

# St. Joseph County

# Central Dispatch 2015



*Dennis Brandenburg*



*Stacey Bowler*



*Kristen Carpenter*



*Angie Gutfrie*



*Ryan Fillmore*



*Keli Rezzani*



*Dianona Metzger*



*Candace Scott*



*Mike Haydon*



*Kelli Lusk*



*Kyle Murie*



*Abe Merten*



*Brendan Westrick*



*Regan Taylor*



*Travis Helmer*



*Trenton Thaxton*



*Jennifer Homan*

## **A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR...**

Once again, it is my pleasure, to come before this Commission to present the 2015 Annual Report for St. Joseph County Central Dispatch.

It is hard to believe, that it has been over a year since I became Director of our County's Central Dispatch. The time has flown by with the number of projects we have taken on and completed during this past year.

As you recall, last year when I came before you, my number one challenge was to fully staff our Dispatch Center. I am sorry to say, that in spite the my efforts, the efforts of the staff, my supervisors, and the county Human Resources Department this still remains our number one challenge. This is not unique of our center though. While attending several Director's conferences across the state, and some of the surrounding states, I have found this is pretty much universal for most dispatch centers. This is a very elusive goal for most dispatch centers as not just anyone can handle the demands, hours of work, and the never ending stress of being a Telecommunicator in today's dispatch center.

We have made progress though. A year ago we were 4 people short. We currently have two full-time Telecommunicators in training. One is expected to have her training completed by the first part of March of this year, and due to a very recent unexpected resignation, left us with a vacancy which we have found a very good applicant and she has just begun her training as a Telecommunicator.

A Telecommunicator is a rare breed of person, they thrive on challenges and adversity. These people have a wealth of resources at their disposal and use them wisely. They also possess this uncanny ability to find a solution to just about any problem that arises. I have to commend my staff on their tenacity and determination to get the job done.

I am extremely proud to work with some of the best Telecommunicators around, St. Joseph County should be proud of the men and women who have stepped up to handle these emergencies one call at a time.

The tower project was finally completed in November. I think everything that could go wrong did, and had to be fixed. One tower climb, turned into 3. Instead of just one antenna being damaged, 4 antennas and cabling had to be replaced. On the bright side, the tower itself was in very good condition. Now that all the extra antennas, cables and other miscellaneous things that were hanging on the tower have been removed, there is considerably less weight. I hope this will help extend the overall life of the tower.

The following report will cover our accomplishments and projects during 2015, compare statistics from some of the past years, and includes a vision of where we are headed in the future.

Dennis Brandenburg, Director

## **ST. JOSEPH COUNTY 9-1-1 POLICY BOARD, JANUARY 2016**

Chief Thomas Bringman  
Three Rivers Police Department  
Representing:  
Three Rivers Police Department

Chief Mark Brinkert  
Colon Police Department  
Representing:  
Village Police Departments

Chief Carl Holcomb  
Three Rivers Fire Department  
Representing:  
Fire Chief's Association

Director Geoff Smith  
Sturgis Police Department  
Representing  
Sturgis Police Department

Sheriff Bradly Balk  
St. Joseph County Sheriff Office  
Representing:  
St. Joseph County Sheriff Office

Commissioner Robin Baker  
St. Joseph County Board of Commissioners  
Representing:  
St. Joseph County Board of Commissioners

First Lieutenant James Coleman  
Michigan State Police  
Representing:  
Michigan State Police

Lisa Kinsman  
Three Rivers Area Hospital  
Representing: Emergency Medical Service

J. Patrick Yoder  
St. Joseph County Administrator  
Ex-Officio Member

This Policy Board oversees the communication and emergency dispatch services for St. Joseph County. To help develop and implement policies for the efficient and effective operation of the Central Dispatch Center.

It is with the support and approval of this Policy Board that many projects are developed and approved to be presented to the County Board of Commissioners.

## **St. Joseph County Central Dispatch Staff**

Dennis Brandenburg

Director

### **Shift Supervisors**

Stacey Bower      Kristen Carpenter      Angela Guthrie      Ryan Fillmore

### **Telecommunicators**

Keli Bazant      Ramona Metzger      Candace Scott      Michael Haydon  
Kelli Lusk      Kyle Murk      Abe Merten      Regan Taylor  
Brendan Westrick      Trenton Thaxton      Jennifer Homan      Rachel Cook

Currently our staff consists of 17 personnel ranging from two still in training to our most experienced employee with 23 years of service.

This fine group of men and women work very closely together, sharing duties and responsibilities to make sure help and assistance is sent as quickly and efficiently as possible. Our staff's first concern is not only the safety and wellbeing of the citizens of St. Joseph County, but also that of the Police Officers, Fire and Rescue personnel, and the Medical Responders they work with every day. The brotherhood between the Telecommunicator and these responders is an extremely close bond.

The Telecommunicators duties are many. They include gathering accurate, detailed information on every incident, dispatching that information to Police, Fire or EMS units. They keep those units informed of any updates while they are responding, and monitor every unit while they are on scene. Telecommunicators must be prepared for whatever type call comes into the dispatch center. Each Telecommunicator receives extensive training in all aspects of their duties at Central Dispatch.

## **Training**

It seems as though training never ends for our staff. Training begins with a 14 week in-house training period. This training program is presented by our 5 certified Communication Trainers Officers (CTO), this program covers the necessary skills a Telecommunicator will need to handle the job. Such as; Call-taking, Radio Dispatch, Computer knowledge, CAD entry, information gathering, questioning techniques, telephone etiquette, people skills, problem solving, the layout of the county, along with the knowledge of any and all resources available, , and much more.

Once the in-house training is completed every Telecommunicator is required to attend a 40 hour Basic Dispatch course, followed by another 40 Hour Advance Dispatch course. These are both mandated by the State of Michigan. These classes are handled by certified instructors and cover specific topics such as an overview of public safety, Telecommunicator's roles and responsibilities, legal aspects of dispatcher services, interpersonal communications, telephone technique, call classification, radio communications and stress management. The advance class covers more specific topics such as; domestic violence, suicide intervention, 9-1-1 liability, stress management and Homeland security.

Once this outside training is completed, the Telecommunicator begins to hone their skills and become proficient in the call-taking process. In 2015 St. Joseph County Central Dispatch hosted both the Basic and Advance Dispatch classes in our center. This not only saved us a great deal of money normally spent on transportation, hotel stay and meals, but was also much more convenient for our staff members who attended the classes. We also were able to show off the center to employees of other dispatch centers from around the state.

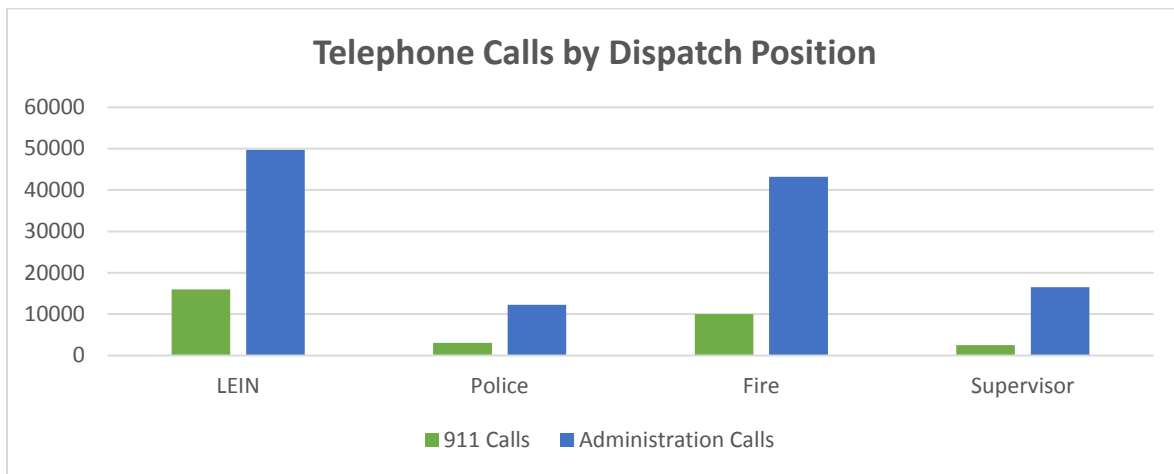
Within the first year of employment, all Telecommunicator are enrolled in an Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) Class. This is a 24 hour class concentrating on the call-taking process regarding medical calls only. After completion of this class each Telecommunicator is certified to handle any Medical calls that come into the dispatch Center.

The staff is still not done with training at this point. Each Telecommunicator is also required to attend a minimum of 24 hours of Continuing Education training every 2 years, be certified in CPR, and re-certified every 2 years with the Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN) system. Along with the continuing updates to laws, policies and procedures, and new equipment, it is a never ending process to stay abreast of the ever changing world of dispatch.

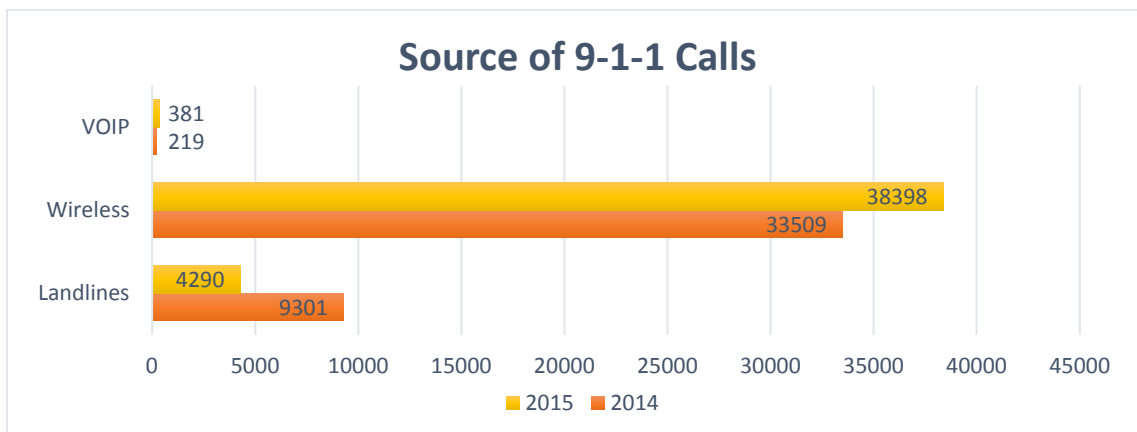
Every call has the potential to be an emergency. No matter if it comes in on a 9-1-1 line or our non-emergency lines, anything can happen anytime of day. Every Telecommunicator must be prepared each time they pick up that phone and say "St. Joseph County Central Dispatch, or "9-1-1, Where is your Emergency"

## By The Numbers...

In 2015 a new digital recorder was installed at the dispatch center. This state-of-the-art recorder is capable of not only recording more channels than the old analog recorder, but it is also capable of creating reports. Reports include how many telephone and radio transmission come in and go out of the dispatch center, which Telecommunicator is taking the call, and also a video record of the actual entry into the CAD system. This can be used to not only document the actual call-taking process, but is also used in our training program. It demonstrates to the Telecommunicators how efficient they are in their data entry. The following graph shows the number of 9-1-1 calls and Administration Line calls into the Dispatch Center since the installation of the new recorder. This is only a portion of the year as the recorder was not installed until February 2015.



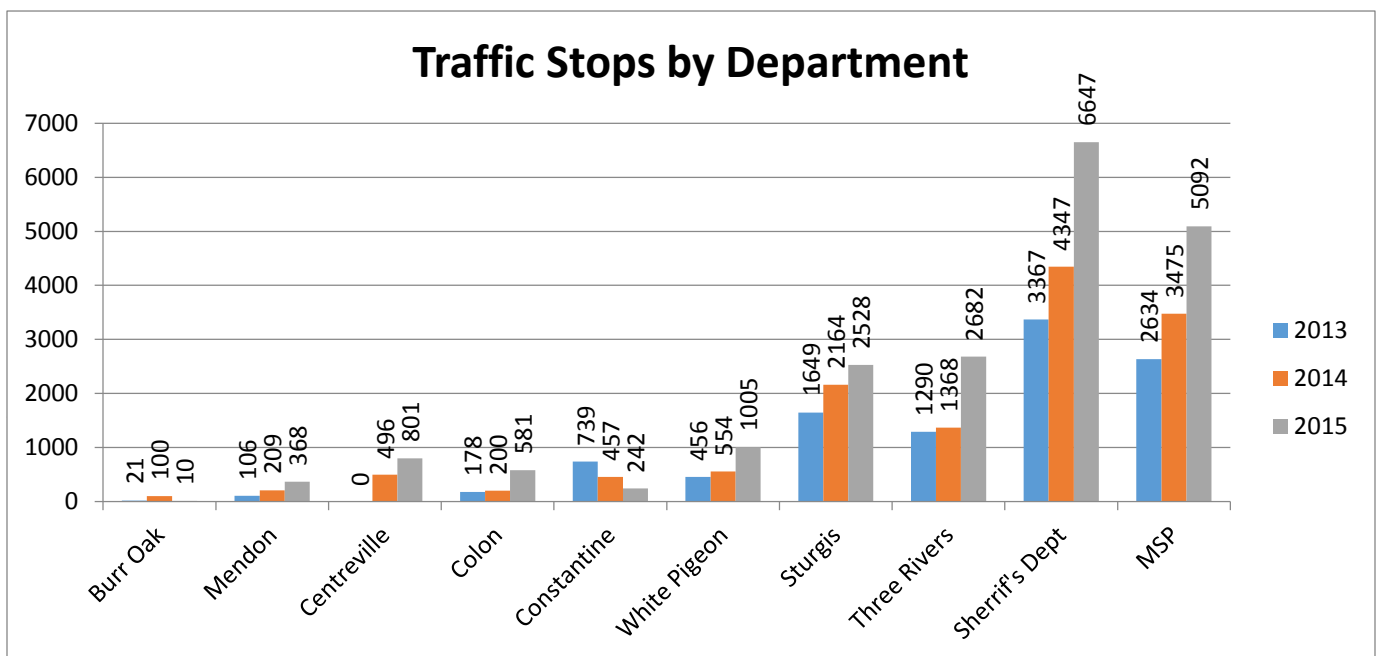
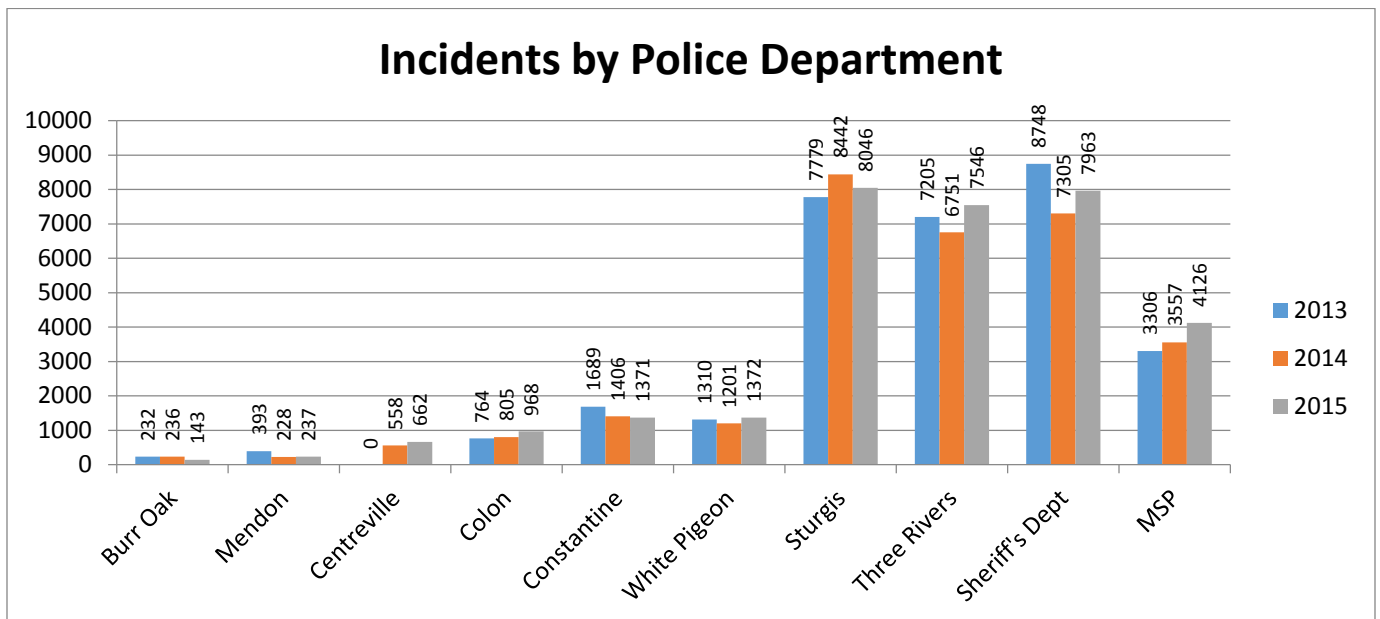
These 9-1-1 calls originate from various sources, Landline or house telephones, Wireless or Cell Phones and Voice Over Internet (VoIP) telephones. Here is how these sources break down;



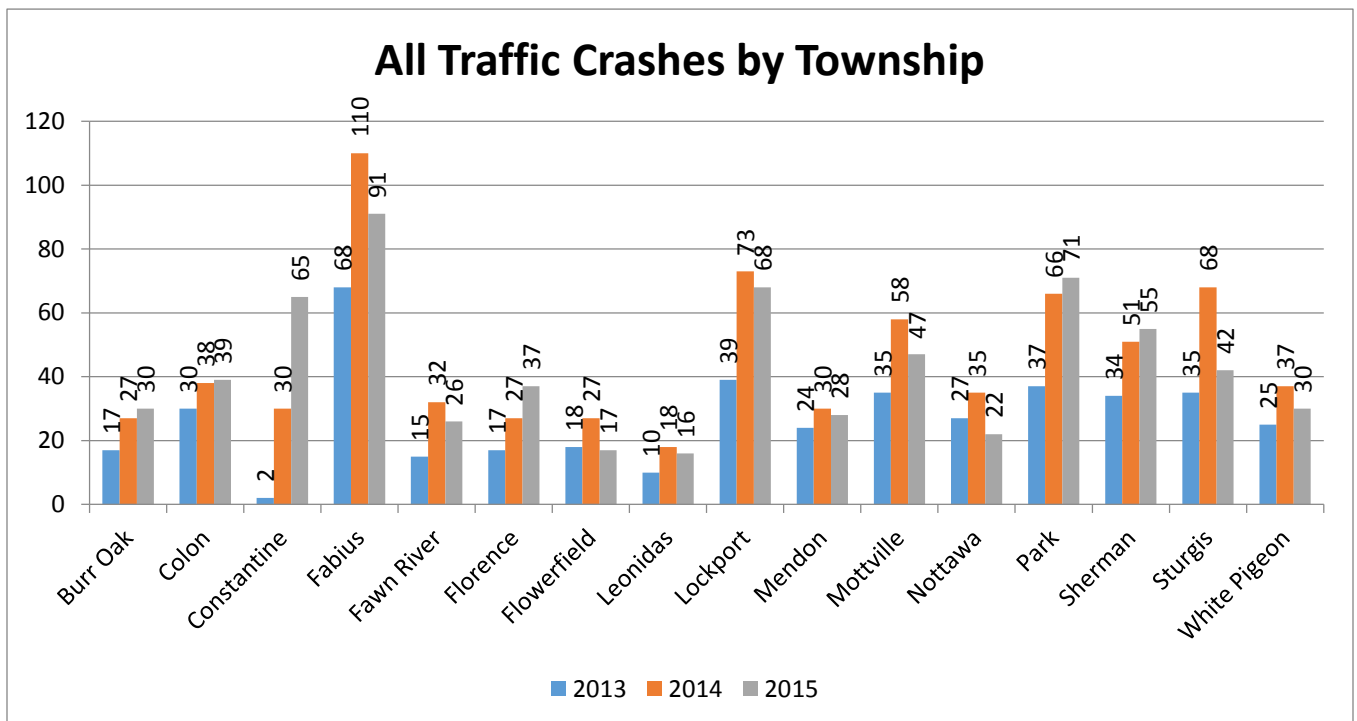
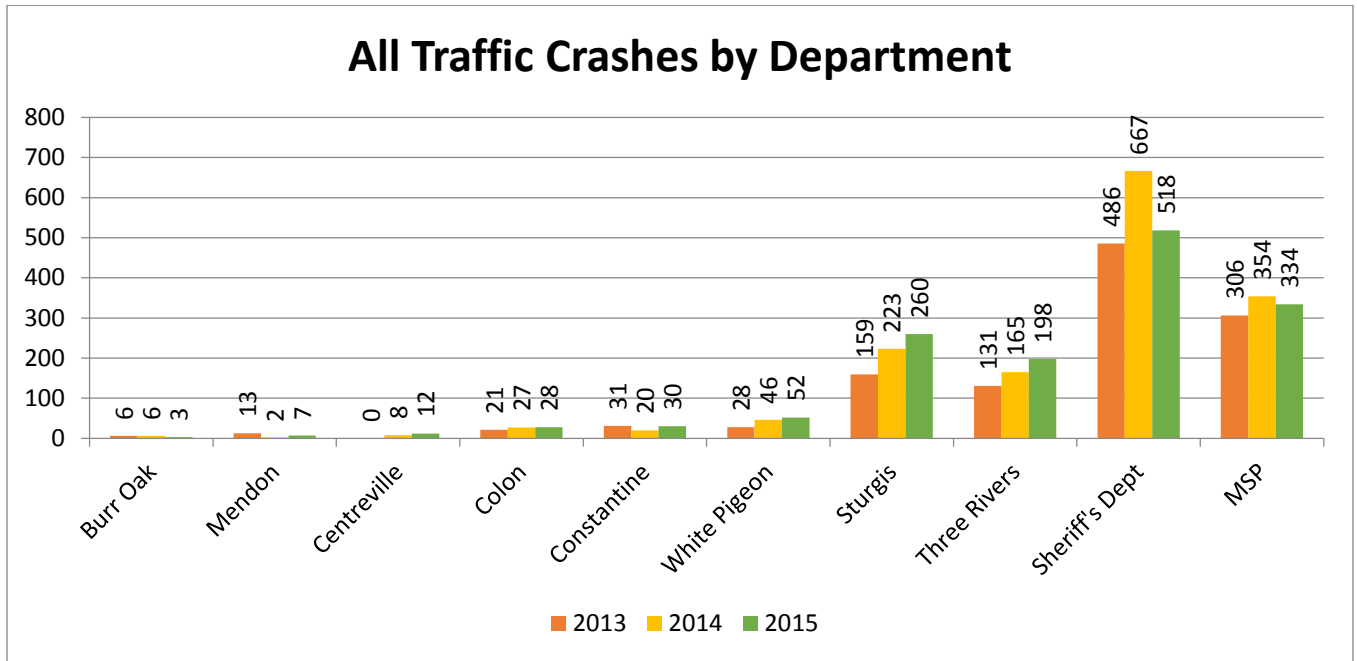
As you can see by this chart, nearly 90% of all 9-1-1 calls coming into our dispatch center originate from cell phones, that is up from 77% in 2014, making it that much more difficult in getting an exact location as we are able to do with landline telephones

The next group of graphs represent the number of incidents entered into the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. These incidents are broken down by each Police, Fire, and Ambulance Service, then by township, city and villages within St. Joseph County.

This first graph shows the total number of incidents handle by each Police Department, compared to the past 2 years. The second graph reflects the number of traffic stops by each Police department, again compared to the past 2 years.

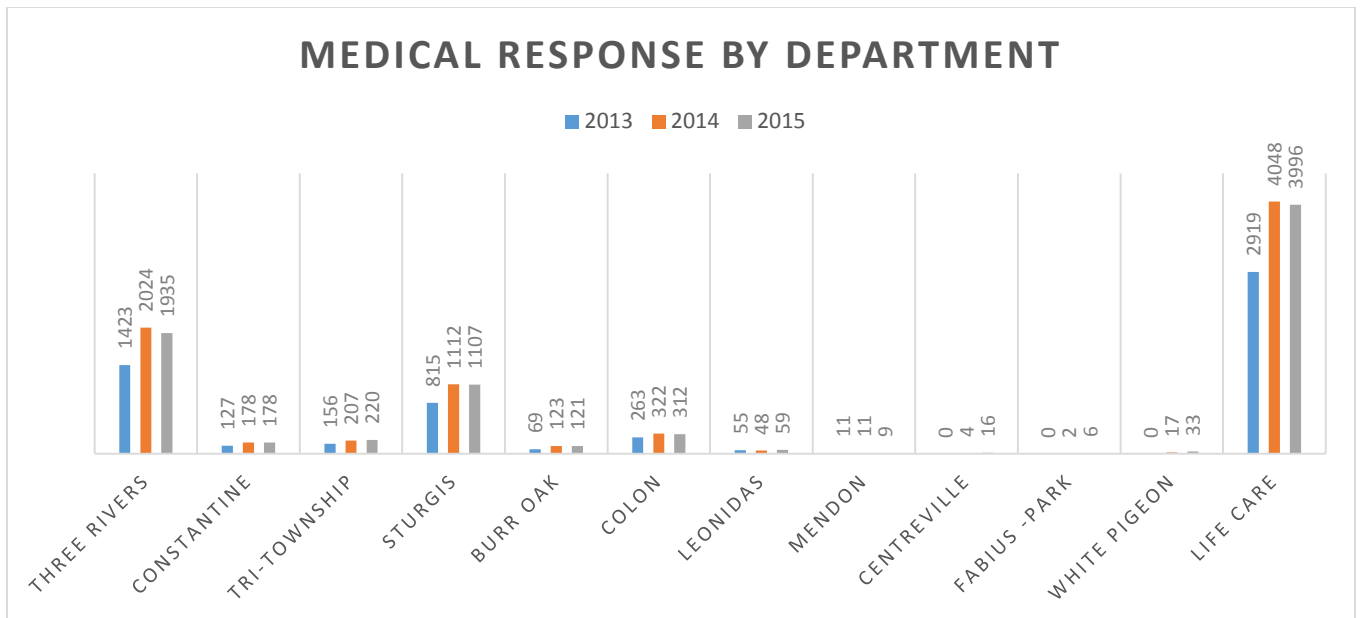
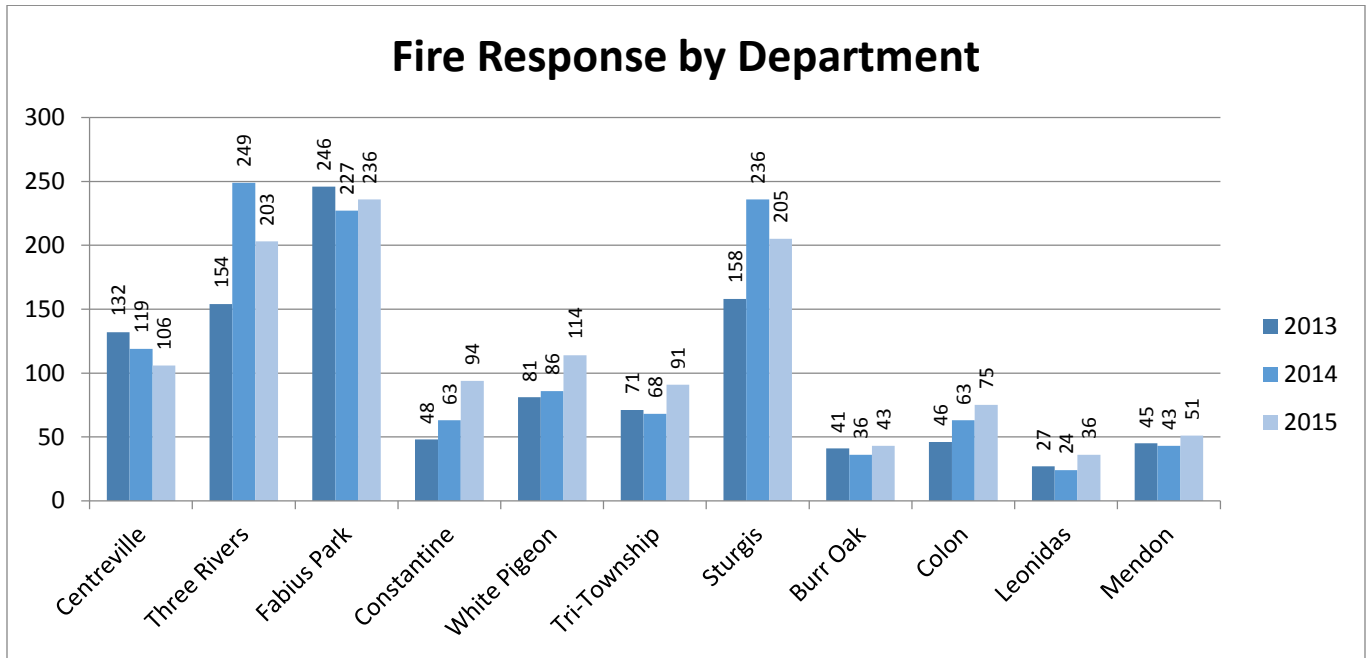


The following 2 graphs show the total number of traffic crashes by city, village and township in the county. I believe that the number of traffic stops is directly related to the number of crashes reported, as the number of traffic stops increase or decrease, so do the number of traffic crashes. Through extra patrol efforts the number of traffic stops has increased by nearly 50%, and at the same time the number of traffic crashes has decreased by about 5% from 2014 to 2015. These are figures that need more data to see how the trend follows from here.



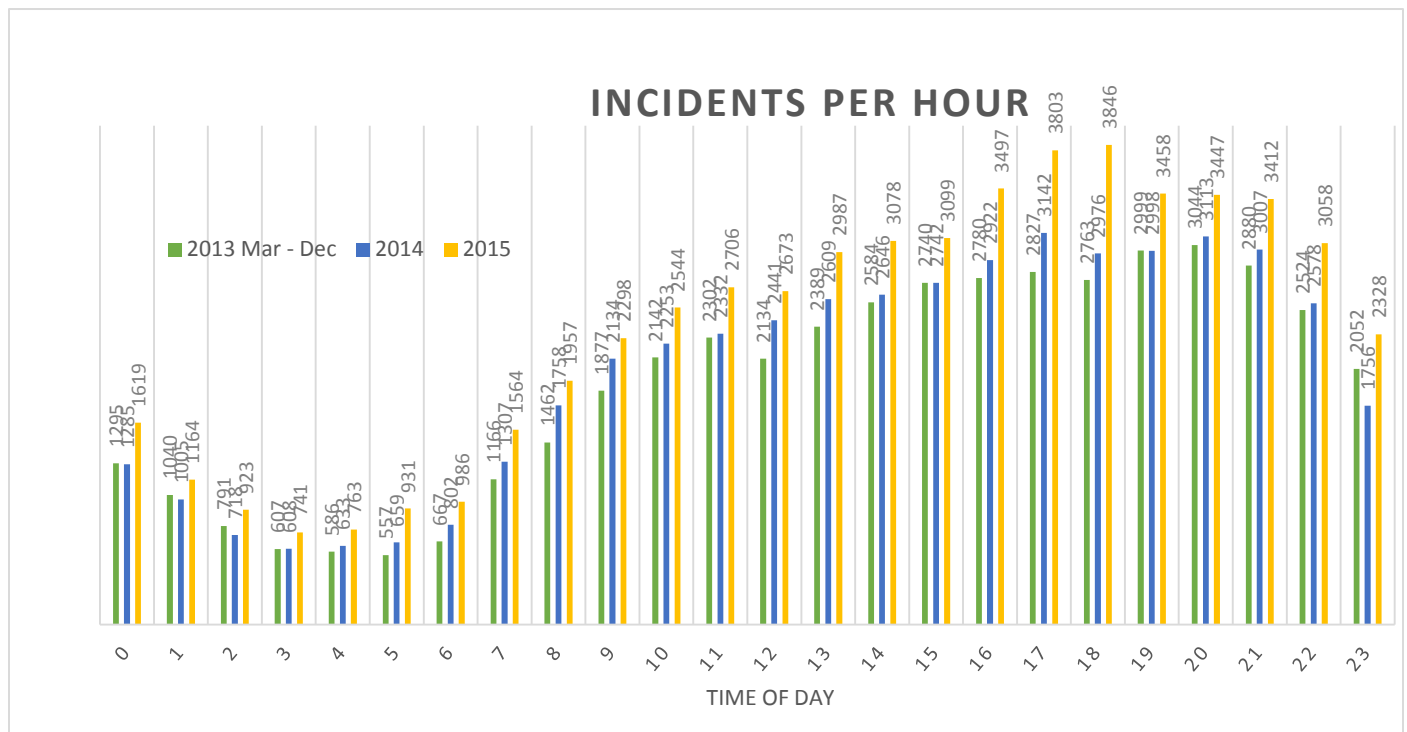
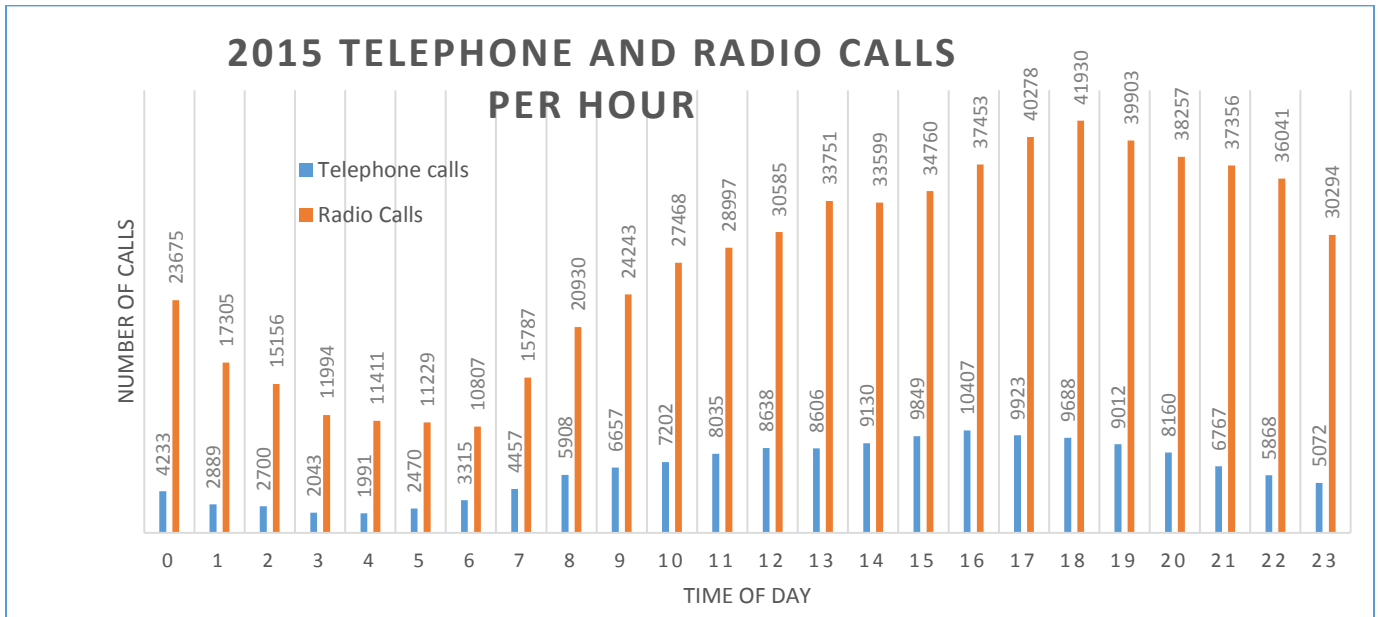


Central Dispatch also handles every Fire and Medical call within St. Joseph County. The next 2 graphs reflect the number of Fire Response (Non-Medical) calls and Medical Calls handled by area Fire Departments and Ambulance services for the past 3 years.



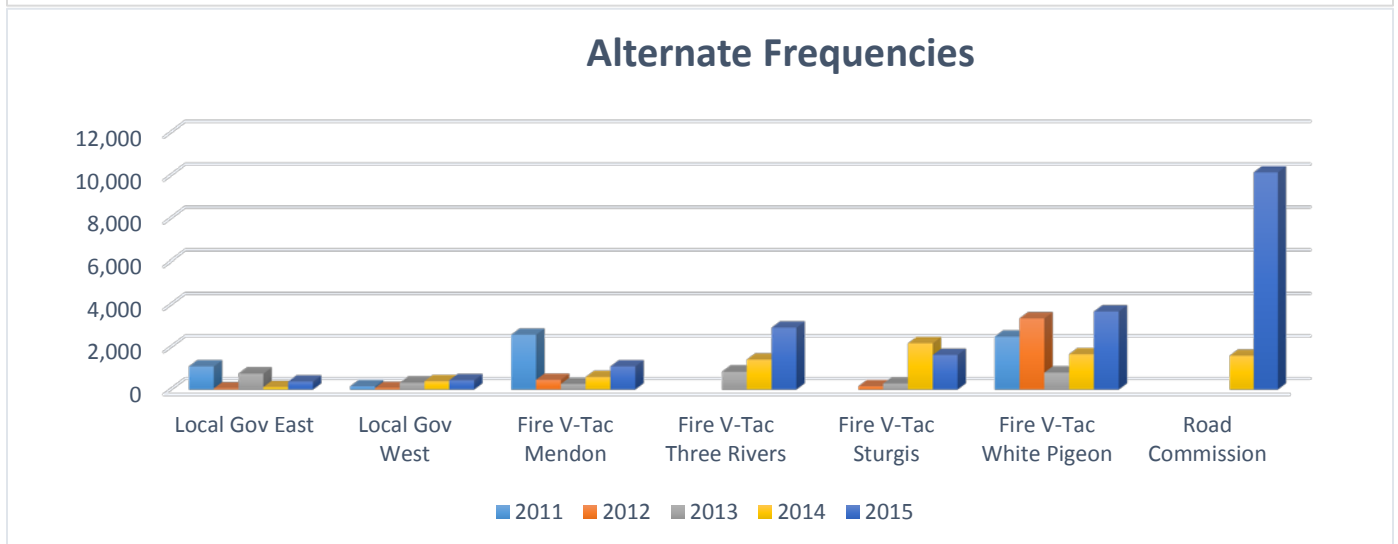
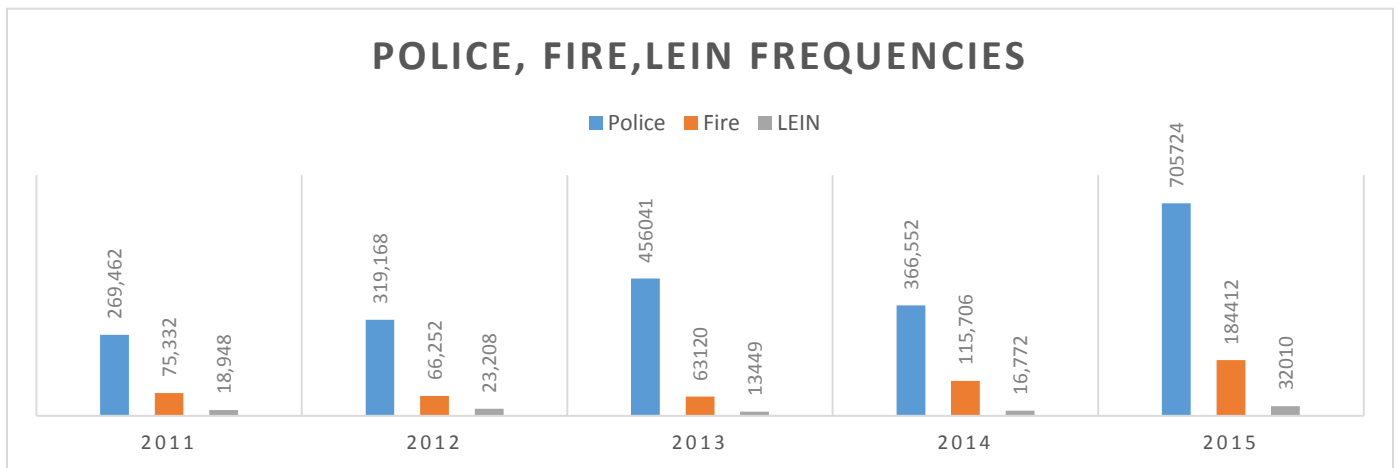
Not all Fire Departments in St. Joseph County respond to medical calls within their respective areas. Occasionally additional man-power is requested by EMS services when needed.

The following 2 graphs show the number of Telephone and Radio Calls per hour, and the Number of Incidents per hour for the 2015. These graphs aid in the staffing requirements of Central Dispatch to ensure we have enough personnel to handle the in-coming calls without overloading the on-duty staff. Our staff works 12 hours shifts, 5 am to 5pm, and 5pm to 5am. As you can see there are slow times, but never is there an hour of the day that something isn't happening. As you would expect the busiest part of the day is between 2pm and 10pm when most people are home from work and active with their lives.



Each of these types of incidents requires the Telecommunicator to make several types of data entry into each incidents. These include caller information, location, description of incident, proper classification, dispatching units, updating unit's status, all parties involved. It then concludes by closing the call when every unit clears the scene.

In 2015 Central Dispatch entered over 59,000 police, Fire, and EMS incidents into the CAD system. Our CAD system tracks how many entries each Telecommunicator makes for each incident. In 2015 this required 430,000 separate entries into the CAD system. (Combine this data entry the radio traffic in and out of the dispatch center.) There were over 610,000 in-coming, and 1,170,000 out-going radio transmissions for our dispatch center. Our radio system is capable of recording the length of each transmission and reception in and out of our dispatch center. This information translates to 774 hours of in-coming and 1,400 hours of out-going radio broadcasting. This is equivalent to 32 days straight of in-coming and 59 days of out-going continuous radio broadcasting through our dispatch center. These numbers are reflected on the following graph in comparison with the past 4 years that we have been able to track this information.



## Part 1 Crimes

The Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Part 1 Crimes are also referred to as the Crime Index, covering the following types of crime;

Criminal Sexual Conduct

Robbery

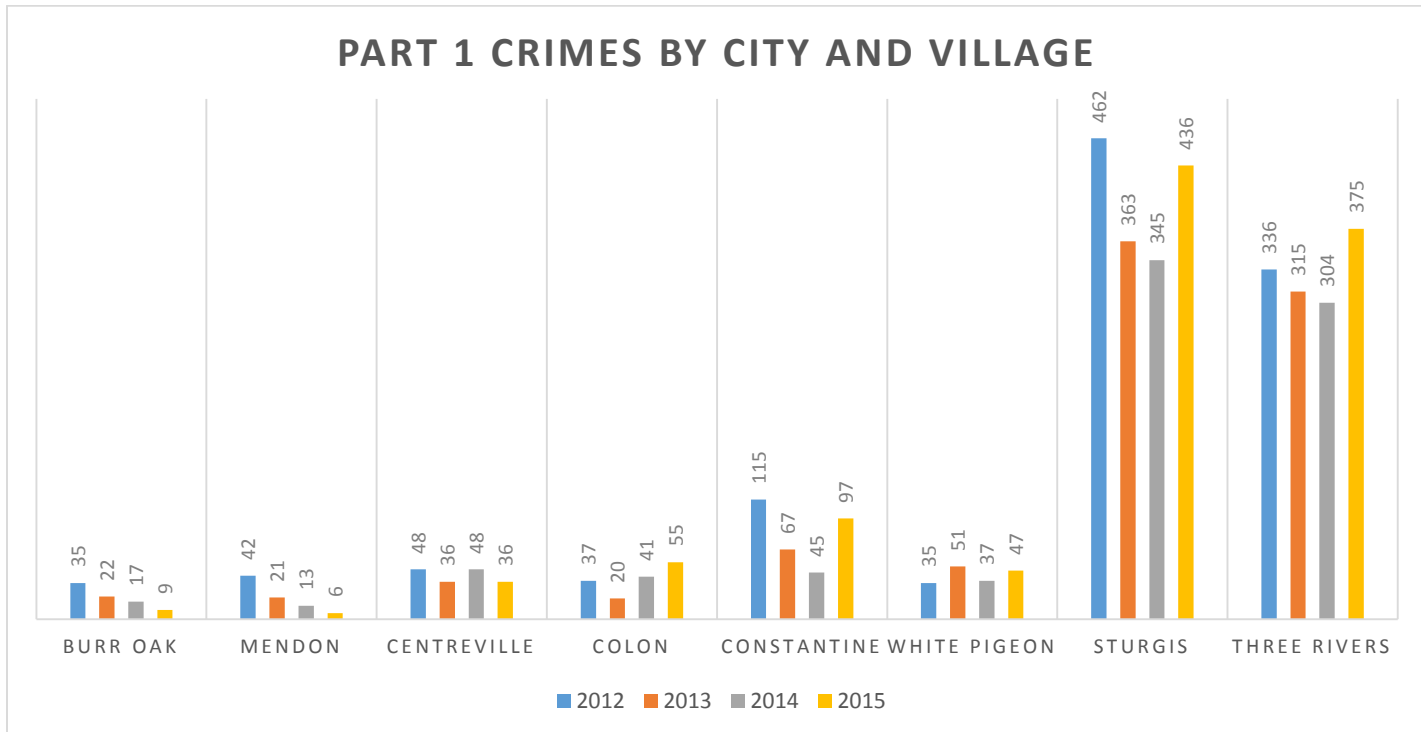
Aggravated Assault

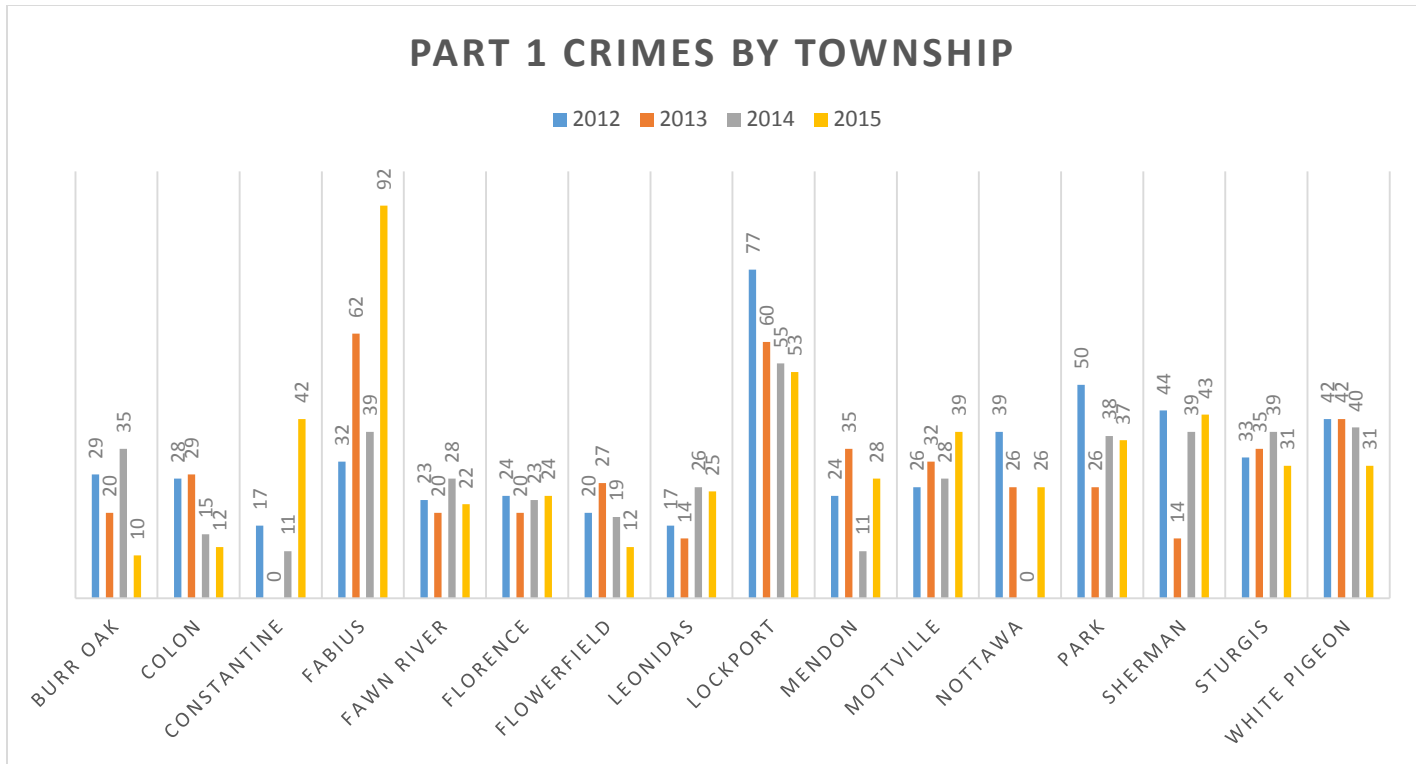
Burglary

Larceny

Motor Vehicle Theft

The following graph reflects the trend of these Part 1 Crimes for the past 4 years in St. Joseph County.





## Completed Projects in 2015

2015 was an extremely busy year, we had numerous partially completed projects and other neglected projects to get finished. Many of these projects required most if not all of 2015 to complete. The following is a list of projects that needed to be addressed and were completed in 2015;

- Finish proper installation of the new generator. Generator bolted down, proper start-up and tuning to ensure peak performance.
- Old CAD removed from dispatch positions, this system just contained outdated information once we made the transition to the new Alert Public Safety CAD system.
- All reports and News releases can now be faxed or e-mailed directly from our CAD system. Now there is no need to print these reports first then fax to Police and Fire departments or the News agencies. This is saving on the cost of ink/toner and paper.
- New digital recorder installed. It is now capable of making copies of calls for Police, Fire and the county prosecutor's office, and also for the numerous Freedom of Information

requests that are received. These recordings can be sent by e-mail, without the need to make copies on CD or DVD, again saving time and money.

- Tower Project for Centreville tower. This was a total re-grounding of the tower, the dispatch center, and radio shack. Removal of damaged wire and antennas, and installation of fiber optics between the radio shack and the dispatch building to help prevent any future lightning damage. Several radio electronics had been damaged from previous lightning strikes over the past 2 years and needed to be repaired and replaced.
- \$3,700 refund for unused Automated Vehicle Locators that were never installed in patrol cars and returned to the manufacturer. This refund had been lost in a great deal of red-tape. It was finally tracked down and refunded to the county.
- Clutter of excess wiring was removed and other wiring organized, identified and labeled throughout the dispatch center.
- The dish antenna located outside the dispatch center was also disconnected. This antenna had been used as a backup connection for the Emergency Management Service, and was being rented for \$1,500 per year. This antenna was replaced by a more reliable fiber optic cable service that was already installed within the dispatch center at no additional cost to the county.
- Offices were reorganized, cleaned and painted.
- New 9-1-1 Service plan was completed with the assistance of County Clerk Patty Bender
- New color security camera system was installed around the perimeter of the dispatch building, increasing security of the center.
- Test Project for replacement of Laptop computers in the patrol cars with tablets. These tablets will give more room for officers, and provide easier maintenance for IT department. This project turned out to be a success. Now plans are in the works to switch to tablets in 2016.
- Emergency Management office was moved back to the Sheriff dept.
- Renovation of the Kitchen! Probably the one project that was completed during 2015, that had the greatest impact on the morale and attitude of the employees was the upgrade to the kitchen area of the center. A stove, additional counter and cupboard space and an island to sit and eat our meals were all installed. This was a project that I had been placed on hold when I first took over, as other projects seemed to be more important. As projects were checked off the list, the kitchen improvement kept being brought up by the staff. With a relatively small investment, this upgrade gave a huge return in the general wellbeing of everyone in the center. Visitors remark how nice it

looks. Former employees return to see the improvement and the current staff have expressed their appreciation for all that was done.

- Burr Oak Tower completed. This is providing better communication with the southeast portion of St. Joseph County.
- Many other much needed repairs were also completed on the dispatch center to keep everything in operational condition

## Public Education – Community Involvement

The St. Joseph County Central Dispatch continues to become more involved in activities within the county. Staff members go out into the county and participate in many functions such as the Job Fair at Glen Oaks Community College, presentation to the Township Supervisors, and participation with the Health Fair at Three Rivers Hospital. At these fund raisers we are meeting people and talking about our dispatch center.

St. Joseph County Central Dispatch continues with our presentation in the schools with our “9-1-1 for Kids” program. This program is presented in the area to elementary school students by Supervisor Angela Guthrie and Telecommunicator Regan Taylor. These employees visit the county elementary schools with their program to teach kids when to call 9-1-1 through the use of a video entitled “The Great 9-1-1 Adventure”, and then with a follow up review of the basic points when to and not to call 9-1-1, review the types of questions the caller will be asked and what information they should know (Address, Phone, Name etc.) if they ever have to dial 9-1-1.

This program is also reinforced with the students being able to practice making a call on our 9-1-1 simulator which was purchased several years ago through a grant from State Farm Insurance Company.

Central Dispatch still maintains our Facebook page. This Social Media has reached over 12,000 people with valuable information as to weather and road conditions, road closures, special events going on in the county and some just all around general information like driving tips, and pet safety. Much of this is done with a little humorous twist which has resulted in many positive and supportive comments to me and my staff from people who take advantage of this information sharing. This site is maintained by 2 staff members both on and off duty to help keep the people of St. Joseph County safe and informed.

In March of 2015 Director Brandenburg participated in the “March for Meals” program. Brandenburg rode along and assisted the Commission of Aging with the delivery of meals to the homebound and elderly citizens of the county. This was a very enjoyable time for all. Interacting with these people who seldom receive visitors, and who often make calls to the Dispatch Center for assistance, was priceless. Several of these people had questions of Brandenburg and the duties of 9-1-1. Director Brandenburg had fun answering some of their

questions and speaking with many of the residents during the route. This was Brandenburg's first opportunity to participate in this affair and we are planning on getting more of the 9-1-1 staff involved in this program and assist with more of the meal deliveries in 2016.

A complete clean up and re-organization of the Center was performed this past year, to eliminate the clutter and the collection of old, worn out and unused equipment. 6 Computers, which had been replaced and never disposed of, along with monitors, broken printers and other unrepairable electronic equipment were taken to the electronic recycle program at the county fairgrounds.

The damaged antennas, wire, and cabling removed from the tower in Centreville was also recycled through Omni Source in Sturgis. This included over 1,800 pounds of copper wire, cabling, metal brackets and antennas that had been removed during the tower upgrade.

During this clean-up there were 16 sleeping bags, blankets and pillows which had been purchased in case our staff had to shelter in-place during a major disaster. It was determined that this was an excessive preparation and was taking up valuable storage space. 6 of these sleeping bags and pillows were retained, should over-night stay by any of our staff be needed. The remaining 10 sleeping bags, blankets and pillows were donated to the Keystone Place in Centreville to be used by the homeless or other residents of their center.

Our dispatch center has taken on a newer, cleaner, and better organized look. A place we all are proud to work and show off to any visitors.

Our staff members are also very involved in their own communities, we have 4 Firefighters that work on local Fire Departments within the county, and Reserve Police officers with local Police departments and the Sheriff Department, Several of our Telecommunicators are coaches for athletic teams and cheer leading squads in the local schools.

The entire dispatch staff is looking forward to 2016. A few projects that are planned are the replacement of the 9-1-1 telephone system (upgrading the current system that is over 20 years old), Installation of the Pro QA program to assist in taking Medical calls, the new tablet project (to replace the laptops that are currently in the patrol cars) and the possibility of expanding the tablets or re-using the current laptops in some of the Fire department vehicles.

I thank this County Board of Commissioners for all their support and trust you have placed in me to accomplish the goals I have set for myself and the Dispatch Center. We will continue to improve and serve the Citizens of St. Joseph County, On Call at a Time.

