



## Charleston County News Release

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### **Charleston County Honors 911 Emergency Services Dispatchers**

*National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week is April 13 -19*

Charleston County and the Consolidated Dispatch Board is celebrating National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, April 13 -19, by honoring those who work in 911 dispatch centers throughout the county.

Emergency services dispatchers from all 10 dispatching agencies in the county were honored by Charleston County Council and the newly formed Charleston County Consolidated Dispatch Board during the County Council meeting on Tuesday, April 15.

Following a reception in the dispatchers' honor, a resolution declaring the week of April 13-19 as National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week in Charleston County was passed by Charleston County Council. All dispatchers who were present at the meeting were asked to stand and be recognized for their service to citizens of Charleston County.

"Every day, Charleston County citizens dial 911 for help in emergencies. The dispatchers across our county who answer these calls for help, gather essential information, and dispatch the appropriate assistance are often the vital link between life and death," said Charleston County Council Chairman Tim Scott. "We honor these highly-trained professionals and thank them for their dedication to our safety."

Dispatchers in Charleston County are aware that changes are coming with recent decisions to establish a Charleston County Consolidated 911 Center by approximately 2012. Among these changes will be new opportunities, such as police dispatchers obtaining training and experience in medical dispatching.

"We are moving toward Consolidated Dispatch one step at a time," said North Charleston Police Chief Jon Zumalt, who is also Chairman of the Consolidated Dispatch Board. "Working on this transition gives us the opportunity to appreciate and honor our dispatchers for their critical role in emergency response to citizens."

There are currently a total of 154 dispatch staff members at the 10 emergency dispatch centers in Charleston County. National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week is a time set aside to honor these emergency services professionals.

Emergency services dispatchers play an integral part in public safety and community welfare. Serving in this role, dispatchers are the primary communications point between the public and police, fire and EMS personnel.

Emergency services dispatchers are responsible for receiving a wide variety of incoming emergency calls for police, fire and EMS services. After a dispatcher obtains important information, pre-arrival instructions may be given to the caller, and the appropriate response personnel and vehicles are sent and tracked until the incident is concluded.

Emergency services dispatchers are responsible for:

- Providing public safety assistance to the citizens of Charleston County
- Answering and/or transferring incoming 911 lines and administrative lines and providing the appropriate pre-arrival instructions
- Inputting all call information into the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system
- Dispatching and tracking calls for service for police, fire and EMS units based on the priority of the call, and then responding to all activity and requests generated by the units
- Working with specialized teams such as S.W.A.T., Air Support, Marine Patrol, K-9, Rescue Squad, Coroner, Technical Rescue "Ropes" Team, HazMat, etc.

Dispatchers are trained in police, fire or medical protocols, and some have training and experience in multiple disciplines. There are a variety of other certifications that must be obtained, such as E9-1-1 Telecommunicator, Emergency Medical Dispatch and National Crime Information Center (NCIC).

### **Background on National Public Safety Telecommunicator Week:**

Each year, the second full week of April is dedicated to the men and women who serve as emergency services dispatchers (known as telecommunicators). The idea for this week was first conceived by Patricia Anderson of the Contra Costa County (Calif.) Sheriff's Office in 1981 and was observed for three years at that agency only. Members of the Virginia and North Carolina chapters of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) became involved in the mid-1980s. By the early 1990s, the national APCO organization convinced the U.S. Congress of the need for a formal proclamation. The resolution was introduced twice more in 1993 and 1994, and then became permanent, without the need for yearly introduction.

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