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EMS 911 changes cut response time

By JEFF GILL

Daily News Staff Writer



DICK

In an effort to cut down on the response time of emergency medical services personnel, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) is now requiring EMS services in the state notify their county 911 dispatch center of their availability 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In order to comply with the requirement, [Huntingdon County](#) 911 coordinator Dave Dick asked the Huntingdon County 911 Policy Board during its monthly meeting Thursday to assist with the purchase of a laptop computer and 32-inch monitor that will be used to monitor crews' availability.

"This is to help with response times in medical emergencies," Dick told the board. "If the first due EMS is not available, then it allows us to page out the second-due unit immediately."

Dick explained that 911 dispatchers typically attempt to page an EMS company for approximately six minutes before they move on to a second due unit. A dispatcher will continue to page a unit until someone takes the call.

He said the new system is really a smartphone app that can be downloaded to the laptop computer.

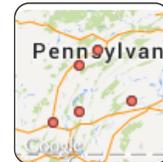
"It updates every minute of the day and shows which ambulance services are available," Dick said. "It also shows if a unit is unavailable and if a second or third unit from the same company is available with a crew or not. The best thing about this is the state is allowing each county to control how they want to do it."

Dick did not have an overall price for implementing the change, but noted one of the computers already at the center could be used at the first and second dispatch positions and the requested monitor would be used at the third dispatch position. He hopes to begin using the app in the county by Oct. 1.

[Huntingdon County](#) 911 director Rufus Brenneman said the move is a good one.

"I think this is a positive for [Huntingdon County](#) residents," Brenneman said. "This will help people in need during emergencies."

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5 Points Mentioned



Dick said he hopes this will end delays in EMS response times.

After a short recess to attend 9/11 ceremonies in front of the Huntingdon Borough Building Thursday, the board returned to discuss presenting a bid to the [Fulton County](#) Commissioners for the cost of providing 911 services to that county.

At the present time, [Fulton County](#) emergencies are being dispatched through [Cumberland County](#) and it is too expensive for Fulton officials.

At the August meeting of the [Huntingdon County](#) 911 Policy Board, chairman Gary O’Korn stated [Fulton County](#) had reached out to Huntingdon and [Bedford](#) counties for bids to provide 911 services.

“We do not have an exact amount on what we are going to offer them,” Brenneman said. “We’re still working on the figures and should have something to them by the end of the month.”

911 Policy Board consultant Sid McConahy of Mission Critical Partners of [State College](#) said [Fulton County](#) is looking for a five-year contract.

“[Fulton County](#) has a population of 14,000 and their call volume is just a blip on the radar compared to what [Huntingdon County](#) has,” McConahy said. It can be a ‘win-win’ situation for everyone involved.”

Jeff can be reached at jgill@huntingdondailynews.com.

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