

# St. Joseph County



*Dennis Brandenburg*

# Central Dispatch 2016



*Stacy Fowler*



*Kristen Carpenter*



*Angie Gutfrie*



*Ryan Fillmore*



*Keli Bazant*



*Candace Scott*



*Mike Haydon*



*Kelli Lusk*



*Kyle Murk*



*Albe Merten*



*Regan Taylor*



*Andy Homan*



*Rachel Lewis*

## A Message from the Director...

Honorable Chairman and distinguished Commissioners, I am once again pleased to present the 2016 Annual Report for the St. Joseph County Central Dispatch.

I take great pride in our Central Dispatch. I have committed myself and my staff to continue improving our customer service and the services we provide to the citizens of St. Joseph County. My position at Central Dispatch demands that I stay abreast of the ever-changing needs associated with a dispatch center. These needs include better communications, better GPS tracking of cell phones, continued training of staff, and any recent changes in training and education requirements of personnel.

Staffing the Dispatch Center remains a problem. I have been working very closely with HR Director Teresa Doehring trying to find, test, and hire the most qualified applicants. There are many factors that play into the hiring and training process. We have reviewed our hiring and testing process extensively. This is not a job just anyone can handle until they actually sit down and start taking calls. Some calls hit very close to home for some people.

A dispatch center like ours has evolved into a total informational hub for the entire county. Maintaining records and contact information for businesses, after hour contacts for other services such as Community Mental Health, County Courts system, Health Department, Road Commission, City and Village DPW services, and the list goes on and on.

Our dispatch center is staffed by some of the most dedicated and conscientious people you will find anywhere. They answer calls, and dispatch emergency services to ensure the people of St. Joseph County receive the best possible service that can be provided.

The pictures you see on the cover of this report are the people that make that happen. They work 12 hour shifts, holidays, weekends, anniversaries, and birthdays. These are the people that balance a home life with that of a Telecommunicator, to shield their families from the hurt and tragedies that they deal with every day. They know that when the phone rings they must be prepared to act quickly and get help sent as soon as possible, no one ever calls 9-1-1 because they are having a good day.

Thank You

Dennis Brandenburg

Director, St. Joseph County Central Dispatch

## **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 Dennis Allen

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

Linda Leensvaart

Citizen at Large

This Policy Board oversees the communication and emergency dispatch services for St. Joseph County. Newly appointed member Linda Leensvaart, our Citizen at Large, joined our board in mid-2016. Linda is a retired Telecommunicator from Kalamazoo and lives in Three Rivers. Linda has shown to be a valuable addition to our board and we look forward to her service.

This Policy Board assists in the development and support of all the projects taken on by Central Dispatch. It is with their support that these projects are presented to the County Board of Commissioners for approval.

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

Dennis Brandenburg

Director

### **Shift Supervisors**

Stacey Bower      Kristen Carpenter      Angela Guthrie      Ryan Fillmore

### **Telecommunicators**

Keli Bazant      Candace Scott      Michael Haydon      Kelli Lusk

Kyle Murk      Abe Merten      Regan Taylor      Andy Homan

Rachel Cook

### **Trainee**

Kory Wallace

### **Retiree**

Ramona Metzger

24 Years of Service

These are the Telecommunicators that serve St. Joseph County with the utmost dedication and commitment. They work 12 hour shifts, weekends, holidays, birthdays and anniversaries, to ensure that every call is answered in a timely and professional manner. These people work very closely, like a well-oiled machine. The calls are received, details and caller information is gathered, and Police, Fire, and Medical services are dispatched. They anticipate what the Police Officers and Fire Personnel may need while on-scene, and are poised to fulfill those requests when they are made.

This group of highly trained professionals are the finest example of commitment to their profession. They are serious about their duties and perform them without hesitation. These are the people that no one ever sees, but are the first first-responders on scene. These are the calming voices, and the source of a great deal of information.

**These are the heroes behind the scene.**

## Training

Once a person is chosen to join our staff, they must complete a 16 week training period. During this time, the trainees are taught all of the aspects of the job as a Telecommunicator. The responsibility of Call-Taking, this involves obtaining as many details of the incident as quickly and accurately as possible. They learn the operation of the telephone system and the text to 9-1-1 systems recently installed in the dispatch center. They become proficient in data entry into the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. They are able to summarize the information in their call taking so it is as brief as possible with as many details in the shortest amount of time. This is quite a challenging task to accomplish, but with practice and guidance it is also acquired. Trainees also are taught proper radio operation. They learn to be clear and precise with their information. All this, along with learning the proper procedures of the various police, fire and medical services, keeps the trainee very busy.

Once the trainee has completed their in-house training to the acceptable level, they are released from training and take on the full-time dispatch duties. Within the first year of employment, the new employee must complete a 40 hour Basic Dispatch certification course. This can be done on-line or at various sites around the state that host these classes.

Then within the new employees first 24 months, they must complete a 40 hour Advance Dispatch certification course. This course concentrates on various topics such as domestic assault calls, suicide intervention, legal aspects of 9-1-1, and liabilities of a 9-1-1 call center, stress management and Homeland security.

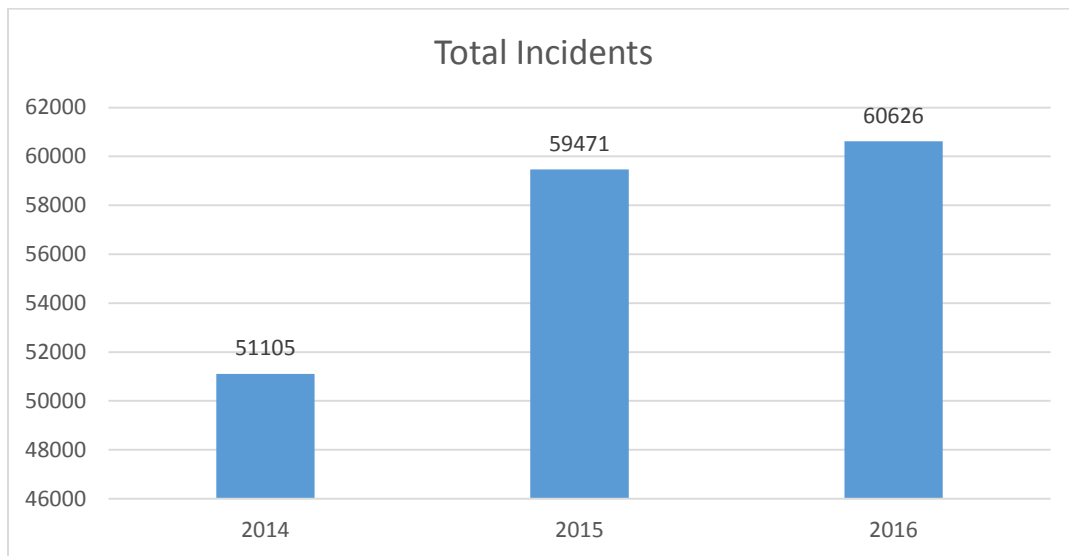
Every employee is also required to be CPR certified, along with attending Emergency Medical Dispatch class, to be certified as an Emergency Medical Dispatcher. After receiving this certification, each employee must re-certify every 2 years to maintain their certification. Law Enforcement Information Network certification is also required. This certification is usually obtained during their initial training, and each employee is re-certified every 2 years.

There are constant changes in new laws, updated laws, operating procedures, and dispatching protocol. Every Telecommunicator is required to stay abreast of all these changes and be familiar with current laws and procedures. These updates come to them as notices, training videos, seminars and conferences they attend. Each employee brings back to the staff any new changes they have learned for the rest of the staff to become familiar with.

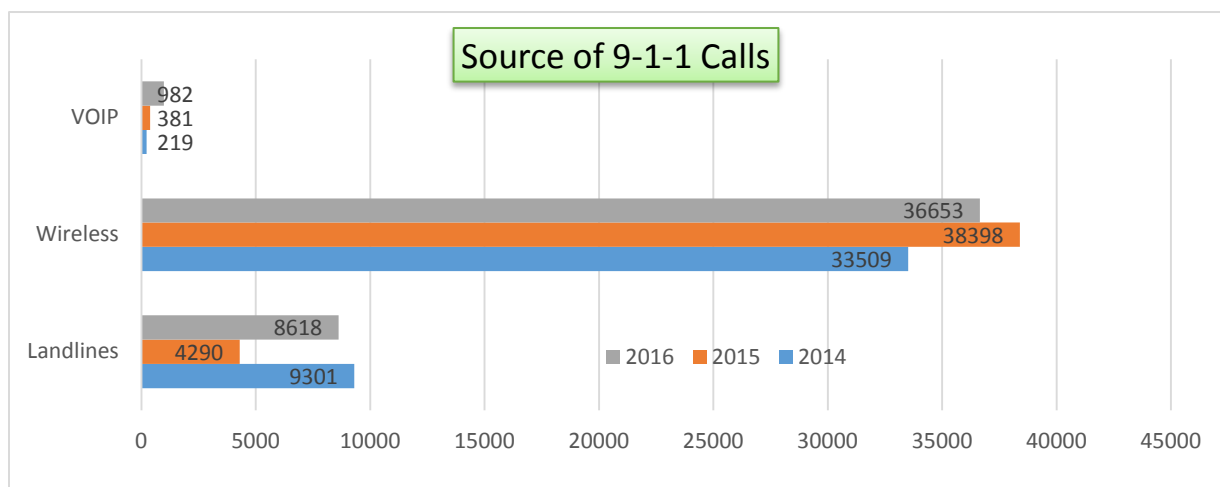
In 2016 Telecommunicators from St Joseph County Central Dispatch attended 894 hours of continuing education training to fulfill the requirements set down by the Michigan Legislature. Telecommunicators have worked 1,260 hours of overtime during 2016.

## Statistics for St. Joseph County

2016 has been a very active year at Central Dispatch. Not only is training constantly going on, the everyday operation still has to be maintained. In 2016 Central Dispatch entered 60,626 incidents into the CAD system. This represents the number of calls Police, Fire, and Ambulance were dispatched to, throughout the county. This is up from 59,471 incidents for 2015, represented in the following chart.



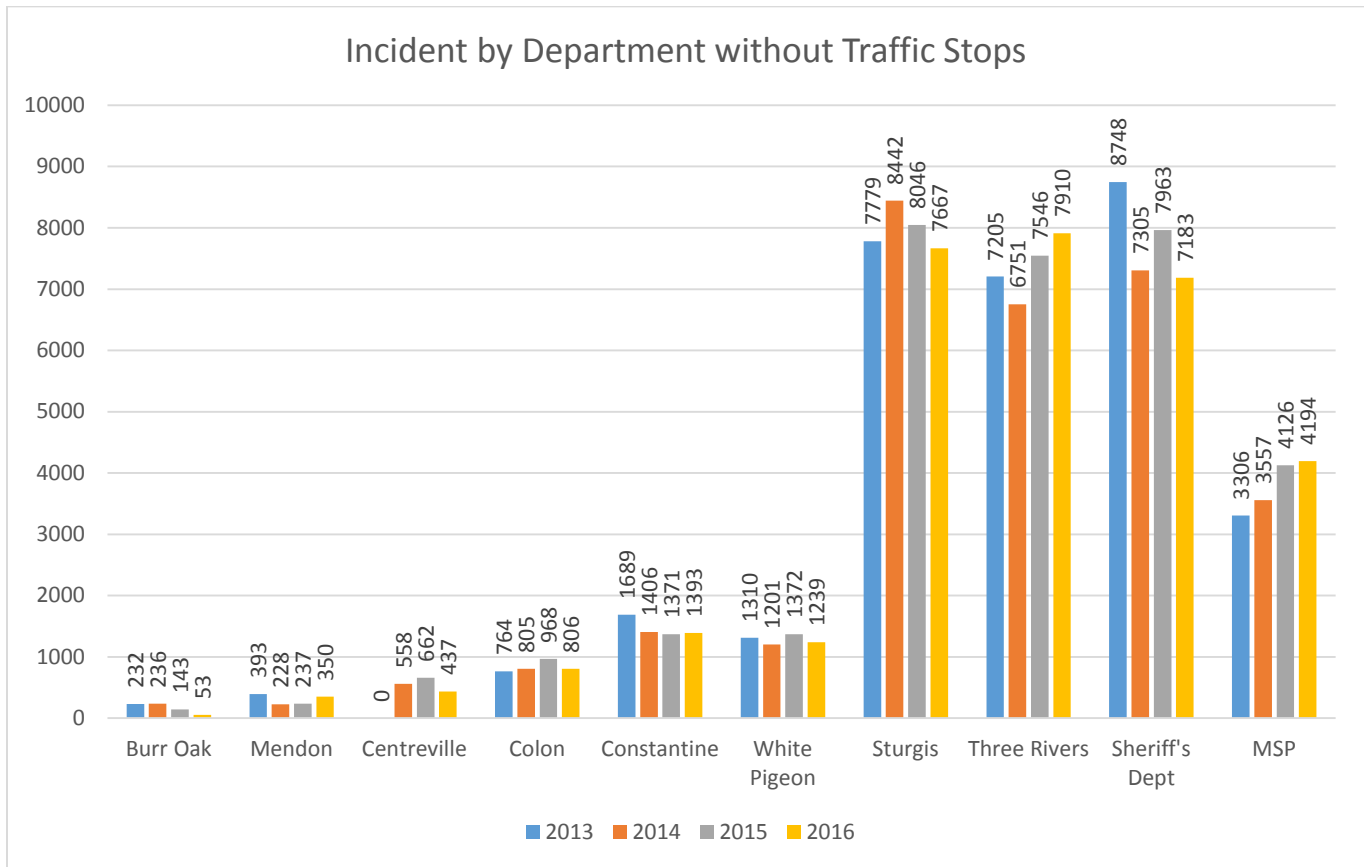
These incidents come into the dispatch center in various ways, Landlines, Wireless or cellular telephone, Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephone calls, shown in the following graph.



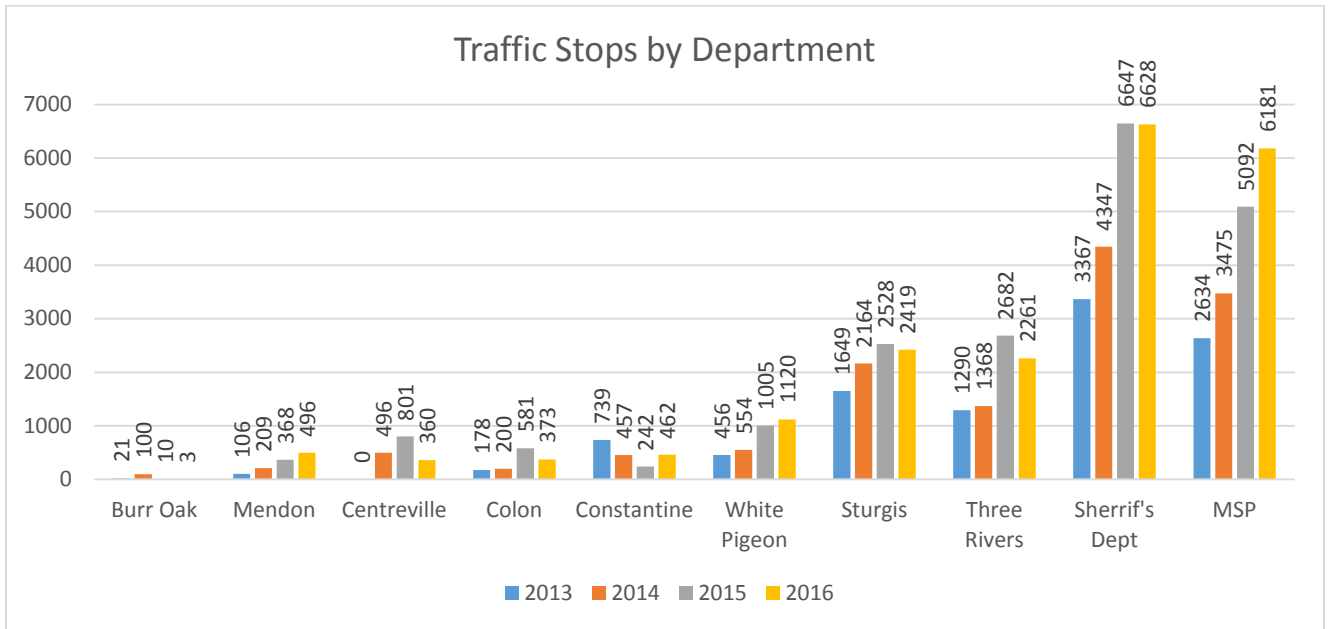
In 2016 79% of all 9-1-1 calls into the Dispatch center came from wireless or cellular telephones. This is down slightly from 2015. Non-Emergency calls into the dispatch center totaled 62,773 calls, bringing the total number of all calls into Central Dispatch to 99,026 calls. Each call handled quickly, professionally, and efficiently by the Telecommunicators.

The types of incidents tracked by Central Dispatch covers a wide variety of calls handled by police, fire and medical personnel. These calls are distributed out to these agencies and the number of calls are displayed on the following graphs;

The first graph shows the total number of incidents each police department was assigned to. This shows an over-all reduction of 1202 or 4% incidents handled by area police agencies from 2015

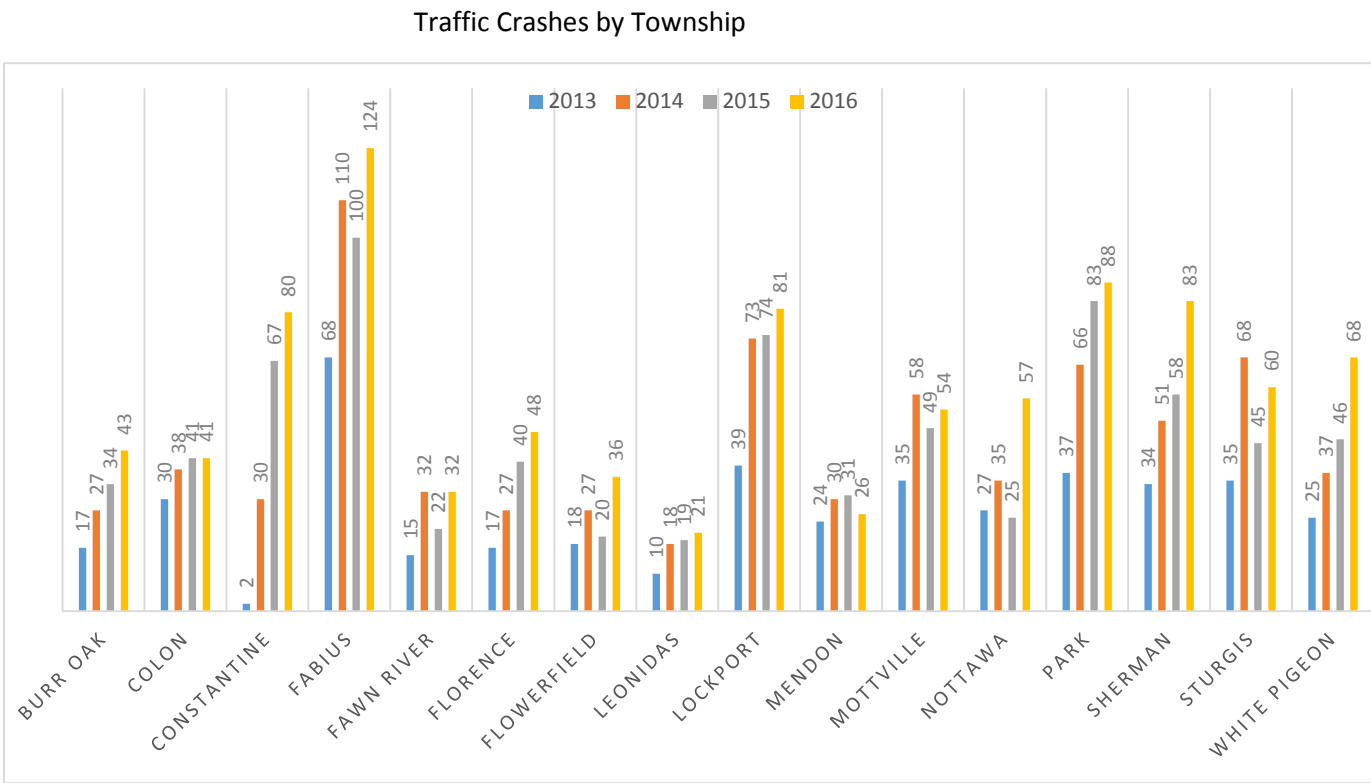
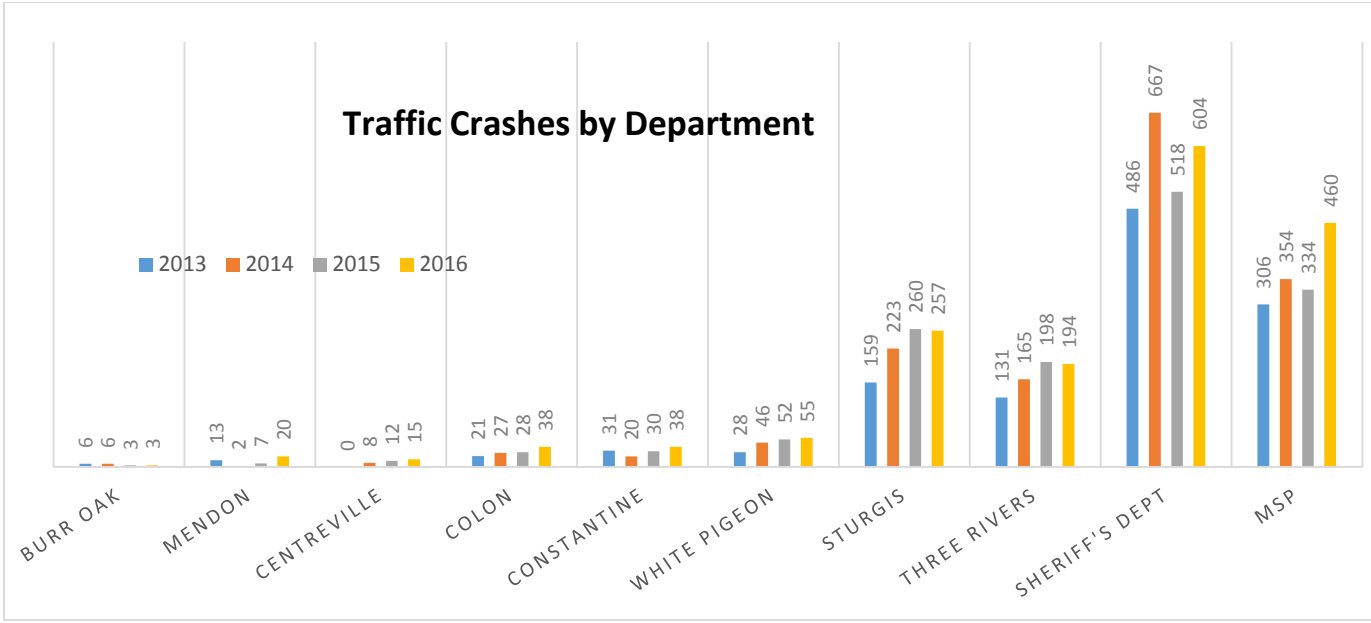


This next graph illustrates the number of Traffic Stops performed by each Police Department. This graph shows a 2% increase of traffic stops from 2015.

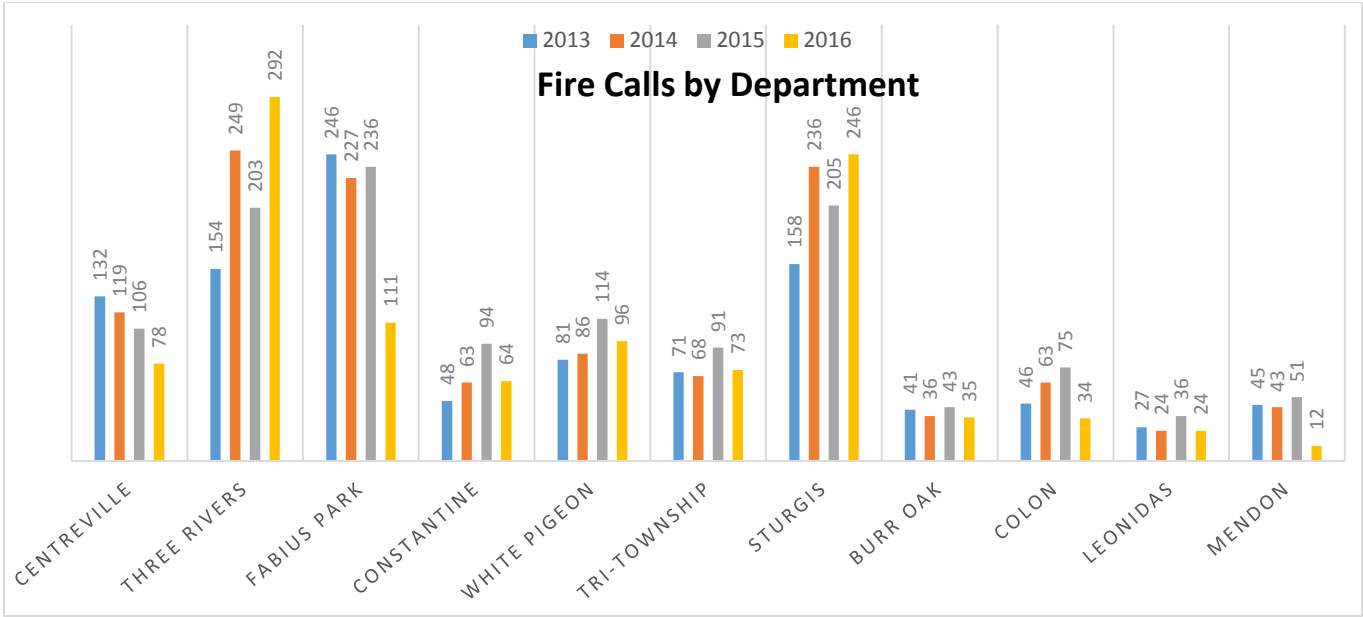


Unfortunately traffic crashes have risen over-all by 17% since 2015. This is demonstrated by the following 2 graphs. The first graph depicts the number of crashes handled by the individual police departments, within their jurisdictions. The second graph shows the breakdown of crashes by townships, which shows an increase of 25% from 2015. These crashes are generally investigated by the St. Joseph County Sheriff Department and the Michigan State Police. These crash numbers also include Car/Deer crashes which have risen drastically over the past 3 years, 2014 shows 166 car/deer crashes, 2015 had 221, and 2016 this number shot up to 376 car/deer crashes.

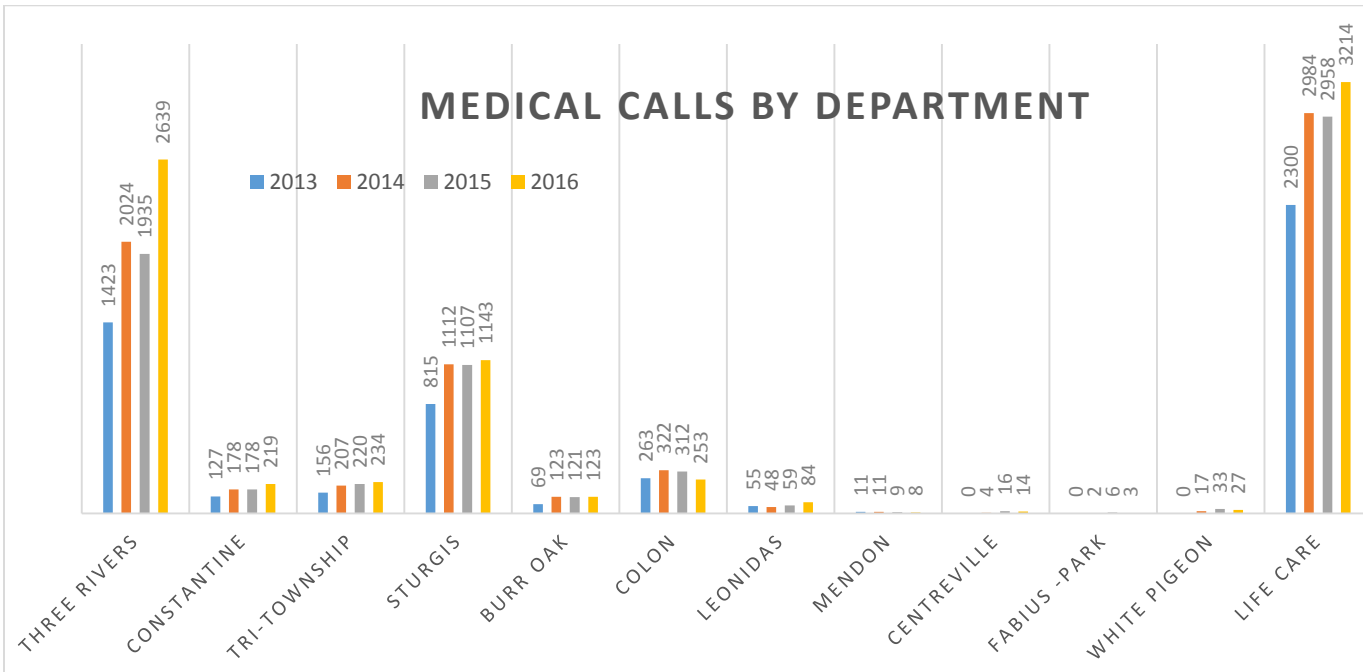




The area Fire departments have seen a decrease in the number of Fire Runs they have responded to in 2016. These numbers are down 189 county-wide from 2015.



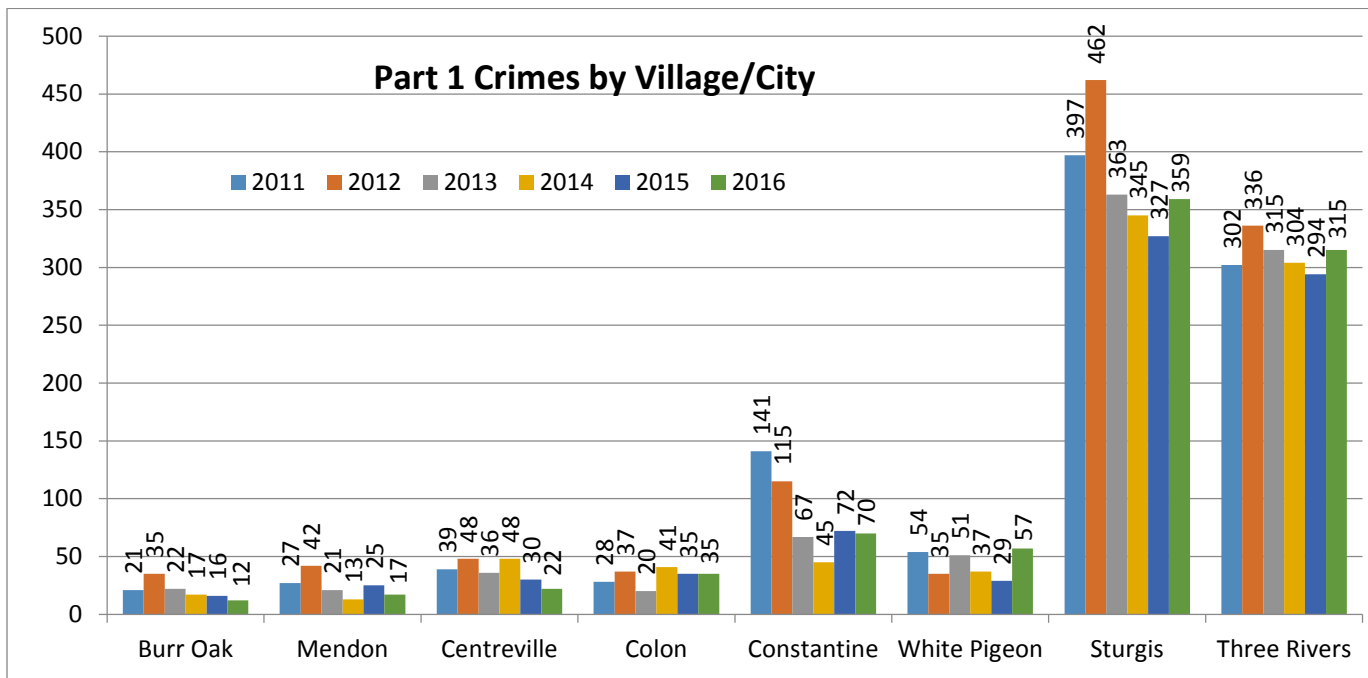
While not all area Fire Departments have Medical First Responders (MFR) occasionally each the Fire Departments are called upon to assist the Ambulances responding in their areas. The following chart shows the number of Medical Calls each department responded to in 2016. This illustrates an increase of 1007 Medical calls in 2016. This makes 2016 the busiest year for medical responses in the past 4 years with a total number of runs at 7961, up from 6954 in 2015.

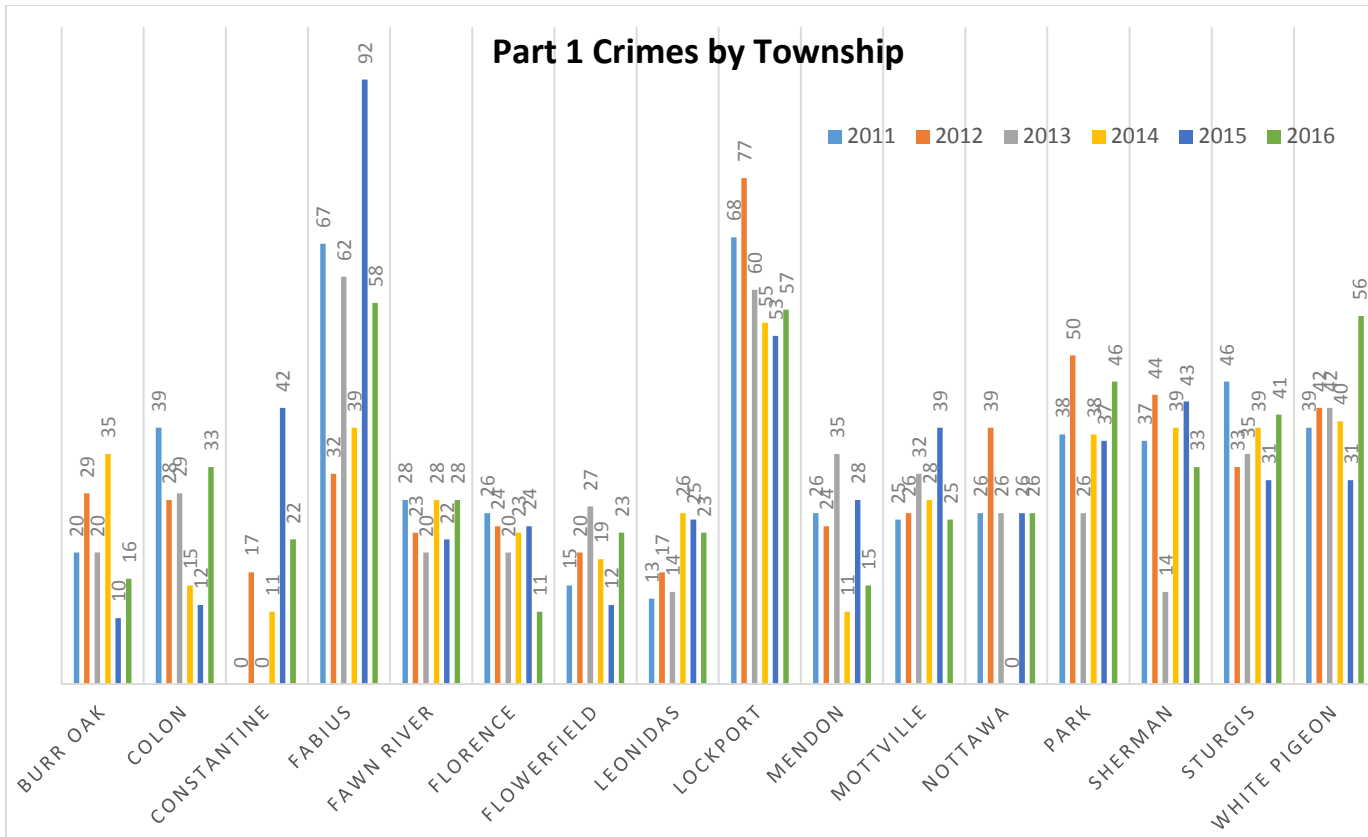


## Crime Statistics

Part 1 Crimes, which include; Homicide, Criminal Sexual Conduct, Robbery, Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Larceny, Motor Vehicle thefts, and Arson, are displayed for St. Joseph County in the next 2 graphs on the following page. The first graph has the statistics for Part 1 Crimes in the cities and villages. This shows a total rise of 59 reports or an increase of 6% over 2015 Part 1 Crimes reported to Central Dispatch.

While the second graph shows Part 1 Crimes reported for all 16 townships within St. Joseph County. This shows a decrease of 55 or an 11% drop in Part 1 Crimes reported in 2016.



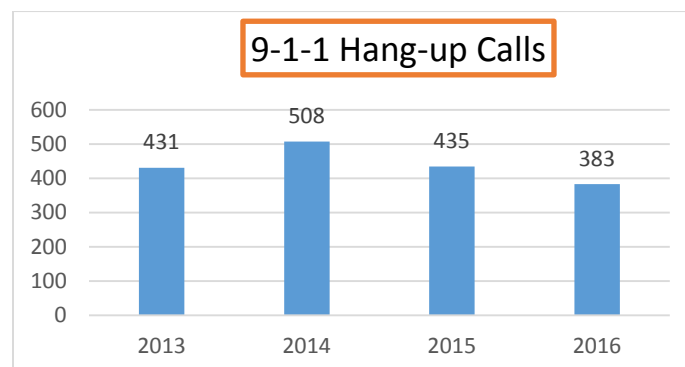


## Accomplishments in 2016

In 2016 several projects were completed, some of which had been started in 2015 and were carried over and completed in 2016.

- In January 2016, Central Dispatch was able to begin tracking the MSP Cars on our maps in the Dispatch Center, along with all the patrol cars in St. Joseph County. This not only speeds up the amount of time locating the closest unit, but also allows the Telecommunicators to monitor each unit's location in case they something happens where they cannot use the radio to broadcast their location.
- Some more of the additional fiber optic lines that we had installed during the Centreville tower upgrade were put to use. The State of Michigan upgraded the Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN) and required every PSAP to pay an additional charge of \$3,750 for the "last mile" connection from the cable company fiber optic lines to each PSAP. By using our previously installed fiber optic line, Merit Cable Company offered to pay \$4,500 one-time fee to connect our center to their fiber optic line using our fiber lines. This completed the connection to the State of Michigan, and offset the cost to the State of Michigan.

- The updates to all the Weather Sirens throughout St. Joseph County were completed this past summer. All are now in full operation.
- The old generator that was replaced in 2014, was finally sold. This generator had been moved from the Dispatch Center to a spot next to the jail. This generator was beyond repair and Sheriff Balk and the 9-1-1 Policy board asked to have it disposed. The generator was placed on Craig's List and sold within a week to a gentleman in Pennsylvania for \$600. He sent a truck and driver up, paid the shipping and Bill Johnson and his crew from the Fairgrounds was kind enough to supply a fork lift and driver to load the generator on the truck.
- The laptops in the patrol cars were replaced with much smaller tablets, allowing more room in the already cramped space of the patrol cars. This deployment was completed in August 2016 with great success. The officers are very pleased with the extra room and performance of the tablets.
- A new 9-1-1 telephone system was installed at the Dispatch Center. This is an IP based, Digital telephone system. Replacing the original 9-1-1 system that had been installed in 1996. This has made call-taking much quicker, and easier for the Telecommunicators. With this came the ability for the call takers to return to the use of wireless headsets. The new telephone system also brought along with it the ability of our Dispatch Center to send and receive text messages to 9-1-1. Everyday this feature is becoming more and more valuable to the Telecommunicators to help them perform their jobs more efficiently. This also makes it easier for the speech and hearing impaired citizens to contact Central Dispatch. Since the roll-out of the Text to 9-1-1, we have received \_\_\_\_\_ text to 9-1-1 calls, some of these were tests performed during installation and by our staff. There have been \_\_\_\_\_ outbound text messages. These messages are quite often used to contact someone when we receive a telephone call to 9-1-1 and no one is on the line. These we refer to as "pocket dials" or abandoned 9-1-1 calls. All of these abandoned calls we call back, most times there is no answer or it goes to voice mail. The Telecommunicators then will send a text message to that number and get an almost instant reply advising that they had the phone in their pocket or purse and it dialed, or their child was playing with the phone. This process had reduced the number of times we have had to send officers to check on these types of calls.



- Central Dispatch received a \$10,000 RAP (Resource Allocation Program) Grant to help off-set the cost of the ProQA Medical call-taking program. The ProQA medical call-taking program was installed in September. Up until this time, the Telecommunicators had to use a large flip-card set to follow in order to meet the standards of medical call-taking. Now the computer program is linked directly to our telephone and CAD systems and has sped up the call taking process for medical calls. This allows the Telecommunicator to enter information directly into the CAD system while asking the questions that appear on the screen. Through the use of this system, about 2 months after installation, our newest Telecommunicator Rachel Lewis assisted in the birth of a new baby boy to a young woman who lived near Three Rivers. This was the woman's first child, and three minutes into the call the baby boy was born. This is the type of call every Telecommunicator wishes for and dreads at the same time. About 2 weeks after the birth, Rachel and the staff working that day received a visit from mom, grandmother, and the new arrival. Everyone is doing Fine. Rachel became our latest recipient of the "Stork Award" presented to Telecommunicators that assist with the birth of a child.



I would also like to recognize Ramona Metzger for her nearly 24 years of service to St. Joseph County Central Dispatch. Ramona was one of the first Telecommunicators to help form and organize the 9-1-1 Center for St Joseph County. Ramona was wealth of information about the county and the people that live here. She was a foundation we have built our center on. She will be missed. We wish her well in her future endeavors.



## **Public Education – Community Involvement**

Central Dispatch employees remain very active in the county, Supervisor Angela Guthrie and Telecommunicator Regan Taylor put on the “9-1-1 for Kids” program presentation to many elementary schools throughout the county. Teaching the children when and how to call 9-1-1 and the things they will need to know if ever they have to call 9-1-1 in an emergency.

Supervisor Angela Guthrie also participates in many other events, such as the Three Rivers Hospital Health Fair, Glen Oak Job Fair, and the Kalamazoo Community College Job Fair. These contacts have brought in numerous applications for employment to the Dispatch Center.

Central Dispatch continues to maintain a Facebook page. This page is used to keep citizens informed of weather related problems, road and traffic issues, power outages, all around information, special events and pet safety. Many of these Facebooks post are done with a humorous twist, beautiful pictures and sage advice. Not a day goes by that someone doesn't mention to me how much they enjoy reading the posts from Central Dispatch. Our followers have risen to over 20,000 people. This site is maintained by 2 staff members in their spare time, and by keeping the public informed has also kept many people safe, another responsibility of a Telecommunicator.

Telecommunicators are also involved in area 4-H programs, Fire and EMS services for area departments, Girl Scouts, Cheer Leading coaching, and coaching for several sports teams throughout the county

Director Brandenburg and Telecommunicator Regan Taylor participated with the Meals on Wheels staff this past March during the Meals on Wheels “March for Meals” program. Brandenburg and Taylor assisted with delivering meals to the home-bound and elderly citizens of the county. This is always an enjoyable time meeting and interacting with some of the people who have called into Central Dispatch and want to put a face with who they spoke with.

Brandenburg also regularly attends numerous meetings throughout the year, such as;

- County Police Chief Meeting

- County Fire Chief Meeting

- 9-1-1 Policy Board Meeting

- St. Joseph County Medical Control Board meeting

- Professional Standards Review Organization meeting (PSRO)

- Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)

- Local Planning Team meeting

Management Council meeting

Newly formed Round Table discussion meeting hosted by Teresa Doehring  
County HR Director.

Township Board meeting

2016 Homeland Security Conference in Grand Rapids

2016 NENA Conference in Lansing, MI

2016 Alert Symposium in Ashville, North Carolina

Monthly meetings with the Shift Supervisors and Training staff at Central  
Dispatch.

### **Closing**

In closing I would like to thank the Board of Commissioners for their support over this past year. I look forward to continuing as Director of the St. Joseph County Central Dispatch. I would also like to thank the St. Joseph County 9-1-1 Policy Board for their help and guidance over this past year.

I would also extend an invitation to the Board of Commissioners to visit and watch what actually goes on at the Dispatch Center. Meet the dispatch staff, and watch the magic that they do. This is a very special place with very special people that perform an extremely valuable service for our county.

Thank You

Dennis Brandenburg

Director

St. Joseph County 9-1-1

