

# DISPATCH Magazine

On-Line

Stories from the on-line edition at [www.911Dispatch.com](http://www.911Dispatch.com)

## Release of Tape Sparks Debate on Procedures

In one of the saddest and most chilling 911 logging tapes ever released, Kimberlyn Rae Kendrick repeatedly asks a Mayes County (Okla.) dispatcher for advice as her car continued to sink into flood waters. During the 9-minute call, the dispatcher told her fire units were coming, but never gave her any advice or suggestions on leaving the car. At many points in the call, the sounds of water can be heard lapping against the phone, with Kendrick saying, "I'm running out of air." The call eventually ended, perhaps as the phone shorted out from the water. The incident has sparked local debate on how dispatchers should handle such incidents, and highlights that lack of any water rescue procedures at Mayes County's comm center. The incident also recalls previous national debate when a young woman drove off the Florida turnpike in 2001 and was on the phone with a dispatcher for 3-1/2 minutes before she died. 📄

## Retirement After--Gulp!--32 Years

Quite simply, Rockford (Ill.) Fire Department dispatcher Karen Welsh is retiring at 55 years-old. After 32 years of service. Working 12-hour shifts. On the night shift. She even has four years of service with the before that, too. She recalls handling virtually every conceivable type of incident, as a police dispatcher from 1977 to 1990, and after that at the fire department. 📄

## Bankruptcy Touches 800 MHz Transition Team

The economic downturn and bankruptcy have intruded on the 800 MHz retuning project mandated by the FCC and now underway nationwide. The role of BearingPoint Inc. in the Transition Administrator (TA) role will be replaced with Deloitte LLP, after the former company declared bankruptcy. In 2004 the FCC approved establishing a TA to oversee the complex process of separating 800 MHz frequency assignments, retuning radios and having Sprint-Nextel pay for the entire process. The TA consists of three entities: engineering companies BearingPoint Inc. and Baseline Telecom Inc., and the law firm of Squire, Sanders & Dempsey LLP. Last Feb. BearingPoint filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, and the consulting firm of Deloitte agreed to buy BearingPoint's assets. Now the FCC has approved the formal transfer of BearingPoint's duties under the TA to Deloitte's consulting division. One technicality: the TA was formally owned by BearingPoint so the TA could enter into contracts. Now, because a Deloitte division serves as an auditor for certain 800 MHz "stakeholders," they will not become the owner to avoid any conflicts of interest. Rather, Baseline will assume the TA ownership role. 📄

## Suspect Radios From Stolen PD Car

A man involved in a domestic dispute fled from Mower County (Minn.) police on a bicycle first, but then circled back and stole a Austin PD police K9 unit called to assist in the search. During the 120 mph pursuit of the patrol car by deputies, suspect Jeremy Winkel radioed dispatchers, asking what would hap-

May – 2009

### Check the Icons!

Check any icons at the end of each story to see if there is on-line material to enhance the story:

 — there's a logging tape posted

 — there's a link or Acrobat (pdf) file posted



[editor@911Dispatch.com](mailto:editor@911Dispatch.com)

## What's Up?

Almost 10 years after a similar incident in Florida, a dispatcher in Oklahoma fielded a 911 call from a woman trapped in her car as it slowly sank into a ditch filled with flood waters. On the logging tape, you can hear the water lapping up against the inside of the car as the woman desperately tries to keep her head in the bubble of air at the top of the car. Eventually the phone went dead, and firefighters later found her dead inside the submerged car (check the Web site for details).

Quite frankly, you better be prepared for *every* type of telephone call that you've every experienced before, read about or can imagine. Cars into water, airplanes into houses, babies into water wells, explorers into caves—everything. First, that's the purpose of your comm center: to be prepared for any incident, and to help anyone who calls. And that help isn't *just* by sending out law enforcement, fire or emergency medical units. It's also by giving immediately them advice that's been thoughtfully prepared. You cannot simply rely on a single dispatcher's best opinion or knowledge of how to handle a particular type of incident—if they even have such knowledge. You need a collection of knowledge and advice.

Read this month's stories, collect the incident types and starting preparing.

Also in this issue: APCO's personnel standard for comm center manager's is excellent, and includes many of the non-technical skills required. OnStar upgraded its service, New York City changed how 911 calls are answered, and Florida's dispatcher training legislation may have been influenced by a dispatcher group lobbyist.

### Gary Allen - Editor

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DISPATCH Monthly Magazine was founded in 1988 by Alan Burton (1934-2007) with the goals:

- Improved training
- Improved working conditions
- Improved self-esteem
- Individual and collective recognition
- Enhanced professionalism

pen to the suspect--himself--when deputies arrested him. Dispatchers tried to convince him to pull over, but he crossed into Iowa and evaded spike strips laid out by the Iowa State Patrol. He then radioed dispatchers again, trying to arrange a surrender at the Northwood (Iowa) fire station. He finally pulled in front of the fire station, 38 miles from where the chase began. Deputies say Winkel struck and killed a dog during the pursuit, but otherwise avoided any accidents.

### State Grants Appeal In Response Time Request

The Pennsylvania Office of Open Records (OOR) has ordered York County's 911 center to include locations in any citizen requests for response time logs, after a citizen appealed the county's refusal to provide such information, claiming it was confidential under state law. The state's Right to Know Law specifically prohibits the release of telephone and radio logging tapes, limiting information only to what the legislature called "time response logs." The issue on appeal before the OOR was whether incident locations are considered part of the "time response log" record. In an opinion released last week, the OOR agreed with the citizen who appealed the county's decision, saying that without a location, response time logs are useless in determining if emergency units are arriving in a timely fashion. Therefore, the OOR said that locations must be part of the time response logs that comm centers are required to release. The county is considering an appeal of the OOR's decision. ☞

### NYC Consolidation Still Being Debated

Just two months before New York City's fire dispatchers are scheduled to move from their borough-based comm centers to a downtown center and Bronx-based backup, criticism is being raised about the plan, sparking more debate. Mayor Michael Bloomberg and fire officials say the new center is ready and that operations will be improved by the move. But Staten Island politicians are raising the issue of local control and knowledge--they say dispatchers miles away won't have the intimate and detailed knowledge of dispatchers who are within the borough for which they are dispatching. David Rosenzweig, president of the Uniformed Fire Alarm Dispatchers Benevolent Association, says that police dispatchers are not competent to handle telephone calls involving fires, and received just six hours of training, compared to the 90-days received by fire dispatchers. A city council member representing Staten Island has introduced a bill to keep dispatchers within their own boroughs, and a rally was held outside the Staten Island fire comm center to protest the move. ☞

## River Tragedy Response Questioned

Callers along the Willamette River in Portland (Ore.) heard yelling and voices and dialed 911 for help, but it took almost 40 minutes for water rescue craft to be launched to search for two children thrown from a bridge by their mother. Amanda Jo Stott-Smith, 31, is under arrest for the death of her 4 year-old son, and the attempted murder of her 7 year-old daughter. Police believe the incident is related to a custody battle with her ex-husband. Dispatchers at the Office of Emergency Communications first classified the 1:19 a.m. incident as a “disturbance” and didn’t consider it involved anyone in the river, officials say. Only after police arrived and couldn’t locate the yelling did they request a fire department boat response, which took another 20 minutes. A houseboater located the children around 2 a.m. and brought the two children to shore. 🗨️

## State Governor Proposes 911 Fund Diversion

Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle’s proposed budget includes taking \$100 million from the state’s 911 surcharge fund for two years to help cover “police and fire protection” affected by a \$1.6 billion budget shortage. The budget also proposes killing a plan to increase the current 16¢ monthly 911 surcharge fee to 75¢ per month. If the budget is adopted, the diversion would make the state ineligible for any part of \$43.5 million in federal grant funding, critics of the plan point out. The state collects about \$7 million a year from the 911 surcharge. According to Dane County officials, they would have to replace \$557,000 now received from the state surcharge fund each year. A legislative committee could decide this week on the 911 portion of the budget. 🗨️

## APCO Releases Personnel Standard

The Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) has posted a proposed standard “Core Competencies of Public Safety Communications Manager/Director” for public comments, part of its on-going program to establish industry-established methods of operation. The proposed standard is “one of the most aggressive tasks” that the association’s Call Center Standards Committee has undertaken, says chair Julie Righter. The 37-page document covers six sections, including “managing self and personal skills,” “facilitating change” and “achieving results.” 🗨️

## APCO Announces 2009 Award Recipients

The Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) International has revealed its 2009 Public-Safety Communications Award winners, which will be handed out during the opening sessions of the group’s annual conference this August in Las Vegas. According to a press release, those honored, “have demonstrated the highest levels of personal and professional conduct and performance in the line of duty.” The recipients are:

- Telecommunicator of the Year – Loanne Travess, Grays Harbor Communications E9-1-1, Aberdeen (WA)
- Trainer of the Year - Stephan Bunker, Maine 9-1-1 Bureau, Augusta (ME)
- Information Technologist of the Year – Scott Sipe, Grays Harbor Communications E9-1-1, Aberdeen (WA)
- Radio Frequency Technologist of the Year – David King, City of Bakersfield, Bakersfield (CA)
- Line Supervisor of the Year – Patrick Healy, Arlington Fire Department/Communications Services, Arlington (TX)
- Communications Center Director of the Year – Jerald Bleck, Tri-Com Central Dispatch, St. Charles (IL)

## Family Believes Dispatcher Botched 911 Call

The family of a murdered Great Falls (Mont.) man say that had a dispatcher sent police units in response to their very first 911 call, the victim would still be alive. Jerod Williams was strangled to death by acquaintance Jaydee Haagenon just before 1:30 a.m., police say, but his family members say they dialed 911 and a non-emergency number at 9:44 p.m. to say Haagenon was violating his parole and being violent. An unnamed dispatcher at the Great Falls/Cascade County Dispatch Center questioned the caller, but concluded that since the caller wasn’t at the house, police couldn’t respond. Haagenon’s father later called to provide more first-person information, and the dispatcher then transferred him to a watch commander on an untaped telephone line, and police never responded. Only later when Williams’ body was found did police arrive. Comm center manager Pam Johnstone defended the dispatcher, saying she followed procedure, but that “a little bit of training” needs to occur with dispatchers. Johnstone told a reporter that dispatchers have to make quick decisions on how to use limited resources based on the information they have, and can’t predict the future. **Update:** An internal investigation found that neither the dispatcher nor a shift commander mishandled the family’s calls for assistance. 🗨️ 🗨️

## Disconnected Cell Phone Hampers Search

A missing 62 year-old Carrollton (Ohio) man who may have been suicidal fled sheriff's deputies when they arrived to investigate a disturbance at his home, and the deputies learned they couldn't track the man down using his cellular phone because Verizon demanded \$20 to reinstate the man's phone service. Sheriff Dale Williams says the man was at-risk and fled into a rural area. He called Verizon, but learned they wouldn't assist until someone paid the man's overdue phone bill. Williams was in the process of paying the bill when search teams found the man unconscious. ☞

## Ford Reports First '911 Assist' Incident

The Ford Motor Company has reported the first reported use of its 911 Assist service, when a motorist's collision automatically generated a 911 call to the local PSAP. The 911 Assist service is part of Ford's SYNC system, which connects various electronic devices, including cellular phones, PDAs and music players. In this case, Maryland resident Cheryl Vogel was driving her 2009 Ford Escape when it was struck broadside by a minivan. Vogel was left "dazed and confused," according to a Ford press release, but the SYNC system automatically dialed 911 on Vogel's cellular phone, which was linked to the car's system using Bluetooth. Vogel was able to give a dispatcher her location and fire units were on-scene quickly, Ford reported. Since SYNC uses the customer's existing electronic gear, there is no monthly service fee. The 911 Assist feature is an upgrade for existing SYNC customers, and is now included in new installations. SYNC is a option on 2008-2010 Ford, Lincoln and Mercury models. Read the press release here, and find SYNC info here. ☞

## Tapes Released in Fatal Officer's Crash

Las Vegas Metro Police Off. James Manor was killed while responding to a 911 call from a 14 year-old girl who said her stepfather had beaten her, threatened her and told her not to call the police. While Manor and other officers were enroute, the 911 call was disconnected, and the dispatcher called back for more information. The girl's mother came on the line at one point to say the girl had anger and mental health issues, and that the stepfather did not hit the girl. But the mother's comments came just after Manor crashed into a vehicle that turned in front of him--his patrol car was traveling 109 mph across Tropicana Blvd. with no warning lights or siren, investigators later determined. [Editor - It's unknown what information the calltaker recorded in CAD and what information a dispatcher broadcast on the radio that may have caused Manor to drive so fast.] ☞

## Company Recalls Handsets--911 Problem

Samsung has voluntarily recalled about 160,000 "Jitter-bug" cellular handsets that may not complete 911 calls when they are out of range of the home carrier. No incidents or injuries have resulted from the flaw, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), and the problem can be corrected with a software upgrade. The FCC requires handsets to complete 911 calls using the network of any available carrier, instead of only the user's subscribed carrier. According to the CPSC the handsets were sold from March 2008 to May 2009, mostly through direct-mail ads, mostly to seniors because of the handset's large buttons and simplified service plans. ☞

## Chief Plays 911 Shooting Tape for Conference

Ever since a man stormed into the American Civic Association in Binghamton (NY) last April, Broome County officials have refused to release the logging tape of 911 calls from a group of persons hiding in a basement boiler room. However, BPD police chief Joseph Zikuski played the tape for a group of hostage negotiators at a conference last week, and copies of that audio have now been posted on-line by the media. During the call, teacher Kay Gruss used five cellular phones to keep a connection to dispatchers and relay what little information she obtained before herding dozens of students into the room and shutting a heavy door. The group was in hiding for three hours until police searched and cleared the building, and convinced the group it was safe to come outside. Gruss has told reporters that another critical element of the calls was to take bits and pieces of information provided by the dispatchers, and to relay it back to the group to help keep them calm and patient. Most of the group spoke little or no English, and were very nervous about hiding in the dark. ☞

## CHP 911 Answer Times Get Worse

Statistics from the California Highway Patrol show that it's taking significantly longer to answer 911 calls during the past three months, even as the comm centers are included among those for mandatory employee furloughs because of a state budget deficit. The CHP uses the NENA call-answering standard of 10 seconds for 90% of calls. The San Francisco region CHP comm center met that standard just 52% of the time during April, and other centers answer rates have fallen: Sacramento went from 81.5% in Jan. to 73.2% in April, and the Los Angeles center went from 97% to 70%. Officials say part of the change resulted from eliminating a pre-screening feature from 911 calls. ☞

## Child Reports Double Murder on 911

Police in Huron County (Ohio) have released the logging tape of a 911 call made last Dec. by an 11 year-old boy who described a double murder and the suspect still at the scene. The boy was a resident of migrant housing unit outside Sandusky, and reported that a 9 year-old boy had just run in to report the shooting. "The guy is trying to shoot the lady, so we need help," the boy told the dispatcher at one point. Arriving deputies found and arrested the suspect. 📞

## Ambulance Delay Highlighted by Tapes

The release of telephone logging tapes has focused the spotlight on how and why a private ambulance took 25 minutes to reach an 11 year-old boy who collided with a car in Albany (NY). Benjamin Coco died later at a hospital, and it's not clear if he could have survived with a quicker response. In two calls released by Albany police, an APD dispatcher asks a dispatcher for Mowhawk Ambulance service when the ambulance would arrive. All five of the company's local EMS units were out-of-service, and so they requested an ambulance from Troy. Later, the Albany dispatcher questioned the route that ambulance was taking, saying, "It didn't make sense to us." 📞

## Family Blames Slow Response for Death

The family of an Aurora (Colo.) grandmother says that a dispatcher's mistake created a 13-minute response delay that ended with the woman's death. County officials admit the error, but haven't explained precisely how the mistake occurred. Sandra Lowman, 64, suffered a medical ailment on April 2nd at her son's home, and both the son and his wife dialed 911 for help. The couple both gave their correct address in the city of Aurora. However, the CAD system includes a South Oak Hill Circle in Arapahoe County, and that's where a dispatcher sent fire and EMS units. Lowman's son eventually drove to a nearby firehouse to request help, but the units were out. He then returned to the scene to find no emergency units had arrived. The first fire unit arrived within 13 minutes, even though it's stationed just 1.5 miles from the Lowman's home. 📞

## Quick-Witted Dispatcher Plays Drug Dealer

It took only seconds for Scioto County (Ohio) dispatcher Melissa Sissel to switch roles from calltaker to drug dealer when a woman mistakenly dialed 911 instead of her drug dealer. Joanna Mullins was standing around a liquor store in Portsmouth when she made the call and

asked for oxycontin, a powerful prescription drug. Sissel at first was perplexed, but then realized what Mullins was trying to accomplish. Arriving officers arrested Mullins for attempting to make a drug transaction. 📞

## Texas Family Sues Over EMS Incident

The family of a Texas toddler who strangled in a backyard soccer net are suing the city of Murphy, its police officers and a private ambulance company, saying they didn't do enough to treat their son, and instead considered their home a crime scene. Matthew Cantrell, 21 months-old, somehow became entangled in the net in 2007, and was discovered by his mother after she awoke from a nap. Neither a Murphy police dispatcher or a dispatcher for East Texas Medical Center gave her CPR instructions, and arriving police treated the incident as a crime scene instead of aiding the boy. Paramedics were able to revive the boy, but he died several days later. 📞

## Documents: Police Officials Knew Radio Failings

An Australian commission looking into the deadly brush fires that swept Victoria state last August heard testimony this week that police officials knew its digital radio system wasn't compatible with the analog system used by rural agencies. The lack of communications put peoples' lives in danger, the panel was told by witnesses. Documents were also presented that said a planned integration of the two systems was delayed. 📞

## Panel Issues Report on Crash Notification Work

A panel convened by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued its final report on the use of automatic crash notification (ACN) system information to predict the severity of vehicle accidents. The CDC is a key agency for the formation of national trauma policy, and with the help of other federal agencies and private companies has created a National Trauma Triage Protocol. The CDC formed a panel to study how OnStar and similar ACN providers might contribute meaningful data to the Protocol, since certain crash severity information for first-responders can be critical in making treatment and transport decisions. In this case, the panel wasn't definitive, saying only that ACN data "shows promise" in improving patient outcomes and "can improve accuracy" of triage. Essentially, the panel wants more data to study. 📞

## NENA Extends Early Bird Conference Reg

The National Emergency Number Association (NENA) has extended the “early bird” registration for its June 6-11 annual conference to May 22nd, offering a savings of \$100. The conference has an amazing collection of experts, panels, PSAP tours and other informative sessions, including trainer Gordon Graham as its keynote speaker. NENA is offering a \$50 voucher to association members who register for the conference, redeemable for a discount on a future NENA national event. 📄

## Fraud Victims Tell Why They Gave Money

The victims of a dispatcher’s cancer fraud have spoken to a local Napa County (N. Calif.) reporter, explaining why they gave money to Dannille Vanderpool, who claimed to have had breast cancer. Over a two-year period, the county district attorney figures Vanderpool collected at least \$50,000 from fellow dispatchers, sheriff’s deputies, companies and other residents of the county. After co-workers became suspicious, an investigation revealed that Vanderpool does not have cancer. Her attorney says she suffers from mental illness, and that money was never the reason for her behavior. 📄

## Man ‘Tweets’ For Help at Medical Incident

When Atlanta (Geo.) councilmember Kwanza Hall noticed a commotion on a street corner, he pulled over to find a woman having a seizure. He knew his phone battery was nearly dead, and so decided to send a Twitter message--instead of dialing 911--and have his 1,889 followers dial 911 for help. Indeed, people did dial 911, but police officials said it’s unclear how many of the “several dozen” 911 calls were prompted by Hall’s Twitter request. Hall appeared on CNN and other talk shows after the incident, but police officials aren’t enthusiastic about the use of Twitter to report emergencies. Maj. Joseph Dallas said a one-to-one conversation on the phone is still the best way to ask for--and receive--help. 📄

## Dispatcher Goes Public Over DC Problems

At least one dispatcher has gone public to tell a District of Columbia television station about on-going problems at the city’s Office of Unified Communications, including disconnected 911 calls, CAD addressing issues, and money “squandered” on uniforms, chair maintenance and a childcare center that’s never been opened. Sabrina Richardson talked to a WTTG-TV reporter, and another provided a daily diary of problems that she has kept since 20067 when the joint police-fire-EMS center opened. 📄

## FCC OKs Associations’ Access to 911 Reports

The FCC has approved allowing NENA, APCO and NASNA access to confidential reports from telecom companies on the reliability and resiliency of their 911 networks and systems, but the rules prevent further disclosure of the information to the public. Local exchange carriers, certain commercial mobile radio service providers and VoIP service were required to analyze their system and submit reports to the FCC by February 6, 2009. In its latest decision, the FCC said it has the authority to issue a “protective order” for confidential records, allowing authorized persons to access the information, which the telecom companies consider to be “proprietary and confidential.” 📄

## Story of 911 Call Now Changes

The transcript of a 911 made last November to a Maine comm center indicates that the caller did mention the possibility that a man walking along a rural road at night might be intoxicated, contradicting earlier accounts of the call by the state’s Commissioner of Public Safety. No law enforcement investigated the report and two hours later, the man was killed when he was struck by two cars. The incident came to light as part of several complaints about how the state’s comm center are handling 911 calls and radio dispatches. Commissioner Anne Jordan earlier told reporters that the 911 caller, “did not say (the victim) was drunk in the road. The word ‘drunk’ was never used.” However, in the transcript released last week, the man, “”had too much hooch, I guess.” The caller first saw Darren Duncan lying in the roadway, and stopped to investigate. But Duncan then got up and approached the caller’s car. Perhaps more significant, the transcript shows the dispatcher said, “OK. I’d lay down in the road and look for ‘em ... Good way to become a speed bump.” 📄

## 911 Caller Arrested for Threatening Calls

Police in Austin (Tex.) have arrested a man who made several 911 calls to dispatchers threatening to kill officers in retaliation for an officer-involved shooting that left a teenager dead. At one point he told a calltaker, “We gonna kill a cop every time we seem ‘em.” In other calls he reported that bombs had been planted downtown, and that an officer was “down.” Police did not initially respond to the 911 calls to avoid any type of ambush confrontation. But two days later, when more 911 calls were received, police had an arrest warrant for Ellis Ingram, 27, and went to his apartment and made the arrest. 📄

## Good News Is...Well, Good News

A Scottsdale (Ariz.) man is simply grateful for the help he received after suffering a mental health crisis, and talked to a local reporter to make sure it didn't go unnoticed. The man called The Arizona Republic reporter EJ Montini to say the dispatcher, police officers and mental health workers all were understanding and professional--as it should be. He told Montini that he reads a lot of bad news. "I understand why we need to hear about it. But in this case all of these people did their jobs and saved me. Shouldn't that be news?" the man asked. Montini agreed, and you can read his account of how good work does make a difference here. 🗨️

## Report Cites Poor Communications in Accident

A report by the Ohio State Patrol says that poor radio communications played a part in the accident that seriously injured a Lockland police officer who was laying out spike strips on I-75 to catch a robbery suspect. A West Chester Township officer was pursuing the suspect at up to 80 mph, and requested spike strips, the OSP report says. But that officer never received confirmation that any officer was actually putting out the strips ahead of him. Consequently, he was focused on the suspect and didn't see Off. Brandon Gehring until it was too late to avoid a collision. Gehring was struck by the officer's SUV patrol vehicle and was near death. He has since recovered somewhat, but is in guarded condition. 🗨️

## State 911 Director Defends System

The head of Maine's 911 system said her agency has investigated recent complaints about the handling of 911 calls and says that dispatchers acted appropriately in all cases. Department of Public Safety Commissioner Anne Jordan's statements came after several agencies complained that dispatchers had either not dispatched field units or sent them to the wrong address. Jordan appeared before a legislative committee on Monday and reassured them that the state's 911 comm centers and dispatchers are operating correctly and efficiently. She said logging tapes disputed a citizen's claim that deputies failed to find a man reported to be wandering on a highway, who was later found dead. Two other incidents were also handled correctly, she said, despite claims that deputies were sent to a wrong address and failed to warn deputies of weapons. 🗨️

## 911: If Life Were Only Like This

In the latest episode of the NBC prime-time show "Southland," two officers investigate a 911 call, only to discover that it's not an emergency. Watch the short segment and see how they handle the call. 🗨️

## Surveillance Cameras A Success

The mayor of Allentown (Penn.) has declared the city's street video surveillance system a success and says there have been 29 arrests over the past 18 months from dispatchers seeing crime or directing officers to suspects. The dispatchers watch about 65 cameras throughout the city, and generated 1,215 incidents during 2008 from seeing suspicious activity or crimes. So far in 2009 the cameras have generated 750 incidents, although the mayor noted that over 400 of those were parking-related situations not handled by the police. The city hopes to add another 40 cameras to the system. 🗨️

## On-Line Community Tunes in For Pranks

The FBI has arrested and charged a 16 year-old North Carolina youth who made threatening prank calls for fun and profit, part of an on-line culture using the Internet to reach out to any location. While the boy never dialed 911 or police, the background of the incident and technology used are instructive for public safety dispatchers who handle telephone calls and who might be targeted for pranks. The boy, who is not named because he is a juvenile, allegedly used the VoIP conferencing software Ventrilo to make calls, while up to 300 persons listened in on the often-crude and racist calls he made to individuals. According to a Wired.com article, the Web site PartyVanPranks.com was used to facilitate the on-line gatherings. At some point, he began accepting money from people who wanted him to phone in bomb threats at schools in order to get out of classes. The youth was fingered by one of his followers, who felt the boy had crossed over the line. 🗨️

## Dispatcher Answers Dreaded Call--A Fire

Bulloch County (Geo.) 911 Communications dispatcher Robert Fail answered one of the most dreaded of all 911 calls--one from his own wife Melissa reporting that their house was on fire. Now Robert and Melissa are trying to put their lives back together again, aided by his co-workers and their family and friends. They recently held a barbeque lunch to raise money to help the couple. 🗨️

## iPhone Adds Scanner Software

The creation of the Apple App Store for the iPhone has prompted software developers to get busy, and now they've turned their attention to a dedicated "Emergency Radio" to monitor radio transmissions from 900 public safety agencies across the U.S. The 99¢ application takes advantage of the network of privately-operated scanner feeds on the Internet, along with many agency-operated sites. Check out the new download's features.

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## Dispatcher Indicted--Union Fraud Alleged

After a 10-month investigation, a former Jefferson County (NY) public safety dispatcher has been indicted for embezzling over \$15,000 from the labor union where she served as treasurer. Karen Calhoun, 42, was arrested by sheriff's deputies and was later released without bail. She resigned in July 2008 after serving 11 years as a dispatcher. According to the indictment, officials believe she falsified union business records, forged documents, and took money and property that belonged to the Jefferson County Sheriff's Employee Local 3089, AFL-CIO. She served as treasurer of the group from 2005 to 2007, and the indictment says the alleged crimes occurred between Jan. 2006 through March 2008.

## Lobbyist 'Interfered' With Legislation

Proposed legislation that would create a mandatory curriculum of training of public safety dispatchers in Florida failed to win support during this year's session, and one legislator said part of the reason was the interference of a lobbyist representing the state's APCO chapter. State Sen. Nancy Detert said lobbyist Richard Pinsky testified against the bill several times. In the end, the bill had no support in the state Senate, and consequently the House failed to move the bill before the legislative session ended for the year. The outcome was a disappointment to Nathan Lee, whose wife Denise was kidnapped and murdered in April 2008. Critics pointed to several incidents of miscommunication by Charlotte County and Sarasota County dispatchers as contributing to her death. After the incident, legislators quickly passed a long-pending bill to establish a training program for the state's dispatchers, but it was voluntary and offered no funding. Detert said the legislature had several major issues to consider during the session, including the budget, which left little time to debate other issues. She vowed to re-introduce the training bill in the next session.

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## Civilian-Regional Clashes With Sworn-Local

The town of Swampscott (Mass.) is conflicted with an age-old question: should they move their local dispatching operation now handled by sworn officers to a proposed regional comm center staffed by civilians. The town's police officer's union has taken a firm stance that local officers perform better than civilians at a regional comm center. But police chief Ronald Madigan supports the regional proposal, and so is the town's administrator. At a town meeting residents wanted to know more information about the costs of the move, which can't be forecast until surrounding towns and cities commit to joining the future center.

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## New York City Changes 911 Call Handling

New York City underwent a major shift in how it handles incoming 911 calls on Monday, by having 911 calltakers handle fire and EMS incidents directly and enter them into CAD, rather than transferring them those agencies' separate comm centers. The calltakers were already directly handling incidents that they determined needed a police response. City officials say this change will eliminate redundant gathering of information from callers and call transfer times, all leading to a faster emergency response. The change came after three months of training, and is part of a major upgrade to the city's emergency communications system, including a new \$1.5 billion back-up 911 center in the Bronx that will open this summer.

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## Dispatcher Responds to Critical Incident

It was Northwest Central Dispatch System (Ill.) dispatcher Paul Jenkins who answered the 911 call on April 17th reporting that three persons had been stabbed to death in the city of Hoffman Estates, and now he's been profiled in the local newspaper. He says the 911 call later sounded scarier than it actually was at the time. "When you're taking it, it's business. You fall back on your training," Jenkins told the reporter. Jenkins was just 16 minutes short of ending his night shift when the stabbing call came in--three persons dead, one critically injured. He recalls standing up during the call and talking directly to the police dispatcher to help coordinate the response quicker. Read Jenkins account of the incident here, and then read the humble letter he wrote to the local newspaper about his actions, and the newspaper's decision not to release the audio of the 911 logging tape.

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## Deputies Worried About Center's Liability

A group of Maine sheriff's deputies is seeking legal advice after continuing complaints about the service from the Central Maine Regional Communications Center. Last month a caller reported a man stumbling along a highway near Chelsea, but no officers were sent to investigate. Over an hour later, the man was found dead on the highway, apparently an accident victim. Now the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 7 that represents the Kennebec County sheriff's deputies says it has filed over 24 complaints about the center's work, and wants to know if the county would be liable if a deputy is injured or killed because of poor communications. Three state senators called for an evaluation of the state's 911 program after the highway death. ☞

## Single Wrong Digit Sent Police to Wrong House

An Erie County (Penn.) dispatcher fielded a cellular phone call reporting a man holding a woman a gunpoint, but the location wasn't given. The dispatcher obtained the subscriber's home address, and Girard police arrived to order a couple out of their home at gunpoint. But, because the dispatcher had traced the wrong telephone number, it was the wrong house. Now officials will only say that the unnamed dispatcher was fired for the mistake, and that they've apologized to the couple. Most of the incident details are coming from the couple who were surprised while watching TV. They told county officials they didn't want anyone fired over the incident, and seem very understanding. ☞

## Dog's Death Sets Off Re-Training

Officials from Manitowoc County (Wisc.) say that dispatchers will receive "refresher training" on handling incidents involving animals, after a delayed response to a loose dog 911 call was delayed, ending with the dog drowned. Manitowoc County Emergency Services coordinator Nancy Crowley said a family dog ran away, but was spotted and reported in downtown Manitowoc at 11:26 p.m. Police were handling other incidents and couldn't respond, and the fire department wasn't dispatched. A second caller reported at 11:35 p.m. that the dog was in the Manitowoc River, which has steep banks at that point. A third caller at 11:42 p.m. said a crowd had gathered along the river trying to rescue the dog. The fire department was dispatched and arrived six minutes later. Crowley said in a statement that, "Appropriate measures are being taken to assure that the procedure for handling calls of this nature is both clear and comprehensive." ☞

## Dispatcher Fired 6 Hours After Suspension Ended

A DeSoto (La.) dispatcher who was suspended for five days last month for not following proper procedures and tardiness was fired for a mistake she made six hours after returning to work. The E911 board of commissioners gave administrator Bruce Vanderhoeven authority for the immediate termination of Donna Claybrook, and he did so after she failed to transfer a 911 caller reporting a domestic disturbance to the sheriff's office. Instead, she took the information, hung up with the caller and then notified the sheriff's dispatchers herself. The mistake was discovered during the routine weekly audit of dispatchers' telephone calls and radio work. ☞

## Councilman Billed for 911 Ride

A Capitola (N. Calif.) council member who dialed 911 and demanded a ride for an intoxicated friend did violate the state's government code, the county district attorney has ruled, and owes the city \$139.98 for the ride plus a fine. Kirby Nicol told the dispatcher he was "Mayor Nicol" last month, when in fact he left office last year. He said a friend had visited his home and was now too intoxicated to drive home to an adjacent city. Someone leaked the logging tape to local media, creating criticism from the police department. The district attorney said Nicol violated the government code section related to using a public resource for personal use, punishable by a \$1,000 fine. DA Bob Lee said Nicol should also pay three times the cost of the ride a patrol officer gave his friend. Nicol apologized immediately, and said he agreed with the DA's disposition.

## Motorola Radio Unit Reports Sales Decline

Radio and electronics company Motorola Inc. reported another in a series of quarterly losses, with the company's radio division turned in a narrow profit on a sales decline of 11%. The company's financial results continue to be impacted by competition in the cellular handset market. Sales of handsets was down significantly for the quarter, as the company cut expenses and tried to introduce new handset models to jumpstart sales. The company reported revenue of \$5.3 billion for the first fiscal quarter of 2009, and posted a loss of \$449 million. The company's Enterprise Mobility Solutions unit, which includes public safety radios and systems, reported sales of \$1.6 billion, compared to \$1.8 billion for Q2 2008. Profit dropped to \$156 million, compared to \$250 million for the same quarter of 2008. In a press release, Motorola said it secured public safety contracts for the State of Mississippi, Pernambuco State in Brazil and the Danish Police.