

MEMORANDUM

DATE: 3 December 2003
TO: Ad Hoc Dispatching Study Group
FROM: Evelyn Bailey, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Dispatch Issues from an Enhanced 9-1-1 Perspective

This paper addresses the question solely from the perspective of the problem that H.410 was trying to solve. There may be other issues, but they are outside the scope of this paper.

Background

H.410

H.410 was drafted after a small, rural fire department decided it needed to change its dispatching arrangements, asked the Vermont State Police to take them on and were turned down because the VSP did not have adequate resources to do so. The solution H.410 proposed was to require the VSP to dispatch for any department that requested it, and to use the USF to pay for any increased costs that might be incurred.

E9-1-1 Service and E9-1-1 System

Enhanced 9-1-1 is a regulated, tariffed telephone service. The E9-1-1 system consists of a sophisticated telecommunications network and specialized databases, which work together to selectively route a 9-1-1 call to the appropriate Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), and to display the caller's telephone number and locatable address along with the police, fire and EMS responders for that location to a 9-1-1 operator.

Each town is responsible for providing the E9-1-1 Board with information regarding its primary law enforcement, fire and EMS responders, including information about who dispatches for each of them.

The information is incorporated into two databases, the Emergency Service Zone/Emergency Service Number (ESZ/ESN) database and the Selective Transfer database, and programmed into the telecommunications switches and the PSAPs. The programming of the E9-1-1 system with this information (1) enables a 9-1-1 call to be routed to the proper Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), (2) provides an automatic display of the police, fire and EMS services for the caller's location, and (3) enables the 9-1-1 Operator (call-taker) to initiate a three-way conference call (selective transfer) between him/herself, the caller and the appropriate dispatcher with a single key stroke or mouse click.

Dispatch

Dispatching is the use of radio communications to coordinate and direct the police, fire or EMS responders.

The Nexus

The E9-1-1 system is designed to support whatever local arrangements exist for police, fire and EMS responders and dispatch. From the E9-1-1 Board's perspective, the issues that occasionally arise are those that surround change. Changes that impact the E9-1-1 system include change in a police, fire or EMS service's dispatching arrangements; change in the geographic jurisdiction of a police, fire, or EMS service; change in the telephone number for local police, fire, EMS or dispatch that is programmed into the E9-1-1 system for use when transferring 9-1-1 calls; dispatch consolidation.

All such changes require commensurate programming changes to be made to the E9-1-1 network, the various system databases, the GIS database, and the PSAP equipment. Sometimes, the impact is significant.

Managing Change

The specific situation that gave rise to H.410 and similar situations that arise from time to time require close coordination between the local police, fire or EMS service, the former dispatch service, the new dispatch service, the local telephone service provider, the E91-1 Board's System Provider, and the E91-1 staff. Each stakeholder has responsibilities and tasks to ensure a smooth transition and to preserve the reliability and integrity of the E9-1-1 system and E9-1-1 call processing. In the instance that gave rise to H.410, everything went smoothly.

There have been times when things have not gone smoothly. Those times are always attributable to a change made by one of the stakeholders that was not communicated and coordinated with the E9-1-1 Board.

For example, a local department that provided dispatch services to a number of local emergency responders took one of its seven-digit telephone lines out of service. No one was informed. The E9-1-1 system was programmed with a number that no longer existed. The 9-1-1 Operator, trying to calm a frantic caller while initiating a three-way conference call with dispatch, got only a recorded message that said, "the number you have dialed, Nxx-xxxx, is no longer in service."

Conclusion

While problems do arise, generally due to a failure to communicate, they are rare. The state's law enforcement, fire and EMS responders, as well as their dispatch service providers, have come to understand that certain aspects of their operations require coordination with the E9-1-1 Board. Mutual understanding, cooperation and collaboration between these important stakeholders and the E9-1-1 staff have steadily increased with the passage of time and the establishment of routine working relationships.

Appendix D

MEMORANDUM

DATE: 3 December 2003

TO: Ad Hoc Dispatching Study Group

FROM: Evelyn Bailey, Executive Director

SUBJECT: The Vermont Universal Service Fund -- History and Public Policy

1992. The Vermont Public Service Department (PSD), in response to concerns raised by consumers, emergency service providers, and Legislators, initiated a study of Enhanced 9-1-1.¹ The study determined that Enhanced 9-1-1 was feasible and should be implemented. The PSD also engaged Macro, Inc. to conduct a public opinion survey. The survey determined that telephone ratepayers would be willing to pay a surcharge on their monthly telephone bills for enhanced 9-1-1 service.

1993. The Vermont Legislature passed Act 83, which provided funding and direction to the PSD for further analysis and study.

1994. The two years of study and research resulted in the introduction of Enhanced 9-1-1 enabling legislation. The proposed legislation was conceived originally without the USF section. The Public Service Board (PSB) and PSD, in pursuit of broader public policy goals and with the Administration's agreement, determined that a Vermont USF was the appropriate funding mechanism for Lifeline,² Vermont Telecommunications Relay Service,³ and Enhanced 9-1-1. The USF concept became part of the Enhanced 9-1-1 enabling legislation.

Enhanced 9-1-1 is a tariffed, regulated telephone service. Telecommunications utilities are regulated by state public utilities commissions (the Public Service Board in Vermont) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Thus, the use of a surcharge on telephone subscriber bills was viewed as the most logical and appropriate way to fund the Enhanced 9-1-1 telephone service.

Dispatching is the use of radio communications to coordinate and direct the police, fire and EMS responders.

¹ Enhanced 9-1-1 is a telecommunications service that selectively routes a 9-1-1 call to the appropriate Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), and which subsequently displays the caller's telephone number and locatable address along with the police, fire and EMS responders for that location to a 9-1-1 operator.

² Lifeline is an entitlement that subsidizes the monthly cost of basic telephone service for low income and elderly persons.

³ VTRS is an interpreter service for people who communicate over the public switched telephone network using text telephones (TTY machines).

Enhanced 9-1-1 call taking and dispatching are separate and distinct functions. The law reflected that demarcation in establishing what the USF could fund and what it could not fund.

1997. The General Assembly extended USF funds to the Department of Public Safety (DPS), for “costs solely attributable to public safety answering point operations.”⁴ There was logic to funding the 9-1-1 operators (“call-takers”) because their function was solely attributable to E9-1-1: they answered 9-1-1 calls and relayed the information to the appropriate dispatch service. The costs for four supervisors, one Administrator and one Secretary could receive USF funding for the portion of their duties that was solely attributed to E9-1-1. The funds were not to be used for the portion of their duties attributable to dispatch or other functions.

2002. H.410 was introduced in response to a situation that occurred when a small, rural fire department, dissatisfied with its dispatching/paging service, asked the Vermont State Police to take them on and were turned down because insufficient resources were available to accommodate the extra work. H.410 proposed to address the issue by requiring the VSP to dispatch for any department that requested it, and by using the USF to pay for any increased costs that might be incurred.

Testimony from stakeholders within State government – the Governor’s office, the Agency of Administration, Department of Public Safety, the E9-1-1 Board, the Public Service Department and Public Service Board – unanimously opposed use of the USF for this purpose, although their reasons for doing so varied. The reasons included resistance to using a telephone tax for a non-telephone purpose thereby increasing the burden on telephone ratepayers, a belief that the current USF policy is the right public policy, and a desire to avoid being in the position of taking on additional service with a funding mechanism that could not guarantee a consistent and reliable revenue stream. Testimony from other stakeholders was consistent with these positions.

⁴ The six local PSAPs were not included in this provision.

Appendix E

This appendix is not available electronically.

Appendix F

This appendix is not available electronically.

ESP's and Dispatching Summary

Information was received from the E 9-1-1 Board regarding Emergency Service Providers (ESP's) and dispatching services. Every fire department, police department (State, municipal, Sheriff) and emergency medical service, providing service to Vermont communities is considered an emergency service provider (ESP). However, it should be mentioned that not all ESP's are first responders. A first responder is an agency that is called upon to be the primary response to any emergency call received through the E 9-1-1 system. First response to emergencies is determined by each community's wishes, while all fire Departments and emergency medical services are first responders not all police departments have this designation. Below is a listing of all police departments including state agencies and sheriff offices and there designation as a first responder.

Sheriff's Office

	<u>First Responder</u>
Addison	No
Bennington	No
Caledonia	No
Chittenden	No
Essex	Yes
Franklin	No
Grand Isle	No
Lamoille	Yes
Orange	No
Orleans	No
Rutland	No
Washington	No
Windham	Yes
Windsor	No

Municipal Police Departments

	<u>First Responder</u>
Barre City	Yes
Barre Town	Yes
Bellows Falls	Yes
Bennington	Yes
Berlin	Yes
Bradford	Yes
Brandon	Yes
Brattleboro	Yes
Bristol	Yes
Burlington	Yes
Castleton	Yes
Chester	Yes
Colchester	Yes
Dover	Yes

Essex	Yes
Fair Haven	Yes
Fairlee	No
Hardwick	Yes
Hartford	Yes
Hinesburg	Yes
Ludlow	Yes
Manchester	Yes
Middlebury	Yes
Milton	Yes
Montgomery	No
Montpelier	Yes
Morristown	Yes
Newport	Yes
Norwich	Yes
Randolph	Yes
Richmond	Yes
Rutland	Yes
St. Albans	Yes
St. Johnsbury	Yes
Shelburne	Yes
S. Burlington	Yes
Springfield	Yes
Stowe	Yes
Swanton	Yes
Thetford	Yes
Vergennes	Yes
Vernon	Yes
Waterbury	Yes
Weathersfield	No
Williston	Yes
Wilmington	Yes
Windsor	Yes
Winhall	Yes
Winooski	Yes
Woodstock	Yes

Yes

Miscellaneous Agencies

First Responder

UVM Police	Yes
Capital Police	No

State Agencies

First Responder

Vermont State Police	Yes
Fish & Wildlife	No
DMV	No
Liquor Control	No

There are no constables or special police officers for any community that are designated as a first responder.

Summary of Police first response emergency service providers		
	<u>Respond First to Emergencies</u>	<u>Do not respond first</u>
Sheriff's Office	3	11
Municipal Police Dept.	47	3
Miscellaneous Agencies	1	1
State Agencies	1	3

Dispatching Services

The E 9-1-1 board also provided a list of all dispatching services that call takers refer emergency calls to for assignment to a first responder. These dispatching services are listed below along with the agencies that serve as a Public Service Answering Point (PSAP).

<u>Sheriff's Offices</u>	<u>Dispatch Provider</u>	<u>PSAP</u>
Addison	Yes	
Lamoille	Yes	Yes
Windham	Yes	

<u>Municipal Police Departments</u>	<u>Dispatch Provider</u>	<u>PSAP</u>
Barre City	Yes	
Bellows Falls	Yes	
Bennington	Yes	
Brattleboro	Yes	
Burlington	Yes	
Colchester	Yes	
Dover (Part Time)	Yes	
Essex	Yes	
Hartford	Yes	Yes
Ludlow	Yes	
Manchester	Yes	
Middlebury	Yes	
Montpelier	Yes	Yes
Newport (Part Time)	Yes	
Rutland	Yes	
St. Albans	Yes	Yes
St. Johnsbury	Yes	

Municipal Police Departments

Shelburne
S. Burlington
Springfield
Swanton (Part Time)
Vergennes (Part Time)
Williston (Part Time)
Wilmington (Part Time)
Windsor
Winhall
Winooski
Woodstock

Dispatch Provider

Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes

PSAP

Yes

Yes

Miscellaneous LE Agencies

UVM Police

Dispatch Provider

Yes

PSAP**State Agencies**

Vermont State Police
Derby
Rutland
Rockingham
Williston

Dispatch Provider

Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes

PSAP

Yes
Yes
Yes

Fire & Rescue Departments

Springfield FD
St. Michael's Rescue
Lefevre Ambulance

Dispatch Provider

Yes
Yes
Yes

PSAP**Private**

Contact Communication
Red Phones

Dispatch Provider

Yes
Yes

PSAP**Out of State Providers**

Washington Cty, New York
Colbrook Dispatch, NH
Hanover Dispatch, NH
Keene SW Fire Mutual Aid, NH
Lancaster FD, NH
Twin State
Grafton Cty. Sheriff, NH
Claremont Dispatch, NH
N. Adams Dispatch, MA

Dispatch Provider

Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes

PSAP

Vermont Hospitals
 Weeks Memorial Hospital
 Porter Hospital

Dispatch Provider
 Yes
 Yes

PSAP

Miscellaneous
 SSpeir – Hardwick
 U.S. Customs – Beecher Falls

Dispatch Provider
 Yes
 Yes

PSAP

The following is numerical summary by category of all the services providing dispatching for first response emergency service providers (ESP's) in Vermont. Arguably, these services represent all the services in Vermont providing dispatch service to all ESP's

Summary of Dispatch Services

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Number Providing Dispatching</u>	<u>PSAP</u>
Sheriff Offices	3	1
Municipal Police Department	27	5
Miscellaneous LE Agencies	1	
State Agencies – State Police	4	3
Fire & Rescue Departments	3	
Private	2	
Out of State Providers	9	
Vermont Hospitals	2	
Miscellaneous	<u>2</u>	
TOTAL DISPATCHING SERVICES & PSAP's	53	9

Appendix G

Several documents have been reviewed that are relevant to this issue and are summarized below.

In a "Report of the Public Safety 2000 Summer Study Commission to the General Assembly, January 4, 1993 the following was taken.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The State should encourage greater coordination and consolidation of police dispatching.

The Commission heard convincing testimony that dispatching of police officers would be both more efficient and more economical if there was a significant reduction in the number of dispatch centers. Consolidation of dispatching centers would result in significant savings for several reasons: 1) the expense of the hardware associated with dispatching can be spread amongst several users or municipalities if the service is shared; 2) consolidated dispatching centers would reduce the number of personnel required to staff the system; 3) expanded implementation of the emergency 911 telephone system is facilitated by consolidation because 911 exchanges do not necessarily coincide with municipal boundaries; and 4) there was an appreciation amongst some of the police departments that police dispatchers, who are civilian, need more training than they have obtained to date, and that consolidation of dispatching would make it more likely that such training would be forthcoming.

At the same time, local police departments expressed concern about delegating dispatching functions entirely to one organization, such as the Department of Public Safety, without an opportunity for input. It was suggested that these concerns could be addressed by instituting some administrative unit which would oversee the dispatching system but which would be advised by a board comprised of the users of the system and the public.

At the final meeting of the Commission, the group endorsed the creation of a Division of Telecommunications and Information Support Services, separate and apart from the Vermont State Police, but within the Department of Public Safety. The purpose of the Division would be to: 1) advise localities on consolidation strategies; 2) provide, where appropriate, consolidated dispatching services on a contract basis; and 3) to explore alternative funding structures similar to the municipal loan fund to support local and regional consolidation efforts.

Separation of the division from the State Police would alleviate some concerns of other police agencies that dispatching decisions might be biased if the system were run by the Vermont State Police. To address this concern, the Commissioner of Public Safety suggested the creation of a board of member

agencies and the public to advise the Division of Telecommunications and Information support Services. The Division could be created without the need for additional revenues or legislation.

In a "Report of the Rural Law Enforcement Committee to the Senate & House Committees on Judiciary and Government Operations", March 2000 the following is taken.

Dispatching Services: The committee heard from a variety of witnesses that the need for dispatching service continues to be a requirement for effective law enforcement services within rural areas. Many small agencies, including constables, are called upon to provide a variety of services. These services not only include responding to calls but also include providing extra patrol coverage with their communities. Some Sheriff's Departments are being given patrol coverage with their communities. Many of these agencies do not have dispatching services and in many cases assume the Vermont Department of Public Safety should provide them. The calls for service from the public are not the problem for the dispatch centers. Many of the calls are calls that would have been received by the Vermont State Police or other service provider in the areas. However, there has been an increasing desire in communities to provide *enhanced* coverage. This type of coverage results in added radio traffic being handled by the dispatchers. This radio traffic originates from the police officer making motor vehicle stops and asking for license, registration information along with NCIC and other types of information needed to secure his/her safety and adequately assess the involvement. This added response creates an added workload for the dispatcher. Dispatching services whether by the Department of Public Safety or other agencies should be made available to small law enforcement agencies providing service in rural areas.

Summary of the issues

2. Dispatching Services: Dispatching services continue to be a problem for constables and other new law enforcement initiatives. In areas of the State where dispatching services are stretched to the maximum, dispatch centers are not able to provide services to new users. It is dangerous and inefficient for constables or other agencies to try to provide law enforcement services to a community without dispatching. It should be the responsibility of the State of Vermont to fund regional dispatch centers such that they are able to provide the requisite dispatch services for rural communities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

2. Dispatching Services

The Committee has concluded that the lack of consistent dispatching services is a significant impediment to the development of additional police services in rural areas. Existing dispatching services are overtaxed and stressed to the limit. All agencies, including constables, who provide law enforcement service to a community, must have adequate dispatching services in order to ensure officer and community safety, prompt response time, and efficient utilization of limited law enforcement services.

Recommendation

- 2.1 Dispatch services and radio systems need to be better funded by the State of Vermont in order to handle the additional workload created by the expansion of law enforcement and emergency services in rural communities.
- 2.2 Dispatching services should be provided to Constables who are reacting to calls for service. Law enforcement dispatch centers should assess the impact of providing services to proactive Constables, determine the workload impact, and seek personnel to adequately meet those demands.
- 2.3 The Department of Public Safety should continue to promote the consolidation of dispatching services (whether by the State Police or other providers) within the state in order to meet the growing demands of servicing the rural needs of law enforcement and the needs of other **emergency service providers**.
- 2.4 The Department of Public Safety should continue to bring mobile data capabilities into the State. This will be a way of reducing voice radio traffic and therefore provide the capability of meeting other demands for dispatch services.

In a report prepared for an Emergency Responder workshop held in 1992 the following is taken:

"The groups generally agreed that there is a need for better coordination between levels of government, response agencies and resource providers. Insufficient funding was identified as a contributing factor, directly or indirectly, to other concerns, such as lack of proper responder training, emergency planning, and adequate equipment. The present patch work of emergency communications, from *fragmented dispatching*

to the lack of a statewide 911 or Enhanced 911 capability, was identified as a serious hindrance to emergency operations.”⁵

As has been previously noted in this report the E 9-1-1 system has been implemented and is a system that is working well. Further the issue of insufficient funding continues to be theme plaguing the public safety response to calls for service. The report after identifying the problem areas identified there priorities which one of them was communications.

“**Communications**” needs were directly tied to the funding problem. Both 911 and enhanced 911 were included as were the costs of regional dispatch services. Coordinated radio frequency assignments were considered as on way of linking various emergency services. Training on equipment and the roles of the users was deemed insufficient. A need for improved public notification capability was included as part of the total communications problem.”⁶

Centralization of dispatching, response and training was recommended, although there were those who worried about the loss of local control.⁷

Establishing regional dispatch areas was considered a major state communication project by this study committee. Re-assignment of some radio frequencies for compatibility should be accomplished in coordination with the new system. Training needs for operation of the new system must include use of equipment and the roles of responders. Along the same channel, statewide trunking of emergency service communications systems was propose as a means of coordinating responses.⁸

This report also briefly addressed the funding question. Participants at this workshop proposed a county emergency services tax as one avenue of funding. Banking and insurance surcharges and special sin taxes were considered as sources of revenue. Dedication of a portion of speeding and DWI fines to emergency services was proposed. The importance of dedicating funding sources was identified along with the need for tracking monies to ensure their use for emergency services. The report also suggested that it was the State’s responsibility to provide adequate funding for “catastrophic” hazardous materials incident response. Within the context of “catastrophic” it was also the State’s responsibility to provide personnel, including response coordinators and *dispatchers*.⁹

⁵ Report of the Vermont Legislative Emergency Management Summer Study Committee, Emergency Responder Workshop, July 15 and 16, 1992, prepared by the legislative council, page 1.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Appendix H

H.410

Introduced by Representatives Fallar of Tinmouth, Baker of West Rutland, Brennan of Colchester, Brown of Walden, Chen of Mendon, Clark of Vergennes, DePoy of Rutland City, Donaghy of Poultney, Krawczyk (Albert) of Bennington, Nitka of Ludlow, Pillsbury of Brattleboro, Rogers of Castleton, Shand of Weathersfield and Smith of Morristown

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Public service; public safety; dispatch services; local criminal justice entities, fire departments, and emergency medical service providers

Statement of purpose: This bill proposes to require the state police to provide dispatch services without charge to local law enforcement agencies, fire departments, and emergency medical service providers upon request. The bill proposes that the additional cost to the department of public safety of providing such services would be paid by the universal service fund.

AN ACT RELATING TO PROVISION OF DISPATCH SERVICES TO LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, FIRE DEPARTMENTS, AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. § 1875 is amended to read:

§ 1875. RADIO COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

(a) The commissioner shall establish a communication system as that will best enable the department to carry out the purposes of this chapter. This shall include a radio set furnished, on written request, to the sheriff and state's attorney of each county on a memorandum receipt.

(b) The ~~Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, the~~ commissioner may charge to all users of telecommunications services managed, maintained or operated by the department for the benefit of the users a proportionate share of the actual cost of providing the services and products inclusive of administrative costs. Such charges shall be based on a pro rata allocation of the actual costs of services or products, determined in an equitable manner, which shall be representative of services provided to or system usage by individual units of government, ~~including state, local and federal agencies or private nonprofit entities~~. Such charges shall be credited to the Vermont communication system special fund and shall be available to the department to offset the costs of providing the services.

(c) The commissioner shall ensure that the state police, on a 24-hour basis, provide dispatch, transfer, and relay services free of charge to any local law enforcement agency,

municipal or volunteer fire department, or nonprofit emergency medical service provider requesting this service. The cost incurred by the department for providing this service shall be paid from funds received under chapter 88 of Title 30.

Sec. 2. 30 V.S.A. § 7503 is amended to read:

§ 7503. FISCAL AGENT

(a) A fiscal agent shall be selected to receive and distribute funds under this chapter for the Vermont telecommunications relay service, for the Vermont lifeline program, for enhanced 911 services, for local first-response dispatch services, and, subject to further legislative authorization, to reduce the cost to customers of basic telecommunications service in high-cost areas.

Sec. 3. 30 V.S.A. § 7511(a)(6) is added to read:

(6) To pay the costs attributable to local first-response dispatch services in the manner provided by section 7516 of this title.

Sec. 4. 30 V.S.A. § 7516 is added to read:

§ 7516. FIRST-RESPONSE DISPATCH

The fiscal agent shall make distributions to the department of public safety to reimburse it for the cost of providing dispatch services to local law enforcement agencies, municipal and volunteer fire departments, and nonprofit emergency medical service providers pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 1875(c).

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