

Karis' Law Requires Direct Access to 9-1-1

Effective September 1, 2016

SHERMAN, August 23, 2016 – Susan B. Thomas, PhD, Executive Director of Texoma Council of Governments (TCOG), would like to notify business owners about a new law requiring owners of multi-line telephone systems (MLTS) in Texas to provide direct-dial access to 9-1-1 without having to dial an additional digit such as 9 first before getting an outside line. Providers of multi-line telephone systems have until September 1, 2016 to comply. Senate Bill 788, also known as Kari's Law, which requires direct access to 9-1-1, was signed into law by Governor Greg Abbott on May 15, 2015. On March 1, 2016 the Commission on State Emergency Communications adopted Rule 251.16 (Direct Access to 9-1-1 Service) to implement Kari's Law.

The law represents a culmination of efforts in the aftermath of the murder of Kari Hunt in a motel room in Marshall, Texas who was attacked by her estranged husband. Kari's 9-year-old daughter tried to call 9-1-1 for help four times from the motel room phone. Unfortunately, the call never went through, because she did not know to first dial "9" for an outbound line before dialing 9-1-1. Tragically, Kari died before help could arrive.

Since Kari's death, her father Hank Hunt and his family have made it their mission to educate the public and elected officials across the country about the need to change multi-line phone systems to provide direct access to 9-1-1. Their concerns were heard by representatives of the Texas 9-1-1 authorities, elected officials in Texas, the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Currently, Illinois, Maryland, Texas and Tennessee have all passed similar legislation.

"Seconds count, and when a 9 year old little girl is mature and brave enough to attempt to dial 9-1-1 for help, she should be answered," said Mr. Hunt.

MLTS owners must do their diligence and provide direct access to 9-1-1 and comply with Kari's Law. If the existing MLTS cannot be re-programmed or replaced to meet the direct access requirement, a one-year waiver shall be granted upon timely submission of an affidavit. Business owners should contact their MLTS provider to learn if their phone system is compliant. Some new phone systems need to be reprogrammed (not replaced) and costs, if any, should be minimal.

For more information on the history of Kari's Law, the requirements to comply or to request a waiver, please visit texas911.org/KarisLaw. A PSA on Kari's Law can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/ilvrLNGwZ-c>

The Texoma Council of Governments is a voluntary association of the local governments in Cooke, Fannin, and Grayson Counties. Established in 1968, the Texoma Council of Governments promotes economy and efficiency in the coordinated planning and development of the tri-county region through its community and economic development activities. Either directly, or through contractors, the Council provides housing, utility assistance, and weatherization services for low-income citizens in the region and assists the elderly through a variety of Area Agency on Aging programs. The Council also facilitates the delivery of grant funding for homeland security and criminal justice.



news release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

###

For Additional Information Contact:

CJ Durbin-Higgins
(903) 813-3552
chiggins@texoma.cog.tx.us

For Statements or Interviews Contact:

Susan B. Thomas, PhD
(903) 813-3514
stthomas@texoma.cog.tx.us

better leaders building better lives™

Texoma Council of Governments | Susan B. Thomas, PhD, *Executive Director* | Honorable Jason Brinkley, President, *Governing Board*