



ST JOSEPH COUNTY CENTRAL DISPATCH ANNUAL REPORT

New Director April 2022

In April, Director Brandenburg retired as director of Central Dispatch. After 15 years as a dispatcher, 12 of them as a Supervisor, Stacey Bower was chosen by county administration to take the helm. While she had much experience at dispatch, the two took a couple of short weeks to familiarize her with the administrative aspects of the center.

2022 Projects

Cass County Tower

In 2021 Director Brandenburg began talks with Cass County about a joint tower project that would improve communications in both St Joseph and Cass Counties. In early 2022, the agreement was signed with Cass County to go ahead and move forward with the project and share the costs. It was a huge step forward for both counties at half of the cost.

800 Paging Complete

Also Early in March 2022, each fire agency, and victim services, was given its own 800 talk group. They became active on the 800 system at this point. This gave the Center the capability to page out each department on the 800 system. Lifecare came on board with the 800 paging towards the end of the year. This means that the only VHF paging the Center has to do is for the weather sirens. Emergency Manager Erin Goff and Director Bower started conversations about retrofitting and/or replacing the VHF weather sirens so they can be set off by the 800 system. This will continue into the next year.

Contact

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Dispatch Staff

Director:

Stacey Bower

Deputy Director:

Regan Lucas

Supervisors :

Kelli Coykendall

Rachel Gould

Kory Wallace

Debra Williams

Telecommunicators:

Andy Homan

Brendon Andaverde

Abigail Sweet

Makenzi Troyer

Cierra Furlong

Jessica Scoglietti

Ashley Beebe

Madison Schroll

P.T. - Sabrina Lindsley

Trainees:

Mary Wright

Breanna Ketcham

Emotional Support Dog:

Bolo

2022 Projects Cont.

Dispatch Chairs

The first project that Director Bower got to handle was purchasing 3 new chairs. Some might think that this is not a very exciting project, but if you ask one of the telecommunicators, this was a very big deal. Being a 24/7 operation, the chairs need to be able to withstand wear and tear. It is also very important that they are very comfortable as the employees need to sit in them for 12 hours at a time.

Director Bower was very happy to be able to facilitate the purchase of these chairs. No dispatcher should have to be distracted by things like being uncomfortable in their chair.



Comfy Durable Chairs



Regan Taylor

Deputy Director

One of Director Bower's first goals was that she wanted to take some of the extra workload off of the working supervisors so they could supervise the employees. The solution she came up with was creating a deputy director position. This person would be in charge of the training program, the daunting schedule, the quality assurance program, and much more. It was decided that it would be best to promote from within. Applications were accepted and two Directors were brought in from other counties to make the decision. Regan Lucas was promoted to Deputy Director. Regan had eight years of experience as a telecommunicator and nine months as a supervisor. She has stepped right up and filled the position very nicely. She takes her responsibilities very seriously and has shown that she is the correct person for the job numerous times in many ways.

Supervisors

With the promotions of Stacey and Regan and another supervisor moving on to another career, there were three open supervisor positions. In August, resumes were accepted for supervisors. The three chosen for the positions were Rachel Gould, Kory Wallace, and Debra Williams. They joined Kelli Coykendall as the supervisor team. No time was wasted getting them into their new roles. They were put in place in August and hit the ground running. This team has grown so much and has made a tremendous difference in the Center. They have taken much pride in the work that they are doing.



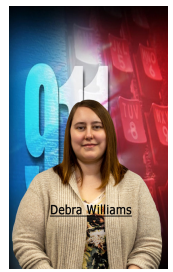
Kelli Coykendall



Rachel Gould



Kory Wallace



Debra Williams



St. Joseph County Central Dispatch

911 For Kids



The 911 for Kids program has been one of the Center's best community service projects throughout the years. In 2022, it was definitely ramped up. There are 4 employees that did a wonderful job visiting schools and other events to educate children on when it is appropriate to call 911. Kory Wallace, Jessica Scoglietti, MaKenzi Troyer, and Cierra Furlong have been applauded by every teacher in the classrooms that they have been a part of. They have also been a part of Sturgis Safety Town Camp in the summer.

Along with this, for the high school-aged kids, Kory Wallace is sitting on the CTE committee for the county through the ISD. This committee is working on programs that will get high schoolers to at least familiar with the inner workings of dispatch and also show them that it can be a very rewarding career.

Training

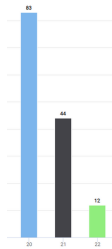
Throughout the year 2022, the Center has hired many new employees. These new employees have to complete 80 hours of new dispatcher training along with EMD training which certifies them to take medical calls using our EMD Protocols. Along with the new hires, every telecommunicator has to have continuing education hours to keep in good standing with the State 911 Office.

This training can be rather costly for 911 centers. The State 911 Committee (SNC) regulates training money from the State of Michigan to help offset these costs. There is a large amount of paperwork and reports that centers have to do to apply for these funds every year.

We have looked at different ways to save money on this mandatory training. We have hosted some at our Center to cut down on hotel and travel costs. There have also been virtual and hybrid computer classes that our telecommunicators have attended as well.

Telecommunicators have completed training that will help them better do their jobs. Some topics they have sat for are active shooter, LEIN training, leadership, mental health, burnout and negativity to name a few.

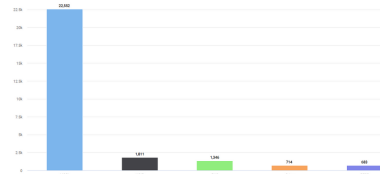
Call Volumes



JUNE 13, 2022

139

911 CALLS IN 3 HOURS



2022

22,552

MOBILE 911 CALLS

Call volumes in 2022 were down compared to 2021. One of the biggest contributing factors was due to the August storm in 2021 where we logged a whopping 2,050 911 calls in three days. In 2022 our biggest day was June 13 during a storm that brought us 139 911 calls in the span of three hours. Keep in mind that these are just 911 calls. The center also received over 100 non-emergency calls during this time period. The 911 calls were handled while dispatching police, fire, and EMS along with power companies, county road, and MDOT. When a storm hits, all of the normal things continue happening, such as domestics, medical calls, alarms, accidents, etc.

In 2022 the Center fielded 83,754 calls, The majority of these calls were admin lines with 27,340 of them being 911 calls Throughout 2022 the busiest day of the week was Friday with an average of 1998 calls, and the busiest hour of the day throughout the year was at 4 p.m. with an average of 1773 calls. The next 3 busiest hours were 1 p.m., 5 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Police-Fire-EMS Calls

Police calls in 2022 were 55,398. These calls include officer initiated, 911, and admin calls. They can range from assaults to traffic crashes to loose animals and everything in between. We dispatch for eight different police agencies.



2022 was busy in the fire service category. We fielded 1211 fire-related or mutual aid calls for the county's 11 fire departments. Fire departments were sent to 124 structure fires throughout the county and approximately 450 traffic accidents.



The City of Sturgis started ambulance crews about mid-year 2022. This helped cut down ambulance response times in the city tremendously. Our EMS calls for the whole county were 6008. This is the total of Lifecare, Three Rivers Ambulance, and Sturgis Ambulance. The southeast corner of the county EMS coverage/response time was supplemented by a safety net ambulance that ran out of the Tri-Township Fire Department under the Lifecare umbrella. Many calls for EMS were impacted positively due to this program.

Hiring-Retention

In 2022 our team turned over and we lost some great experience. It went through some pretty lean times with the bare minimum of people in the seats. The team stayed strong even through the long hours and few days off due to working overtime.

One of the biggest challenges, in our center, and across the country in most dispatch centers, is finding and retaining employees. Job fairs, college/CTE programs, online job services, and word of mouth are a few ways we have obtained applicants. It is now mandatory for applicants to come in and sit a long with our existing employees.

This helps them see what the career is all about and gives them the knowledge to decide if they want to pursue it.

This has helped to not waste as much time in the training process by eliminating those that don't want to or can't do the job.

Retaining the employees is something that we have been working on. One obstacle is mental health and the burnout that plagues many telecommunicators.

Many employees have been to trainings and workshops that help get them through the dark side of this job. There are some instructors that do a great job teaching our people skills to make it through. We make sure to get them into these classes to get the best information that is available to them. We have also been involved in county events and contests, as well as our own activities to make working here more enjoyable..

Conclusion

2022 was a huge year for my career here at St Joseph County Central Dispatch. In April, I took over as the new director as Dennis Brandenburg retired. I am so glad that the county administration entrusted me with the task of running the Center. It has been an honor to work alongside the best Administration team. Being able to grow and learn from the leaders of this county has been a blessing.

I will continue to do what is best for the Center and make it a place of honor and integrity. From working with technology to budgets, physical facilities to equipment, the communities to employees, other agencies to the state entities, I will do what it takes to make our Center the best it can be. I have a great team here at Central Dispatch and I am very proud of each and every one of them!!



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