



# New Jersey Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness **NEWS**

Jon S. Corzine, *Governor*

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## **State Expands 2-1-1 Telephone Service to Provide Homeland Security and Emergency Information**

— Public Can Call One Easy-to-Remember Number to Receive Critical Information;  
Call 9-1-1 in an Emergency, Call 2-1-1 for Emergency Information —

**Hamilton** — New Jersey has expanded 2-1-1 telephone service to begin providing New Jersey citizens with easy access to homeland security and emergency information to complement the hotline's social services sources, Governor Jon S. Corzine and Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness Director Richard L. Cañas announced today.

“Today we are taking an important step towards improving the flow of information during times of emergency or heightened alert,” Governor Corzine said. “By expanding the state’s existing 2-1-1 telephone system, New Jersey’s residents will have an easy-to-remember number to call for information on how to proceed in the face of everything from terrorism threats to natural disasters.”

The 2-1-1 line also has a corollary Web site, <http://www.nj211.org/>, that the public can use to obtain emergency information.

Director Cañas said the 2-1-1 line will also help by directing calls away from 9-1-1 that do not reflect true emergencies.

“If it’s a true emergency, call 9-1-1. But if you are looking for critical homeland security and emergency information that’s not a matter of life-and-death, call 2-1-1,” he said.

Colonel Rick Fuentes, the State Director of Emergency Management, said, “We’re very pleased to join this partnership, and help create a brand-new channel for the public to find emergency preparedness information.”

“It is a privilege to be of service to the citizens of New Jersey,” said Tom Toronto, Chairman of the New Jersey 2-1-1 Partnership. “Everyone on the 2-1-1 team will do their utmost to provide the people of New Jersey easy access to the most up-to-the-minute information and advice when they call — or click on our Web site.”

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A public-private partnership headed by New Jersey's United Way agencies, 2-1-1 is currently working with the state's Department of Human Services and other agencies to provide access points for citizens who need social services, such as food banks, shelters, housing, crisis lines, counseling, healthcare programs and job training.

Cañas credited the partnership between 2-1-1 and the Department of Human Services for paving the way for expanding the state's use of the service.

"Today we are expanding that partnership to the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness and the state Office of Emergency Management (OEM), which will work with New Jersey's 2-1-1 Partnership to ensure that all citizens can get easy access to emergency information," Cañas said.

"As a long-time supporter of 2-1-1, I applaud this enhancement to the service," said Assemblyman Lou Greenwald (District 6). "The addition of emergency information provides yet another way in which 2-1-1 benefits New Jersey citizens."

The new 2-1-1 service is available today by phone and via the Internet. The Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness and the state OEM will be working with the 2-1-1 partnership day-by-day to provide more information and make the service as useful as possible. The state will also solicit feedback from the public to help improve the service on an ongoing basis. The Office of Information Technology is handling all technical issues related to the state's expanded participation in the new service.

The 2-1-1 service started in New Jersey in 2005. Toronto, the New Jersey 2-1-1 Partnership chair, who is also President of the United Way of Bergen County, noted that the program was born out of the United Ways' experience following September 11, 2001, when the agencies banded together and established a statewide toll-free telephone number to provide assistance for families and individuals who had experienced the loss of loved ones or loss of economic livelihood as a result of the attacks.

The New Jersey 2-1-1 Partnership currently maintains 11 call centers throughout the state. The annual budget for the service is approximately \$1.5 million. The bulk of the funding for the program is provided by the state's United Way agencies, with additional funding from the state, county and local governments and foundation grants.

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