

Waukesha County Exec: New location services just the beginning of public safety innovations

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(WAUKESHA, WI) – Today, I am proud to announce a game-changing technological integration to the Waukesha County Communications (WCC) Center. We are among the first in the nation to utilize precision location services for 911 calls from smartphones. This is just the latest innovation establishing Waukesha County as a leader in its commitment to public safety. We are partnering with RapidSOS 911 Clearinghouse, a tech startup that provides fast and accurate location information to assist 911 dispatchers in identifying where a call for help is coming from. This solves the problem of locating calls that stems from the rise in cell phone use and the decline in landline phone service by significantly narrowing down the area first responders must search when finding a mobile 911 caller. This feature increases the odds of saving lives while reducing risks to field personnel.

Location services are just the beginning of the innovations Waukesha County continues to implement to protect the safety and health of our first responders and the public. County leaders are working on two additional initiatives to enhance the efficiency of fire, medical, and law enforcement emergency response.

First, we are working with community leaders to implement the results of the Waukesha County Fire and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Feasibility Study. The study shows that increased collaboration between local fire and EMS could enhance fire prevention, improve emergency services, cut costs, and reduce volunteer firefighter turnover – all while allowing local fire departments to maintain their identity.

The study has identified several ways to achieve those goals. One major takeaway is that 75% of the calls local firefighters respond to are medical, not fire, emergencies. Leveraged properly, we expect to use this information to reduce the burden of those calls on our hardworking, overtaxed volunteer firefighters.

Another study outcome leads to the second initiative we hope to implement to improve public safety is countywide integration into the WCC. Today, four fire districts and seven of Waukesha County's thirty-seven municipalities have yet to physically or virtually integrate into our 911 dispatch system. All Waukesha County mobile calls and text messages come through the WCC, accounting for at least 80% of all county 911 calls. The few municipalities and agencies that have yet to integrate into the WCC must wait for these calls to be transferred to their dispatch centers before they can begin to call for help.

Today, I invite all local fire departments, municipalities and law enforcement agencies the opportunity to join our system. It is the county's goal, and my initiative, to eliminate inefficiency and reduce the amount of taxpayer dollars spent to invest in and maintain redundant systems. By working together, we can decrease the amount of time it takes to process emergency calls, notify our field responders sooner, and get help to those who need it as fast as possible.