

September/October
Volume 4, Issue 4

Erie County Public Safety

Special Interest Articles:

- QA & Public Safety
- Homeland Security Training

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Letter from County Executive Barry Grossman



Quality Assurance is a system for ensuring a desired level of quality in the development, production, or delivery of products and services. My Administration has made it a priority to be sure that all actions necessary are in place to provide confidence to the 286,000 citizens of Erie County regarding our 9-1-1 Public Safety Center.



In this issue of the Public Safety newsletter, you will get a peek into just what kind of quality assurance steps are being taken. This process is an on-going endeavor by Public Safety Director Geers and his team. It requires constant review of calls coming in to the Center, along with action steps for the call-takers and dispatchers in the event a call may not meet the set standards. This review is an opportunity for improvement, education, and enhancement of a call-taker or dispatcher's skill set.



Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to recognize and congratulate two 911 call-takers at our Center, Jackie Polka and Heather Pasewicz, who successfully helped deliver two healthy babies. With the training, education, and computer systems currently in place, these call takers had the knowledge and skill to calmly walk the parents-to-be through a tense, scary, and exciting event with a truly positive outcome.



My Administration will continue to monitor the steps in place for Quality Assurance. I am confident that our Public Safety Center will remain on this important path of quality assurance and excellence in providing 9-1-1 services to all Erie County residents.



Quality Assurance & I

By: Todd Geers, Director of Public Safety

Job Well Done!

Best Call-Taking Times

Police Incident
Chris DiRaimo
19 Seconds

Fire Incident
Mike Howard
38 Seconds

EMS Incident
Jeff Barrett
27 Seconds



Best Dispatching Times

Police Incident
Nick Seelinger
6 Seconds

Fire Incident
Jeff Barrett
6 Seconds

EMS Incident
Jeff Barrett
6 Seconds



In 1985, I was 21 years old. That was the year I was appointed a Collateral Duty Inspector (CDI) in the US Navy. I was so proud of myself, a youngster with grown-up responsibilities. At that time I was serving on the carrier USS Midway as an avionics technician on the SH-3H helicopter. The quality assurance axiom in the Navy was “you cannot inspect your own work,” hence the need for CDIs. I was entrusted with inspecting the proper twist rate of safety wire; that the four bolts removed from the radar antenna were all reinstalled; and, that the anti-corrosion spray was applied to wiring harnesses with a brush, not sprayed on like paint. Important tasks, each one; tasks that instilled in me from an early age the need for quality work and that an inspection system is critical to life safety. Within a year I was appointed a Quality Assurance Representative (QAR), the guy who inspects the CDIs.

Several years later, I am minding my own business and enjoying flying the E-2C Hawkeye off the carrier USS Independence in Japan, when I was appointed the Quality Assurance Officer for the squadron; now I am the guy in charge of all the QARs! Around this time I was certified in the Total Quality Management movement of the late W. Edwards Deming, the man who introduced quality control methods to Japanese manufacturers. The Navy, though, liked the phrase, Total Quality Leadership.

So, what does all this have to do with public safety?! In the Navy or at the Public Safety Building, a quality assurance program consists of two simple steps: 1) a systematic review of processes to ensure adherence to policy and consistency in standards; and 2) acting on the results of the review to improve those policies and standards. For example, a review of the audio records of a 9-1-1 call may lead to a training opportunity to enhance a call-taker’s skill of call control or knowledge of local geography. Or within emergency management, a review of an incident may help frame a different response or a quicker notification system to impacted municipalities. Quality assurance is also the mindset that personal and professional growth comes from self-evaluation and constant improvement: learning new words; earning that college degree; remembering to bring an umbrella; or, from prior experience, knowing to answer the question, “Honey, how do I look in these jeans?” by saying, “Oh, look at the time. Gotta go!”

I hope you enjoy this newsletter as we share some of our quality assurance programs.

Quality Assurance at 9-1-1

By: Ryne Rutkowski, Quality Assurance Coordinator



Before becoming the QA Coordinator, I was a call-taker and dispatcher for four years. After being awarded the new position in May, I traveled to Baltimore for training and came home with certifications from the National Academies of Emergency Dispatch in both medical and fire QA disciplines. These certifications correlate directly to the protocol system our call-takers use for medical and fire calls. Our call-takers use a computer program version of the protocols called ProQA. While in Baltimore, I also received training in AQUA, which is a software program used to more efficiently and more accurately review ProQA data. The program allows me to review calls more quickly and accurately than using paper forms that were used in the past. AQUA also allows me to easily track trends in protocol compliance which results in better data for quality improvement programs.

I've really tried to hit the ground running in the new position and I see the importance of the process and the benefits the process can provide.



Quality Improvement

By: Ryne Rutkowski, Quality Assurance Coordinator

Quality improvement isn't just a reactive tool as the example above showed. Most often we try to be proactive with it. Several times each month, I put out to the floor a one or two page article providing tips and tricks for call-taking from the QA prospective. (QA is often referred to as the Q... Q guides, Q manuals, Q reviews, etc.) These articles are about seasonal topics like heat or cold exposure protocols, local geography reminders, protocol hints and tips, and call taking skill refreshers. The articles are a way to prevent minor issues from becoming major issues. Take the Memorial Day edition for example. The focus was on Presque Isle State Park and listed popular places on the peninsula as well as how to enter those locations in the CAD. By putting out those reminders before receiving an influx of calls from Presque Isle, we avoided many potential problems with callers only knowing a general location of the emergency.



Quality Improvement Continued....

Another proactive initiative I've started uses reactive information – stay with me here. Twice a month, I take data collected for the month so far and post it in the call center and break down the information by shift. The report shows each shift's compliance in case entry, chief complaint, key questions, pre-arrival instructions, post dispatch instructions, final coding, customer service, and an overall compliance score. I try to come up with a different theme for each report, the latest by request (pictured top right), is Tiddlywinks. I superimposed the requestor's picture into the theme for added humor. Past themes have been carnival games, horse races, and house building. Most everyone seems entertained by the themes, which in turn sparks more interest in the report data. The report lets everyone know where each shift stands, spurring some internal motivation as well as a little competition between shifts.



Top Gun Competition

By: Ryne Rutkowski, Quality Assurance Coordinator

A little known fact about Director Todd Geers is that he is a huge Top Gun fan. He's also a fan of the newly started Top Gun competition in the call center. Each call-taker has been given a call sign, just like in the movie. My Top Gun name is Ryne "Condor" Rutkowski. Hanging in the call center is a roster board with everyone's name and three Ace blocks following it. To achieve an Ace, the call-taker must process the call with 100% compliance in 60 seconds or less, which is no easy task. Call-takers can submit calls for review when they believe they have achieved an Ace.



Once three Aces are achieved the call-taker makes Top Gun status, and their name goes on the Top Gun plaque for the month. Excellence is expected from our Top Guns though. Excellence is expected from our Top Guns though, and with one review below a specified level, it's back to flight school! Small prizes are awarded for achievements of different kinds. The competition is in its second month, and we hope to see it continue to evolve and grow in popularity. The creation of the competition was a joint effort between Shift Commander John Durlin and myself.



The Future of Quality Assurance at Public Safety

By: Ryne Rutkowski, Quality Assurance Coordinator

In addition to improving the quality of call-taking and dispatching, I am also working on several administrative projects. The biggest project is the reduction of paper used in the QA process. When I first took over the position, a typical QA would require printing five pages of paper. Based on call volume, I typically complete 15-20 reviews daily, not including special reviews and other projects. That's over 100 pages of paper daily!

To help curb paper and toner use, through the help of the IT department, I can now remotely log into a CAD terminal from my office, eliminating the need to print CAD reports for each call I review. I can now pull up the call on my computer, review it, and close out the call again without printing a page.

At this time the review itself still needs to be printed for the call-taker or dispatcher to review, sign, and be filed, but I've reduced the number of pages per review to three. With the availability of iPads in the Erie County system, I hope to eventually eliminate paper altogether through the use of PDF files, e-signatures, and data storage on servers rather than filing cabinets.

So, that is the quality assurance program in a nutshell. I'm excited to have the opportunity to serve the community in this new capacity and even more excited to see where I can take the program in the future. I believe that improvements in the quality assurance program results in better service to those who call 9-1-1, which in turn creates a better outcome of emergencies in the community.



Public Safety Staff Attend Homeland Security Training



Kale Asp, Department of Public Safety Assistant 9-1-1 Coordinator, and Jack Carter, Department of Public Safety Training Administrator, recently completed an instructor training course at the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) in Anniston, Alabama. The center is operated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency. In addition to instructor training, the CDP teaches emergency responders necessary skills to respond to and manage incidents. Jack and Kale attended this training class to enhance their instructional knowledge skills and to function as federally-certified instructors. "Attending this CDP course provides us a credible background to deliver training at home. This training provides a great deal of knowledge. When we provide training at home, it will be beneficial for all of our staff, and the public we serve," said Kale Asp, about the Train-the-Trainer course.

Responders attending the center's training are selected from the nation's 11 million emergency responders. Training ensures that responders gain critical skills and confidence to be better prepared to effectively respond to local incidents or potential weapons of mass destruction incidents.

"The FEMA instructor course that I took in Anniston, Alabama was very in depth, very structured, and really helped me build on my experience as an instructor," stated Jack Carter. Jack recently received his CPR/First Aid instructor certification, followed by his APCO PST 1 certifications. He is currently in the process of completing his APCO CTO instructor qualifications as well.



Administrative Employee of the Quarter

Randy Tripp

Randy (pictured right) was chosen for the Administrative Employee of the Quarter, not only for his patient, calm demeanor, but also for his effort to constantly go above and beyond what is already asked of him. Randy is always looking for ways to improve the IT Department at Public Safety. Willingness to learn, taking on outside responsibilities, and applying his knowledge of Fire/EMS to help improve our systems is what made Randy an easy pick for this award.

From your Public Safety Family, THANK YOU



Telecommunicator of the Quarter



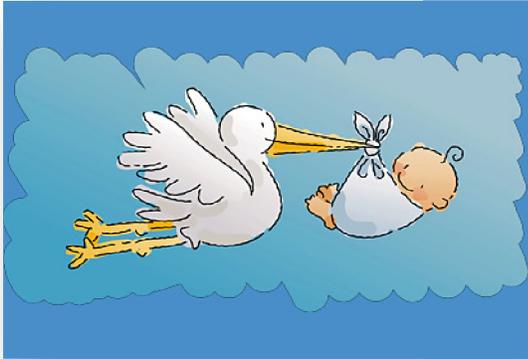
Heather Pasewicz



Heather (pictured left) was chosen for this award by more than one of her fellow staff members. She is always respectful of those around her, and constantly displays professionalism and integrity. She is always striving to be better, and do better as a call-taker/dispatcher. Heather always acts as a team member, and helps others when needed. Her wonderful, pleasant, positive attitude is what makes Heather the Telecommunicator of the Quarter.

Thank you for everything you do.

Another day, another baby!



Recently Public Safety congratulated two call-takers, Jackie Polka, and Heather Pasewicz, for helping deliver two healthy babies within five minutes of receiving the initial call. Here's another story!

Ashley Rhodes, another recent graduate from the Call-Taker/Dispatcher Academy, helped deliver a healthy baby boy on September 22nd, 2013. The call came in at 8:46 P.M, and the baby was delivered at 8:52 P.M.

Captain John Bosley from Perry Hi-Way Hose Company took the time to thank Ashley for a job well done. "I would like to commend Call-taker Ashley Rhodes for a job well done." After speaking with the father on scene, who was on the line with Ashley, he stated he was, "freaked out but the dispatcher walked me through each step". He was very appreciative of all parties involved, including the 9-1-1 Call-taker. Captain Bosley also stated, "I also commend her ability to maintain control of the situation, as this was the patient's first pregnancy, and therefore would not normally progress so quickly. The actual childbirth itself happened very quickly. Excellent use of the protocols and EMD cards resulted in a textbook childbirth and a happy family. From one EMD to another, I would like to officially congratulate Ashley Rhodes on a job well done. "



Pictured left:
Ashley Rhodes

Pictured below:
Jackie Polka



Pictured left: Heather
Pasewicz