

Dates:



Property Tax Bills

Some counties mailed the bill in May for partial payment in June; the remaining balance will be due in September. Other counties will mail tax bills in late summer for full payment in September. Check with your County Clerk for local details.

September 20-26
National Farm Safety Week

October 15
County resolution submittal deadline

November 4-5
Statewide Resolutions Committee Meeting

November 12
Local & Regional Food Summit

9-1-1

New law brings Illinois' emergency response systems closer to 21st century technology

By Brenda Matherly

Illinois' 9-1-1 emergency response system receives a "shot in the arm" thanks to a legislative initiative that was recently signed into law.

Included in the new law is language that impacts 9-1-1 system updates, consistent funding, consolidation requirements and rural access. These changes include an overhaul in areas that:

- Create a universal funding structure targeting more money to small, rural 9-1-1 centers
- Funds the development of a statewide next generation emergency phone system
- Strongly encourages 9-1-1 providers to consolidate, offering more cost-efficient service

- Ensures Enhanced 9-1-1 services are available in every county
- Transfers oversight of 9-1-1 to the Illinois State Police

Most importantly, the changes are expected to shorten emergency response times and provide better service in more counties. This improved response time and access will be achieved, in part, through the standardization of a single fee amount of 87 cents per line, per month, on both wireline and wireless phones throughout Illinois.

Prior to the passage of this legislation, wireless users paid a surcharge of 73 cents per line. This was a statewide rate established under the Wireless Emergency Telephone Safety Act. There

(See 9-1-1 on page 4)

Did you know...

Drainage subdistricts have no governing body separate from that of the parent district. These subdistricts are not counted as separate governments.



Plan for broadband

Efforts underway to step up rural high-speed access

By Brenda Matherly

Are you happy with your broadband service? Are your local schools able to provide the best connection in the classrooms? How about your small community business? Are they connecting at high speeds? In many areas of the state, the answer to these questions is a resounding "NO".

In populated urban areas, this is an unexpected response. While high-speed Internet is a staple in urban areas, many rural areas across the state and the nation have not caught up to the 21st century connectivity.

The President is vowing to do something about that. In January, President Obama

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National Farm Safety & Health Week

Ag Safety is not just a slogan, it's a lifestyle

National Farm Safety & Health Week is an annual promotion of the National Safety Council honoring the contribution and hard work of our nation's farmers and ranchers.



it's a lifestyle.

National Farm Safety & Health Week
September 20-26, 2015

The theme for this year's tribute is: "Ag Safety is not just a slogan, it's a lifestyle". A theme that is intended to remind local and rural communities that agriculture is one of the most dangerous occupations in the U.S. and that farm injuries and fatalities are preventable through education.

The most recent data from the U.S. Department of Labor indicates that in 2013 farming accounted for 500 fatalities, or 23.2 deaths per 100,000 workers.

Each year since 1944, the third week of September has been recognized as National Farm Safety & Health Week. This recognition has been an annual promotion initiated by the National Safety Council and

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In a jam

Local drainage districts seek a solution to a fast growing problem that state and federal agencies shun

By Kevin Rund

Just a few miles upstream from the mouth of the Sangamon River, there's a problem developing that—if left unresolved—could eventually affect land half way across the state. It's a logjam, the likes of which the river has not seen for over 60 years, that has local drainage districts in a jam.

The problem was initially created with high flows on the Illinois River where the Sangamon empties its flow at Beardstown.

Those last few miles of the Sangamon get backed up when outflows are slowed by high water on the Illinois. Those slow flow rates on the Sangamon result in silt and sand drop-out, which in-turn contributes to sandbar buildup in the middle of

the river.

Once the sandbars are large enough, they begin to snag floating logs and other debris. The debris build-up further slows flows, depositing more silt, snagging more logs and spiraling the problem to greater heights.

Today, at one point in the river, the jam extends from bank-to-bank allowing only minimal water passage at low summer flows. (See photo on page 5.) The Corps has reportedly estimated that—even at these low flows—the blockage creates a three-foot "head" behind the jam. At higher flows, that differential between water heights downstream and upstream of the jam can reach seven feet.

The persistence of high water behind the jam affects area water ta-

bles and farmland drainage. As this problem persists and builds, it could saturate area farmland, limiting its usefulness for agriculture, even turning some of it to swampland.

As water levels have risen behind the jam over the past year and a half, the river has established cuts in its northern bank, allowing waters to flow into the adjacent Sanganois State Wildlife Area. Wildlife managers reportedly had originally thought the extra water to be a good thing. Now they realize that, left unchecked, silt from the Sangamon River could eventually silt-in their wetlands.

Last year, drainage districts in Cass and Mason Counties had approached the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) about cleaning out what—at that time—was a relatively small snag of trees. Permitting requirements and associated red tape prohibited action that would have cost only a few thousand dollars to fix the problem. Today, local drainage districts estimated the cost of a remedy would run into the millions.

Drainage district officials in both Cass and Mason Counties are looking for a solution. The Corps claims it has no authority to maintain the flows in the Sangamon River, that, instead, it falls to local jurisdictions to affect the cleanup.

More than 60 years ago, the Corps had been convinced to resolve an even larger logjam. Back in the 1950's, a special act of Congress authorized and funded the effort. But instead of cleaning out the six-mile jam back then, the Corps simply re-routed the Sangamon River

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Broadband

(Continued from page 1)

announced his plan to promote “Broadband That Works.” A plan that is designed to combine public and private efforts to help more Americans, in more communities nationwide get access to reliable, affordable and fast broadband. The backbone of the plan is to deliver broadband that works by bringing in new competition, leveraging municipal investments, and forming new partnerships to bring high-speed Internet to small towns and rural areas.

To help more communities achieve these results and provide for equal opportunities among competitive providers, the Obama Administration is reportedly:

1. Identifying and removing regulatory barriers restricting broadband deployment and creating advantages for one provider over another.

- Encouraging a new effort to support local choice in broadband and opposing measures that limit the range of options available to communities to spur expanded local broadband infrastructure, including ownership of networks.

- Calling for the Federal Government to remove all unnecessary regulatory and policy barriers to broadband build-out and competition.

- Establishing a new Broadband Opportunity Council of over a dozen

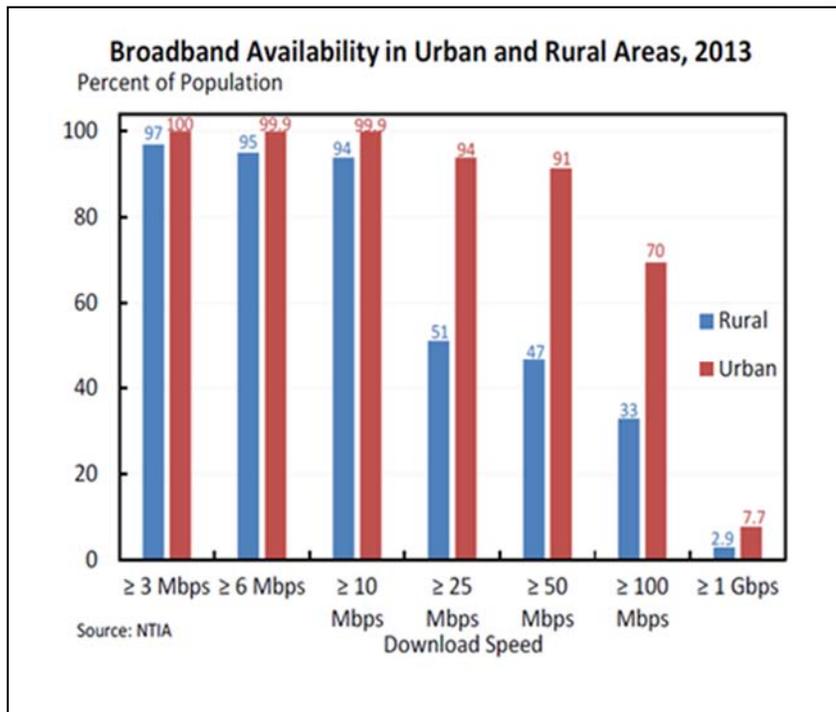
government agencies with the singular goal of speeding up broadband deployment and promoting adoption for our citizens.

2. Initiating a successful national mobile spectrum auction.

- This high-grossing auction of mobile spectrum raised more than \$41 billion.
- Freeing up this spectrum for private investment will lead to better mobile connectivity while funding important priorities like a first-responders network.

the digital divide between rural and urban areas is getting some national attention. While most agree the gap between rural and urban connectivity using basic broadband speeds has almost closed, rural areas still have far less access to the higher speeds enjoyed by their urban neighbors.

According to the *National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)* the gap in broadband availability between urban and rural communities is linked to the economics of network investment.



As you might expect, the costs of providing high-speed connectivity increases with every mile. As infrastructure is built out into the rural areas the cost goes up while at the same time the population goes down resulting in decreasing profits. This makes it more economical to serve densely populated urban locations, where lesser infrastructure expenses can serve a larger number of customers.

3. Continuing to free up wireless spectrum.

- Concerted government efforts to free up wireless spectrum previously held by government agencies have, to date, identified 335 MHz of Federal and non-Federal spectrum for potential reallocation.

In addition to the relaxation of regulatory constraints, the need to close

this disparity comes in the form of wireless technology. While this technology is offering significant improvements and opportunities to rural communities, as you can see from the chart above, more work is needed to close the urban/rural gap in high-speed broadband availability.

LINK

9-1-1

is also a surcharge on wired lines. Those charges varied among the 200 9-1-1 systems within Illinois. They ranged from \$0.00 to upwards of \$4.00 a line.

The uniform single fee on wired lines might also have another benefit for rural members. With the varied surcharge, rates were based on the number of landlines funding the local

9-1-1 system. In rural areas, those charges tended to be higher than in more populated urban areas. The lower population base and fewer and fewer subscribers to landlines created a higher surcharge in rural areas. The new uniform rate will likely lower the current surcharge amount being paid by rural residents. Conversely, more populated urban areas could see an increase in their rate.

Since funding for 9-1-1 services comes primarily from a surcharge, the new standard rate of 87 cents per line is expected to fund the establishment of

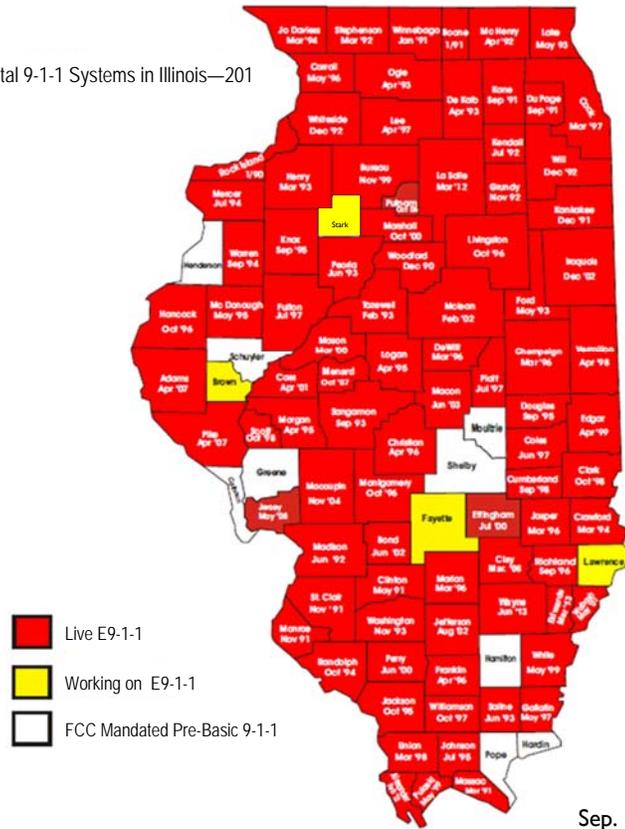
9-1-1 centers in nine Illinois counties that are currently without Enhanced 9-1-1.

In addition to funding updates, the new law will create a statewide 9-1-1 system that will fall under the authority of the Illinois Commerce Commission and the Illinois State Police. Up until now, 9-1-1 systems have been operated by local public safety offices in cooperation with the telecom providers that offer services in each area. This approach has created a patchwork of more than 200 different 9-1-1 systems in the state.

Beginning January 1, 2016 this new

E9-1-1 Status

Total 9-1-1 Systems in Illinois—201



services currently offered to their more urban neighbors.

Enhanced 9-1-1 is the ability to determine location information with a 9-1-1 call based on either the caller's residence through their landline or their current location through their cell phone. For those counties currently without an Enhanced 9-1-1 system and for all of Illinois, this new law sets us on the path to a 9-1-1 system that is compatible with 21st century technology and gets us closer to the next generation of services.

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office of the statewide 9-1-1 administrator, within the Illinois State Police, will be responsible for developing, implementing, and overseeing a uniform statewide, interconnected 9-1-1 system for all of Illinois.

The local calling centers and emergency system boards will still operate on the local level, but the new law mandates a consolidation plan that will result in the closure of some of the smaller call centers.

In addition to the new universal funding, the law requires 9-1-1 services in every county to offer more cost-effective services through consolidation. This improved service will provide residents in our rural communities the same level of Enhanced 9-1-1 emergency response

Jam

(Continued from page 2)

around the problem. There's no re-routing this one—both due to geographic limitations and to the regulations that drainage districts face today.

Even Abraham Lincoln had difficulties with sandbars and logjams on the Sangamon almost two centuries ago. But back then, they were not so severe that they prevented navigation of the river. Today, you couldn't float a kayak past the jam. What would Abraham do?

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At left is the Sangamon River as it appeared in mid-September looking from south to north across its width at a point about three miles upstream from its confluence with the Illinois River. Slowed river flows at the Illinois have resulted in drop-out of sand and silt, creating sandbars that have been steadily building since last year. Those sandbars then snag logs floating in the river, further slowing the flow and aggravating the blockage. Pictured here at relatively low summer flows, the sandbars are clearly visible, stretching from bank-to-bank in what looks more like a wetland forest floor than a river. Local drainage districts are seeking a remedy.

Safety

has been proclaimed as such by each sitting U.S. President since Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the first document. A copy of this year's promotion has been sent to Washington to await President Obama's signature. The proclamation typically becomes available on the White House website (www.whitehouse.gov) a few days prior to the third Sunday in September.

As we recognize National Farm Safety & Health Week this September, please join us in promoting safe and healthy practices on our farms and ranches across the U.S. and in our neighboring countries as producers enter the harvest season. NECAS welcomes the collaboration and participation of community members in this year's observance, and would like to thank the Illinois Farm Bureau for its work in developing the "Ag safety is not just a slogan, it's a lifestyle" logo this year.

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Local and Regional Food Summit

Join us to learn more about the economic impact of local food projects

By: Cynthia Haskins

The fifth annual Local and Regional Food Summit will take place at Heartland Community College, Astroth Community Education Center, 1500 West Raab Road, Normal, IL, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on November 12. Last year, over 300 attended the conference to learn from leaders in the local and regional food industry on all the different local food projects taking shape in our state.

Jim Ryan, City Administrator, Rockford, IL will speak on measuring the financial impact of a public market. He will share findings from a recently completed economic evaluation study determining the benefits of both farmers' market vendors and nearby businesses. The study indicates that Rockford had a total combined economic impact of \$8.7 million.

Other speakers will include Steve Jarzombek, Vice President of Pro-

duce at Roundy's, Peter J. Sikorski, Chief Financial Officer, Get Fresh Produce, Inc., Tom Phelps, Director of Produce Operations, Niemann Foods, J. Robert Serrine, Ph.D., Community Food Systems Educator, Greening Michigan Institute Affiliate, MSU Center for Regional Food Systems discussing successful hops production for craft brewing, Julie McCoy MS, RD, LDN, Director of School Nutrition speaking about school foodservice, and more.

This one-day event is hosted by the Illinois Farm Bureau, Illinois Department of Agriculture and Heartland Community College.

Conference registration fee is \$20 per participant (\$15 for Farm Bureau members). Registration fee includes all conference materials and lunch. [REGISTER HERE](#). More information can be found on the registration website including full agenda and hours.

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