

911

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ing firm that will help develop South Dakota's Next Generation 911 plan. The L.R. Kimball firm will write a state master plan within the

next three months and then help select contractors to provide elements of the new system.  
Board member Jeff Carmon said the new system must be reliable. "As long as I'm convinced the network is going to be available and the service is there, that's my big thing," Carmon said.  
Ruffedt, deputy director of the Pennington County 911 systems, said each of the 33 answering cen-

ters across the state now has its own equipment costing up to \$500,000. The new system will replace that with core operating equipment that use the same software in two or three locations, providing a common system that allows the centers to communicate better with each other, he said.  
If a 911 operator is taking a call now, another caller gets a busy signal, Ruffedt said. The upgrade will

route such calls to the nearest 911 center, which can handle the emergency, he said.  
Once the new system is deployed, it can be modified to use the latest technology installed in phones, Ruffedt said.  
People with smart phones might sometimes want to be able to send text messages to 911 centers, which would be handy if someone is hiding and doesn't

want to alert an intruder by talking, Ruffedt said. People with hearing problems also want to use text messages for such calls, he said. Callers also could send photos or videos taken on their cell phones to help law officers identify criminal suspects.  
The current 911 system can immediately locate a cell phone owned by a South Dakota resident with a South Dakota-based service

contract, but the upgrade will improve the routing of cellphone calls to centers that can best dispatch help, Ruffedt said.  
"Hopefully, one to three years from now we're sitting on a very robust, reliable 911 system that allows us to bring in all the technological advances and hopefully use the money we've got much more wisely," he said.

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