

**St Joseph County 911
Central Dispatch
2020 Annual Report**



... From the Director

I would like to just put the year 2020 on a shelf and forget it. 2020 proved to be one of the most difficult years for me as well as St Joseph County Central Dispatch.

We started off with great promise, our new radio system was planned to be in full operation this year, I learned of a grant through the State 911 Committee to replace our aging telephone system for very little cost on our part, we had new employees in training, morale was high and things were running smooth.

We all know what happened the end of February and beginning of March. Our entire lives were totally disrupted. The ever-changing "solutions" on how to handle the Coronavirus, kept everyone on edge. The world shut down.

My staff did what they always do, they stepped up, began cleaning and sanitizing everything. I was so proud how they continued to do their work, handle all the added stress, and never missed a beat. New procedures were set in place, then changed and changed again. They continued to do their work. Yes, they were affected, they continued doing as they have always done.

With the cooperation of Motorola, Michigan Public Safety Communication System (MPSCS), and Indigital, our radio system was installed and operational in mid-May, the telephone system upgrade was completed in June. Every vendor cooperated and followed proper safety procedures. We all stayed safe.

Unfortunately, dispatchers are not immune to the Coronavirus, shortly after Christmas weekend, 7 of the 13 dispatchers were out with symptoms. The remaining 6 employees stepped up, adjusted their schedules, work ungodly amount of overtime, and did what they always do. Luckily all employees recovered and returned to work shortly after the New Year.

We are a very tight team, no one can do it all alone, but I would like to recognize and thank these people who did go above and beyond in performance of their duties...

Supervisor Stacey Bower

Telecommunicator Abe Merten

Supervisor Kelli Coykendall

Telecommunicator Sabrina Lindsley

Telecommunicator Candace Scott

Telecommunicator Rachel Gould

This small group were the key to keeping our operations as normal as possible. Every one of them worked overtime, adjusted their working hours, worked short-handed on many shifts. The stress on this group was immense. They handled it like champs and the special people they really are.

The best part and probably the most rewarding for me is that no one outside the dispatch center was aware how short-handed we were. Not one telephone call or radio transmission was missed. Police, Fire and EMS units were dispatched to every call, even with the many changes in how calls were handled did not affect this crew.

The stress of everything took a huge toll on the staff, I was and still am extremely proud of how they all handled and still handle this crisis.

The following Annual Report represents the work performed by the dedicated staff of St Joseph County Central Dispatch

Thank you

Dennis Brandenburg

Director

St Joseph County 911 Policy Board

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY 9-1-1 POLICY BOARD, JANUARY 2020

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

Chief Mark Brinkert
Colon Police Department
Representing:
Village Police Departments

Chief Jeffrey Bloomfield
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

Brad Selent
Three Rivers Area Hospital
Representing: Emergency Medical Service

Teresa Doehring
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. This Policy Board assists in the development and implementation 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.

We were able to have one in-person meeting during 2020 for this board, the other meetings were held via Zoom.

St Joseph County Central Dispatch Staff

Candace Scott	07/18/2000	Stacey Bower	10/17/2007
Kristen Carpenter	11/17/2009	Kelli Coykendall	10/12/2010
Kyle Murk	08/14/2012	Abe Merten	10/22/2013
Regan Taylor	04/08/2014	Ryan Fillmore	07/07/2015
Andy Homan	10/28/2015	Rachel Gould	02/01/2016
Kory Wallace	10/24/2016	Debra Williams	02/12/2019
Sabrina Lindsley	02/26/2019	Brendon Andeverde	03/12/2019
Abbigail Sweet	11-25-2020	Jonah Moyer	12/04/2020

This is the current staff of the St Joseph County Central Dispatch. At this time Central Dispatch is fully staffed. Our 2 newest employees Abbigail Sweet and Jonah Moyer, began their training in November and December respectively. Both are progressing very well in their training. We are looking forward to having them join our team.

The 4 Supervisors (shown in red), are some of my most experienced personnel. They manage the day to day business. Some of their responsibilities include, but are definitely NOT limited to scheduling, maintaining staffing levels, reviewing calls, and handling equipment and software issues. They are working supervisors. So, they accomplish all this, and much more, while taking phone calls, dispatching Police, Fire and EMS units. These are the staff members I rely on the most, they manage the day-to-day operations of the center.

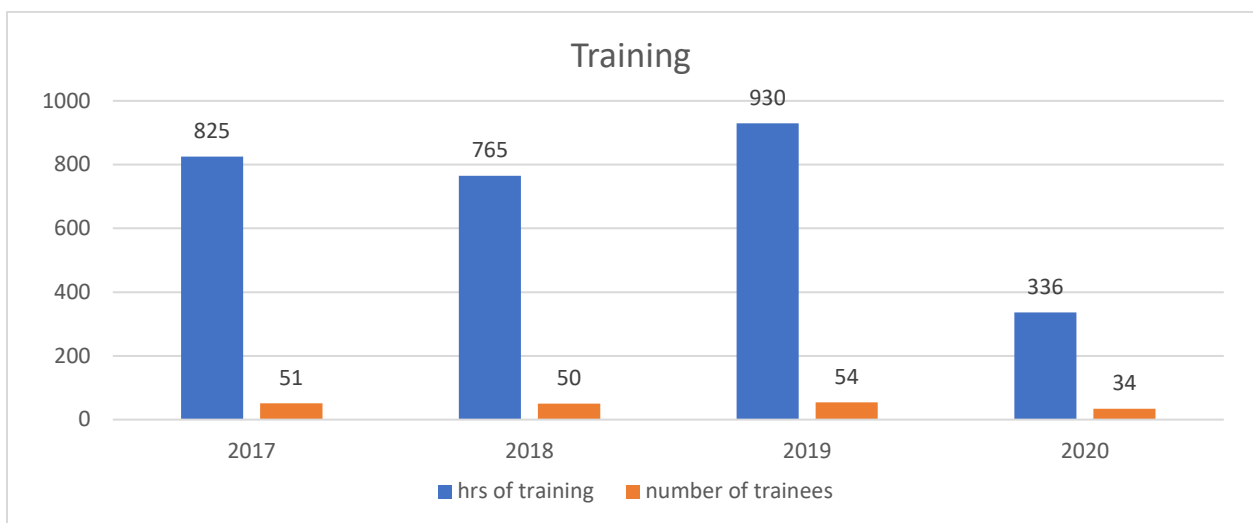
Hiring and Training

In 2020 due to personal issues, I was unable to participate in the hiring and interview process which took place in late 2020. I relied heavily on my Supervisors to filter through the many applications we received, conduct testing and evaluations of the applicants. Do a live interview with the finalist and select the top 2 from the final group.

I was kept abreast of their progress. Abbi and Jonah are proving themselves in the amount of knowledge they have received so far and their dedication to the responsibilities. The Coronavirus did interfere with their training, but with their determination they are both on track to complete their training in early summer of 2021.

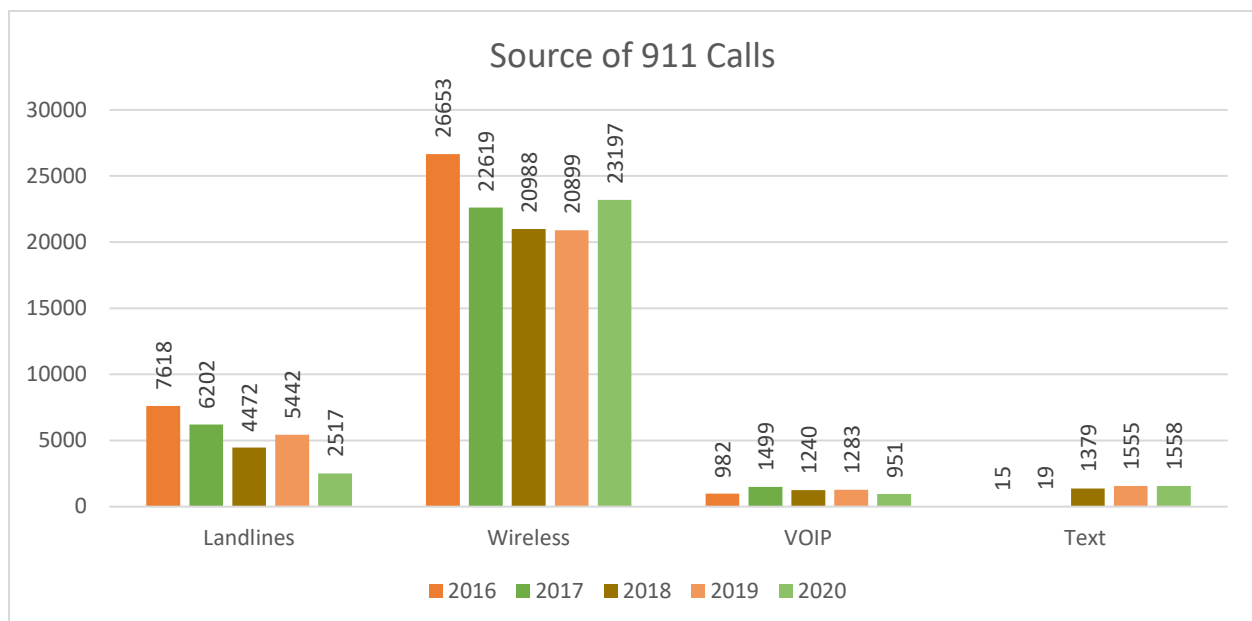
Training was very difficult to schedule in 2020. All in-person training was canceled. Some on-line training was developed by several vendors and instructors. I do have to admit that on-line training is just not as effective or as contusive to learning as in-person.

As you can see the number of training hours were down drastically from 2019. Each employee is required to attend at least 24 hours of training every 2 years. We were able to meet enough hours for 2020 to meet those requirements. We are all looking forward to in-person classes to resume in 2021.



Statistics for St Joseph County Central Dispatch

By the chart below, you can see the number of 911 calls and their source into Central Dispatch. 2020 showed 911 calls were down 956 calls, but the number of wireless (cellphone) calls reached second highest at 82% of all 911 calls.

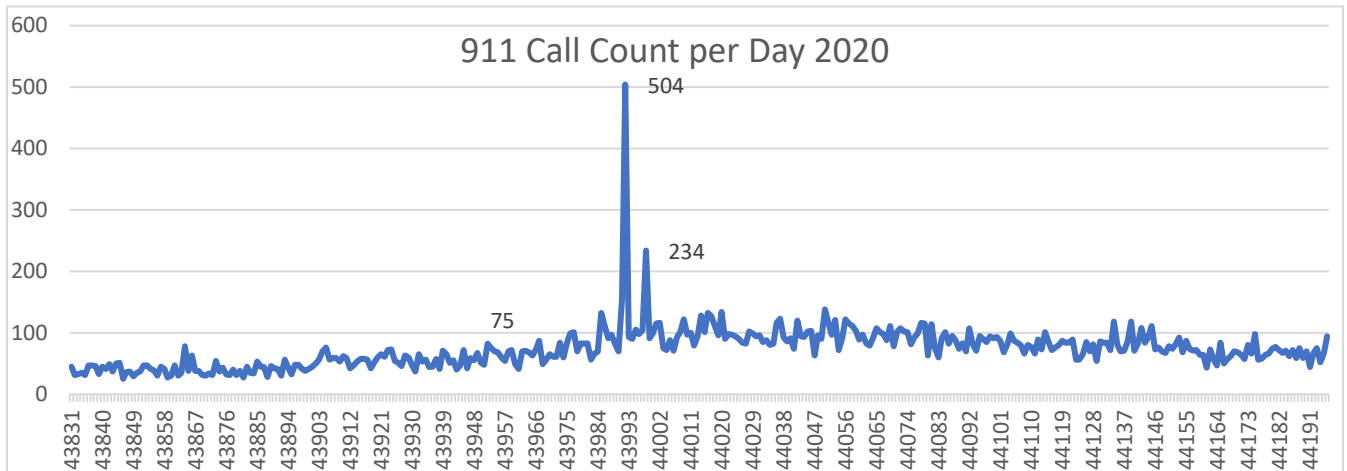


A typical year for Central Dispatch reflects an average of approximately 75 - 100, 911 calls per day. In the chart below you can see two “spikes” of incoming 911 calls. The first one was a severe storm on June 10, 2020 that rolled through Cass, St Joseph, and Branch Counties.

You can just imagine what it was like in Dispatch, I went out to join the call-taking. In a two-hour period as the storm rolled through, all three counties were bombarded with 911 calls of trees down, flooding, roads blocked, houses damaged etc. St Joseph County Dispatched received 504, emergency calls during

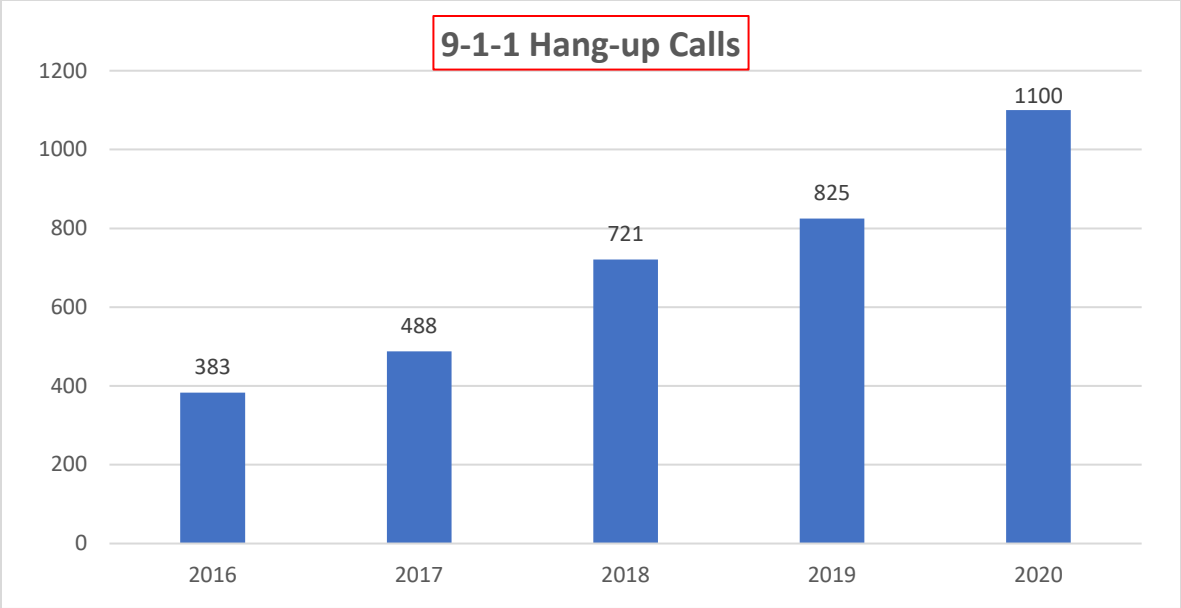
that period, between 5 and 6 times the average day's calls were handled in the center. As the chart below illustrates.

If that wasn't enough, on June 16, 2020, the same shift was working, the second spike occurred when there was a major circuit failure and one of the Peninsula Fiber Network (PFN) our 911 carrier, servers. This caused a circular calling event from a single number to begin ringing into our dispatch. This failure affected most of Southwest Michigan Dispatch centers. This lasted about 45 minutes before the calls could be stopped. None of the calls could be ignored as we could not tell if they were a cause of the failure or actual 911 calls.



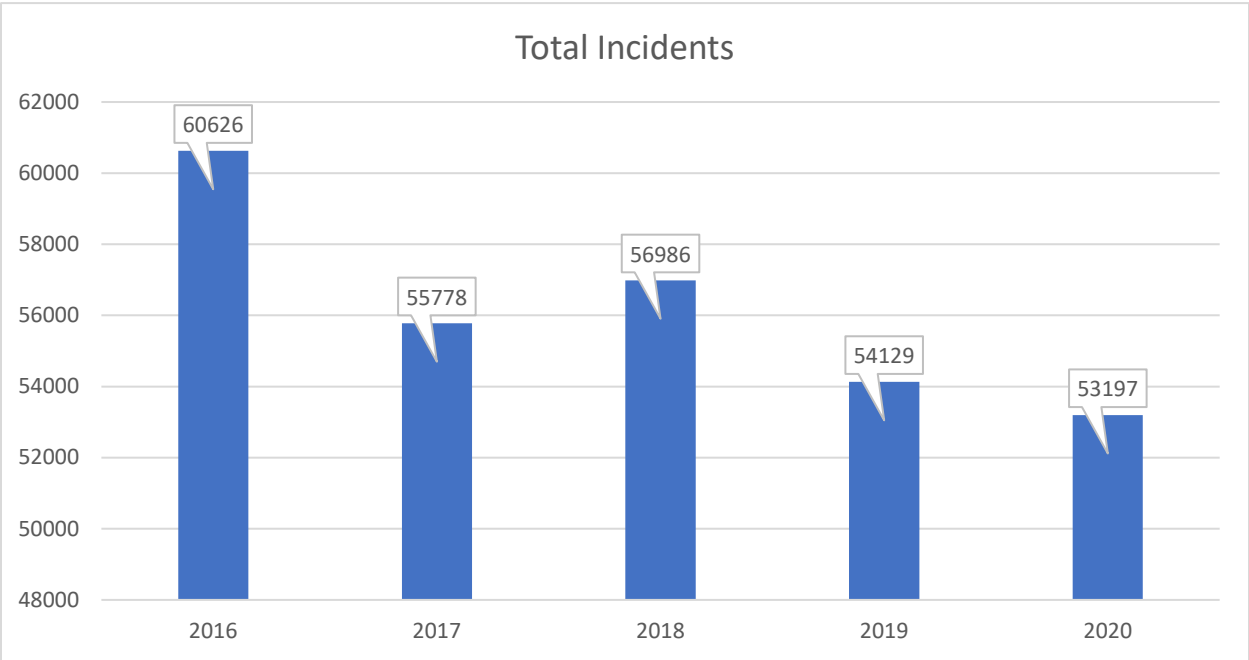
9-1-1 Hang-up Calls

Abandoned 911 calls, commonly referred to as Hang-up calls or pocket dials are always a concern, in 2020 there was a significant increase in these calls. I attribute most of the increase to the two previous occasions listed above. Many of those calls were "roll-over" calls from neighboring counties. The telephone system is designed to allow six rings before the call automatically rolls over to the neighboring county to answer. With all three counties being over-whelmed with calls there was bound to be numerous roll-overs occur. The following chart shows there was an increase of 175 calls into our Dispatch.

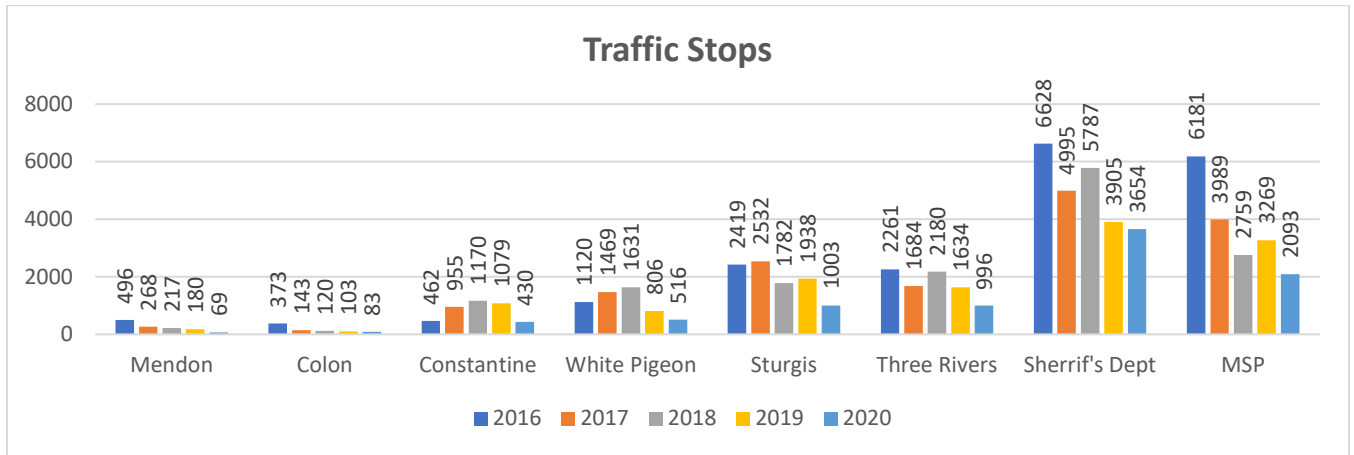


Total Incident

The total number of incidents decreased in 2020 from 2019, down by 932 reports. I would attribute this to the reduction of officers on patrol, reducing the number of traffic stops and limiting their contact with the public.

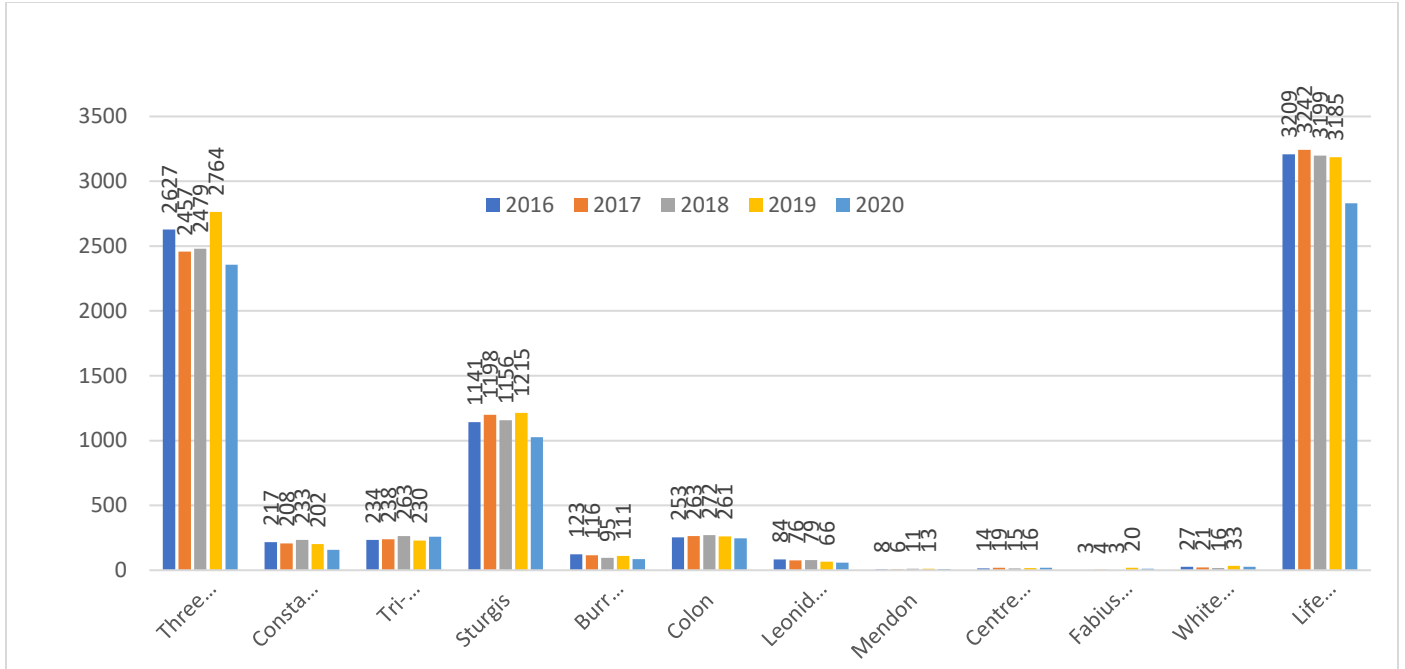


The following chart shows the number of Traffic stops were down by just over 4000 stops from 2019 to 2020.



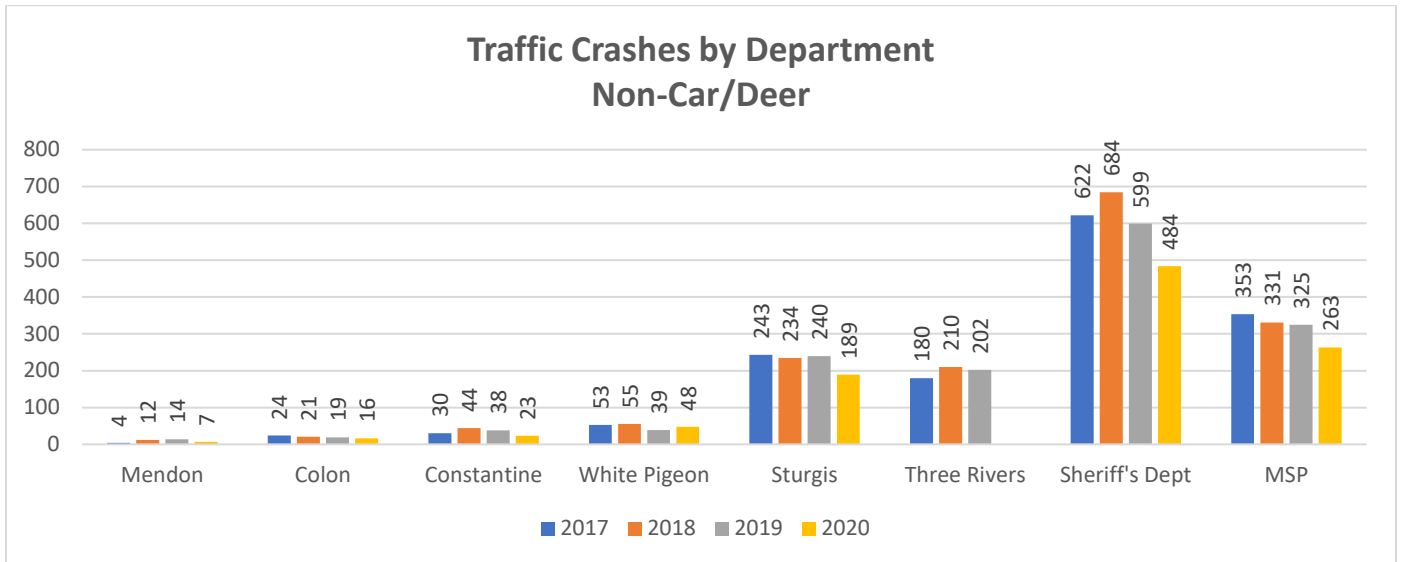
Medical First Responder Calls by Department

Medical calls in 2020 were down by over 12% from 2019. Total number of Medical calls were down by 1029 calls for the entire county.



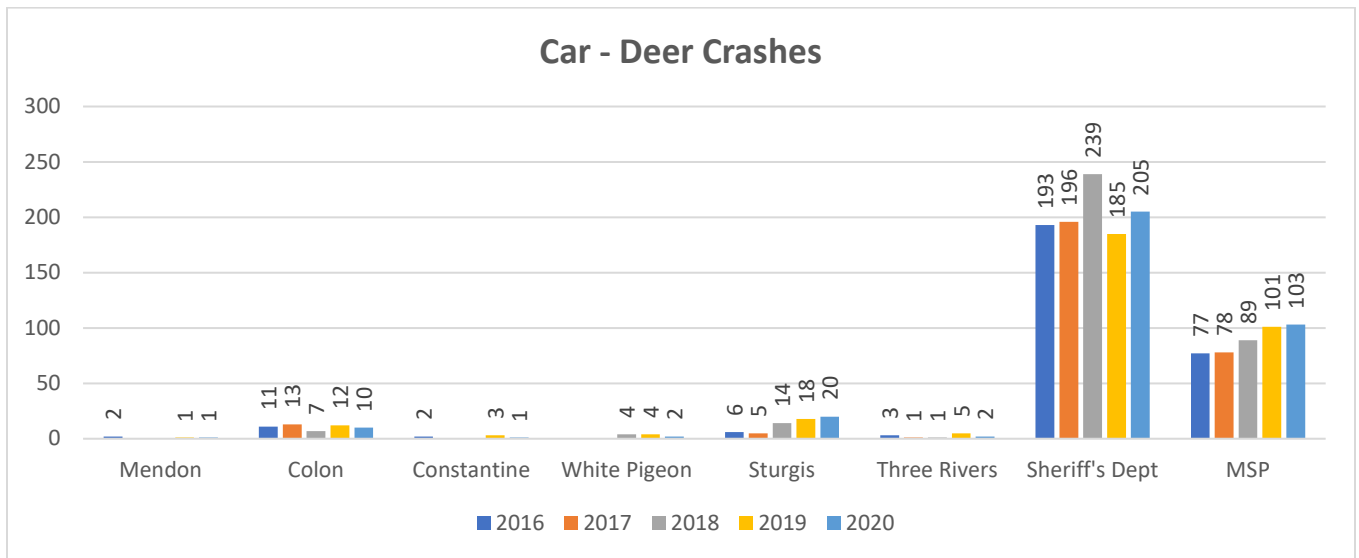
Traffic Crashes

Traffic Crashes were also down in 2020, down 317 crashes from 2019



Car – Deer Crashes

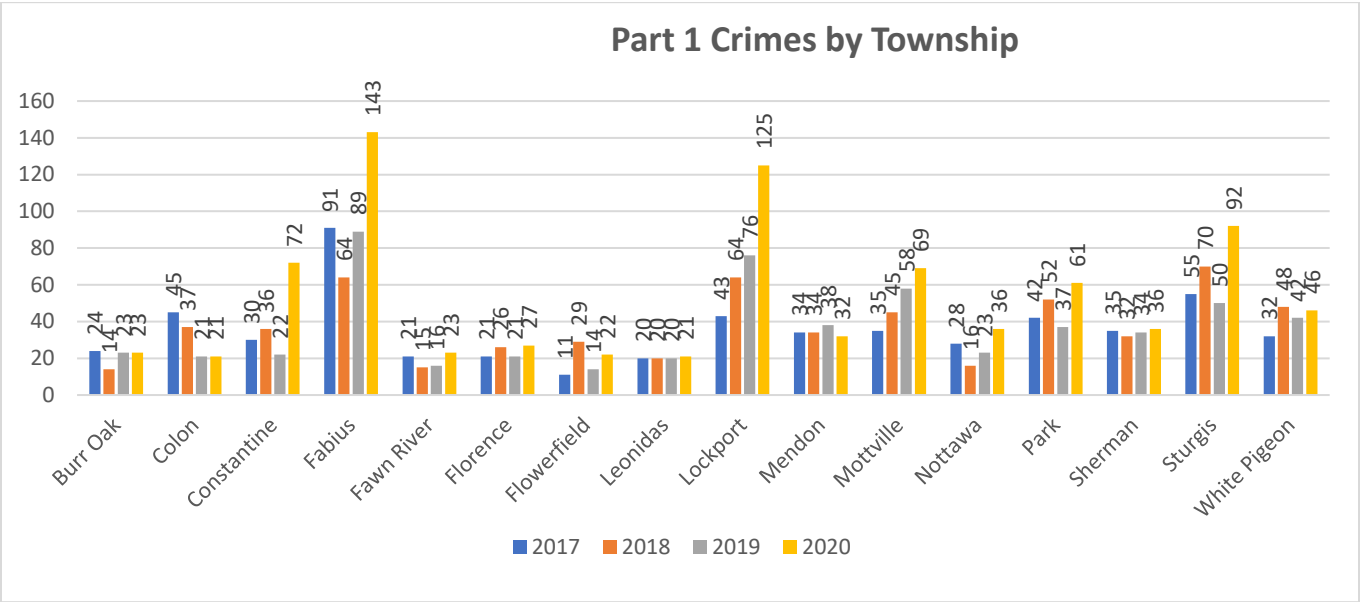
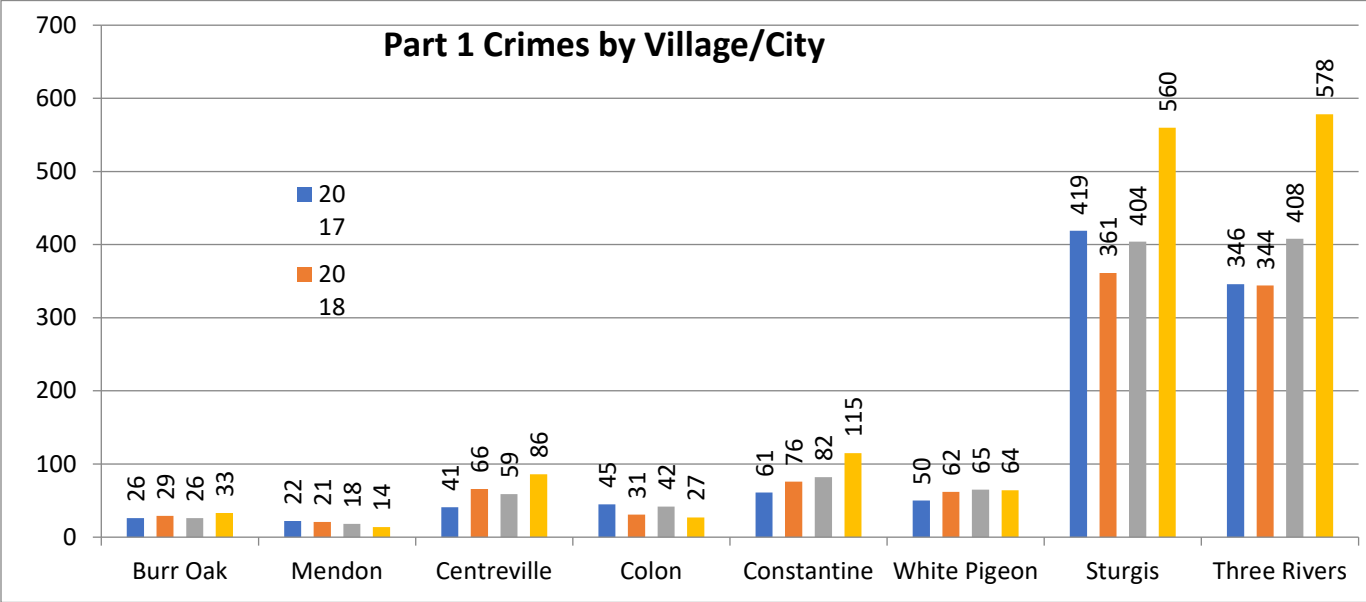
About the only type of incident that was not affected by the coronavirus were the number of Car-Deer crashes that occurred in 2020. Records show the number of these crashes actually increased in 2020 from a total of 329 in 2019 to 344 in 2020, a 4 % increase.



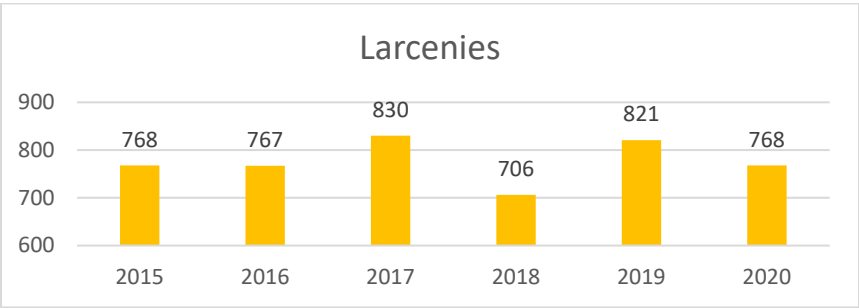
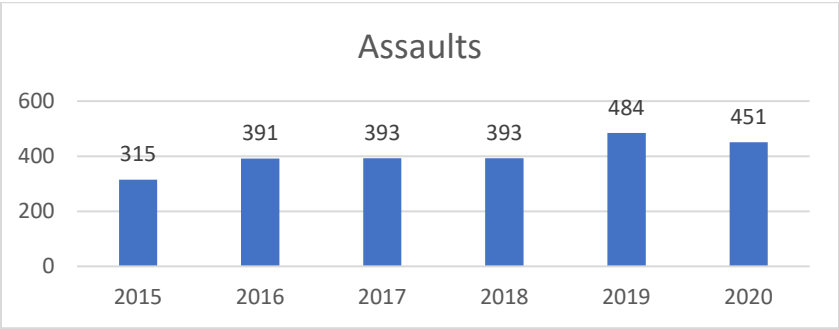
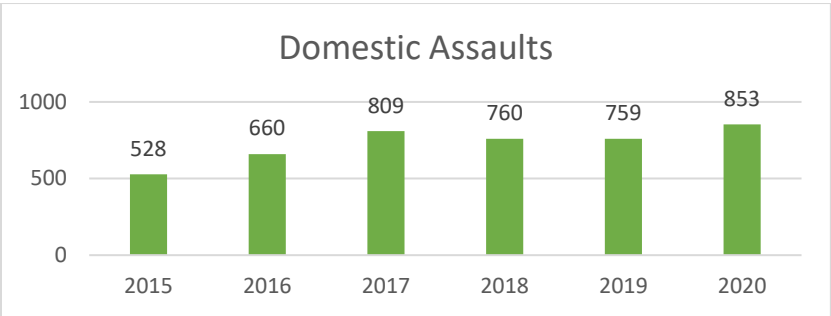
Crime Statistics

Part 1 Crimes are defined as: Homicide, Criminal Sexual Conduct, Robbery, Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Larceny, Motor Vehicle thefts, and Arson. These are displayed for St. Joseph County in the next 2 graphs. The first graph has the statistics for Part 1 Crimes broken down by city and villages.

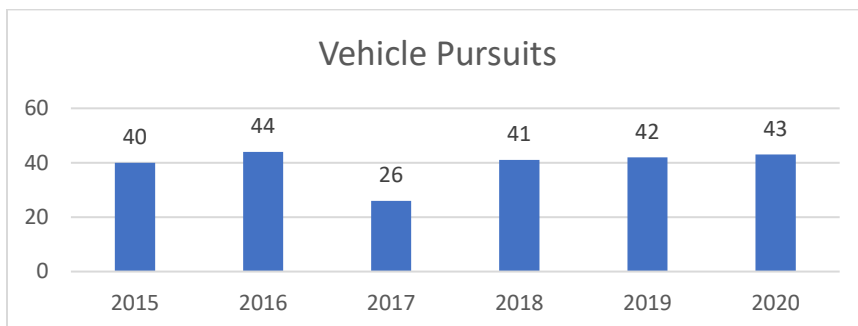
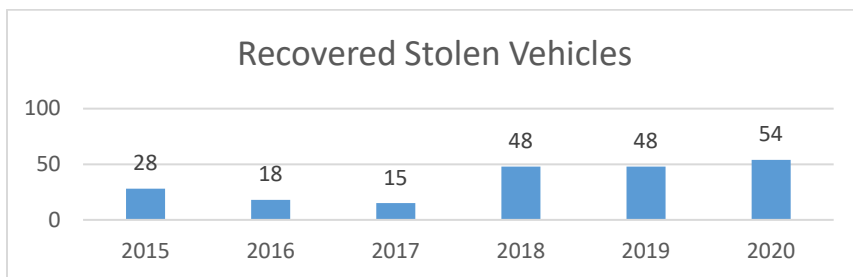
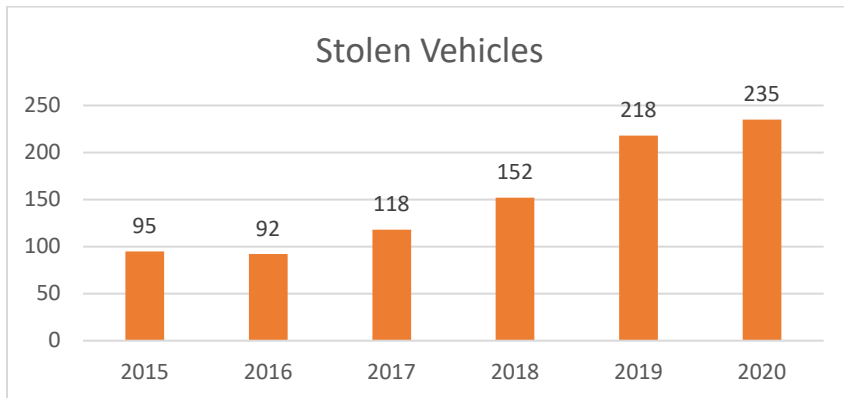
As you can see there was a significant increase in Part 1 Crimes an increase of 16% average for all Cities and Villages within St Joseph County and a 45% for all 16 townships from 2019 to 2020.



This year I decided to break these type crimes down a little further due to the unique circumstances with Covid-19 involvement, the total lock-down and isolation of the people. The various Part 1 Crimes are broken down and compared to the past 5 years, you will see this comparison in the following charts.



Not just crimes against persons were the only crimes that increased in 2020. Some less-severe cases also showed a rise in activity. The following crimes seem a strange combination to show such increases during this period. I do not have any theories as to the reasons.



Community Involvement and Contacts

In a “normal” year, Central Dispatch is involved in many activities within the county. 2020 took a huge toll on those activities. Our 911 For Kids, was placed on hold, and remains so until the area schools resume in-person classes.

About the only true interaction that was maintained regularly was our Facebook page. Even that suffered as the levity and lightheartedness of our page administrators suffered during 2020.

Even Director Brandenburg’s regular attendance at area meetings and conferences suffered, He attended as many Zoom meetings as possible, all 911 conferences and all State-wide conferences were canceled or postponed until 2021.

Closing

As I started this report, so shall I end it. 2020 for me will just be a bitter memory, full of frustration and sorrow.

I will say a big thank you to my staff for their support and the fabulous job they do for this county. I knew they would always do their job to the best of their abilities, work as a fine team, solve problems, get help sent, and comfort the callers until help arrived.

I would like to thank the County Board of Commissioners and County Administrator Teresa Doehring for all your support and trust that you have placed in me.

Thank you

Dennis Brandenburg

Director

St Joseph County 911 – Central Dispatch