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**“INTERNET” PHONES MAY PUT YOU AT RISK
911 emergency service isn’t always included**

With more and more people turning to Internet phone service to save money, County Executive Andy Spano is advising these customers to make sure they are able to call 911 in emergencies.

VoIP or “Internet” phones, which are rapidly growing in popularity, are being sold to the public without full disclosure of their shortcomings with regards to 911. While most traditional phones support enhanced 911 (E911) services which route calls to live dispatchers who see the address and number of the caller on a computer screen, many of the more technologically advanced phones – which allow calls to be made through the Internet – offer limited or no 911 service.

In addition, since VoIP equipment can be portable, people need to be aware that if the phone is moved, dispatchers may not know where they are and could send help to the wrong location.

“We want to make sure everyone can get through to 911 in an emergency,” Spano said. “We have trained dispatchers on the other end of the line waiting to help but they need to know where to find you. Having the right phone carrier could potentially mean the difference between life and death.”

Residents are advised to take the following actions:

- Survey the types of phones in your home. If one traditional landline phone has been retained, it should be designated for emergency use.
- At a minimum, verify that your VoIP carrier can relay a simple 911 call – in other words, that the call will go through. Do so by contacting the company directly either by phone or e-mail.
- If a basic 911 call can be made, then verify that your VoIP phone carrier supports enhanced 911. Do so by contacting the company directly either by phone or e-mail and inquire specifically about E911 and

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about what you need to do to ensure that the phone company knows the location of your VoIP phone.

- Subscribe to E911 service if you learn that it is offered by your carrier.
- Switch carriers or install a traditional telephone line if E911 service is not supported by your carrier.

If you have additional questions, please contact the County Department of Information Technology at (914) 995-2976.

Residents should know that, on May 19, in the wake of recent tragedies linked to inadequate Internet-based 911 service, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted unanimously to require Internet telephone carriers to provide E911.

The FCC approved the order at an open meeting after hearing emotional testimony from families who blamed their Internet phone carriers for trouble they had reaching 911 operators when they used its service to call for help. For example, when one mother dialed 911 with her Vonage Internet phone after her infant daughter stopped breathing, she only got a recording telling her to hang up and dial 911 if it was an emergency. The baby died minutes later.

Because compliance with the FCC's new regulations will realistically take many months, the County Executive recommends taking the necessary steps now to ensure life-saving 911 service ... before it's actually needed.

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