

# Erie County Public Safety Newsletter

## **Special Interest Articles:**

- EmergencyCare  
Raises  
Awareness
- Albion VFD
- UPMC Cath  
Lab

## Erie County Department of Public Safety

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County Executive

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## Letter from County Executive Barry Grossman

Necessity is the mother of all invention. Invention promotes progress. Progress implies change, yet change sometimes carries a negative tone: a disruption of the norm, a departure from one's comfort zone. Change occurs daily, and even hourly, in our lives.

Recent changes in Public Safety have improved agency coordination, decreased overall dispatch times, assigned ownership to processes and tasks, enhanced professionalism, and standardized operational procedures. Although some or all of these changes may have met resistance by various stakeholders, it is difficult to argue against the need for such change. The Administration is very pleased with the positive collaboration that has occurred with these stakeholders thus far. The goal is to continue working toward a product that stays in line with the general mission of Public Safety, while at the same time keeps the safety and security of the citizens of Erie County at the forefront.

In this issue of the Public Safety Newsletter, you will read a letter from Public Safety Director, Todd Geers, information about fire department collaboration, Emergencycare raising awareness during CPR and AED month, along with Public Safety Center news. The Administration would like to wish all of you a safe and happy Labor Day weekend.

Barry Grossman,  
County Executive



## Letter from Public Safety Director, Todd Geers

Past issues of the Public Safety Newsletter mentioned our efforts at process improvement such as with the radio procedures manuals, mobile data terminals, and 9-1-1 call-transfers to secondary dispatch centers, to name a few. An equally important and multi-faceted improvement initiative focuses on enhancing, fortifying, and realigning the three-band, county radio system.

### **JOB WELL DONE!**

#### **BEST CALL- TAKING TIMES** July 2012

Police Incident  
29 Seconds:  
Chris Diraimo

Fire/EMS  
Incident  
31 Seconds:  
Tom Brown  
Liz Hermann

#### **BEST DISPATCHING TIMES** July 2012

Police Incident  
17 Seconds:  
Ed Finck

Fire/EMS  
Incident  
13 Seconds:  
Jim Allen

The current radio system used by Erie County's first responders has been operational for decades. In the beginning, numerous dispatch centers existed in Erie County, each served by their own radio and tower. Over the years, consolidations eventually brought this disparate collection of towers together under the Public Safety umbrella. Dispatchers and first responders would appreciate a new, properly engineered county-wide radio system, one that supports interoperability via a single frequency band. Since a new system costs \$10+M and a source of funds has not been identified, it is prudent and necessary to continue enhancing the radio system we have.



Although the radio system is simple in design and old-school in its frequency usage, the various tower sites across the county are connected via a modern, Internet Protocol-based, microwave system called Canopy, which provides backhaul routing of signals to and from the dispatchers. One component of our improvement efforts is to ensure an optimal Canopy configuration; as the new mobile data terminal system will also share a portion of the Canopy backhaul, the infrastructure of the county's radio system is being called upon to perform double duty.

Saving money is not a guiding principle of our process improvement strategy, rather a benefit which hopefully reduces our annual infrastructure costs. Public Safety spends \$145K on tower leases and tens of thousands more on leased phone lines for back-up connectivity. Any savings realized can be directed toward other projects without upsetting our budget or asking County Council for more money.

A comprehensive survey of radio signal coverage was started last fall in preparation for the West County consolidation, and continues today as the primary determinate for both tower site reduction and expansion in areas with weak signal strength. A desired by-product of the survey is to create a dispatcher guide for optimal tower site selection. Future projects associated with the county radio system include creating regional police talk-groups, redesigning the county's medical frequency plan, and eliminating out-of-county interference in VHF low-band.

# Emergycare Raises Awareness During National CPR & AED Awareness Month

*Submitted by Jennifer Farrar, Director of Development*



During the month of June, EmeryCare undertook several programs to inform the community about the importance of learning CPR and how to use an AED during National CPR and AED Awareness month. In partnership with the Erie Times News, a series of ads providing facts about the importance of CPR and AED use ran in the newspaper and on GoErie.com all month long. In addition, EmeryCare provided information and statistics about CPR and AED use to households across Northwestern PA through printed newsletter, e-mail newsletter and Facebook promotion.

The awareness project wrapped up with a free CPR training day at the Erie Zoo on June 30. The free program offered individuals the opportunity to learn the hands-only CPR technique recommended for non-medical bystanders by the American Heart Association. Participants also were able to use demonstration AEDs to learn how they worked and overcome the fear of doing something wrong when using them. The program was suitable for all ages with the youngest participant being 5 years old and the oldest 82. According to our follow-up survey of participants, the two things they found most helpful from the training program were to not be afraid to do CPR and that any CPR is better than no CPR so they should do their best until emergency personnel arrive.

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*The program was suitable for all ages with the youngest participant being 5 years old and the oldest 82.*

Thanks to a grant from Highmark and partnership with the Erie Times News, each household that participated in the free training at the Erie Zoo received an American Heart Association Friends & Family CPR take-home kit so they can practice their skills and share them with others. The kit included a copy of the training video, a skills reminder card and a mini-manikin to fine tune their technique. Participants agreed to quarterly communications from EmeryCare for a year to remind them to use their kit to practice their skills.

Special thanks to Highmark, Erie Times News and the Erie Zoo for their generosity in supporting this community health program.



# Albion VFD News

*Submitted by Chief Scott Hyde, Albion Volunteer Fire Department*

Albion Volunteer Fire Department is the proud owner of a new 2012 Toyne tanker! With 2000 gallons of water onboard and a pump rating of 1250, this hybrid pumper/tanker is fully capable of fighting fires and supporting the fire fight through tanker shuttle operations. Albion VFD proudly displayed their newest rig at the Fire Department Instructors Conference held at Indianapolis, Indiana on April 21, 2012.



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*Albion VFD, along with several other fire departments, will don PINK RIBBON STICKERS on their helmets in support of Breast Cancer Awareness month.*

Albion VFD, along with several other fire departments, will don PINK RIBBON STICKERS on their helmets in support of Breast Cancer Awareness month. Any Erie County department interested in this promotion for a GREAT cause may contact Chief Hyde at [avfd620@hotmail.com](mailto:avfd620@hotmail.com) or 814.566.4510 for more information. Pink ribbon stickers are \$5.00 for a sheet of 12; we will be ordering soon.

Albion Borough Police Chief Dan Ries, Officer Mark Gadley, and Albion Fire Chief / Fire Marshal Scott Hyde were awarded the Pennsylvania Association of Arson Investigators most prestigious award at a June 2012 awards dinner in State College. The George T. Lewis, Jr. Investigative Achievement Award was bestowed upon Chief Ries, Officer Gadley, and Chief Hyde for criminal and arson investigative work on the 2010 arson fire at the Northwestern Middle School, which led to the arrest and conviction of three juvenile suspects, and for the 2011 arson fire at the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad diesel shop, which resulted in losses of \$500,000 and led to the arrest and conviction of three adults and two juveniles.



# UPMC Hamot Excels With Direct to Cath-Lab Program

*Submitted by Jason C. Chenault, PhD, CEM, FACEM  
Senior Director of Emergency & Regional Services  
UPMC Hamot*

Recently here at UPMC Hamot, we have been breaking records in getting patients to our Cath Lab while bypassing our Emergency Department. There have been several success stories over the past few months where we have been able to directly bypass the ED and get our patients directly to our Cath Lab. Record-breaking treatments like this enforce the Top 50 Cardiac Award UPMC Hamot recently received from Thomson Reuters. This was the eighth time UPMC Hamot received this prestigious award.

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*UPMC Hamot reinvented the way its physicians, nurses, and staff handle heart attack admissions to the Emergency Department by the creation of the “direct-to-Cath-Lab” program in December 2010.*

Our best official time yet was back in May, 2012 when it took only 20 minutes from the time the patient arrived to the UPMC Hamot Emergency Department’s door to opening the patient’s artery- which is called “door-to-balloon” time. The out-of-town patient was enjoying lunch at McDonald’s when the sudden chest pain took him by surprise. Quick thinking by McDonald’s staff to call 911 got the ball rolling. The emergency crew that arrived on the scene quickly hooked the patient up to a cardiac monitor and completed a 12-lead EKG. The EKG was transmitted to the UPMC Hamot Emergency Department, and the ED physician determined the patient needed to go directly to the Cath Lab. Recognition of signs and symptoms of a heart attack and dialing 911 as quick as possible are very important for enabling care like this. Time is muscle, and the faster you call, the faster we can help.

Most recently, in June, 2012, another patient laid on her bathroom floor, unable to control her hands or feet. Minutes earlier the Frewsburg, N.Y., woman was standing in the backyard with her husband, when she felt a searing pain around her shoulder blades, followed by intense nausea. The patient thought she was having a stroke. What she didn’t know was that a blood clot had completely blocked her left anterior descending coronary artery. This blood vessel is commonly called the “widow maker,” as these blockages often lead to cardiac arrest and death. This husband and wife knew something was wrong. They also knew that the nearest hospital with a Cath Lab was more than 55 miles away from their rural N.Y. home.

At the same time the patient was lying on her floor, members of the Starflight Helicopter Service were finishing up an important meeting in their Jamestown headquarters. That same night, they had just introduced a new protocol that allows the paramedics to bypass the local Emergency Department if they can identify a certain type of heart attack in the field. When they heard about the patient described above, they put the new protocol into action.

Once the ambulance arrived at the patient's home, the EMT determined that she was having a heart attack. The patient was driven by ambulance to Starflight headquarters, next to WCA Hospital, where she was loaded into the helicopter. Less than an hour after the patient called for an ambulance, the helicopter landed here at UPMC Hamot. She was taken directly to the Cath Lab upon her arrival. A total of 78 minutes after the ambulance was called, normal blood flow had been restored to the patient's heart.

UPMC Hamot reinvented the way its physicians, nurses, and staff handle heart attack admissions to the Emergency Department by the creation of the "direct-to-Cath-Lab" program in December 2010. This process continues to decrease the time it takes to treat heart attack patients by collaborating with local Emergency Medical Services (EMS), UPMC Hamot's Emergency Department, and the heart team at UPMC Hamot, which saves heart muscle and produces better outcomes.



# UPMC Hamot



UPMC Cath Lab is one of the reasons UPMC has received the Top 50 Cardiac Award from Thomson Reuters.

# Deactivated Cell Phone No Match for Dedicated Telecommunicator

Submitted by Carol Lang, Public Safety Quality Assurance Coordinator

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*If the phone works, has a battery charge, and can acquire a cell network signal (i.e., a newer digital phone vs. an older analog phone), the cell phone can be used to call 9-1-1 in an emergency.*

Did you know a deactivated cell phone can call 9-1-1? Federal law mandates that wireless service providers must connect a wireless caller to 9-1-1 regardless of the phone's activation status. In other words, an old, unused cell phone without a subscription to AT&T, for example, can be used in an emergency to call 9-1-1. While old phones may be useful as an emergency phone left in your vehicle or given to children, this same FCC rule presents challenges for 9-1-1 centers.



A deactivated cell phone means a phone without a subscription; as such, no individual subscriber phone number is assigned to that phone. If the phone works, has a battery charge, and can acquire a cell network signal (i.e., a newer digital phone vs. an older analog phone), the cell phone can be used to call 9-1-1 in an emergency. Interestingly, when such a phone is used to call 9-1-1, the 9-1-1 call-taker will receive a strange phone number associated with the call, such as 911-555-1234, or any string of numbers following a 911 area code. As long as the caller stays on the line until released by the call-taker, the caller's emergency can be processed. But if the caller hangs up, intentional or otherwise, the call-taker has no way to call them back!

On July 25, 2012, Telecommunicator Matt Fuller received one of these calls from a young child. Barely able to hear the child's voice amongst background noise, Matt repeatedly asked the caller for her name and location, but to no avail. Although call-takers often times receive prank or inadvertent 9-1-1 calls, Matt sensed this was in fact an emergency and continued to engage the caller, while simultaneously using the tools available at his console to fine-tune the cell phone's location via what is called Phase 2 technology. Upon receiving a valid latitude and longitude of the cell phone, Matt transferred the call to Millcreek Police.

Even though his duties were done, Matt did not abandon the caller. Instead he researched CAD (computer aided dispatch) records for prior hang-up calls and found two at the same address, very near the lat/long of this call, for a special needs child. This amplifying and helpful information was in turn passed to Millcreek Police. In addition to a "Thank You" Matt received from the Millcreek Police Department, Public Safety would like to say ...WELL DONE, MATT!

# Atta-Boy from Erie Fire Department

Submitted by Ross E. Gaertner, II – Erie Fire Department, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, Tower 2

“I would like to pay kudos to the 9-1-1 dispatchers who were working on the evening of Saturday, 28 July 2012. There was a power outage that affected several blocks in the City of Erie. Dispatch was sending rigs over several incidents. Through all of this, [the] 9-1-1 staff maintained a calm vocal tone and managed resources appropriately. Also, in all confusion, [the] 9-1-1 staff had operations running on Erie Fire Department channels 1, 2, and 3, which I thought was a very smart move and worked extremely well. Just want to let you all know your good work didn’t go unnoticed!”



Dispatcher Matt Fuller



Dispatcher John Semple



Dispatcher Rob Collins



## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Nicole Dorman,  
EMA Secretary/Account Clerk

Nicole Dorman, a Harborcreek native, began her employment with the Erie County Department of Public Safety as the EMA Secretary/Account Clerk in March of 2012. Prior to her current position, she worked as a Payroll Specialist for Voices of Independence. Nicole is also a graduate of Erie Business Center where she earned an Associate's degree in Specialized Business focusing on Travel and Tourism. In just a few months, through online courses and classroom workshops, Nicole has learned the fundamentals of emergency management and disaster response. Henceforth, she hopes to expand her knowledge about the four phases of emergency management and plans to continue working on her staff certifications.