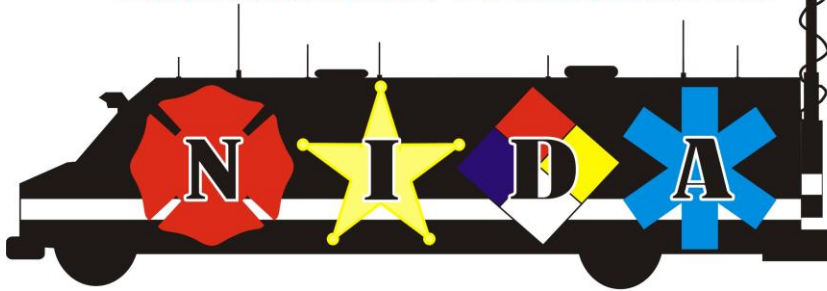


National Incident



Dispatcher Association

Field Notes

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1128 Royal Palm Beach Blvd, #327
Royal Palm Beach, Florida 33411

From the Editor

I was hoping that this issue would be brought to you by the new editor of the newsletter. We had one nibble for the job, but as is often the case in our profession, personal and professional circumstances prevented the sucker – I mean the volunteer – from being able to take the reins. So you are stuck with me for another quarter. This newsletter will only be as good as the material that gets submitted – articles, photos, newspaper articles, etc. If you don't think you can write a good article, we can help you! None of us (well, Randall is the exception) are professional writers. But we all are what my organization calls SMEs – Subject Matter Experts. Each one of you is doing the job. No one knows what you do better than you do! And no one else will know what you and your team are doing if you don't advertise! If you have an event, just take a get a few pictures while you are working (pack a disposable camera in your response bag.), and if you don't have time to take pictures, there is always someone there who needs something to do! Then just write down what happened – don't worry about grammar, spelling, format – tell us who are in the photos and what are they doing, and send it in! We will make it pretty (and send it back to you for final approval), and then it can go into the newsletter. It's that easy! Even if you don't have anything going on, but your team does something you think works especially well (or even if you tried something that didn't work so well – we can all learn from mistakes!), or have equipment or a vehicle that works good for you, write it up! I will take material anytime – don't worry about deadlines. It is a dream of mine to have more material than I have room to print it!

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Mountain View Police Dept., California

How We Got Here As A Profession By Chuck Berdan

In 1989, our comm center was given a communications van – owned by the State of California – to staff when needed for any emergency in the state. Our comm center was already the mutual aid coordinator for the central part of California, and in the prior 4-5 years had seen a significant increase in the need for mutual aid for wildland interface incidents. As the training officer, I was assigned to train our staff on the operations of the van.

In 1990, we received our first assignment, a series of lightning caused fires over a large area of Northern California. After stopping at one fire outside of Chico, where the IC really didn't know what to do with us, we were reassigned to a staging area in the Central Valley. After several hours of begging for an assignment, we were dispatched to a small (5,000 acres at that time) fire outside of Red Bluff. We arrived at the Incident Base to find three people there – the Facilities Unit Leader, a check-in recorder, and a secretary that was monitoring a portable radio in an office. We were asked to establish the communications center as quickly as possible, as things were going to heck in a hand basket on the fire line. The fire eventually reached 75-80,000 acres.

After the first day, my partner, who was a firefighter and part-time dispatcher, had to return to his agency to work his shift, so it was me running the van, and a comm unit leader running around trying to set up repeaters. At one point on the third day I had a microphone in each hand, trying to relay resource requests from the field to planning, and planning to the expanded dispatch center in Red Bluff. I told the comm unit leader that I needed help, and to make a request for dispatchers. What I got was a very nice person from the Tehama County Sheriffs Office who had never dispatched fire agencies, and did not know what ICS was. So instead of being able to relieve me, she was my trainee.

Over the course of the next few days, I did receive help from my own agency, sending out two

dispatchers that I had trained on the operations of the van, and other help in the form of fire captains from the California Department of Forestry, some of them traveling over 8 hours to reach the incident base. When I got home from this event, I was focused on not letting that happen again. California has a great mutual aid system – we can get help from one end of the state to the other at a drop of a hat – but no one considered dispatchers as an essential part of that mix. They were satisfied to put a firefighter, a forester, a secretary, basically anyone who was available or couldn't be used on the fire line. Communications is always to blame on major incidents, and I wanted to fix that at least on the dispatch end of it.

So, with help from Glenn Swarner, a co-worker at my agency, we developed a training course on incident dispatching. At first we wanted to teach the dispatch centers in our mutual aid region so that we could use them to help staff our communications van. But then I was asked to teach the class to others. So Glenn and I taught many of these classes over the next couple of years. We had a cadre of dispatchers from other counties within OES Region IV that we could pick up on the way to the incident, which helped maintain our staffing back at home and let others come out to play!

Eventually I got promoted to Deputy Director, and had to pass the baton on to Don Stabler, Randall Larson, and Dave Larton, all of whom took one of my first classes. These folks will have to fill you in on the rest of the history to date.

Tactical Dispatching

by Tammy Smith, Mountain View Police

Tactical Dispatching was created to place a trained dispatcher in the Command Post to assist the Incident and/or Tactical Commander. Their duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to keeping information such as the incident log, suspect information, demand log, threat conditions, deployment log and location site information.

They handle communications from the units on the tactical net and sniper net. They continually update and brief the commanders with intelligence information so the Commanders can make informed decisions as to their next course of action. Historically, the Commanders were expected to perform these tasks, taking them away from the essential tasks of running the critical incident.

The Tactical Dispatcher is considered a member of the SWAT/SERT/ERT team. They attend monthly and/or quarterly training sessions with the team.

The Tactical Dispatch course is designed to give the dispatcher instruction in setting up a command post in a logistical fashion, dependent on the needs of their perspective departments. The course also provides information on assessing the situation, types of situations, roles of the SWAT team members (including HNT) and several tabletop scenarios that prepare them for a full day scenario with an actual SWAT team.

Coming soon to the NIDA Website...

Our members only website will be launched within the next month. Once we're up and running you will all be given a unique password to access the site. Inside you'll find discussion boards, after action reports, photos, policies... Basically any information relating to IDT will be at your fingertips!

For agencies whose incident dispatchers are all members of NIDA they will be provided with their own website to coordinate the activities of it's incident dispatch team. This is our way of appreciating you for all that you do! Keep an eye out for these changes, and thank you for your continued support.

Pictures

We need pictures! They can be anything related to incident/tactical dispatching – action photos, training sessions, group photos – anything! Until an editor is recruited, please send them to Chuck Berdan – berdan1@lntl.gov.

Videos

The Executive Board is also interested in putting together a video that can be used by an agency to help propose an incident/tactical dispatch team in their area. So we need video clips of incident/tactical dispatchers in action, testimonials from bosses saying how their team has enhanced their operations, etc.

Contact Information

All correspondence should be mailed to:
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San Mateo County (CA) Incident Dispatcher Team By Don Maynard

The San Mateo County IDT consists of the Comm. Center Director, Fire/EMS Program Services (Operations) Manager, Team Leader, and 12 Incident Dispatchers (IDs). We provide coverage to 15 battalions covering 51 stations with a population of 750,000 and handle between 50 and 80 greater alarm fires per year.

Qualified Dispatchers apply in writing and are selected by a panel that includes IDs, Managers, and fire agency personnel. Our IDs are divided into two classifications depending on their response time. Level I IDs generally live in or very near the County and are responsible for local IDT call outs. Level II IDs live in communities outside the response area and are the primary responders



for statewide call outs. This doesn't mean, however, that one can't do the other. If a level II ID is happens to be in the county or can be relieved from the Center he/she is encouraged to respond to a local incident.

We built our policies using models from other agencies and customized them to our operation. Our main protocols are modeled after those in San Jose with some local modification. On local call outs the Comm Center dispatches one ID per alarm level beginning with the 2nd alarm. The closest IDs respond and if one answers up closer, the farthest responder is canceled.

Responsibilities are divided by priority among the first three arriving IDs. Training is conducted

in IDT-specific Continuing Education (CE) modules (these are in addition to monthly CE's for the non-IDT staff) as well as field exercises. CE training generally



consists of response critiques, ICS refreshers, SitStat and ReStat instruction, policy review. Field training sends IDs to multi-company drills, live fire wildland exercises, and burn tower and smoke room observation. Each recruit and Captain's academy in the County has instruction regarding the fire communication system. We use this opportunity to talk about the IDT's roles and responsibilities.

We recently received approval for one paid 24x7 on-call ID position. This position is rotated among local IDs and the status of all IDs is tracked in CAD. The on call position not only guarantees an ID response but we believe it helps show our commitment to the program.

We have support from all the departments in the county, but this program is still sold being one chief at a time. Therefore it's important for IDs to understand how to integrate at the command post. The professional balance can be difficult to achieve. Doing too little can lead to questions about the IDT's value, while doing too much or the wrong thing may leave the impression that we are there to do the IC's job.



STILL WANTED!

Region Representatives



We have received applications from the following people in these regions:

Region 1

Anthony Favreau, City of South Portland, Maine
Steve Hooke, Holbrook, Maine

Region 2

Steve Gerrity, Howell Township, New Jersey

Region 5

Rick Juth, Minnesota State Patrol

Region 3 – Mid Atlantic

Need to recruit

Region 4 - Southeast

Need to recruit

Region 6 - Southwest

Need to recruit

Region 7

Nancy Brady, Iowa Law Enforcement Academy

Region 10

Kevin Bostrom, Bellevue, Washington
Jerry Boyd, Baker County, Oregon
Shelia Betts, Mountlake Terrace, Washington
Al Tamagni, Anchorage, Alaska
Barbara Matson, Pierce County, Washington

Region 8 – Rocky Mountains

Need to recruit

Region 9 - West

Need to recruit

Now I find it hard to believe that we can't get at least one person from these regions that are open! We aren't asking for a huge commitment here – an occasional conference call, visibility at regional events, maybe some phone calls... For those regions where there is only one person, you will be confirmed shortly. For those regions that have more than one person, we will take a vote from association members in your area in the next month or so, so start campaigning!

If you are interested, contact the secretary – listed at the end of the newsletter. We would like to finish this up in the next month.

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