

Knox Regional Communications Center Executive Board

June 24, 2015

A meeting of the Executive Board of the Knox Regional Communications Center took place on **Wednesday, June 24, 2015 at 3:00 p.m.** in the Knox County Emergency Management Agency Office.

Executive Board members in attendance: Adam Miceli, Rockland Fire/EMS; Camden Fire Chief Chris Farley; Craig Cooley, Rockport Police Department; Francis Brandon, North East Mobile Health Services (EMS); and Ruston Barnard, Rockland Fire/EMS. **Members absent:** *Knox County EMA Director Ray Sisk and Thomaston Police Chief Kevin Haj.*

Others in attendance: Knox Regional Communications Director Linwood Lothrop, Knox County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Candice Richards, and KRCC Dispatch Supervisor Stephanie Gibbs (*arrived at 4:08 p.m.*).

- I. 3:00 Meeting Called To Order**
- II. 3:01 Discussion/Action Items:**
 1. Approval of Board Minutes of March 18, 2015
 2. Incident Clock Update
 3. Staging Area Protocol
 4. Major Event Documentation
 5. Active Shooter County-wide Plan Discussion
 6. Follow-up on Agency Protocol Review
 7. Fire and PD Protocols – Priority Dispatch
 8. Secretary Nomination for Executive Board
 9. Other Business
- III. Adjourn**

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Chris Farley at 3:04 p.m.

1. Approval of Board Minutes of March 18, 2015

- Craig Cooley motioned to approve the minutes. Francis Brandon seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.

2. Incident Clock Update

A recent incident was discussed in which the Camden Fire Department was out on an extended call and nobody at the KRCC called to check up on them. For major incidents (structural fires including chimney fires), dispatchers automatically do a check every 10 minutes, but Director Lothrop wanted to know if he should start having dispatchers do something similar for non-major calls. A 30-minute check was discussed for non-major calls. If agreed to, the protocols for the KRCC would be updated. The consensus was to have Director Lothrop revise the Incident Clock Update protocol to do 10 minute checks on major incidents, and now also do 30 minute checks on all calls that are not major incidents, for both fire and EMS calls. The revisions will be discussed at the User Group meeting in September before being formally adopted, but Director Lothrop said he would implement the change now since there was obviously a need for it.

3. Staging Area Protocol

Director Lothrop discussed two ways he wanted to reduce unnecessary radio traffic as well as the amount of confusion for responding units and KRCC dispatchers relating to staging areas.

Mutual Aid

When an incident commander requests mutual aid, the level of aid, as well as the location of the staging, is not always given to the dispatcher. This can cause confusion as well as tie up the radio with numerous requests from mutual aid responders asking where they need to report to and what their assignment is. The consensus was that Director Lothrop would draft some language into the SOG that incident commanders will tell dispatchers the level of mutual aid desired, as well as the location of the staging where units should report to. The location of the staging area will be broadcast by dispatch via radio to all responding agencies on initial tone out.

Multi-Jurisdictional Automatic Response

This is similar to the mutual aid issues but is for automatic response rather than the incident commander requesting mutual aid. The consensus was that Director Lothrop would draft some language into the SOG that during the initial size-up of the scene, the incident commander will give dispatch the location of the staging area for any responding units to report to. This information will be broadcast to all responding units by dispatch using the Fire Alert Tone followed by the message telling all responding mutual aid units to report to the specified staging area.

The changes Director Lothrop drafts will be reviewed by the User Group in September before the Executive Board votes on them.

4. Major Event Documentation

Director Lothrop explained that when there is a large storm that causes a lot of incidents of trees being down, knocked down power lines, etc., the KRCC staff have a hard time keeping up with it when a separate ticket is pulled for each individual incident. The big snow storm on November 1, 2014 completely overwhelmed the Center and it was difficult to make sure all calls were closed out. While it has not yet been formalized in an SOG, from now on when there is a big storm, instead of drawing a ticket for each incident, it will be documented as a single incident, with the individual calls relating to the storm listed beneath that. This would not apply to any non-storm-related damages, such as a structure fire or a burglary during the storm. Dispatchers will still be able to supply responders with their response/clear times after the incident. Making the change is really just a way to lessen the KRCC's workload and will not affect responders.

5. Active Shooter County-wide Plan Discussion

KRCC staff have been doing active shooter training and Pen Bay Medical Center also did some training and a table-top exercise for active shooter scenarios. Director Lothrop feels that having a county-wide active shooter plan would be beneficial so that all agencies know how the KRCC, as well as everybody else, is going to respond to this type of incident. The hospital also wants to do a full-scale exercise for this at some point, so it might be a great opportunity to do this all together and get everybody on the same page.

6. Follow-up on Agency Protocol Review

This has been going pretty well. Some issues have been cleared up during the process.

7. Fire and PD Protocols – Priority Dispatch

LD 342 was killed officially, which means the 5 cent surcharge stays in place

LD 1256 was reworded to support fire protocol only. The RFP will be going out shortly but it probably won't be until the beginning of next year before the RFP process is done.

8. Secretary Nomination for Executive Board

It was explained that the EMA Administrative Assistant or Director Lothrop had previously been doing the minutes, but since the Executive Board and User Group had been reorganized and transparency was more important than ever, there needed to be a single person consistently doing the minutes.

- Craig Cooley motioned to nominate Administrative Office Administrative Assistant Candice Richards to be appointed as Secretary for the Executive Board and User Group. Adam Miceli seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.

9. Other Business

May Day Protocol

Director Lothrop wanted to know if this needed to be updated and whether automatic transmissions of another alarm level should be covered in the SOG. It was decided to discuss that at the User Group meeting in September.

Operational Status

There was a discussion about whose responsibility it is – either the KRCC or the Fire Chief – to bring up whether the Fire Chief’s station is operational or if the resources are exhausted. In smaller towns, there might not be anyone else left to respond to a second incident so the KRCC would need to know if another fire department was going to need to be called in to deal with a second incident. Director Lothrop’s question was whether the KRCC need to check in with the Fire Chief if there is a suspicion that the agency has drained all its resources, or does the KRCC wait to for the Fire Chief to notify dispatch of his/her department’s operational status? The consensus was that this was the chiefs’ responsibility. No changes will be made to the SOG.

4:08 p.m. Dispatch Supervisor Stephanie Gibbs arrived.

Safe Word

Rusty Barnard briefly explained about an email he had sent to Director Lothrop regarding some research he had done into how other agencies around the country have a “safe word” for Fire and EMS personnel which lets dispatch know that the first responders are in a bad situation but can’t explain over the air without making the situation worse. Mr. Barnard said that he had requested information from other agencies but is still waiting to hear back on what the “safe word” is that an agency might use, or sample language to put into KRCC policies. There was a brief discussion about the fact that police departments within Knox County use “Knox 10-74” as a way to indicate backup is needed without actually saying so, and the consensus was that this would be a really easy way for Fire and EMS personnel to also request law enforcement assistance if in a situation where they cannot say the problem over the air without escalating a bad situation. Mr. Barnard will be getting the information to Director Lothrop once he receives it, and language will be drafted 30 days before the September Users Group meeting to be discussed then.

Psychiatric Calls

Dispatch Supervisor Gibbs explained about some of the confusion that can happen during calls into dispatch regarding a person with a psychiatric problem needing assistance. It is not always clear to dispatchers how to respond to the call. Some of the issues are:

- The person needing help does not always cooperate about going to the hospital, so sometimes law enforcement assistance is needed, but sometimes officers will refuse to respond. Some departments leave it up to “officer discretion” and not all officers are willing to help out.
- Sometimes people will just ask for police even though it might be a situation that requires an ambulance.
- A trip in an ambulance is an expensive ride and ties up an ambulance and it’s possible that the person does not have an actual medical emergency.
- Law enforcement might be a cheaper option, but a handcuffed individual in the back of a patrol vehicle can do a lot of damage to himself and the vehicle on the way to the hospital.
- Ambulance staff can restrain someone by strapping them down in the ambulance, but they are not allowed to restrain someone that way unless an officer actually rides in the ambulance with them. Some ambulance crews are not even trained on transporting that type of restrained person.
- Sometimes the call gets bounced around because either EMS or law enforcement might decide the situation is “not their problem”.
- It is not always clear, based on what the complainant calling dispatch says, whether EMS or law enforcement should be sent.

Board members indicated that dispatchers should just let law enforcement and EMS know what the KRCC has received for information. EMS will decide whether they need to “stage” or not. Agencies need to do better

about notifying dispatch what they are doing and when they've cleared a scene. If there are any changes made to the policies, the wording needs to be flexible because situations dictate tactics, not policies. Director Lothrop said that he would keep things as they are currently written so that the KRCC is meeting State EMD protocol, and it's up to the agencies whether to go along with whatever request is made by the Center, or to override it. The consensus was that everyone was good with that.

Ragged Mountain Update

Director Lothrop has met with Active Communications and been up to Ragged Mountain to do another assessment. There was an empty slot on the combiner which will allow the fire frequency to be up higher on the tower with the law enforcement frequency. AC wanted to do the work next week, but they were told no because it is not a good idea to be messing with the system just before a holiday. AC will therefore be doing the work the week after. If it doesn't work out the way the County wants, the new antennas will be installed to try that. Communications Engineer Bruce Marcus has approved of the County's plan. Agencies will be notified prior to the work being done so they can have people on standby to test the system to make sure it works. The County now has a tower lease in place with Charlie Foote which resolves a lot of past issues. The lease is for 5 years with the option to renew. The Verizon Wireless tower is going to be built up next to Charlie's tower and all wireless equipment will be moved to the new tower.

Upcoming Meetings

- Executive Board – Wednesday, September 16th at 2:30 p.m.
- User Group – Wednesday, September 16th at 4:00 p.m.
- Executive Board – Wednesday, September 23rd at 3: p.m.

Adjournment

- Craig Cooley motioned to adjourn. Francis Brandon seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards
Administrative Assistant