



## Knox Regional Communications

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### County Commissioner's Meeting Communications Report – March 01, 2005

#### February

- 1<sup>st</sup> Department Heads Assoc. Meeting
- “ Met with Coastal Communications ref. DHS Grant info
- 7<sup>th</sup> Knox EMA – Functional Exercise Planning meeting
- 8<sup>th</sup> Knox County Commissioners Meeting (Supv. Gibbs)
- “ County 911 Directors Association Meeting – Sagadahoc County
- 9<sup>th</sup> Knox LEPC Meeting – Red Cross Office
- “ Knox DHS Grant meeting
- 10-11 Maine Chiefs of Police Training and Conference – Portland
- 13<sup>th</sup> NENA Conference Planning Workshop – MCJA
- “ 9-1-1 Council Meeting – MCJA ESCB Office
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Knox EMA Public Officials Conference workshop
- “ Haz Mat Awareness Level Instructor Recert. Course – Knox EMA
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Knox RCC In-house training class
- 28<sup>th</sup> Effective date of Supv. Renee Grover Resignation

The month of February has proven to be a very busy month for the world of Public Safety. The Knox RCC has been extremely busy with a multitude of calls related to three major snowstorms that have hit the Midcoast this month. There have been a large number of motor vehicle accidents and related EMS responses as a result of the storms.

We have been fortunate not to have any major widespread power outages. There were some minor damage and outages caused by high winds and heavy wet snow.

The Communications Center has been busy preparing protocols and conducting in-house training for the start-up of “no code” dispatching. The no code dispatching will do away with the use of codes used to describe particular call types. These codes have caused some confusion between public safety agencies in the past. While some codes may have been applicable for EMS, it would only lead to confusion and lack of understanding to Fire Departments or Police.

With the increased demand for multi-jurisdictional responses in the County, it was felt that the elimination of all codes was the best possible solution. The national trend for radio communications is the use of plain language. This policy has been adopted by the Knox Dispatch Advisory Board and will be implemented by the time you read this newsletter.

The majority of the Fire Departments in the County now have, to some extent, automatic response of mutual aid companies. This type of response has been necessitated out of lack of available manpower due to job commitments and the overall lack of enough volunteers in local services.

The KRCC is in a position to provide a smooth automated response of multiple jurisdictions to calls. All departments are now equipped with radios capable of supporting the repeater systems used by KRCC to accomplish this type of response. A document outlining incident communications interoperability is being drafted and will be distributed to all users for input in the near future.

A meeting was held with Coastal Communications to go over proposals for the Homeland Defense Grant project requests. The items being discussed in the proposal include the new base radio for Pen Bay Hospital, which will allow the hospital to communicate on the KRCC repeater network for improved communication with EMS, upgrades to pagers to include an "All Call" page tone, which allows one tone to open every pager in the County for general announcements and emergency traffic, and upgrades to portable radios to include lapel microphones and additional equipment not obtained in the previous years grant.

It appears that all radio needs requested in the 2004 grant will be able to be met.

A meeting was attended on the 7<sup>th</sup> to discuss the planning of a functional exercise for Knox County. This will be a step up from the tabletop exercise held in January of 2004. Mike Grant of the State EMA Office attended the meeting and went over the objectives for our planning group to consider. As always, KRCC will play a vital role in any WMD or Haz Mat response in the County.

A meeting of the newly formed Maine Association of County Emergency Communications Centers was held on the 8<sup>th</sup>. The association was formed to have representation on the MACCO steering committee representing emergency communications. The association is made up of County emergency Communications Directors representing the 16 counties in Maine.

Mike Smith, Director of Somerset County was voted in as President, Linwood Lothrop, Director of Knox Regional Communications Center is Vice President, Rob Morris, Director of Sagadahoc County Communications is the Secretary and Kathy Blagdon, Acting Director of Lincoln County Communications is the Secretary.

The purpose of the association is to promote efficiency and provide a forum for cooperation and uniformity of practice among county communications professionals. The objective of this Association is to promote the enhancement of the public's understanding and support of the public safety communications profession.

Membership is limited to the Director, Manager, Supervisor, or designee from each of the sixteen counties, plus an alternate member.

One of the first concerns of the association is LD 407, an act to move the ESCB from the PUC to the Dept. of Public Safety.

One of the biggest reasons for creating the association was the need for the sixteen counties to be able to unite and have a voice in the 9-1-1 system as the PUC and State work on restructuring the 9-1-1 network. It appears more and more that the future vision of the 9-1-1 network will heavily depend on County PSAPs. Therefore, we need to organize and have a platform to provide input that will be a united statewide voice.

On February 10-11, Director Lothrop attended the annual Maine Chiefs of Police Winter Conference and training at South Portland, ME. This year's training was on Multi-Agency Incident Management For Law Enforcement & Fire Service. The class was for personnel in law enforcement and the fire service that responds to and work together using the Incident Command System in incidents involving the real or potential of risk to life and property. The course entailed interactive lecture, case studies and incident simulations followed by open discussions.

The 9-1-1 Council meeting was held at the Emergency Services Communications Bureau on February 13<sup>th</sup>. The following is the highlights of the meeting.

All ESCB dispatcher-training records will soon be available over the Maine Criminal Justice Academy automated records, which will be accessed through the internet by use of a student I.D. and password.

It was reported that the Central Maine Commerce Center on Rte 27 in Augusta is preparing to install the State Police dispatch center equipment. During the week of 14<sup>th</sup>, 30 operator positions will be installed and ready for radio installation. WOW!!

There are presently four wireless companies (Sprint, Nextel, US Cellular and Verizon) that are all Phase II compliant. All these companies are using a GPS chip in the phone to provide coordinates. There may also be some triangulation used. This will require all customers to be issued new phones or have their existing phones modified.

There are three public hearings on the PSAP reduction NOR #2005.23 scheduled for March 1-3 in Augusta, Portland and Bangor. Anyone interested in the reduction of PSAPs is encouraged to attend the hearings, prepared to offer any testimony that you would like on public record.

A letter was drafted on behalf of the 9-1-1 council and sent to Governor Baldacci's Office, outlining the status of Federal Legislation H.R. 5419 "Enhanced 9-1-1 Act of 2004". The legislation was passed by Congress on December 29, 2004. The council wanted to ensure that the Governor's Office is aware of the legislation and the strict guidelines for use of 9-1-1 surcharges and associated penalties.

The following is an extremely brief review of legislative items effecting PSAPs:

LD407 – Move the ESCB from PUC to DPS

LD474 – Authority for funding county communication centers by County (Penobscot)

LD523 – Designate 2-1-1 agency (United Way of Greater Portland & Ingraham)  
This bill will clear the way for the United Way to be the sole provider of the 2-1-1 number, which will open up needed funding to create the service for telephone customers. The goal is to provide a Social Services Referral Clearinghouse accessed by 2-1-1. Ingraham's has developed a robust database that will be used in the project. This service would have minimal value to PSAPs.

LD525 – Ban use of handheld cellular telephone while driving  
This bill is meeting a lot of opposition, including the Maine Chiefs of Police. There is quite a lengthy list of exceptions, not to mention it creates a problem for PSAPs. What do we do when a caller is reporting a crime in progress of which they must continue to operate their vehicle while reporting a crime? An example is they are following a robbery suspect vehicle and they want to keep the caller on line for updated location information. Are dispatchers breaking the law by keeping the caller on the phone? Is there any type of liability to the communications center if they do keep the caller on the phone and something happens?

LD898 – Mandatory Testing of TTY's at the PSAP

This is already being done in Knox RCC

LR1273 – Mandatory EMD.

This is supported by KRCC. All our personnel are already trained in EMD, which has proven to be a life saving program resulting in providing immediate life-saving instructions to callers over the telephone.