

# Erie County Public Safety Newsletter

## **Special Interest Articles:**

- Public Safety  
– IT Dept.
- W.E.C.E.M.A.

## Erie County Department of Public Safety

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County Executive

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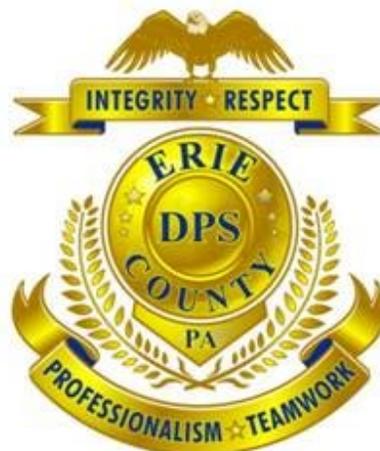
## Letter from County Executive Barry Grossman

On behalf of the Administration, I would like to take a moment to express my utmost thanks and appreciation to our Public Safety Center administration and employees, for their outstanding dedication and commitment to the 283,000 residents of Erie County. I would also like to convey my sincerest thanks to all of the volunteer firemen and women, EMT's, fire police, and emergency management volunteers and committees for their loyalty and allegiance when answering the call of duty. With your diligence and perseverance, all Erie County residents can rest easy knowing their safety is in the hands of such bright and competent individuals.

With the holiday season right around the corner, the Administration makes it a priority to give back to the community in some way. This year, as in years past, we will be personally delivering Thanksgiving turkeys and food baskets to area families in need. The Administration and its employees believe in the importance of giving year-round with the proceeds from various Jeans Days fundraisers benefiting area non-profit organizations, including Daffodil Days, which supports the American Cancer Society. One of our strongest outpouring of giving is employee contributions made to the United Way campaign year round, with funds remaining in Erie County to help those most in need. The Administration appreciates all of you for giving your time and service in helping keep Erie County a safe community to live.

Wishing all of you a safe and Happy Thanksgiving –

Barry Grossman,  
Erie County Executive



# Letter from Public Safety Director, Todd Geers

Imagine the following scenario: a bomb threat to a local college; the bomb was placed in a chemistry laboratory; and, the bomber remains on campus. The response to such an incident involves dispatching fire, police, emergency medical services (EMS), and the county hazardous material team. Once on-scene, these four different responders are communicating on four different frequencies, using different radios and radio tower sites! For an incident that demands interoperability for command-and-control and first responder safety, this example underscores the need for a common radio system throughout Erie County.

The County currently uses a three-band radio system (VHF low-band, VHF high-band, and UHF) with numerous (40+) tower sites connected together via telephone lines and/or a 4.9 GHz Canopy microwave backhaul, controlled by custom-designed radio software, and integrated into a custom voice recording solution. Our legacy system was not designed as a county-wide radio; rather, it is a cobbling together of tower sites and bands that have existed for decades.

To remedy this disparate assortment of radio sites, frequencies, and connectivity, Public Safety will commission the design of a modern radio system to serve the needs of police, fire, and EMS agencies, and the needs of other agencies that rely on radio communications such as municipal public works, mass transit, emergency management, and the county jail.

The first step toward a new radio system is to hire a consultant who specializes in designing radio systems. The consultant will interview each agency to conduct a needs analysis, survey the existing radio frequencies owned by the County and the municipalities, study the topography-limiting and -enhancing features of Erie County, and recommend a next generation emergency communications system that leverages our existing investment, where possible. Additionally, the consultant will develop governance and operation models, estimate an overall system cost, and generate Request for Proposal (RFP) bid specifications. The RFP will then be released so radio companies can bid on building a new radio system according to the consultant's design. The winning bidder's RFP response will reveal the overall cost; with this figure in hand, we can seek funding sources.

The steps to a new system are many. Public Safety has started the process by reaching out to agencies and municipalities asking for their current radio count of mobiles and portables. Soon we will form an advisory committee populated by one representative from each stakeholder group (e.g., one rep for police, one for public works, et cetera). This committee will play an integral role in shaping next generation public safety communications for Erie County.

## **JOB WELL DONE!**

### ***BEST CALL-TAKING TIMES*** *Sept-Oct 2012*

Police Incident  
20 Seconds:  
Ryne Rutkowski

Fire Incident  
36 Seconds:  
Kyle Wright

EMS Incident  
29 Seconds:  
Jeff Barrett

### ***BEST DISPATCHING TIMES*** *Sept-Oct 2012*

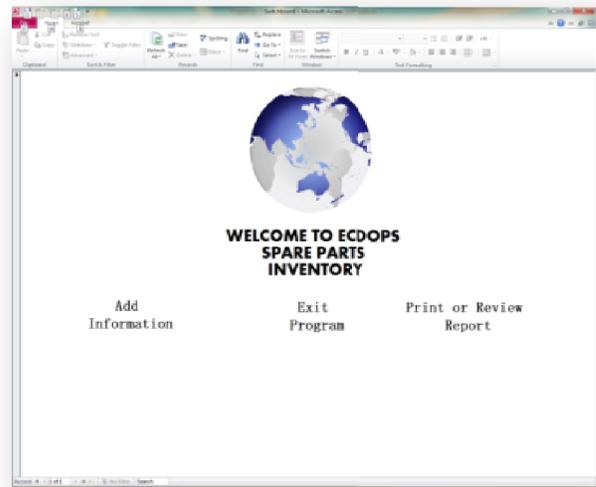
Police Incident  
22 Seconds:  
Nick Seelinger

Fire Incident  
13 Seconds:  
Jeff Barrett

EMS Incident  
10 Seconds:  
John Semple

# IT Department Creates "Spare Parts Inventory Program"

Submitted by Clarissa Hicks, System Operator



*When equipment breaks down, the IT department needs to have readily available parts to minimize downtime.*

In the IT department we always strive to be proactive. When equipment breaks down, the IT department needs to have readily available parts to minimize downtime. However, on more than one occasion, the parts needed to restore a device were not available, therefore increasing downtime until the part arrived. I was approached to help create a way in which we could avoid this from occurring. In order to keep an accurate record of spare parts in stock, I have created a database that does the following:

- Keeps an accurate and current record of parts in stock and where they are located.
- Keeps track of which technicians added or removed parts from the inventory.
- Retains a record of the date and time that transactions occur.
- Has flags set in place to alert technicians when stock falls below a certain quantity.
- Has a built in vendor table with an embedded outlook email link that allows technicians to request an immediate quote for devices.
- Helps to decrease downtime.
- Has a visual feature built in to help those who are unfamiliar with the terminology.
- Allows you to print out a report of devices that need to be reordered.



When approached with this project, the object was simply to track inventory. I have also taken the initiative to build in monthly and yearly historical charts and reports which will allow us to:

- Govern what items are seldom used to decrease inventory overflow which increases savings.
- Take a snapshot of the entire inventory to see all of the parts we currently have.
- Determine what items are highly used and encourage technicians to shop for vendors with competitive pricing to help keep costs as low as possible.
- Use the data with regards to highly used spare parts to help determine if the equipment used is poorly made and needs to be replaced.

In short, this database helps to minimize downtime, lower costs, keep accurate records of inventory and track their locations. This is just one more way I am actively supporting my department on staying proactive.

# SPOTLIGHT – Emergency Management Agency Equipment

*Submitted by Dale Robinson, EMA Coordinator*

One of the main responsibilities of emergency management is to support incidents by helping to insure that Incident Commanders have the equipment, supplies and facilities needed to respond to an incident. Over the years, the Erie County Emergency Management Agency has expanded the county's inventory of supplies and equipment that can be used to respond to various disasters.

In each edition of the Public Safety newsletter, we will spotlight a piece of equipment in order to help educate First Responders as to what equipment and supplies are housed and available at the Public Safety building.

In our first spotlight, we would like to showcase the Coleman Engineering Rite-Lite light tower. The Rite-Lite provides 4,000 watts of light. The tower is 30 foot and rotates 360 degrees and can withstand 60 mph winds. The lights can run more than 60 hours on one tank of diesel. The unit is relatively quiet at 71 dBA at 23 feet.

First Responders should work with their local emergency management coordinators to request resources from the County.

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# THE CREATION OF THE W.E.C.E.M.A. - WEST ERIE COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

*Submitted by Lyne Daniels, WECEMA Secretary & Lindy Platz, WECEMA Treasurer*

Since September 11, 2001, and Hurricane Katrina, there have been numerous changes to the local Emergency Management Coordinator's responsibilities and the requirements of local municipalities. There is a shortage of volunteers in the local fire departments. Under the current state law, Title 35, each municipality is required to have an Emergency Operations Plan and an Emergency Management Coordinator. Past practices have held true to the "volunteer" service of the EMC. However, with the changes and requirements occurring at the state and federal level, the reality is that municipalities are asking a person to do a full-time job on a volunteer's pay.

In the spring of 2006, while attending a NIMS training class, members of Girard Township and Platea Borough discussed combining their emergency management services to save time and money and pool resources together in the event of an emergency.

In 2007, Girard Township and Platea Borough held an informational meeting with nine municipalities and six fire departments in attendance to discuss the idea of an "Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement" type concept for emergency management in western Erie County. Most that attended were interested in the concept, but wanted to see it up and running first.

In 2008, Girard Township and Platea Borough held their belief that looking ahead towards the future, a "paid" Emergency Management Coordinator and a Council of Governments was needed to facilitate the needs of the residents and municipalities in the event of an emergency. The two municipalities worked diligently together with assistance from the Erie County Emergency Management Director, Dale Robinson, to make this concept a reality.

In 2009, the hard work and commitment of the elected officials from both municipalities became a reality. The West Erie County Emergency Management Agency (WECEMA) was created. In July, after receiving 25 applications from all over the country, the first Emergency Management Coordinator, William Heald, was hired. Bill is a retired FEMA employee who was relocating to the region.

In 2010, five more municipalities joined the WECEMA. Cranesville Borough, Elk Creek Township, Franklin Township, Washington Township and McKean Township became a part of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement. The organization was recognized by PEMA for the creation of the COG. The Emergency Operations Center was moved from the Girard Township Building to the West Erie County Emergency Communications Center.

In 2011, WECEMA created a Board of Directors. The first budget was adopted for the agency. The budget meets the needs of the Emergency Operations Center equipment that would be needed in the time of a disaster. The EOC also serves as the back-up to the Erie County EOC should something happen. Two other municipalities, Albion Borough and McKean Borough joined the Agency. Erie County Emergency Management, working with the Erie Area COG, held meetings around the county to discuss the benefits of implementing the very same program that WECEMA had implemented. Members of WECEMA attended the county wide meetings and the PEMA Conference to discuss the benefits of having a regional Emergency Management Agency.

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*Under the current state law, Title 35, each municipality is required to have an Emergency Operations Plan and an Emergency Management Coordinator.*

In 2012, the Agency is still growing. Two more municipalities have expressed an interest to join in 2013. The EOC funding has increased grant availabilities with so many government entities working together for public safety.

The benefits of working together to share valuable resources, employees, and assets between the municipalities in the event of an emergency cannot be understated. The costs associated with the Emergency Management Coordinator are split on a per capita basis for each of the municipalities participating. There is safety and comfort knowing that our EOC plans are completed and approved and the EOC staff is properly trained. This benefits the elected officials which public safety is entrusted to from their residents when they take the Oath of Office, in regards to not only safety, but documentation for reimbursement of funding from the state or federal government as well. Documentation is imperative in receiving funds from a Disaster Declaration.

To any municipality researching the pros and cons of the regional EMA concept, the pros far outweigh the cons. The cost is minimal. The cost acts as an insurance policy to ensure that as local, rural municipalities, the residents never endure the conditions of not being prepared in the event of a disaster or emergency. The horrific scenes from Hurricane Katrina were certainly a wake-up call for all elected officials everywhere. When disaster strikes, the first people that are held responsible and accountable are the local government. The residents and elected officials in western Erie County are prepared.

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*(Pictured from left to right)  
Bill Felege, WECEMA President, and  
Bill Heald, WECEMA Emergency Management Coordinator*

Organizations are increasingly turning to project-based work to facilitate success and to allow for more efficient prioritization. By breaking projects into manageable pieces, employees can be assigned by skill-set and allocated to several different projects at once instead of to one large, lengthy project at a time. This trend has forced many enterprises such as Erie County Department of Public Safety (ECDoPS) to look into efficient ways of managing these interconnected projects and subprojects. A Project Management Process (PMP) is a centralized forum for keeping these projects within schedule and budget, and also aligned to business goals through the creation and enforcement of policies and procedures.



The PMP allows ECDoPS' top executive managers to create standardized processes and maintains control of all project process for the entire organization. As a result, Erie County Department of Public Safety's Information Technology Sector decided to develop a project plan that aligns major radio communication activities, resource requirements, and project timelines from a Radio Check List Master Plan to Radio Project Flowchart.

The benefits of implementing a Radio Check List Master Plan to Radio Project Flowchart in our organizations are to:

- (1) Identify resources and their availability;**
- (2) Improve project success with minimal pain or change;**
- (3) Ensure adequate project progress tracking and accountability;**
- (4) Ensure understanding of team member responsibilities to create consistent stakeholder expectations; and**
- (5) Ensure that the project progresses well; and (6) Ensure that the organization is ready to leverage the results.**

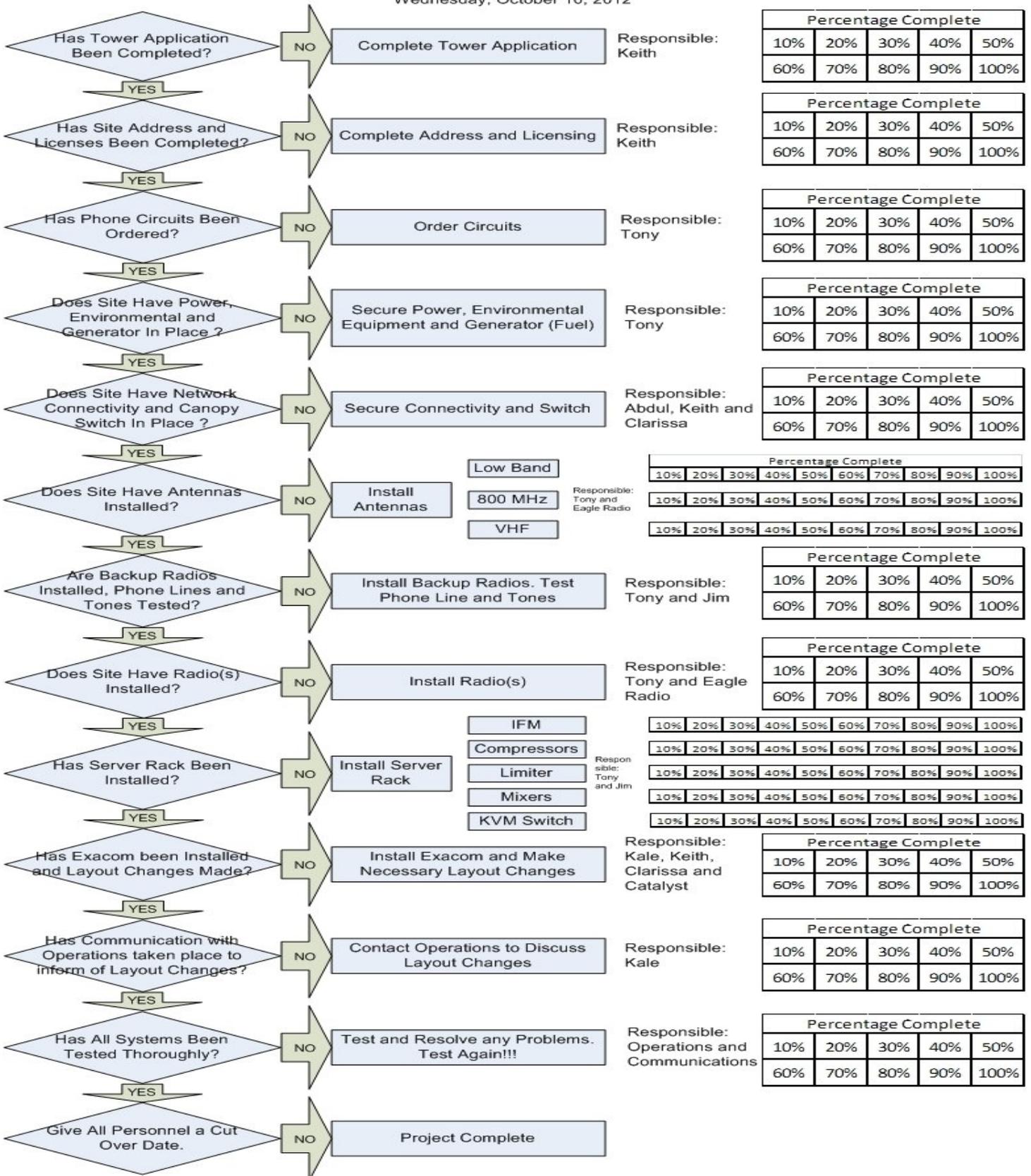


*Check out the Radio Project Flowchart on the following page to get an in-depth look at how this process works!*

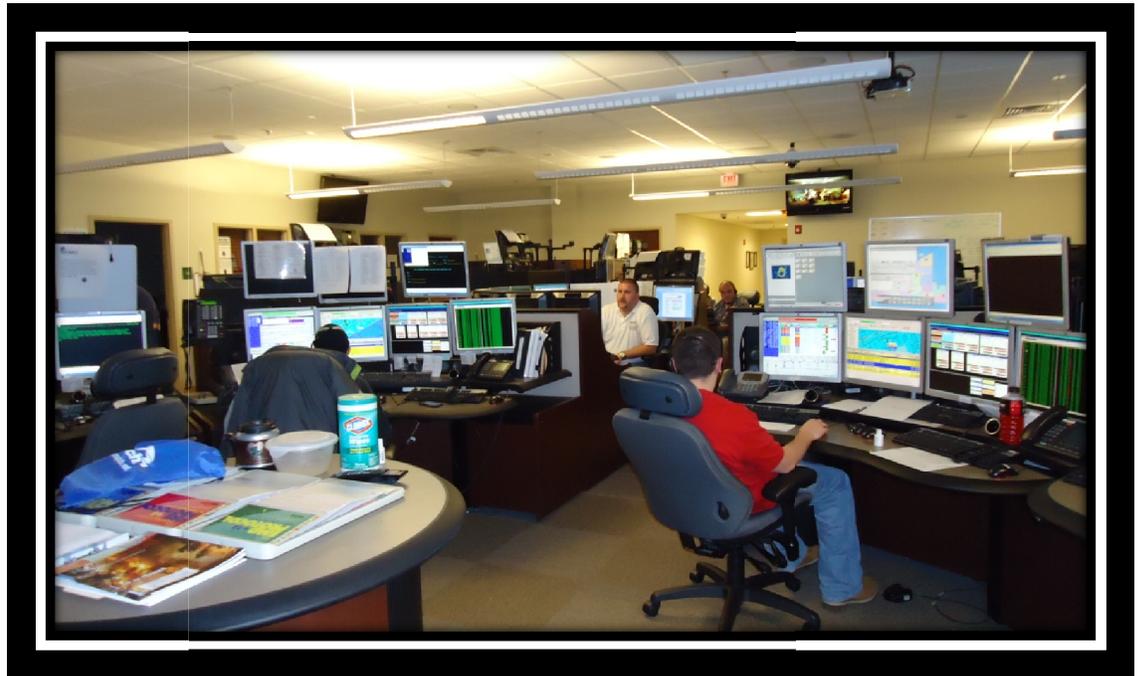


## Radio Project Flowchart

Wednesday, October 10, 2012



## Database Information Coordinator Enhances 911 Operations



Meeting our customers' needs while enhancing operations provides double satisfaction! To assist non-English speaking 9-1-1 callers, we conference translators from Language Line Services with the caller and the call-taker. After a Language Line call occurs, Randy Tripp, Public Safety's Database Information Coordinator, takes it upon himself to associate in the CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) system the language used with the incident address. In the event a 9-1-1 call originates from the same address and it appears a foreign language translator is needed, the CAD association "gives the call-taker a place to start," says Randy, when trying to determine which language is being spoken. Good job, Randy.

