



## **PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS 9-1-1 CALL PROCESSING**

When citizens and residents in Prince George's County need Police, Fire, EMS or Sheriff assistance, they will contact the Prince George's County Public Safety Communications (PSC) 9-1-1 Center. PSC is a unified, combined 9-1-1 and dispatch center under the leadership of the Office of Homeland Security. Headed by a civilian Director, PSC is staffed with civilian dispatchers, call takers, managers and supervisory personnel.

Citizens call PSC for public safety assistance and emergency response by dialing 9-1-1 or the 10-digit non-emergency number, 301-352-1200. Each call, regardless of the number dialed (9-1-1 or 301-352-1200) is processed using a Nortel PBX and Plant/CML 9-1-1 system obtained from Motorola Solutions. The system routes incoming calls to available call-takers. Each call is routed by to the next available 9-1-1 call taker in PSC by way of an Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system.

When a landline, broadband or VoIP 9-1-1 phone call is presented to the call taker at the console position, the display provides the caller's telephone number, name, and address/location information. The call taker answers the call and begins the conversation by asking for the address of the emergency. The caller is also asked to confirm that the address is in Prince George's County to verify the information provided through the automatic location information technology transmitted by the telephone service provider.

If the address matches the information presented on the 9-1-1 display, the call taker will ask for a description of the emergency, and then will begin to gather information based upon the appropriate Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD), Emergency Police Dispatch (EPD) or Emergency Fire Dispatch (EFP) protocol.

The EMD, EFD, and EPD protocols allow the call taker to ask standardized questions to ensure the appropriate information is gathered to pass on to the public safety personnel responding to the scene of the emergency. Each question that is asked has been devised to ensure the safety of the caller and to ensure the appropriate public safety personnel are dispatched to the scene.

Once the initial questions are asked and the appropriate units are dispatched, additional questions are asked to obtain, process and relay critical and detailed information between the victim(s) and the responding Police, Fire and EMS personnel. During the first five-to-ten minutes of an emergency; prior to the arrival of public safety responders, our safety sensitive employees remain on the phone with the caller to triage and provide detailed emergency medical instructions for choking, hemorrhaging, cardiac arrest and one-hundred and thirty-two other emergency situations. These include detailed "caller in danger" instructions to individuals trapped by fire, exposed to hazardous atmospheres, victimized by a home invasion, abducted, or robbed by armed assailants.

These often life-saving instructions along with verbal evidence gathering and preservation instructions are provided under stressful conditions. To the caller it may seem as if the questions are not necessary. At no time do these questions cause a delay in the response nor does it cause a delay in obtaining critical life and death information.

The information gathered by the call taker is entered into our Tiburon Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. This system integrates all aspects of Sheriff, Police, Fire, and EMS incident data using Julian-date based incident numbers. Based on the incident-type, the call for service information is routed to the appropriate dispatcher for processing. As the call taker continues to receive additional information from the caller, the information is entered into the CAD system and the dispatcher passes the information on to the first responders. The call taker will provide pre-arrival instructions and life saving information to the caller while entering all appropriate information into the CAD.

If the call for service is for both law enforcement and Fire/EMS emergency responders, the call taker will enter a "Combined Call" and the CAD will create two separate incident numbers. Both incident numbers will be routed to the appropriate Police/Sheriff and Fire/EMS dispatcher. Continuing updates and data from the call taker will be added to both the law enforcement and Fire/EMS incident information in the CAD. This is crucial to provide the most efficient public safety response as well as ensuring the safety of the first responders.

When the call for service is displayed on the dispatcher's status monitor, the CAD system will recommend units to respond to the emergency, based upon unit availability and the area the unit is assigned to. Fire and EMS units are recommended based upon the firebox assignment information as determined by the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department. Police units are assigned based upon the sector the units are assigned to, in keeping with Prince George's County Police policy.

Sheriff Units are assigned based upon call type and location of the unit, as determined by the Office of the Sheriff. Other responses by the Office of the Sheriff calls are self-initiated, as they are performing warrant services, eviction tack ups, etc.

Information received by dispatchers from field personnel is entered into the CAD system. Should the incident be a "combined call", information is posted to the CAD for both the law enforcement and Fire/EMS dispatchers to view and pass on to the first responders in the field.

### **Cellular/Wireless Calls**

Cellular/wireless telephone calls to the 911 Center are handled in a very similar manner. The major difference would be that the 911 call taker would receive a general location of the caller only if the wireless telephone and wireless company are FCC Phase Two compliant. If the wireless telephone is FCC Phase Two compliant, the 911 Center receives an approximate latitude and longitude of the caller's location, which is then

converted to a map location by the mapping software installed in the Plant/VESTA 9-1-1 equipment and the CAD system.

Prince George's County Public Safety Communications receives ever-increasing numbers of 911 calls from wireless devices. Today close to 65% of all 9-1-1 calls come in from wireless telephones. Those calls are located to the best extent possible as PSC is fully FCC Phase One and Phase Two compliant.

When a Phase One wireless call is received at the 911 Center, the tower and often the tower face that transmitted the call are shown on a map displayed at the call taker's position. This allows the call taker to get a general idea of the caller's location if they are unable to provide that location verbally to the call taker. Phase Two technology allows the 9-1-1 Center to map the location of a caller to within about 300 feet. This technology can be used to help locate callers that are unable to communicate their location verbally or are unaware of their location and cannot provide a specific address. As a cautionary note this technology is relatively new and location information provided by wireless able to give their location to whatever extent possible.

All remaining call taking and dispatch functions remain the same.

### **Municipalities**

Prince George's County has five (5) municipal police departments that dispatch their own police units. When calls are received requiring police response to one of the five areas (Hyattsville, Laurel, Greenbelt, Riverdale, and Bladensburg), the 9-1-1 call taker will determine whether Fire/EMS units are required for the emergency. If no Fire/EMS units are required, the call taker will transfer the call to the municipality. If Fire/EMS assistance is required, the call taker will process the call for service using EFD and/or EMD protocols then transfer the call to the municipal dispatcher.

### **Staffing**

Public Safety Communications is staffed by civilian personnel as a division of the Office of Homeland Security. A total of seventy-six (76) dispatch personnel, seventy (70) 9-1-1 call-taking personnel, and twenty-four (24) supervisory/quality assurance personnel are assigned to the Operations Section of Public Safety Communications.

Supervision of the Law Enforcement Dispatch and Fire/EMS Dispatch sections is provided by a shift supervisor (Emergency Dispatcher IV) and an assistant shift supervisor (Emergency Dispatcher III). Supervision of the 9-1-1 section is provided by a shift supervisor and a Quality Assurance Supervisor.

The supervisors of each section are responsible for all aspects of daily operations, from quality control to monitoring of active incidents and personnel, initiating disciplinary action, shift staffing, overtime approval, and inquiries from PSC and other public safety agency command staff. The current authorized staffing levels for the 9-1-1 Center vary

based on the time of day and day of the week with maximum staffing planned for times of peak demand for service. Fire/EMS Dispatch authorized strength is six (6) dispatchers and Law Enforcement Dispatch authorized strength is thirteen (13) dispatchers.

All dispatchers and call takers are required to achieve and maintain 9-1-1 certifications. Both Fire/EMS and Law Enforcement Dispatchers are required to work in the 9-1-1 room as call takers to maintain their certifications and to ensure adequate staffing in answering and processing 9-1-1 calls.

All new call takers and dispatch employees begin on the same training path. New employees receive six to eight weeks of academic training, then four months of on the job training as a 9-1-1 call taker with an APCO Certified Training Officer. Upon completion of established training, the 9-1-1 call taker is released to work on his or her own.

Upon completion of the 9-1-1 training, dispatchers are assigned to either Law Enforcement or Fire/EMS Dispatch training. Dispatchers are provided on the job training with an APCO Certified Training Officer. Law Enforcement Dispatch training takes an additional four to six months. Upon completion of established training criteria, the dispatcher is released to work on his or her own.

### **Training**

All Emergency Dispatch Aides and Emergency Dispatchers complete the same 911 Section, two phase training and certification program. All Emergency Dispatchers complete additional training in either Law (Police/Sheriff) Dispatch or Fire/EMS Dispatch. This training program meets the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) Project 33 Standard, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1061 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Safety Telecommunicator, the National Academies of Emergency Dispatch (NAED) Accreditation Standard and the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) Standards.

**911 Section** - training consists of a minimum of 240 hours of classroom instruction. During this training all personnel receive the NAED Emergency Telecommunicator course and certification, the NAED Emergency Medical Dispatch course and certification, the NAED Emergency Fire Dispatch course and certification and the NAED Emergency Police Dispatch course and certification. Additional required coursework and certification includes National Crime Information Center and Criminal Justice Information System training and certification, CPR training and certification, State of Maryland Emergency Medical Dispatch certification, National Incident Management ICS 100 – 700 training and certification. An additional 540 hours of practical instruction under the direct oversight of a certified Communications Training Officer is required before the 9-1-1 call taker is released from training.

**Law Enforcement (Police/Sheriff) Dispatch Section** - training consists the completion of all 9-1-1 training plus: 24 hours of classroom instruction and 540 hours of practical instruction under the direct oversight of a certified Communications Training Officer.

**Fire/EMS Dispatch Section** - training consists of a minimum of 32 hours of classroom instruction and Fire Service Communicator certification. Additionally, 1,020 hours of practical instruction are provided under the direct oversight of a certified Communications Training Officer.

**Supervisor Training** - Supervisor training requires that all supervisors satisfactorily complete the APCO Communications Center Supervisor Course, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency ICS-300, incident management system certification.