

Maintaining Dispatch Capabilities During a Pandemic



Use this information to help your 911 telecommunications and emergency management prepare for a pandemic.

Manning and planning

- Keep your staff in the loop; listen to all their ideas and opinions.
- Define the triggers for calling up volunteers.
- Identify sources for your volunteer workforce.
- Identify potential volunteer assignments and tasks.
- What's your action plan? Plan for getting the word out that you need volunteers.
- Train your volunteers now.
- If not required, encourage 100% vaccination for all personnel.
- Vaccinate families if the vaccine is available for them.
- Vaccinate at the station while on shift (contact your local public health director or agency to provide vaccines to the station).
- Develop local incentives for rewarding those who get vaccinated and strongly encouraging those who do not.
- Maintain joint rumor control system and provide information to staff and citizens.
- Lead by example: Leaders get vaccinated first.

Manage expectations

- Coordinate with key government officials for public health and emergency response.
 - Maintain current or establish new relationships early.
 - Review operation plans for call centers and information lines.
 - Plan to educate the community; decrease expectations for care.
 - Consult with other state and local call center officials.
 - Plan for a single point of service in your community.
 - Consider multicomunity aid.
 - Combine police, fire and EMS into one public safety answering point.
- Consult with local hospital and public health officials.
- Consult with telecommunications providers to plan for telephone trees, hotlines, information lines, additional trunk lines and potential lines for dispatchers telecommuting.
- Review 911 pandemic protocols from national professional organizations.



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Business as *un-usual*

- Acknowledge the acceptance of increased risk (depleted workforce and increased call volume).
- Review state and local regulations and emergency orders to:
 - Determine who receives service (visits to home or office by EMS).
 - Determine who does not receive service.
 - Determine how the “worried well” will be referred.
 - Determine who is marginal to receive services.

Working from home — the ‘what if’ model...

- Define who is eligible to work from home.
- 911 dispatcher/call center manager recovering from virus or staying at home as caretakers.
- If possible, work toward an all-911 dispatch home-based workforce to reduce exposure.

Calls come in — calls go out

- Prepare a series of statements and be prepared to blast out informational messages to the community via the reverse 911 call system, traditional media, blogs, email lists, social networks, text messaging, etc.

Prepare for the next wave

- Host or participate in a virtual stakeholders’ roundtable meeting and discuss lessons learned.
- Contact officials in surrounding communities to coordinate efforts and compare notes.
- Continue searching for key partners to bolster infrastructure and resource needs.
- Develop a coordinated call center system if one is not currently available.

Come out with your hands clean!

- Train staff on infection control.
- Cover your coughs.
- Wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer frequently per CDC guidance.
- Disinfect consoles and related surfaces.
- Use only recommended PPE.

Fireproof your family

- Recognize that personnel have to take care of their families and plan accordingly.
- Allow appropriate personnel to take the equipment home and possibly even respond from home.
- Encourage personnel at the operations center to communicate with their families when possible to relieve stress.
- Encourage and expand webcam use to enable staff to keep in touch with their families.

We are all in this together

- If not already required, encourage 100% vaccination for all personnel.
- Vaccinate families if the vaccine is available for them.
- Vaccinate at the dispatch center, EOC or other agency facility while on shift (contact your local public health director or agency to provide vaccines to the station).
- If EMS personnel have authority to vaccinate in your state, coordinate with your EMS medical director to have them do so.
- Develop local incentives for rewarding those who get vaccinated and strongly encouraging those who do not.



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