

Jarrettsville/Norrisville Community Council Minutes  
27 May 2009

The Community Council met at the Harford County Emergency Operations Center (HCEOC) in Hickory. The Center reports to the Harford County Government.

The Council was met by Mr. Ernie Crist of the HCEOC at 1900. Mr. Crist escorted the attendees to the EOC events room and provided a briefing as documented below:

The HCEOC has the following responsibilities:

**1-**Oversees the hazardous materials (HAZMAT) team. The HAZMAT team is a group of emergency responders who respond to releases of hazardous materials, including hazardous wastes.

**2-**Administers Superfund Amendment Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986. They are responsible for emergency planning and coordination for SARA Title 3 facilities (those facilities with reportable quantities of hazardous materials in storage such as the Clorox facility in Aberdeen). Harford County is the second highest jurisdiction with SARA Title 3 facilities in the State.

**3-**Operates the public safety radio and data systems for Fire/Emergency Medical Services (EMS)/Police.

**4-**Serves as the Emergency Management Agency for the county. Responds to emergency situations at Peach Bottom, significant snow events, hurricanes/tropical storms, etc.

**5-**Operates the 911 system for Harford County - Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). Handles approximately 450K incoming and outgoing calls per year. Typically, about 165K calls (~4/5 emergency calls received) are referred to the Harford County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) and about 32K calls (~1/5 emergency calls received) referred to Fire/EMS.

HCEOC uses three protocols for 911 calls: Fire, EMS, and Police. There are two job types: call operators and dispatchers.

Personnel training is extensive. Mr. Crist estimates that it takes 2-2 1/2 years from the day of hiring for a person to be fully trained in all three protocols for both category of jobs. Test scores of 80 or higher are required for certification. The first 5-weeks consists of certification to take calls using all three protocols, followed by on-the-job training under a dispatcher for another five weeks. Once the supervised training is complete, approximately 30% of the calls taken by the employee are actively monitored by quality assurance personnel for approximately another 5 weeks. Additional training is required for dispatching (one for police and one for Fire/EMS), which can last up to the 2 1/2 year timeframe.

Backup facilities are located in Jarrettsville. The EOC backup facility is located at the fire station, and the backup 911 call center is located across from the HCSO – Northern Precinct.

98% of all calls are answered within 10 seconds. If a call has not been answered within 15 seconds, an automated message answers the caller (this can occur after a major accident on I-95 when numerous cell phone callers dial in simultaneously).

Call recordings are maintained for approximately 1 year before they are destroyed. Exceptions include calls being used for legal proceedings or other legitimate reasons.

Law enforcement is required to respond to every call where the 911 operator cannot determine the situation. Errant cell phone dialing is an example of where the operator can call the person back to verify there is no problem and terminate the case upon verification.

911 calls are subject to the Freedom of Information Act unless it involves an ongoing police investigation or includes medical information protected under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and the Maryland Personal Information Protection Act.

The next generation of 911 plans to include text messaging and picture messaging capabilities within the next few years. Picture messaging would theoretically allow a caller to send a photo of the scene that would then be transferred to the responders.

Currently, all of Harford County is volunteer for Fire Services. An EMS fund was developed to have paid EMS personnel at various locations in the county. Paid personnel are located at areas where volunteer services cannot sufficiently respond (Bel Air, Abingdon, and daytime hours at Level to name some).

Following the briefing, Mr Crist provided a tour of the 911 Call Center.

The meeting ended at approximately 2030.