



Charleston County News Release

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Charleston County Honors 9-1-1 Emergency Services Dispatchers

National Public Safety Telecommunicator Week is April 12 -18

[Charleston County Government](#) and the Consolidated Dispatch Board is celebrating National Public Safety Telecommunicator Week, April 12 -18, by honoring those who work in public safety dispatch centers throughout the county.

On Tuesday, April 7, [Charleston County Council](#) passed a resolution declaring the week of April 12-18 as National Public Safety Telecommunicator Week in Charleston County. Additionally, emergency services dispatchers from all emergency dispatching agencies in the county will be honored over lunch hosted by the Charleston County Consolidated Dispatch Board on Wednesday, April 15, as part of a special two-day training program.

There are currently 154 full time dispatch staff members working at public safety dispatch centers throughout Charleston County. Dispatchers are aware of upcoming decisions and planning activities geared toward the full establishment of a Charleston County Consolidated 9-1-1 Center in 2012. Among the changes are new opportunities, such as police dispatchers obtaining training and experience in medical dispatching.

“Our jurisdictions are working well together on the various transitional issues involved in establishing the Consolidated 9-1-1 Center”, said North Charleston Police Chief Jon Zumalt, who is also Chairman of the Consolidated Dispatch Board. “The transitional steps we are taking serve to remind us of the importance of our dispatchers and their critical role in emergency response to citizens. We take this opportunity to express our appreciation to these dedicated professionals.”

Charleston County hired its Consolidated 9-1-1 Center Director, Jim Lake, in October 2008.

“Handling emergency 9-1-1 calls takes extensive training and commitment,” Lake said. “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 and visitors to Charleston County
- Answering and/or transferring incoming 9-1-1 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, [Volunteer Fire and 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.

Current Charleston County Consolidated 9-1-1 Activities:

- Consolidation began in January 2009, with [Charleston County Sheriff's Office](#) 9-1-1 and [EMS](#) dispatchers joining together under the Consolidated 9-1-1 Director.
- North Charleston has requested to merge its 9-1-1 operation (already co-located with the County's operation) under the Consolidated 9-1-1 Director beginning July 1, 2009.
- Committees of the Consolidated Dispatch Board are actively working on many planning and transitional issues involving operational protocols, technology, facilities planning, and employee transition.
- Charleston County Council is scheduled to discuss the following topics at the [April 16 Finance Committee meeting](#):
 - o Purchase of land for the new Consolidated 9-1-1 Center
 - o Programming and design contract
 - o North Charleston's request to consolidate its 9-1-1 operations on July 1, 2009
 - o Extending consultant contract for planning assistance

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