



News Release

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For more information on Charleston County's 9-1-1 Center: <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/departments/Dispatch/index.htm>

30th Anniversary of Charleston County 9-1-1 System Approaches

A look back at the start of service to the present day Consolidated Dispatch

On August 11, 2013 [Charleston County](#) will mark the 30th anniversary of its first 9-1-1 call. After signing a contract with AT&T in November of 1981, Charleston County embarked on a two-year preparation period in order to convert Rural Route Numbers to physical street addresses as well as name all unnamed streets in the county to build the 9-1-1 database. The database enables the 9-1-1 centers to identify the physical address of the caller by what is known as an enhanced 9-1-1 system.

Working with a staff of merely three in the early stages of the project, the County's first 9-1-1 Director, William F. Kopacka, watched as his team created mylar addressing grids with "old school" drafting technology. The countless hours of work and overtime yielded a complete uniformed addressing system.

With the combined assistance of the United States Postal Service, local police, fire and medical personnel, a public awareness campaign was set in motion to educate the citizens of Charleston County about the new emergency telephone system. Telephone stickers with the message that citizens should now call 9-1-1 for emergencies versus dialing zero for the operator were placed in water bills. Emergency vehicles were outfitted with 9-1-1 stickers that were placed on the rear quarter panel of each vehicle so that citizen could clearly see the message.

Once the groundwork was laid, the mapping system in place and the database complete, the first Enhanced 9-1-1 call in all of South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia was made in Charleston County on August 11, 1983.

After 28 years of service as a 9-1-1 Call Taker and Dispatcher, Shelly Hoskins reflects on her career as her retirement date quickly approaches. "It's like watching someone build a house. First you see the foundation being laid and before you know it, more and more rooms are being added." Hoskins says of her early years as a City of Charleston Police and Mount Pleasant Dispatcher before joining the [Charleston County Consolidated 9-1-1 Center](#). "First, the technology was just buttons and push to talk and as the years progressed, you have a completely computer driven system where security is of the utmost importance."

The Charleston County Consolidated 9-1-1 Center began operations at the Lonnie Hamilton Public Services Building in January of 2009. The Consolidated 9-1-1 Center moved from that building to a newly constructed 38,000-square-foot facility on March 5, 2013. The new facility houses the [Consolidated 9-1-1 Center and Emergency Operations Center](#) at a cost of \$27 million to construct. The Consolidated 9-1-1 Center staffs 24 Telecommunicators and Supervisors per shift to provide their internationally accredited service to the public, law enforcement officials, firefighters and emergency medical services personnel.

Full consolidation will occur in January of 2014 when the City of Charleston Police transition to the Consolidated 9-1-1 Center. Using the latest 9-1-1 technology and information sharing tools, the Consolidated 9-1-1 Center will process over

1.3 million calls a year with an operating budget of approximately \$12 million to support a staff of 150 Consolidated 9-1-1 Center employees.

Charleston County 9-1-1 timeline:

- First call August 11, 1983
- Charleston County Sheriff's Office and EMS consolidated in January 2009
- Dispatch moves into new facility in March 2013

Complete timeline of Consolidation process:

<http://www.charlestoncounty.org/departments/dispatch/overview.htm>

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