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Chester County’s 9-1-1 Center Transitions to New Emergency Call Infrastructure

Next Generation 9-1-1 Employs Latest Technology to Receive and Transfer Emergency Calls More Efficiently

WEST CHESTER, PA – January 30, 2024 – The Chester County Department of Emergency Services (DES) transitioned today its Emergency Communications Center to Next Generation 9-1-1, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency’s (PEMA) Statewide Emergency Services Internet Protocol Network. Next Generation 9-1-1 is a faster and more efficient way for the County’s Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) – the 9-1-1 call center – to receive emergency calls and associated caller information, and when needed, transfer them to other 9-1-1 call centers in the Commonwealth.

Chester County Commissioners’ Chair Josh Maxwell said, “Next Generation 9-1-1 puts Chester County at the forefront of the latest technology that gives our 9-1-1 telecommunicators crucial details about a 9-1-1 caller, including faster and better accuracy on location of the caller. It also allows our emergency telecommunicators to seamlessly transfer calls and a caller’s vital information to another 9-1-1 call center in the state.

“What Next Generation 9-1-1 brings to Chester County’s dedicated telecommunicators and the public is transformative because of its precision in handling emergency calls.”

County Commissioner Marian Moskowitz added, “Thanks to PEMA’s Interconnectivity Fund, the best 9-1-1 technology is now available to support Chester County’s 5,000-plus first responders who work tirelessly every day to protect the public. The strengths of this new system will be especially evident during disasters or times of high call volume when the ability to reroute calls to other 9-1-1 centers is critical.”
Chester County’s 9-1-1 telecommunicators complete more than 500,000 dispatches for emergency personnel and equipment every year, providing support to 53 police agencies, 40 fire/rescue agencies and 26 emergency medical services agencies.

Bill Messerschmidt, Director of Chester County’s Department of Emergency Services, said, “Until now, 9-1-1 calls have been routed to 9-1-1 centers using infrastructure that is decades old. The new Next Generation 9-1-1 infrastructure is a highly secure and redundant fiber-based network that relies on Geographic Information System (GIS) map data to locate and deliver calls to the appropriate 9-1-1 call center quickly and with extreme accuracy.”

Messerschmidt added, “Next Generation 9-1-1 also gives us the ability to adapt to future 9-1-1 technologies, including receiving multimedia, such as photos and videos.”

Chester County Commissioner Eric Roe said, “The shift to Next Generation 9-1-1 infrastructure was handled behind the scenes with PEMA and telephone providers, allowing Chester County telecommunicators to continue to answer 9-1-1 calls. No new training was required, and telecommunicators saw no change in how they receive or handle emergency calls. Moving to new technology can often involve challenges for users, but there were no service disruptions during the transition to Next Generation 9-1-1.”

Chester County follows two other counties in southeastern Pennsylvania – Berks and Delaware Counties – in moving to Next Generation 9-1-1.

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