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February 14, 1980

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County-Wide Emergency 911 Communication Center

The Adams County, Indiana 911 Emergency Communication Center was established in the city of Decatur, Indiana after five years of planning. Adams County is located twenty miles south of Ft. Wayne, Indiana on the Indiana/Ohio state line. Adams County has an estimated population of 30,000 people and has a total of 288 square miles of area. Decatur is the largest municipal area with approximately 12,000 citizens. The smaller communities are Berne 3,200, Geneva 1,800, and Monroe 600. Exclusive of municipalities the rest of Adams County is under the jurisdiction of the county sheriff.

The original plan called for the consolidation of all police, fire, and ambulance services to be dispatched from a single point and be able to communicate with all emergency agencies on the same frequency if necessary.

The purpose of the plan was to delete the constant duplication of personnel and equipment for all like emergency services within Adams County. It would also delete the duplication of taxation. For example, why should a citizen of Decatur city pay for both city and county police dispatchers? Or why should the citizens pay for two base transmitters on the same frequency for both the sheriff and the city police. The plan also indicated the possibility of combining the city police and the sheriff's department into one building, entitled a Law Enforcement Center. This would enable the sheriff and city police to work much closer together and to increase the amount of communication between both departments. This project was labeled a model project by the Indiana Criminal Justice Planning Agency which is an Indiana based federal government project commonly referred to as Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. The Criminal Justice Planning Agency funded 95% of the cost for the project, but informed us that all agencies must agree to the plan before funding could be completed. One of the major advantages of this system was allowing civilian personnel to take over radio communication positions for all law enforcement and fire department agencies so that each agency would be able to increase manpower without asking for additional appropriations to do so. In 1971, then Sheriff Harold E. August, the commander of the Adams County, Indiana Sheriff's Dept. began working on the initial plan with now retired

**COUNTY WIDE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION CENTER - POLICE - FIRE - AMBULANCE - EMERGENCY "911"**

67502

Decatur Police Chief Grover Odle. Knowing the lengthy work involved with the project I, Thomas K. Coolman, was enlisted to draw up a plan and initiate it under their direction.

A meeting was set early in 1971 with The Indiana United Telephone Company in regards to the possibility of a complete county-wide 911 emergency number. Although many other cities had initiated 911, none in the area that we were aware of offered the system to an entire county. The United Telephone Company of Indiana worked hand in hand with this county in attempting to establish a system which was a new project for them. United Telephone Company of Indiana was at the time switching its Decatur office from old equipment to new computerized direct distance dialing equipment. The timing was perfect as the county-wide 911 system could go into effect around the same time the new direct distance dial system took over.

Through studies by The United Telephone Company of Indiana it was determined that 99% of Adams County could be connected to the 911 emergency system. The other 1% were customers of a privately owned telephone company that was not yet prepared with the proper equipment for the 911 emergency system. A prepayment to The United Telephone Company of Indiana for \$6,000.00 was required before the work could be begin. A monthly rental rate of approximately \$330.00 was required after the system was activated. The \$330.00 covered the monthly rate charge for 4 emergency 911 lines that connect into the county-wide communication center. Civil Defense of Adams County also received a federal grant for matching funds for 1/5 of the monthly 911 emergency line bill. The funds were granted due to the fact that Adams County had transmit and receive capabilities on a Civil Defense frequency and housed a Civil Defense transmitter at the communication center at all times.

To our knowledge this system of county-wide 911, combining all county emergency services was one of the first in the state of Indiana and possibly one of the first in the United States. This system offered one central point in a county where all emergency calls were received and dispatched.

The communication center has four 911 emergency lines and two 20 line phones in the communication center which are manned by one assigned dispatcher every eight hours. Jailor personnel assist in the communication center when necessary. The communication center receives an average of 100 calls per day ranging from complaints and information to emergencies and administrative calls. The communication center handles approximately 5 emergency calls per day. Several of the incoming lines are administrative and complaint in addition to direct intercom hookups to elderly apartment complexes in the city of Decatur. The purpose of the elderly apartment complex intercoms is to facilitate communications between elderly individuals and any service they might need such as police, fire, and EMS.

The Sheriff of Adams County is totally responsible for the operation of the communication equipment and personnel. The Sheriff of Adams County meets twice a year with administrative department heads to discuss formats and or changes necessary to continue professionalizing the service for Adams County citizens.

The Sheriff of Adams County is also responsible for the discipline of the communication center and a disciplinary procedure has been established and agreed upon by all administrative emergency heads. The communication system involves receiving a call and dispatching the proper department. This encompasses 21 police cars, 3 full time police departments, 6 ambulances, 5 fire departments, and 24 pieces of fire equipment.

It was resolved at the beginning of the program that the county of Adams would pick up the total financial effect of the system, so to delete the duplication of taxes. The system has five dispatchers that rotate on shifts. At times two or more dispatchers are needed at the same time, but with one per shift as is scheduled, no severe problems have erupted. Every county must weigh the needs and necessities of the number of personnel required to properly operate a system. It is the responsibility of the communication center to receive all calls and dispatch the proper department to same. They are required to keep time stamp dispatch cards for all departments from the time of the initial call to completion.

In a county our size the fire departments are basically volunteer organizations. The problem in the past was that if the fire siren was not heard by a fireman then he would be unable to respond to the fire. With volunteer agencies you have personnel ranging from bankers to farmers and of course their livelihoods come first. Decatur is the only fire department that has a full time staff, but that is only a skeleton crew of seven firemen. The firemen leave the station with their trucks on a first alarm basis and volunteers meet at the scene of the reported fire to assist. To initiate the system with full effect it was necessary that several fire departments purchase radios for their trucks so to be able to communicate with the communication center. It was also necessary for them to purchase a belt clip on pager for each firemen. To do this was a question of affordability to most fire departments. Grants were applied for and approved through the Department of Forestry for designated amounts of money for communication equipment. This only applied to fire departments responding to rural fires. Since all fire departments in Adams County cover rural areas as well as cities they all qualified. After the grant money was received all the departments purchased clip on pagers.

Another advantage of the communication center was the system actually relieved an additional fireman from answering the fire phone at the fire station upon receiving a fire alarm. Thus all firemen could respond to the fire immediately and none would have to be left behind to man the station. The system also enabled the Decatur Fire Department to send three fire trucks on a first alarm to the scene instead of the usual one or two.

As reported by fire chiefs the system has also increased the number of responding volunteer firemen to the scene of a fire. Since the firemen started carrying the belt pagers, no matter where they are, they receive the call and many times are on the scene before the first truck arrives. All the Adams County fire departments are on the same fire frequency and are able to talk to one another. With this new system if a second or third alarm is requested the center can notify another department within seconds. It takes the communication center

one minute and forty seconds to dispatch five fire departments, 130 firemen, and 24 pieces of fire equipment to the scene of a major blaze. All of this is accomplished by using an encoder in conjunction with belt pagers carried by each firemen and EMT.

Emergency Medical Services basically handle the same as the fire departments. Adams County has three divisions of EMS. Four ambulances in the city of Decatur, one in Berne, and one in Geneva. All EMTs wear pagers and are notified by communications of all runs. Personnel for back up are also notified by the same method. EMS responds to the scene of all working fires and stands by for injuries. The Emergency Medical Service in Adams County makes approximately 1,500 runs per year.

When the project was ready and the 911 system was completed no money was available through the county for communication dispatchers until the following fiscal year. The Sheriff's Department relied upon the local Comprehensive Employment and Training Act Program to fund the new positions until such time that money was appropriated by the County Council for the five new dispatcher positions. Since that time, The Indiana Criminal Justice Planning Agency of Region 11 has been so involved in the model program that they assisted the county in funding the communication dispatchers for a period of three years. The funding was 95% the first year, 75% the second year, and 50% the third year.

Since this type of system was unique it was recognized immediately that the civilian personnel would have problems in attempting to send the proper emergency department to the proper location of a call. In response to this problem, tray card files were established in the communication center. Again CETA personnel, personally contacted all business places and recorded all 100 block addresses and intersections in every part of the city and county. They also recorded every landmark location and all county road numbers. After all the data was compiled each city was categorized in the filing system with business and or mailing address locations. This task took approximately six months to obtain and another six months to establish a manual look up card file ready for use in the communication center.

The card file system has worked well as when an emergency call is received, the dispatcher simply looks up the address and or name of business and the following information is listed for their use: A. Every 100 block in every city of all streets B. All streets in every city and what street intersects C. All locations of businesses D. Who the dispatcher is to send if EMS is requested on the first, second or third alarm E. Which fire department is to be sent and what fire departments are to respond on the first, second or third alarm F. What type of fire equipment is to be sent to that address G. Location of the three closest fire hydrants to the address H. Locations of the three closest accessible farm ponds (county fires) J. A cross street listing which indicates the closest intersection or landmark to that specific 100 block in that specific city K. Special instructions file for information pertaining to large amounts of inflammable fluid stored near this business or elderly persons or paraplegic living at such address. All of this information is useful to responding

emergency agencies.

All communication personnel are interviewed at great lengths before becoming a certified dispatcher. The communication personnel must attend and successfully complete the one week basic communication dispatcher's course at The Indiana Law Enforcement Academy. They must also within one years time become an Emergency Medical Technician so to better understand reported injuries and what the responding EMTs are thinking and what equipment they will want. Some of the communication dispatchers are now attempting to complete advance life support training to increase their knowledge. This is one step short of becoming a paramedic. The training on a new communication dispatcher generally lasts anywhere from 30 to 45 days or until such time I feel they are competent to solely handle the inner workings.

The communication center is now examining the possibility of purchasing a mini or micro computer system. The purpose would be to record all of the information concerning addresses on the computer. At the present time the dispatchers look up all addresses manually and obtain all of the necessary information concerning that specific address. It is the proposed plan that all addresses data be programmed and for example if a citizen reported a fire at 422 Stratton Way in Decatur the dispatcher could inquire 422 Stratton Way, Decatur and within a maximum of seven seconds all the necessary data about the 400 block of Stratton is before the dispatcher including who is to respond and what is to respond.

Another avenue of examination for the center has been the possibility of programming software within the telephone company's computer. Thus, whenever a dispatcher keys a 911 line the address of the caller is recognized by the telephone company computer and is displayed on a small CRT screen in front of the dispatcher. Thus, the difficulty of obtaining a proper address is eliminated and I would estimate the response time would be reduced by 20 seconds to one minute.

All the objectives of this plan have been met, except for the construction of a new law enforcement center, which is to begin in March of 1980. The city of Decatur has decided not to be a part of this center. This system has deleted the duplication of taxes and personnel and has put more policemen and firemen on the street where they are needed. All of this has been done without increasing the tax rate of the citizens of Adams County, Indiana. To be more specific about expense this entire system which encompasses years of work and over \$40,000 in equipment has cost Adams County, Indiana only \$1,800. The use of federal and state funds has been overwhelming.

The equipment, almost all furnished by Motorola C&E Inc. is the most modern and up to date equipment on the market. This gives Adams County a professional communication center with trained dispatchers for all emergency departments thus increases the overall performance of the services. It has decreased the amount of response time to the scene of an emergency and increased the chances of saving a life or property, all without increasing the monetary burden, now felt so ever sharply by the public. We have a system unique to this region and it has proved itself to be very efficient. Co-operation by all the city and county officials involved helped to make the

center, as without their support I am sure the program would have failed.

This department receives requests for tours and explanation of our system from numerous counties in and out of the state of Indiana. This system has been displayed in Mobile, Alabama to the National Civil Defense Conference as in Kalamazoo, Michigan to the area Emergency Medical Service Agencies.

Each city, county, and or state must understand this system is devised for Adams County. I do not feel a county can do exactly the same as we have done, as it may not fit their needs. Although the basic overall system has worked well and minor amendments can be made in any county to follow a similar type program.

The communication center is located in a 12X12 room within the Adams County, Indiana jail. The floor and walls are completely carpeted for sound reduction. The lighting is shaded by a blue filter to reduce the glare. The room is equipped with air conditioning and exhaust. The room has two separate closets for storage. The west wall contains a map rack with maps of the state of Indiana, Ohio, and the United States in addition to self made maps showing fire hydrant and farm pond locations for fire departments. The maps are of markable texture for spotting storm centers, disasters, etc. The console is supported on a platform six inches above the main flooring. The south closet is used to store two teletypes. Thus, with the closet door shut it will reduce the typing sound to a minimal. The first printer is connected to the Indiana State Police Computer Network and National Crime Information Center. The communication center has a CRT screen which is used for all computer traffic. If the information is needed it can be printed quietly on the printer in the closet and retrieved at a later date. The second printer is connected to The Ft. Wayne Weather Bureau. Weather information and bulletins are received constantly on this printer and used as information for warnings. Any weather warning received at the center is immediately put out on the fire frequency after encoding all police, fire, and EMS agencies so they will be able to hear it.

The communication center traffic is all recorded on a 10 channel series 4,000 dictaphone recorder. All telephone lines and radio frequencies are recorded and the tapes are changed every 24 hours. The tape is saved for a period of 31 days and then re-used. The status display panel and map are located in front of the dispatcher on top of the console. The panel contains lighted maps of Adams County and city maps of Decatur, Berne, Geneva, and Monroe with all street names and locations listed. Along the left side of the map is status display for 24 pieces of fire equipment. Each fire truck is given a letter and number code. Whenever that piece of equipment is on a run its assigned toggle switch is activated and a red light appears behind its assigned number, indicating to the dispatcher that this piece of fire equipment is busy. On the right side of the status display map is the status display panel for all police cars and ambulances. If the unit is in service an assigned toggle switch to that specific unit is engaged and a green light appears behind the car number. This indicates to the dispatcher that this specific police or ambulance unit is in service and available for

a call. If the in service car is sent on an assignment a dispatch time stamp card is inserted into the slot by the toggle switch and the car assigned automatically changes the green light to a red light, which appears behind the car number, so to indicate to the dispatcher that this car is busy, go to another. If a car or ambulance is not available or on duty no light appears behind the car number.

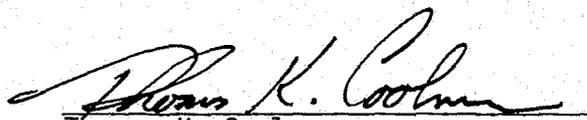
The Telex computer terminal screen sets to the left of the dispatcher for easy access along side the dispatch card files. Looking directly ahead at the console, to the left, is the series 900 encoder. All emergency traffic is encoded from this point, either by calling a group of individuals or one individual. Adams County has purchased 220 pagers in the last two years to be carried by all EMTs, firemen, and police administrative personnel. With the encoder system we are able to keep all emergency departments on the same frequency, but dispatch only that agency that is needed during the day or night. In understanding an encoder it is necessary that a certain pitch or tone must be put out over the air waves to open up a pager so that you can hear the traffic. Thus, Decatur firemen do not hear a Geneva fire as their encoding tones are different pitches. Although there is a switch on every person's pager which will open the unit up so that all emergency calls can be heard during the day.

Above the encoder is the Diebold master alarm panel. The dispatcher must watch a board of approximately 60 alarms for fire, burglary, and robbery. The master panel is capable of 100 separate alarm circuits. When an alarm is activated then its assigned number on the master panel lights up and buzzes. The dispatcher must then purge the alarm panel book and dispatch the proper agency. In forming the communication center it was necessary for us to transfer all alarm hookups to Decatur to the communication center. It also eliminates numerous alarms hanging all over the wall, each having a different set of instructions on how to operate it. All of this equipment was obtained on a no fee basis. Immediately in front of the dispatcher is the module section of the radio. This section contains the workings for transmitting and receiving on all five frequencies. We have point to point police frequency, base to car frequency, north fire frequency, south fire frequency, and civil defense frequency. The lower portion of the module section contains numerous buttons to activate electrically controlled doors inside the jail, a yelper tone for fire frequency which is engaged prior to verbal dispatch so to obtain the attention of all firemen, an alert tone for the same type of useage, a mute switch, simultaneous dispatch, (so to transmit on all frequencies at the same time), and the intercom system between the city and county police. Above the module section is the Civil Defense frequency module and the Indiana State Police monitor in addition to a phone and cross patch. All of the base transmitters are located at the communication center in another room except for the south fire frequency transmitter which is housed in City Hall in Berne, Indiana in the southern part of Adams County. The south fire transmitter is operated via a carrier circuit from the jail to Berne. Both north and south fire transmitters can be heard at the

opposite ends of the county so if one fails the other will handle it. The encoder is also utilized in excess by the Berne Fire Department to facilitate leaving the fire station as when the Berne Fire Department is encoded the tone automatically engages and opens all garage doors in addition to automatically setting off the local city fire whistle.

The communication center is connected to the Civil Defense generator in the garage and survives solely on the generator if necessary. To the right of the dispatcher is the status display board panel with 48 toggle switches assigned to each piece of equipment that control the proper light display for all police, fire, and EMS vehicles. This panel also houses every dispatch card put in the slot of the appropriate vehicle assigned. Above this is the intercom system which connects the dispatcher with all entrance doors and all administrative offices within the jail. The console houses two 20 line phones so that two dispatchers have the capabilities of working at the console. The dispatchers wear either a headset or use a plug in hand set phone. Above the telephone is a unit referred to as a callcheck. This unit tape records all incoming calls on the comm center phone lines. The dispatcher can replay the previous conversation immediately after he or she hangs up to retrieve valuable information that is forgotten or missed.

At the far end of the console are two 9" display monitors that are viewed by the dispatcher at all times for security purposes. The cameras are placed in the communication center for security reasons. Above the monitors is a sequential switcher which is attached to a ceiling mounted 17" tv monitor. This scans all the cameras in the jail every 30 seconds to increase security. A red hot line phone was installed in the communication center free of charge by United Telephone Company of Indiana. The phone is powered by The United Telephone Company office. It connects us with the hospital emergency room, and telephone company. Further plans have indicated connection between County Highway Department for snow emergency and electrical companies for emergencies. If for some reason the entire system would be damaged we would still have an outside powered phone at the communication center to communicate with the public.

  
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**END**