

DISPATCH Magazine

On-Line

Stories from the on-line edition at www.911Dispatch.com

Dispatcher Uses Rare EMD Procedure to Help Victim

A Schenectady (NY) dispatcher was honored at city hall yesterday for her help in saving a person who was having breathing problems, and who had a tracheostomy tube in her throat. Dispatcher Earlene Hyman-Payne quickly realized the situation and navigated to her on-line EMD instructions, and began telling the victim's husband what to do. The tube was blocked, and the husband worked quickly to clear it, following Hyman-Payne's instructions. But the victim wasn't breathing on her own when EMS units arrived. Fortunately, the husband had also followed Hyman-Payne's rescue breathing instructions, and the victim survived. During last night's city hall ceremony, Hyman-Payne was presented with a resolution praising her actions. 🗨️

Guidelines Issued for Human Trafficking Calls

As part of its on-going efforts on creating best practices for handling 911 and other telephone calls, the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) has posted a draft protocol on handling human trafficking incidents, which it calls, "a global crime that involves obtaining or maintaining the labor, services or commercial sex acts of another through the use of force, fraud, or coercion in violation of an individual's human rights." The 62-page document sets out procedures for handling various calls, tips on how to approach reluctant victims who call, and provides a list of resource agencies that can be contacted for information and help. 🗨️

Texting 911—Not Ready Yet

Sending a text "911" message to comm centers in Connecticut is unreliable, has no priority status and doesn't provide any way to indicate the message went through, according to telecom officials who testified before a state legislative committee on Wednesday. The hearing was sparked by the murder of a woman who used her cellular phone to send text messages to a friend, prompting Rep. Stephen Dargan to wonder if the capability exists in the state. But a Verizon official explained there is no connection between the text message system used by cellular companies and public safety comm centers. Marissa Mitrovich said implementing the feature, "will take many years." AT&T director of public policy Peter White told the committee members, "If you need help, don't go to Facebook. Don't Twitter. Don't send a text message. Call and talk." 🗨️

911 Call, Response Questioned After Shooting


The family of a man shot and killed by San Jose (Calif.) police last May has filed a lawsuit against the department alleging dispatchers didn't follow proper procedures in dispatching officers trained in handling persons with mental illnesses, and that the shooting could have been prevented. Police officials emphasize the incident happened very quickly and that dispatchers and officers acted appropriately. Family members dialed 911 for help and gave conflicting information about whether Pham was under the influence of drugs, mentally ill or pos-

November – 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

What's Up?

Exactly eight years after the Sept. 11th terrorist attacks, new information is still being released—or rather leaked—that provides insights into the emergency response. A wireless carrier probably was the source of 500,000 pager messages posted on-line, generated by various government officials from FEMA, the FBI and Secret Service. Reviewers found no new significant information, but did discover insights into how information flowed after the attacks, and how it was frequently wrong.

There continues to be backroom political maneuvering over the D Block of spectrum in the 700 MHz band, after it failed to sell during a Jan. 2008 auction. NENA, APCO and a slew of other public safety organizations are setting out their positions on the issue: re-auction the spectrum, give it outright to public safety or...well, something else. There is some disagreement among the associations that normally work well together, which is probably a healthy thing. And much of the debate is substantially overblown—no, this spectrum *won't* bring interoperability on its own and conversely, not having the spectrum doesn't mean agencies can't achieve interoperability. But long-term, it *is* needed, and eventually, the Congress and the FCC will act.

Are your logging recorders working properly, and do you have written, standard procedures for producing copies of those tapes for the DA and attorneys? You may want to review your processes in light of a San Jose (Calif.) criminal case where a forensic expert disputed some of the logging tape records. Even the way you label the CDs may figure into the final verdict.

Lastly, is 45 too old to be a dispatcher? Check the story on age discrimination.

Gary Allen - Editor

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

sibly drunk. The exact words spoken by the family and recorded on the logging tapes are also in dispute. About 25% of the department's officers are trained as part of a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), but dispatchers didn't assign any members of the team to the incident. ☞

Nightclubs Bypass 911 With New Radio Link

Nightclub security personnel in West Palm Beach (Fla.) will soon be able to bypass the city's police dispatchers and use radios to directly contact the beat officer when trouble develops at their business. The radios will also be able to contact security personnel at other clubs to improve handling of rowdy or drunk patrons who wander from club to club. The radios will cost \$300 for each club that participates in the program, and the concept was tested earlier this year among 10 downtown condo properties. ☞

Radio System Still Suffers From Glitches

The Milwaukee (Wisc.) Police Department is still working to upgrade its radio system to digital technology, five years after M/A-COMM installed the system, and faces a complete replacement of its comm center consoles, which will be obsolete by 2012. A long article in the Journal Sentinel newspaper says the system is over-budget and behind schedule. However, Harris Corp., who purchased M/A-COMM earlier this year, said it's committed to making the system work, including upgrading the consoles. You'll recall that several other jurisdictions have had problems with M/A-COMM systems, including New York state. ☞

Leaked: Fed Pager Messages After 9/11 Attacks

A Web site known for posting confidential and top secret government information has posted a remarkable collection of over 500,000 pager messages that were transmitted during and after the Sept. 11th terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington (DC). The messages posted by WikiLeaks.com include transmissions by a wide range of agencies, including the FBI, FEMA, Secret Service and security officials of several private financial and communications companies. The Web site hasn't explained how or from whom they obtained the compilation of messages, which provide no new dramatic information about the incident. However, the messages do provide considerable insight into how the agencies obtained information after the attacks, and how they reacted.

3-Min. Tape Records Gun Battle

A gun battle between Cincinnati (Ohio) police officers and a wanted man was over in just three minutes, and was documented on a logging tape of radio traffic and on dashboard video cameras. Off. Gregory Toyegas pulled over a car that had changed lanes and cut him off. But then while being questioned, suspect Randolph Ward grabbed a gun and ran from the car. Toyegas followed Ward and the two exchanged shots behind a shopping mall. Ward ran towards a white van being used by a highway repair crew, but was confronted by other officers and Taser'd—without effect—as he hopped into the driver's seat of the van. When Ward fired at the officers, they returned fire and Ward was killed. 📄 📍

Court Dispute Over Tape Provides Insights

A forensic audio expert hired by the attorney of a San Jose (Calif.) woman charged with drug and weapons violations believes that a 911 call reporting the crimes was tampered with, and his report provides some insights into how comm centers might better prepare original recordings and make copies that will withstand court scrutiny. A San Jose judge recently denied a defense request to admit evidence of tampering, essentially ruling that the logging tape is authentic. The case involves the arrest of Shari Nolan on drug and weapons possession charges in Nov. 2007, after her boyfriend dialed 911 to report a dispute between the two. During the 911 call to a veteran male San Jose police calltaker, Roy Legge laid out the dispute, and gave the calltaker complete and, what turned out to be, accurate information that Nolan was traveling in a car with guns and drugs. Officers were immediately dispatched to the area, and one spotted Nolan's car and stopped her. She was arrested and has been fighting the charges in court ever since. After Nolan's arrest, Legge denied that he gave incriminating statements during the 911 calls, but his contention was contradicted by the tape and CAD records as recorded by the calltaker. So, San Jose defense attorney Steve Defilippis challenged the authenticity of the call recordings, hiring a Maine-based audio expert to examine the tape. According to forensic examiner Arlo West, the recording didn't pass several of the "Seven Tenets of Audio Authenticity."

NENA Steps Back, Now Supports D Block Plan

The National Emergency Number Association (NENA) has issued a statement giving limited support to a plan for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to allocate the D Block of wireless spectrum to the public

safety community. The spectrum block in the 700 MHz band was created by the FCC and put up for auction last year, with the intent to create a public-private, nationwide wireless communications network. However, the auction failed to attract any bids that met the FCC-set minimum. Ever since, the D Block has been un-allocated, and various groups have proposed plans on how it could be used. Previously, NENA had endorsed a plan—unsupported and in some cases completely opposed by other public safety groups—to combine the D Block with an adjacent block, and then re-auction it to create a public safety network and generate revenue for public safety agencies. In its statement last week, NENA president Craig Wittington and CEO Brian Fontes said NENA had a "dialogue with its public safety partners," and now "would join those advocating for a reallocation of the D Block to public safety." But they added that long-term funding for public safety communications is still needed, and that issue is not addressed by the proposal to assign D Block to public safety. In an interview with TR Daily, Fontes said the statement is not a reversal of the group's position. Instead, it simply adds one more alternative to NENA's past position. 📄 📍

Calif. 911 Strategic Plan Released

The state of California has posted a 261-page report from a consulting firm outlining a strategic plan for development of the state's 911 system, including establishing operations standards, improved funding and plans for Next Generation 911. The report notes the age of the current analog system, that the state's 911 advisory board is under-used, and that there is are no shared best practices among comm centers, nor any real enforcement of answer time standards. 📄 📍

FCC Updates Rules on Relay Services

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has issued an Order that updates its previous rules on handling emergency calls made through a relay service, usually used by the hearing impaired. The update takes into account relay calls made by a video or Internet connection, technology that is much more flexible and effective than a typical TTY device. Specifically, the rules focus on how such relay calls are identified when they arrive at the PSAP, and how callbacks from a dispatcher are handled at the relay service office. 📄 📍

CAD Keystroke Error Delays Fire Response

Fire officials in New York City say a dispatcher's error while typing in the address of a reported fire led to a nearly one-minute response delay to a fire that claimed the lives of three persons. The dispatcher typed in "62nd St." instead of the correct address of 65th Street, sending units to the wrong location, and also shifting some of the first-due units to a firehouse further away. Despite the delay, city officials said the building had been illegally subdivided into rooms, had no smoke detectors or sprinklers, and those conditions probably contributed more to the deaths than the delay. The firefighters' union took the opportunity to add to their complaints about the new CAD system and dispatching procedures the city introduced earlier this year, saying mistakes are rampant. All calls—police and fire—are now handled by the former 911 dispatchers, who are now part of the Unified Calltaking (UCT) system. The calltakers obtain information, enter it into CAD, where it's handled by teams of police and fire radio dispatchers. Previously, the 911 calltakers transferred fire-related telephone calls to borough-based fire alarm offices for handling and dispatch. David Rosenzweig of the Fire Alarm Dispatchers' Benevolent Association said that the UCT personnel received only eight hours of training to handle fire incidents, which he called "ridiculous." He added, "(This) is not the last catastrophic event we're going to have." The NY Daily News newspaper has also raised questions about two city officials who worked on the CAD upgrade, and who were later hired by one of the major sub-contractors on the project, raising the question of a conflict of interest. ☞

Veteran Chicago Official Resigns, Firing Imminent?

In the wake of an investigation by the Chicago Inspector General's (IG) office into contract practices at the Office of Emergency Management and Communications (OEMC), life-long public safety communications official Jim Argiropoulos has resigned from his position as deputy commissioner of the OEMC. Sources within the agency that provides 911 calltaking and radio dispatching for the city's police and fire departments say Argiropoulos would have been fired if he had stayed, after the IG's investigation found Argiropoulos had falsified documents in 2004 to obtain new comm center consoles. According to the IG report, Argiropoulos falsely claimed to purchase 18,000 radio accessories under an existing contract, for the same price as the consoles would cost. He should have obtained approval for the console purchase and put the purchase out to bid, according to

city regulations. Argiropoulos began his dispatching career at 15, and worked as a paramedic before joining the OEMC. ☞

Dispatchers Confuse Calls, Victim Not Found

Fairfield County (Ohio) officials have disciplined two 911 dispatchers who mistakenly believed that two 911 calls were related, and didn't send deputies to a section of rural road where a woman had been struck and killed by a passing vehicle. Susan Blade apparently ran out of gas, and was standing in or alongside a rural road when she was struck by a passing car. The driver of the car dialed 911 at 2 a.m. to say he/she might have struck something. At the same moment, another 911 caller reported horses loose in the roadway nearby. The dispatchers apparently believed the two calls were related, and did not send anyone to investigate. It wasn't until several hours later that a passing state trooper discovered Blade's body in the roadway. Sheriff Dave Phalen said the dispatchers were reprimanded for their inaction. ☞

Hit-and-Run Fatality, Now 911 Questions

Baltimore (Md.) police say they are investigating how a dispatcher handled a 911 call reporting a possible drunken driver, 90 minutes before that same vehicle struck and killed a 20 year-old university student, and then fled the scene. Miriam Frankl was run down by a white truck, the same one reported earlier by Nicholas Walters as speeding, driving erratically, and circling the neighborhood. Police later arrested Thomas Meighan Jr., who has nine convictions for DUI and many other traffic citations. A transcript of the 911 call seems to show the calltaker properly obtained information about the vehicle, and that a radio dispatcher informed the appropriate beat officer. But the caller says he believes the call didn't receive the appropriate attention, and that the driver might have been stopped before killing Frankl.

Dispatcher Part of Lawsuit Over Shooting

An unnamed Scottsdale (Ariz.) police dispatcher is among the defendants in a lawsuit filed by the family of a man shot and paralyzed by police in Nov. 2008. According to police, the dispatcher fielded a 911 from David Hulstedt, who demanded to speak to the state's governor, Janet Napolitano. "We've got a crisis on our hands," Hulstedt told the dispatcher. There was a baby crying in the background of the call, and Hulstedt then hung up. The incident was classified as a barricaded subject, and officers arrived to confront Hulstedt holding an infant over his head. When he refused to put the baby down, officers ended up shooting him, leading to

his paralysis. The family says the response was “inappropriate” and officers should have let the family talk to Hulstedt instead of confronting him with guns.

Lawsuit Claims Firing Over Dispatcher's Age

A former Leelanau County (Mich.) dispatcher filed suit last month in county district court claiming she was fired in Sept. 2007, partly because she was 45 years-old, and replaced with a 25-year old employee. Cathy Engel also claims she suffered from discrimination and harassment by comm center management because a lawsuit that her son filed against the county. Charles Hameline was arrested in 2007 for drunk driving, and later filed a lawsuit against the deputies and the county alleging excessive force. The lawsuit was later dismissed, but Engel now says the county retaliated against her for her son's lawsuit. 📧 🗣️

Shooting Raises Question—What Did Officers Know?

The fatal officer shooting of a mentally ill San Jose (Calif.) man last May has raised questions among the victim's family and the community about what officers knew and why they took deadly action. The police department initially said officers were unaware of that Daniel Pham suffered from any mental illness, but just-released police documents and logging tapes of the 911 calls and radio traffic show that a dispatcher did say on the radio that officers had previously dealt with a mentally ill man at the address. As officers arrived, two dispatchers were talking to a neighbor outside and a woman locked inside a bedroom of the house. Pham had slashed his brother's neck with a knife, and he approached officers when they arrived and told them Daniel was “high on drugs,” not mentally ill. The officers confronted Pham in the backyard over a fence and tried to distract him. But when he charged the officers, they fired 14 times, striking him 12 times. 📧 🗣️

Unarmed Man Shot by Police, Caught on Tape

Two Des Moines (Iowa) police officers shot and seriously wounded a man who was acting erratic, took a discount store employee hostage and threatened that he had a gun, an incident that was captured by a logging recorder during a 911 call. Daniel Carter survived the shooting, and police now say he did not have a gun. An employee of the store dialed 911 when he entered the store, telling a dispatcher, “He says he has a gun on him.” Officers arrived, and confronted Carter as the employee stayed on the phone with the dispatcher. 📧 🗣️

Man Dies Under Car, 'Help' Didn't Bring Help

The Michigan State Police are investigating how a series of 911 calls were handled by a dispatcher after learning that no one responded after a caller reported hearing agonized screaming for help somewhere in a neighborhood of Wyoming city. Forty minutes later the next-door neighbor of the caller discovered her fiancé dead in the garage, crushed when his car fell off a repair jack. The coroner says the man died quickly, and that an immediate response would not have saved him. However, the man's family is wondering why no police were dispatched to investigate the yells for help. The caller couldn't pinpoint the location of the yelling, even though he toured the neighborhood in his car. The calls for help stopped within one or two minutes, the caller said. 📧 🗣️

Jury Rules on 911 Call, Hearing-Impaired Suspect

A federal jury in Oregon has issued its verdict in a civil lawsuit filed by the family of a hearing-impaired man who was Tasered and physically arrested after a dispatcher failed to relay information to officers about his disability. Erik Pierce was involved in a domestic dispute in 2005, and the brother of a woman involved in the dispute dialed 911. The caller mentioned that Pierce was deaf and had mental health issues, the lawsuit states. But the Willamette Valley Communications Center dispatchers did not give that information to deputies who responded. When Keizer police officers arrived and saw Pierce walking away, they ordered him to stop, instructions which he didn't hear and didn't comply with. The Taser and struggle followed. The jury ruled primarily on the use of force used, but also on the county's failure to accommodate his lack of hearing when jailed. The jury found the officers were guilty of excessive force, but found the city of Salem, who operates the comm center, and Marion County, who operates the jail, guilty of negligence and violations of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). 📧 🗣️

Verification of Logging Tape Very Complicated

Three words are missing—or at least temporarily lost—from a 911 call made back in 2006 by a woman who saw a suspicious man she believed was trying to steal money from a gas station ATM. Police arrived to confront the suspect, and ended up Taser the man, who later died. Now the man's family has filed a federal lawsuit claiming police violated the rights of Otto Zehm, who was mentally ill and not trying to steal money. The 911 call was answered by a Spokane County dispatcher, who

briefly talked to the caller and transferred her to the Spokane police. During the call, the witness may have said, "He's on something." But logging tapes of the two calls were never released together because of the two jurisdictions, and printed transcripts of the two calls were released with different versions, one without the three words. All parties are now scouring Web sites that might have posted full transcripts of both calls shortly after the incident. 