



Barry Grossman
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Public Safety Newsletter
April/May 2011

Many of you are aware that I just returned from a trip to Washington, D.C., where I had meetings with Congressman Mike Kelly and Senator Robert Casey's Chief of Staff, Jim Brown, and top legislative aid Catherine Murray. Although many topics were discussed, my main purpose was to inform both members of Congress that the operating funds for our Safety Center are being quickly exhausted and that we must have new sources of revenue to continue to offer the quality of safety that both the Federal and State Government have been mandating. Both offices were very sympathetic to our situation and I also plan to take the same message to all of our area representatives of the Pennsylvania State Legislature. I will continue to fight for dollars that will help keep our Safety Center the state of the art operation that it has become. Keeping our citizens safe will always be a major priority of this Administration.



Barry Grossman, County Executive

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County Executive

Jerry Mifsud
Director of Administration

Todd Geers
Director of Public Safety

Dale Robinson
Emergency Management Coordinator

John Grappy
911 Coordinator

Abdul Osman
Chief Information Officer

Hello Erie County!

I want to start this newsletter by stating what a wonderful team of employees I work with here in the Public Safety Building. Erie County is blessed to have such dedicated, mission-driven professionals. Their care and concern is readily evident in their commitment to process improvement, personal sacrifices for mission accomplishment, and emotional attachment to our objectives.

Never content to accept the status quo, our team energetically tackled numerous projects in the past several months, constantly striving to improve our services. From finalizing the Fire Radio Procedures Manual and training agencies on the Police Radio Procedures Manual, training county department heads on incident management theory, to building a back-up dispatch center, improvements were made across a wide spectrum of operational and management processes.



I hope this edition of the Public Safety Newsletter is enlightening.

Todd R. Geers, Director of Public Safety
Photo courtesy of Jack Hanrahan, Erie Times News

KID'S SAFETY HOUSE

Erie County Fire Fighters Association received their new Kid's Safety House! The Safety House is an educational tool to teach children what to do in the event of a fire. Children are taught how to stop, drop, and roll if they encounter a fire, and not to be afraid of the firefighters that come to put out the fire. When the Kid's Safety House is scheduled for events in Erie County, we also schedule a 9-1-1 representative who explains to children, either before or after they go through the Safety House, the proper use of 9-1-1. A 9-1-1 simulator guides the children through making a call and how to answer the questions that will be asked. Sheryl Hoetzel, from the Public Safety Building, works closely with the children, explaining what to do when they call 9-1-1 for an emergency and what to do if they accidentally call 9-1-1. The Safety House was on display in Corry for their 150th Anniversary Celebration on June 15th. If anyone is interested in scheduling the Safety House or would like our 9-1-1 public outreach at an event, contact Mary Richards at 814-.51.7921 or mrichards@ecdops.org.



We also schedule CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) and LEPC (Local Emergency Planning Committee) to be at the events to let the community know how they can get themselves and their family prepared in case of a disaster.

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

On June 9, 2011, county department heads, including Jerry Mifsud, Director of Administration, Pete Callan, Director of Personnel, Jim Sparber, Director of Finance, Pat Kennedy, Chief Public Defender, Luigi Pasquale, Manager of Operations & Purchasing, Margaret Stewart, Director of the Erie County Library, Jake Welsh, Director of Planning, Shari Gross, Director of Human Services, John DiMattio, Director of Drug & Alcohol, and Andy Glass, Director of the Health Department, gathered in the Emergency Operations Center at the Public Safety Building to receive National Incident Management System (NIMS) training by Dale Robinson, Erie County Emergency Management Coordinator. NIMS provides a systematic, proactive approach to guide departments and agencies at all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to work seamlessly to prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity, in order to reduce the loss of life and property and harm to the environment.





WEST COUNTY AGENCIES COMING ONBOARD

Public Safety is pleased to announce several West County municipalities will transition to county dispatch toward the end of this year. To date, the municipalities of Girard, Albion, Cranesville, Platea, Conneaut, and Springfield have formally requested that Erie County provide dispatching services for fire, police, and EMS. We look forward to working with their respective agencies!

ERIE COUNTY'S NEW BACK-UP DISPATCH CENTER

Preparedness through redundancy is a critically important public safety tenet, ensuring uninterrupted 24-hour operations. Every primary system we use here in the Public Safety Building has a back-up system: 9-1-1 phones, computer-aided dispatch (CAD), radios and Canopy infrastructure, electrical power distribution, and dispatch consoles, to name a few. Just as system redundancy is important, so too is facility redundancy. In case of a casualty to this building, we need an off-site back-up dispatch center.

For many years the City of Erie graciously offered space within City Hall to house a back-up dispatch center. Four dispatch consoles were available, yet limited growth potential compelled us to look elsewhere for a long-term solution.

The county-owned Maritime Museum solved our problem. In a corner office on the third floor, we created a 5-console, back-up dispatch center with the same systems and functionality used today in the Public Safety Building. Situated on old wooden tables recycled from the library are computer systems and monitors, 5 screens per table. Each console offers Internet-based Sentinel phone system; digital admin phones; hi-tech, Internet-based, Catalyst radio controller software system; CAD; and, an advanced mapping system. Additionally, the back-up center is connected throughout the county by existing fiber optic cable and to generator power in the event commercial power is disrupted.



The back-up dispatch center is operational today, but not yet “geo-diverse.” Phase II of the build-out involves creating a geographically diverse back-up center; that is, a back-up center independent of the primary center. If the Public Safety Building were to be damaged or destroyed, the back-up must be independent, capable of sustained operations on its own. Recently we installed a separate wide-area network server for the Catalyst radio system at the back-up center and are awaiting a Verizon work order which will allow us, with a single telephone call, to redirect all 9-1-1 phone line trunks to the back-up center.



Day-to-day operations in the primary center involve, on average, 8-10 call-takers and dispatchers. Manning the back-up with only 5 consoles will necessitate a change in operations. Planning ahead we created the necessary emergency procedures in our new Radio Procedures Manuals. These manuals, one each for police and fire, govern and standardize our radio dispatch methods. Depending on the circumstances, the dispatch center will upgrade or downgrade levels of operation for both call-taking and dispatching, effectively triaging calls and restricting radio usage to emergency traffic only.



Lastly, during the current fiscal year we modified system contracts and eliminated unnecessary expenditures, saving over \$33,000 so far. I am proud to announce our back-up center was created at a cost of \$17,040—paid for via our own cost-saving initiatives.

Redundancy means layered preparedness, systems ready-to-go in the event of an emergency. The Erie County Back-up Dispatch Center is online, ready, and robust. Once again our team of professionals embraced an idea and developed a solution. Well done!



Accolades!



On April 28th at 09:11 hours, a call was received from Chautauqua County 9-1-1 on our non-emergency line, reporting a male was impaled on a steel rod through the abdomen in the Pit at Lake Erie Speedway. Fire Dispatcher Jennifer Waxham gathered the information and dispatched units within 39 seconds. Outstanding!

Jennifer Waxham – Fire Dispatcher

On May 4th at 4:27pm, a call was received for a residential structure fire at 5212 Annendale Dr. in Millcreek Township. Call-taker Nicholas Seelinger gathered the information from the caller, a landscaper working in the area, and sent the call to be dispatched in 41 seconds. Dispatcher Brian Mankowski had the call dispatched 7 seconds later. While crews were being dispatched and enroute, Nicholas continued to get information from the caller and provide pre-arrival instructions to ensure the caller's safety. Crews arrived on location and found a working structure fire but were able to contain the damage to the family room. Good job!



Nicholas Seelinger – Call Taker



Brian Mankowski – Dispatcher

On April 27th at 08:34, a unique call was received by Erie County 9-1-1. Rookie call-taker, Robert Collins, answered a 9-1-1 call from a caller reporting that her parents lived in Alabama and that a tornado had hit their area, trapping them in their mobile home. Ironically, the staff had just been watching coverage of these storms on the news. Robert calmed the confused and frantic caller enough to gather information and an address of her parent's location. While he was doing this, Telecommunicator Ben Cardot and Shift Commander John Semple researched contact numbers for the dispatch center covering that part of Alabama. Once the caller was able to find the correct address, Robert was then able to transfer the caller to the Alabama dispatch center to get help for her trapped parents. Excellent team work!



Robert Collins – Dispatcher



Ben Cardot – Telecommunicator



John Semple – Shift Commander

IN MEMORY OF.....
Monday, May 30, 2011 – Memorial Day



IN HONOR OF.....
Tuesday, June 14, 2011 – Flag Day

