

ANDERSON COUNTY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT

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Board of Directors

Mark Lucas, Chairman

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PRESS RELEASE

Ten Year Anniversary: *Carl E. McMillan Emergency Communications and Operations Center*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Anderson County Emergency Communications District Board of Directors is proud to announce the *Carl E. McMillan Emergency Communications and Operations Center* will be celebrating its ten year anniversary. The center opened on March 27, 2001, and was the result of years of research, planning, and implementation. The communications center was named in honor of the late Lieutenant Carl E. "Jargo" McMillan who served as a sheriff's deputy and dispatcher for more than thirty years and is located in the Robert L. Jolley Building in Clinton.

The Anderson County Emergency Communications District was established by referendum in 1990 to provide Emergency 911 telephone service for Anderson County outside the City of Oak Ridge. The Anderson County 911 District currently provides 911 service to all areas of Anderson County except Oak Ridge and Clinton. The 911 District is an independent government agency and receives no funds from property or sales taxes. The sole source of revenue is a small surcharge on subscribers' landline and cellular telephone bills as well as funding from the Tennessee Emergency Communications Board.

Upon going on-line in 1992, 911 calls were routed to the local police departments for the four municipalities, Clinton, Lake City, Norris, and Oliver Springs. Calls outside the cities were routed to the Anderson County Sheriff's Department. Medical emergencies were transferred to the Anderson County Emergency Medical Service from each of the five primary answering points. The 911 calls continued to be received in this manner despite large increases in call volume especially for medical emergencies.

The 911 Board saw a need for a consolidated Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) in the mid 1990's. Emergency calls had increased substantially. Some 80% of all 911 calls were for medical emergencies, therefore, the majority of emergency calls had to be transferred to Anderson County EMS. The board also was aware of the need to upgrade the 911 equipment to provide the ability to receive cellular 911 calls. A change was needed to continue to provide 911 services in the most efficient, effective manner possible. A consolidated PSAP was required to keep up with increased demands.

The 911 Board, along with members of Anderson County Government, also sought to improve the communications and emergency operations needs of Anderson County. The sheriff's dispatch office served as the "center" of operations during emergencies, yet, did not have adequate radio equipment for day-to-day use. The equipment was old, dating back as far as 1982, and required frequent repair. The EMS radio equipment was also old and inadequate. Both dispatch offices were hot and cramped. A comprehensive overhaul of 911 services, radio communications, and emergency operations was the goal of both the 911 Board and Anderson County Government.

Space in the county owned Robert L. Jolley Building was secured. This houses the communications center and offices for 911 addressing and mapping. The 911 Board researched the needs of the Emergency Communications District and made numerous visits to other 911 centers. Information gained from these visits was a tremendous help in planning of the new center and in selecting new telephone and radio equipment.

The 911 Board proceeded carefully and conservatively in the planning and implementation of the new communications center. Equipment was chosen to best meet the needs of the district. As a result, the center has the latest in 911 telephone equipment which is able to properly receive cellular 911 calls along with computer controlled radio equipment which can be easily reconfigured as the need arises. Costs were reduced by using county personnel to perform a large portion of the equipment installation. Sheriffs' deputies with expertise in computer software, hardware, and radio equipment were used with outstanding results.

New 911 telephone equipment replaced the old. Both emergency 911 lines and seven-digit non-emergency lines are consolidated into a modern telephone console. 911 calls can be transferred to surrounding counties and the Tennessee Highway Patrol. All telephone calls are digitally recorded for later playback. Cellular 911 calls can be received with our GIS mapping software and their location displayed. The center also has the ability to communicate with hearing impaired callers via a TTY device for each dispatcher.

The communications center has the latest in computer controlled radio equipment. This not only allows radio communications with sheriff's deputies, fire, and EMS units but local law enforcement and fire agencies including Oak Ridge and Clinton, surrounding counties, state organizations such as the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency and the Tennessee Highway Patrol as well as the Department of Energy Operations Center in Oak Ridge. With communications "interoperability" a key element in a disaster or emergency, the center is equipped to maintain radio contact with all area public safety agencies.

Computer equipment has been upgraded since the center first opened to integrate Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) software, National Crime Information Center (NCIC) software for law enforcement inquiries, and digital mapping to pinpoint 911 calls. Weather information including radar maps and severe weather broadcasts are available to provide immediate notification to emergency personnel. In conjunction with a federal grant obtained by the Sheriff's Department, upgraded CAD software allows dispatchers to have instant access to arrest warrants, civil papers, and local criminal histories including mugshots. Call histories and information formerly kept manually on EMS calls are computerized with software developed by in-house personnel.

Computerized, digital mapping is available after completion of another joint project with Anderson County Government and the State of Tennessee. This GIS mapping allows 911 calls both from landline and cellular telephones to be pinpointed. Dispatchers have access to the county road map, addresses, and aerial photographs. This mapping software aids in sorting through the maze of streets and roads in Anderson County.

Using software developed by sheriff's personnel, deputies now use laptop computers in patrol cars to receive calls-for-service and "hotsheets" with information on wanted persons or other law enforcement information. Deputies can now complete reports in the car without the need to drive to the office. This allows patrol deputies to remain out in county and protect the citizens.

Dispatchers have spacious, ergonomic workstations where telephones, computers, and radio equipment are within easy reach. Indirect and ambient lighting reduces glare and eye strain. Headsets are used to allow dispatchers to have both hands free to type or use the radio or telephone. A room with large windows allows dispatchers to see the outside world instead of four confining walls. This is truly a vast improvement over the hot, cramped rooms they formerly occupied.

Perhaps the most useful result of the center is that both the sheriff's dispatcher and the EMS and fire dispatcher are located together. This allows immediate contact in the event assistance is needed or in handling of multi-agency emergency response. All 911 calls from Anderson County, except for Oak Ridge and Clinton, are routed to the center where dispatchers handle the emergency. Police and fire calls for Lake City, Norris, and Oliver Springs are transferred to their respective dispatchers for response. Medical emergencies from Oak Ridge and Clinton are forwarded to the center for dispatch of EMS. With the tremendous increase in calls, dispatch efficiency is most important as it is becoming more and more difficult to keep up with the demand. A total of four dispatch positions and a supervisory position allows personnel to handle the daily workload.

The *Carl E. McMillan Emergency Communications and Operations Center* serves to provide the day-to-day public safety dispatch functions in Anderson County. This includes the receiving of 911 calls as the primary PSAP for Anderson County and dispatching of the Sheriff's Department, Emergency Medical Service, the five county volunteer fire departments, and the rescue squad. The center provides local law enforcement agencies with criminal warrants information and NCIC services. The center is staffed by 16 Communications Officers from the Anderson County Sheriff's Department, as well as part-time dispatchers from Anderson County EMS and other local public safety agencies. These dispatchers handle over 300,000 emergency 911 and non-emergency telephone calls each year for the Sheriff's Department, the county volunteer fire departments, the rescue squad, and the Anderson County Emergency Medical Service. They also dispatch and coordinate the county sheriff's deputies, fire and rescue units, and ambulances. Some 65,000 incidents were dispatched to these public safety agencies last year. With more and more persons using cellular telephones, 911 calls for incidents have skyrocketed over the last few years. New technologies are being studied to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the communications center along with the need for additional personnel.

The implementation of the communications center was truly a cooperative effort between the Anderson County Emergency Communications District and Anderson County Government. Funding for the 911 telephone, radio, and other equipment is supplied by the 911 Board. Personnel costs for dispatchers are funded by the Anderson County Board of County Commissioners. Without this cooperation, the communications center would not be possible.

The Anderson County Emergency Communications District Board of Directors wishes to thank the Anderson County Board of County Commissioners, County Mayor Myron Iwanski, Sheriff Paul White, Emergency Services Director Nathan Sweet, and Emergency Management Coordinator Steve Payne for their efforts in supporting the communications center . The 911 Board also wishes to thank the dedicated dispatchers of the Anderson County Sheriff's Department, as well as the part-time dispatchers from Anderson County EMS and the local public safety agencies, who spend many long, hard hours providing services to Anderson County. The results of this effort are displayed in the quality of their work. The citizens of Anderson County are well served by this "state of the art" 911 communications center.

The Anderson County Emergency Communications District Board of Directors will have an open house at the *Carl E. McMillan Emergency Communications and Operations Center* on **Wednesday, April 13th, from 11:00am until 2:00pm**, for National Public Safety Telecommunications Week and to celebrate our ten year anniversary. Residents of Anderson County can tour the center to meet and talk with our Communications Officers that answer their 911 and non-emergency calls.

For information about 911 service in Anderson County, the communications center, or the upcoming events, please contact **Regina Copeland** with our 911 Office at **865-463-8160**.

For the Board,



Mark Lucas, Chairman