some Point of Sale (POS) systems have been updated to collect the tax. A business that sells pre-paid wireless or phone cards may show these changes on their receipts. The surcharge amount should only be charged if a pre-paid wireless card is purchased. This level of detail may not be present on less sophisticated cash registers systems (see attached example).

Revenue received from surcharge is used to support the infrastructure of the system, software and hardware applications that provide data to assist Telecommunicators and public safety professionals in bettering serving citizens. DuPage ETSB has 7 full time staff members. So the bulk of the surcharge money is used to maintain and improve delivered public safety 9-1-1 services. The DuPage ETSB complete budget is available upon request and monthly financial reports are included on the Agenda website each month in the monthly board packet.
We have already gotten questions on this. It appears to a modification to the POS (point of sale cash register) for the purpose of pre-paid wireless phones/phone cards.