

# DANE COUNTY

**Kathleen M. Falk**

County Executive

DATE: November 7, 2008

TO: Kathy Krusiec, Interim Director  
Public Safety Communications Center

FROM: Kathleen M. Falk  
Dane County Executive

Thank you for the update on the events of November 3rd and your diligent efforts to lead and improve our 911 system. I appreciate the service of our dedicated staff.

Clearly, one of the biggest issues faced by the Center is the proliferation of different dispatch policies from the great variety of 85 different police, fire, and medical emergency services the Center serves across Dane County. Of particular concern are those that affect police dispatch.

While we rightly strive to offer service tailored to each service's requests, our first and paramount responsibility is to public safety. I am concerned that communicators' need to continually know and weigh these different rules sometimes hinders their ability to make as timely decisions as they must. Any such hindrance is unacceptable.

Emergency dispatchers are the community's link to public safety services. Their primary responsibilities should be to answer calls for assistance, gather as much information as possible for emergency responders and then dispatch help. Current policies require dispatchers to apply discretion prior to dispatching a wide variety of calls related to law enforcement. This degree of subjectivity is not always in the best interest of public safety.

To address these concerns, I direct you to take the following steps:

1. Work with the Center Board to initiate and conduct a review of all existing law enforcement dispatch protocols, procedures, and agreements. I have consulted with Center Board Chairman Boylan and recommended creation of a special sub-committee to review all existing documents regarding law enforcement dispatch policies. Share the results of this review with the 911 auditors. It is my hope this review will eliminate any redundancy, confusion, or needless complexity. Three to six months is an adequate timeframe for this much needed, thorough review.
2. Until this review is complete and acted on by the Center Board, immediately instruct 911 communicators and supervisors to dispatch all calls requesting police service if there is any doubt whatsoever that anyone's safety is at all in jeopardy. If there is any doubt about a call related to law enforcement, dispatch the police if there is any indication of a threat to public safety. I am not revising or eliminating any protocol; rather, I am directing you to offer clear guidance to our dispatchers in the use of their discretion. This is an appropriate use of our 911 Center's discretion.
3. I hope the County Board will come to share my judgment that Police Priority Dispatch, with its use of nationally tested protocols and quality assurance, is the direction to which the Center should move. These uniform response standards will reduce the use of subjectivity in determining appropriate law enforcement responses to incidents. Implementation must not be rushed and should be undertaken in a thorough, deliberative, and cooperative fashion, following County Board approval.
4. All the managers and policymakers connected to the 911 Center, myself certainly included, begin working on the findings of the 911 Audit as soon as it is delivered (currently expected in January). I expect the Audit to address the variety of dispatch protocols implemented by the 911 Center. The special Center Board sub-committee will then be ready to take up any recommendations on this topic.
5. Please promptly initiate appropriate actions to determine whether discipline is necessary and if so, pursue those actions as expeditiously as possible.

Thank you.

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