

# 20 23

# Impact Report

## LA CROSSE COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES



David Steinberg, Administrator



LA CROSSE COUNTY

# Keeping La Crosse County Safe

## MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR



As I pause to reflect on 2023, I feel blessed to have worked alongside so many awesome staff that stand watch over La Crosse County 24 hours a day, 365 days a year!

Our telecommunicators provide an essential service to La Crosse County residents and visitors. They take calls and dispatch for all County municipalities, which includes Holmen, Bangor, Shelby, Campbell, Onalaska, West Salem, La Crosse and La Crosse County. We also take all the 911 calls for the county. I am impressed daily with the level of knowledge and customer service that is provided to our residents and visitors.

In 2023 we continued to work on implementation of our new CAD system. CAD is an acronym for Computer Aided Dispatch. CAD is an invaluable tool for helping us keep Fire, Law Enforcement and First Responders on track to do their jobs in an efficient manner.

We continue to work with the state on Next Generation 911, which will allow us to take 911 calls in a more efficient way over the internet rather than using traditional phone lines. This will also allow enhanced interoperability with our neighboring counties. The state is offering generous grant opportunities to help us upgrade our centers.

We took our first steps in 2023 to build our last tower in a radio enhancement project that started in 2016. The Home Plate tower located in the West Salem industrial Park should come online this year. This tower is designed to assist West Salem and Bangor in their emergency services radio operation

As you can see there is always something going on in the Emergency Services Department.

Whether we are building or maintaining radio towers, developing the next best software to help us save lives, or working with our law enforcement, fire, and first responders in every community in La Crosse County.

David Steinberg, Emergency Services Administrator

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Location: Courthouse & Law Enforcement Center, 333 Vine St. La Crosse

## MISSION STATEMENT

La Crosse County Public Safety Communications responds to public safety needs of people in La Crosse County by providing professional call-taking, dispatch and support services to pre-hospital medical, fire and law enforcement agencies.

# Department Finances

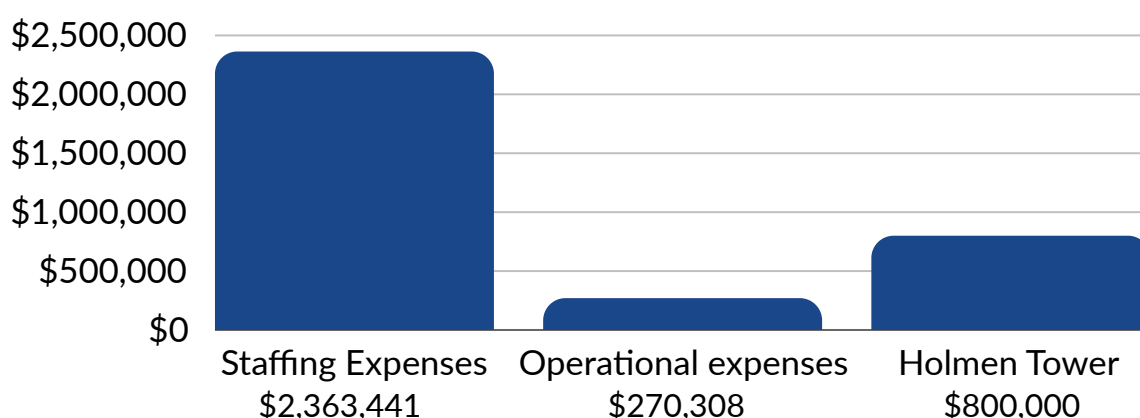
## FACTS AND FIGURES

- Emergency services is 100% funded by levy and has no revenue stream.
- Our 2023 Adopted Budget was \$2,880,013
- Our year end expenses were \$2,633,749
- Our operational budget is mostly staffing costs.
- Our year end staffing expenses were \$2,363,441
- Our year end operational expenses were \$270,308
- Our capital budget is how we pay for all the radio system improvements.
- In 2023 we carried forward \$830,000 for the West Salem Tower and electronics shelters for the 162 tower and 14/61 towers to 2024.

## 2024 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- The operational budget saw little change.
- The capital budget included about \$400,000 to finish the West Salem tower and microwave link. A further \$165,000 was included for two electronics shelters for the Hwy 162 shelter and 14/61 shelter plus miscellaneous tower maintenance items.

### 2022 EXPENSES (CAPITAL AND OPERATIONAL)



# 128,291

Law enforcement calls  
answered in 2023

# 3,821

Fire type calls  
answered in 2023

# 8,988

Medical/First Responder  
calls answered in 2023

# Inside Emergency Services

- Being a telecommunicator is not an easy job. It takes mental fortitude, patience, compassion, attention to detail, and a desire to help people. It also means working different shifts, overtime hours, weekends and holidays.
- The telecommunicators work shifts of 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. (1st shift) 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. (2nd Shift) and 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. (3rd Shift). They work a schedule of five days on with two days off and then five days on with three days off. This works out that a staff person works about two months without a Saturday or Sunday off and about one month where they would have all or part of a weekend off.
- Training for a new telecommunicator takes up to six months before becoming proficient enough to be on their own. We have four positions in Emergency Services: Call taker, Fire, City, and County. The staff all take turns working at each position.
- Our telecommunicators take incoming calls for all La Crosse County's municipal law enforcement agencies - both emergency and non-emergency. Not only do they dispatch police, fire and emergency medical they also work with the Highway dept, City Street Dept, MTU, the Jail, and the Wastewater Dept. All the county's duress button alarms are monitored by our team also. On any given shift the telecommunicators keep an eye on an average of 24 police and sheriff's officers that are on duty throughout the county and its municipalities. All telecommunicators take 911 calls no matter which position they are working. The dispatchers also monitor and keep track of all the warrants sent down to us by the Clerk of Courts daily. We keep track of all the roadkill deer and make sure the people who pick them up know where to find them. We have lists of all the towing companies so we can get them going in emergencies.
- Our telecommunicators have six computer screens in front of them to keep all of what's going on straight. Not only are they talking on the phone or radio, but they are also typing at the same time. Being able to multitask and be accurate at the same time is a must.



# 2023 Highlights

## GRANT AWARD

We received \$108,000 from the state of Wisconsin to upgrade our telephone handling system.

## TRAINING

We are utilizing a new software technology called Virtual Academy that is helping us revamp how we are training and evaluating new telecommunicators.

## IMPORTANT DATES

- National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week - 4/10/23 to 4/14/23
- Oktoberfest - 9/28/23 to 10/1/23

# 2023 By the Numbers

## MAJOR EVENTS



**2023 911 checks:** In 2021, Apple made changes to their iPhone operating system that made it very easy for people to accidentally dial 9-1-1. The change resulted in our 9-1-1 checks soar to almost 10,000 that year, which was taxing on us and our law enforcement partners. After extensive education campaigns and pressure from APCO and NENA these numbers fell to 7,921 in 2022. In early 2023 Android did a similar upgrade to their operating system and our 9-1-1 checks soared to almost 12,000. Again, APCO and NENA have put pressure on the manufacturers, as well as further education to the public. The numbers are coming down again. At its peak, this summer we fielded 1,936 9-1-1 checks. In November that number was down to 386. Hopefully, this trend continues.



**April Snow Showers:** On April 16th and 17th 2023 the La Crosse area received more than 14 inches of snow. This not only taxed our dispatch center but most all emergency services of La Crosse County. We had 57 Reports of Lines Down, resulting in reports of power outages throughout the County; 52 Motorist Assists (These include slide offs and stalled vehicles); 22 Motor Vehicle Crashes, and 86 Hazard Checks (These include limbs or trees down blocking roads). La Crosse County Public Safety Communications handled a total of 564 incoming phone calls during this period. Of those, 148 were 9-1-1 calls; Our average is 100 9-1-1 calls in a 24-hour period.

# 2023 By the Numbers



**Oktoberfest 2023:** Oktoberfest is traditionally one of our busiest times of the year. With tens of thousands of people attending the event, there is always the possibility that things could turn bad. This year's event was rather tame and uneventful as compared to other years. That's a good thing! From 7am Friday to 7am Sunday we handled 1,598 phone calls, and 359 9-1-1 calls. La Crosse Police Dept handled 720 calls for service and the La Crosse Fire Dept handled 66 calls for service.



**Drive by shooting:** On June 17th, 2023, at 01:59:45, LCPD officers on foot patrol in downtown La Crosse reported via radio "gunshots downtown", the first 9-1-1 call was received at 02:00:19 from a person inside Polito's reporting a shooting and that the caller had been shot in the leg. Officers arrived on location of the shooting at 02:00:14, calling for medical assistance and additional law enforcement resources. La Crosse County Public Safety Communications fielded a total of 12 9-1-1 calls from witnesses and victims in the first four minutes of the incident. The 5 telecommunicators on-duty also handled radio communications with La Crosse Police, Holmen Police, Campbell Police, Onalaska Police, La Crosse County Sheriff's Deputies, La Crosse Fire Department, Tri State Ambulance, UW La Crosse Police, and requested extra resources from Wisconsin State Patrol just for this incident. Other calls for service don't stop because a major incident took place. The on-duty team continued to handle a number of other calls for service throughout the County while the shooting was being investigated.

## 2023 VS. 2022

Activity	2023	2022	Difference
Non-emergency calls processed	204,683	193,036	+11,647
Incoming Calls	158,285	148,928	+9,357
Average non-emergency calls per day	561	529	+32
911 calls answered	38,757	35,514	+3,243
Average 911 calls per day	106	97	+9
Out-going calls made	46,398	44,081	++2,317

# What to Do When Calling 911

The first thing a caller needs to do is remain calm and clear when calling 911. Our telecommunicator will ask questions to obtain the information they need to send you help.

It is very important to answer all the dispatcher's questions and wait for the dispatcher to advise it is okay to hang up the phone. Information must be relayed to the emergency responders, and sometimes the needed information may not be obvious to the caller. Dispatchers are much like the news media in that they need to know who, what, where, when, why and how – but not necessarily in that order. Here are some of the things you may be asked when calling 9-1-1.

**Where:** The first and most important piece of information that will be needed is the location of the emergency. Dispatchers will ask where the emergency is occurring, which may not necessarily be your address. Once dispatchers have a location, even if they are unable to get any more information, they can at least send help. Of course, more information would assist in the proper response; so again, stay on the line until the dispatcher says it is okay to hang up.

**What:** What is the emergency? Different types of emergencies get different types of responses. For example, not all accidents are responded to in the same way. If there are injuries, an ambulance and fire department medics or first responders are dispatched along with the police. If there is someone trapped in the vehicle or gas is leaking, additional fire department equipment and personnel are needed. If the accident is blocking traffic at a busy intersection, more officers may be needed for traffic control.

**Who:** Dispatchers will ask who is calling and what your telephone number is. Sometimes a call-back is needed to obtain further information. Sometimes, a witness to whatever happened may be important to the investigation of the incident. It is not always necessary to give your name and the dispatchers can honor requests of callers who wish to remain anonymous.

**When, Why and How:** Different types of emergencies prompt different types of questions from the dispatchers. Responding law enforcement officers, fire fighters and emergency medical responders need certain information depending on the kind of call to determine how they must respond. Specific questions will help to determine the priority of the call, as the public safety communications center is a busy place. Calls in progress will be responded to with a higher priority than those that occurred at an earlier time and are not so immediate. Callers should be prepared to give suspect and vehicle descriptions. Not only do officers respond to take the report, but other officers may begin looking for the perpetrators.



**@LaCrosseCounty**



**@LaCrosseCountyGov**

# Looking Forward

## PLANNED FOR 2024

- Complete construction of the West Salem Radio tower.
- Continue to work with the state on the next Gen 911 project.
- Continue work with our vendor, Central Square on new CAD (computer aided dispatching) project.
- Install two new electronics shelters at our tower sites. 1 at the 162 tower and 1 at our 14/61 tower. The shelters being replaced are past their useful lifespan.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND HURDLES

- We will continue to explore ways to recruit and retain staff as we struggle with both.
- We are hopeful that with the Next gen 911 the state releases more grant funding, allowing us to apply for grant monies that enhance the operation of our center.

## COMMITTEES

### Judiciary and Law Committee (2023)

Margaret Larson (chair)  
Dawn Wacek  
Rob Abraham  
David Pierce  
Dillon Mader

### Public Safety Communications Committee (2023)

Chief Scott Alo  
Chief Charles Ashbeck  
Chief Jeffrey Schott  
Chief Peter Fletty

Chief Shawn Kudron  
Margaret Larson  
Chief Dave Munson  
Tom Tornstrom  
Sheriff John Siegel



**LA CROSSE COUNTY**  
Exceptional services. Extraordinary place.