



Knox Regional Communications

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County Commissioner's Meeting
Communications Report – January 01, 2005

Happy New Year!!

December 2004

- 1st Attended Union Negotiation Session
- 2nd Hosted Meeting with EMS Service Chiefs
- 3rd Attended NENA Conference Mtg at Brunswick PD
- 6th Met with EMA Director to work on Co-location study
- 7th Supv. Grover attended Dept. Head Mtg. (Dir. Lothrop at training)
- 7th Dir. Lothrop and Supv. Gibbs attended Public Health Conference
- 8th Attended Knox County LEPC Meeting
- 8th Attended Budget Review Committee Workshop meeting
- 13th Attended Quad-County meeting on regional computer issues
- 14th Attended the County Commissioners' monthly meeting
- 15th Attended Supervisors' Meeting at Rockland PD
- 15th Attended Public Hearing on the County Budget
- 18th Public Education Class on Radio Operations at Hope F.D.
- 20th Attended Meeting on Tabletop Exercise After Action Report Review
- 24th Another major fire in Rockland – Grape's Restaurant
- 29th Attended Union Negotiation Session

Well, as you can see, it has been another busy month for the staff of Knox RCC. We have experienced yet another major fire in Rockland when the Grape's Restaurant burned on the day before Christmas. Since that time, we have seen a local resident charged with Arson in connection with that fire, along with several other suspicious fires in the area. Hopefully, we can now see a decrease in major fires!

A report on the activities of the Knox RCC will be forthcoming in the next couple of weeks. This report will show the call volumes for the municipalities of the county with comparisons to the previous year.

The year 2004 has seen public safety communications rise to the forefront. There has been a flurry of legislation aimed at public safety communications issues.

There is legislation being formed to govern Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service. There are other legislative efforts aimed at interoperability amongst public safety departments. The FCC has been addressing re-banding efforts to allow for more spectrums for use by public safety. And, as of December 23rd, President Bush signed homeland security legislation improving the nation's 9-1-1 capabilities that will make E9-1-1 implementation and planning a priority. The legislation calls for a 9-1-1 Coordination Office within the Executive Branch and is an important step to better equip our nation's 9-1-1 public safety answering points, response to calls for help, from everywhere, anytime with any device. The Office will also administer new federal cost-share grants to state and local E9-1-1 agencies to assist with E9-1-1 implementation and operations.

As we enter the year 2005, PSAPs across the nation are faced with new challenges in receiving calls for assistance as technologies such as telematics, internet telephony and wireless phones are being used to report emergencies almost as much as traditional wire line phones.

PSAPs must learn to adapt and implement technology to meet the challenges faced by the use of this new technology. There are approx. 140 million wireless telephones in use in the U.S. This number continues to grow as Americans prefer the flexibility and security of wireless phones.

There are approx. 200 million calls placed to 9-1-1 each year, more than 56 million, or approx. 30%, are made from wireless phones.

On Dec. 2nd, a meeting was held with all the EMS service chiefs in Knox County. This meeting was conducted to review mutual aid protocols and to discuss a proposed "no code" policy being considered by the Dispatch Advisory Panel.

The service chiefs were explained how the proposed "no code" policy would work, and the benefits of the use of plain language in announcing calls. It is felt that the policy will provide for better communication and response to EMS calls without the confusion of various codes. The policy has previously been reviewed by the Knox County Firefighters Mutual Aid group and they unanimously support the policy as well.

Director Lothrop has met with EMA Director Sylvia Birmingham to continue work on the study looking into the co-location of the EMA and Knox RCC in one facility. Copies of the minutes of these work sessions have been forwarded to the Commissioners for review.

On December 7th, Supv Gibbs, EMA Director Birmingham and Dir Lothrop attended a Public Health Conference at the Augusta Civic Center on the SAARs virus that occurred in Canada. The workshop was extremely informative and

provided us with several points to consider, should a like event occur within our County. Members of the EMS and communications staff provided insight into the strain that was put on the communications center during various stages of the event. Response plans and emergency procedures necessitated by the agent also provide invaluable lessons on future response plans.

A meeting of members of the Quad-county group met to discuss computer and data issues. There has been movement through the group to ask Senator Collins Office for assistance in obtaining federal funding for improving the computer network to provide mobile data connectivity in emergency vehicles.

The group identified the fact that there are two methods of creating a network to provide connectivity to vehicles. One is the use of a dedicated radio connection; the other is by use of cellular service.

The group weighed the options and decided that the radio network would be extremely costly, have blackout spots and expensive to maintain. On the other hand, the cellular network infrastructure is not currently available in this area. It is not known when such a service would be available; however, it is speculated to occur in the coming year.

The preferred network would be the wireless network that is provided by a service carrier. That way, they are responsible for the infrastructure and maintenance of the network. If it does not work, they don't get paid. We would not be responsible for the maintenance and trained staff to repair the network, thus reducing our costs and time dealing with the network.

The committee is still working on the project and is looking into the timeline for possible wireless service to be available locally. There will be further meetings as information becomes available.

Director Lothrop assisted the Public Education Unit in providing a training class on radio operation to the Hope Fire Dept on December 18th. A PowerPoint presentation covering the operation and care of handheld and mobile radios was presented. There was also a general overview of how a 9-1-1 call is received, transmitted to the Fire dept, and followed through to cover first arriving units and the activation of the mutual aid system.