

## County May Join Pilot Internet 911 Program

WAYNESBURG — Greene County is one of nine Southwestern Pennsylvania counties that will join a pilot program to offer shared Internet-based 911 service by next year.

Greg Leathers, Director of the county's 911 system, said each county presently has an existing communication hub, or a CPE, and "these machines are reaching end of life," he said. "It doesn't make any sense for each county to have one when several counties can share," he said.

Other counties joining in the hub-sharing program are Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, Indiana, Lawrence, Mercer, Somerset, and Westmoreland.

Leathers said under this pilot program everyone will share and that means costs will go down. He said a new CPE machine could cost about \$200,000. He said it is possible Greene Fayette and Westmoreland counties could become partners, although he said it is premature to speculate where the hub would be located.

When a call is made to a 911 center, that particular call is identified as a 911 call and it is directed to a dispatcher. The shared Internet-based 911 system will let people contact 911 using email and text messages.

The state is behind this program, Leathers said, and although the county will still be responsible for some of the costs, "they will be less," he said.

The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency says replacing older county 911 systems across the state would cost \$30.6 million with operating costs of about \$5.5 million, while replacing them with shared so-call "next generation" systems will cost about \$20 million.