

# Marshall County Communications Center



## Annual Report 2024

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## Director's Message



The Marshall County Communications Center (MCCC), proudly serving as the primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for Marshall County, Iowa, is committed to excellence in emergency communication services.

This annual report highlights our achievements, initiatives, and ongoing efforts to deliver critical support to our community. It is my hope that as you review this report, you gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for the vital services provided by MCCC. Our dedicated team of professionals strives daily to enhance the quality of life for our citizens, visitors, and public safety partners by delivering reliable, efficient, and professional emergency communication services.

Since its establishment in 2018, MCCC has continuously embraced innovation, adopting the latest technologies, equipment, and methodologies to ensure the highest level of service. Through ongoing training, rigorous reassessment of our practices, and a steadfast commitment to excellence, MCCC has positioned itself as a leader in the emergency communications industry. These efforts are bolstered by our strong partnerships with emergency services agencies, reflecting our shared dedication to public safety.

The dedicated professionals of the MCCC, alongside the 911 Leadership Team, take immense pride in serving the residents and first responders of Marshall County. As we reflect on our progress and prepare for the future, we remain committed to providing exceptional emergency communication services that are both cost-efficient and highly effective.

Looking ahead to 2024, I am proud of what we have accomplished and excited for the goals we aim to achieve. Together, we will continue to advance the mission of the Marshall County Communications Center, ensuring that our community receives the exceptional service it deserves.



## Mission Statement

*The Marshall County Communications Center is committed to serving with integrity, compassion and care for the welfare and safety of our citizens and personnel. We support expedient, quality services through the industries best practices. Our standard is excellence and the road to success is through our teamwork. We serve as the critical link between the citizens and, visitors of Marshall County, and the public safety Agencies that serve them.*

**Safety is our First Priority**  
**Integrity is our Commitment**

## These Values We Believe

**Harmony** ~ We trust, respect, and care for each other and treat everyone as a valued member of our team

**Service** ~ Safety is our first priority – citizens are the focus of everything we do

**Integrity** ~ We are committed to the highest level of professional and ethical conduct

**Teamwork** ~ Cohesively working together to achieve a common goal for the betterment of the individuals we serve and the future of our center

**Fun** ~ Every day we will give our best effort and have fun along the way

## Vision Statement

To provide service in a manner that fosters trust, respect, confidence and appreciation as a trusted and valued member of the Marshall County Communications Center.

## Agency Profile

Since February 2018, the Marshall County Communications Center (MCCC) has proudly served as the single-source 911 call and dispatch center for Marshall County, Iowa. Operating at the heart of emergency response, MCCC fulfills a vital public safety role by receiving, recording, and dispatching emergency and non-emergency calls to ensure that the appropriate responders are swiftly deployed to meet the needs of our community.

MCCC serves a wide range of partners, including the City of Marshalltown, the Marshall County Sheriff's Office, volunteer fire departments, volunteer EMS organizations, and UnityPoint EMS, providing seamless and reliable dispatch services throughout the county. Our team of highly trained 911 Communications Specialists is available around the clock, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, ensuring that every call—whether from a 911 emergency line or a ten-digit non-emergency number—is handled promptly and professionally.

The center's operations are bolstered by state-of-the-art technology and protocols developed in collaboration with law enforcement, fire services, and EMS agencies. MCCC monitors up to 11 radio channels and can extend to an additional 14 channels when necessary, ensuring robust communication across all public safety entities. Additionally, we manage three E911 phone lines and ten other emergency and non-emergency lines to support the diverse needs of Marshall County.

In FY24, MCCC handled approximately 79,353 calls, showcasing the essential role we play in safeguarding our community. In October 2024, we enhanced our operations by implementing Comms Coach by GovWorx—an intuitive AI-driven program that integrates seamlessly with our existing systems to provide exceptional Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Improvement (QI) in call processing. This innovative tool enables better understanding, targeted training, and constructive feedback, helping us exceed national standards and deliver unmatched service.

Our commitment to professionalism, leadership, and innovation has earned MCCC recognition across the public safety sector. Guided by the standards set by the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO), our team operates with an authorized strength of 16 full-time employees. This includes 11 Communications Specialists, 3 Lead Communications Specialists, 1 Communications Supervisor, and 1 Communications Director. With four APCO-certified Communications Training Officers (CTOs), MCCC ensures our training programs meet or exceed national benchmarks.

Our operational framework includes three 12-hour shifts and an additional 4-hour shift on Fridays, adhering to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). This schedule ensures comprehensive coverage while maintaining the health and well-being of our team.

The Marshall County Communications Center remains steadfast in its mission to protect and serve, upholding the highest standards of public safety communication. We look forward to continuing our work as a trusted partner to the citizens, visitors, and emergency responders of Marshall County, striving always to innovate, improve, and excel.

## **Marshall County Communications Center Staff**

Rhonda Braudis, CPE, RPL, NREMT ~ 911 Communications Director

Tiffany Eibs ~ CTO, Tactical Dispatch Coordinator, 911 Communications Supervisor

Caitlan Reineke ~ CTO, 911 Lead Communications Specialist

Nathan Overmann ~ CTO, 911 Lead Communications Specialist

Shannon Wegner ~ CTO, Tactical Dispatcher, 911 Lead Communications Specialist

Tammy Bowman ~ CTO, 911 Communications Specialist

Zac Mann ~ Tactical Dispatcher, 911 Communications Specialist

Kayla Ball ~ 911 Communications Specialist

Alyssia Klosterman ~ 911 Communications Specialist

Samantha Aman ~ 911 Communications Specialist

Kassandra Rader ~ 911 Communications Specialist

Taylor Nelson ~ 911 Communications Specialist

Kelsey Staker ~ 911 Communications Specialist

Modestie Bunn ~ 911 Communications Specialist

Megan Fiedler ~ 911 Communications Specialist

Caden Hobson ~ 911 Communications Specialist

Shane Andrews ~ PRN 911 Communications Specialist, Tactical Dispatcher

The Marshall County Communications Center is proud to boast a team whose collective years of service, expertise, and dedication represent decades of invaluable experience in the field of emergency communications. This wealth of knowledge and talent underscores the unwavering commitment, passion, and drive of our team to serve the public with excellence. Every member of the MCCC team exemplifies the highest standards of professionalism, working tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of Marshall County's residents, visitors, and first responders. Their dedication to public service is the cornerstone of our success and a testament to the strength of our organization.

## **Training ~ Building Excellence for our Communities**

The Marshall County Communications Center (MCCC) recognizes that effective training is the cornerstone of delivering exceptional emergency communication services. In 2020, MCCC implemented a comprehensive standardized training program based on the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) standards, and this commitment continues today. With the understanding that public safety agencies are legally accountable for the actions of their personnel, MCCC prioritizes training to ensure employees are equipped with the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to excel in their roles.

The Communications Training Officer (CTO) program has been continuously refined to emphasize critical components of a one-on-one standardized training system, utilizing Daily Observation Reports (DORs) to track progress and consistency. This systematic approach ensures all new employees undergo the same structured training experience, providing equal opportunities for success. As the program evolves following APCO and national standards through the San Jose model, its strength and effectiveness grow, solidifying its validity as a benchmark for excellence.

The backbone of any training initiative is the trainer. At MCCC, CTOs are integral to shaping new hires into skilled professionals while maintaining a high level of service for the community and internal stakeholders. These dedicated trainers, certified through the APCO Communications Training Officer Course, deliver the foundational knowledge required for 911 Communications Specialists to thrive. Supervisors are also required to complete the APCO Communications Center Supervisor Course, underscoring the commitment to leadership development within the center.

In compliance with Iowa Code 501-13.3(1) (80B), all 911 Communications Specialists complete a 40-hour Basic Communications course within their first year. For those hired before June 2024, APCO's Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST1) 40-hour basic course provided an advanced, customizable training framework tailored to Marshall County's specific needs. This enhanced training aligns with the center's goal of preparing staff to meet the demands of an ever-evolving emergency communication landscape.

Training at MCCC is not a one-time event but a continuous mission. Beyond initial certifications, personnel are required to participate in Continuing Dispatch Education (CDE) annually, encompassing quizzes, protocol exercises, in-service classes, and other dynamic learning activities. This ensures that staff remain agile and responsive in an industry characterized by constant change.

Throughout the year, MCCC personnel engaged in diverse training formats, including online modules, virtual live classes, and in-person sessions, to maintain and sharpen their skills. To retain certifications such as PST1 and Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD), staff also completed required quizzes, 24 hours of CDE training, and CPR/AED re-certification.

A hallmark of MCCC's commitment to excellence is the development of agency instructors within its team. Lead 911 Specialists and CTOs Caitlan Reineke and Shannon Wegner have achieved certification as Emergency Medical Dispatch Instructors through the APCO Institute. Supervisor Tiffany Eibs and Lead 911 Specialists Caitlan Reineke and Nathan Overmann are certified as Public Safety Telecommunicator Instructors. These leaders bring their expertise, passion, and dedication to training the next generation of MCCC professionals.

As MCCC enters a new chapter with a fully staffed team, the Leadership team is poised to build on the foundation of excellence established over the years. Their experience, education, and enthusiasm for teaching will drive continued progress and innovation, ensuring the center remains a leader in emergency communication services. Together, we look forward to advancing our mission and setting new standards for public safety communication in Marshall County.

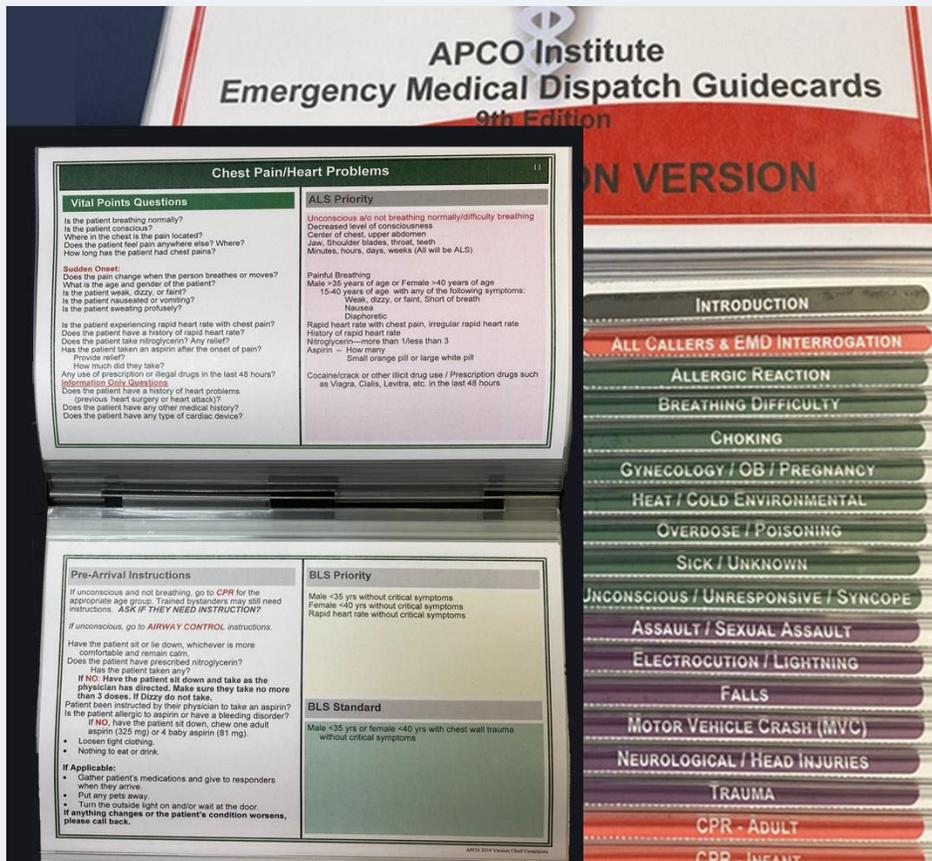
# Emergency Medical Dispatch ~ Instructors



Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) is a critical and systematic approach to managing medical calls for assistance, ensuring that every medical emergency is handled with precision and care. At the Marshall County Communications Center (MCCC), our trained telecommunicators utilize locally approved EMD Guidecards to swiftly and accurately determine the nature and priority of incoming calls. This process enables the dispatch of the appropriate emergency response while providing life-saving pre-arrival instructions to callers, ensuring patients receive timely and effective care before EMS units arrive. A



comprehensive EMD program encompasses a wide array of essential topics, including the roles and responsibilities of dispatchers, resource allocation, adherence to national and state standards, and legal and liability considerations. Through this structured program, telecommunicators are trained in call-taking procedures and the effective use of APCO EMD Guidecards. The curriculum also includes in-depth reviews of chief complaint types, anatomy and physiology, quality assurance measures, recertification requirements, and stress management technique. The training is designed to bridge theory with practical application. Trainees engage in hands-on exercises, simulating real-life EMD scenarios. This practice allows new dispatchers to become proficient in using Guidecards, fostering confidence and competence in managing medical emergencies. By adhering to these rigorous standards and providing high-quality EMD training, the MCCC ensures that its telecommunicators are well-prepared to meet the challenges of medical emergency calls. This commitment not only enhances the safety and well-being of our community but also upholds the highest standards of professionalism and care in emergency medical dispatching.



## Public Safety Telecommunicators (40hr Basic) ~ Instructors



The Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST1) course, developed by the APCO Institute, serves as an indispensable training tool for preparing new hires or refreshing the knowledge of seasoned public safety telecommunicators. Designed to address the essential skills, knowledge, and abilities required in this critical profession, the course ensures participants are equipped to handle the demanding and dynamic nature of emergency communications. Successful completion of the



PST1 course and its final exam leads to certification by the APCO Institute, signifying adherence to national training standards such as the APCO/ANS 3.103.2.2015 and NFPA 1061 2014 Edition. This certification demonstrates a level of competency that meets and exceeds industry benchmarks, affirming the telecommunicator's readiness to excel in public safety operations. The PST1 curriculum builds on foundational topics, including communication skills, call-taking, and radio techniques, while incorporating cutting-edge advancements in technology and addressing emerging issues faced by today's public safety communication centers. Key contemporary topics include Next Generation 911, telematics systems, ongoing education, and legal liability. This holistic approach ensures telecommunicators are prepared not only to manage current demands but also to adapt to the evolving landscape of emergency communications. Course topics are comprehensive and include: Introduction to your new career; interpersonal communications; call processing techniques; telephony and NextGen 911; TTY and telematics systems; computer-aided dispatch (CAD); radio communications and technology; call classifications and NIMS incident command system; liability and stress management. The PST1 course not only provides critical technical training but also emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and professional development. By fostering a deep understanding of both the technical and interpersonal aspects of public safety telecommunications, this course helps telecommunicators build the confidence and competence necessary for success in their roles. At the Marshall County Communications Center, the PST1 program is integral to our commitment to operational excellence. It reflects our dedication to equipping our team with the highest levels of training, ensuring they are prepared to meet the demands of their roles while delivering exceptional service to the community. Through this program, we reinforce our mission to safeguard lives and property with professionalism, innovation, and care.



### Organizational Integrity

The Marshall County Communications Center upholds the highest standards of professionalism and integrity by adopting the Telecommunicator Code of Ethics as published by the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials – International (APCO). This Code serves as a guiding framework for the conduct of all personnel, ensuring that their actions reflect the values of accountability, respect, and dedication to public safety. Each member of the MCCC is required to adhere to this Code, particularly in situations that may not be explicitly covered by other policies or procedures. To reinforce its importance, the Code of Ethics is maintained within each employee's personnel file, serving as a constant reminder of their professional responsibilities. New and existing team members are required to read and acknowledge receipt of the Code, affirming their commitment to abide by its principles. This emphasis on ethical conduct underscores the MCCC's dedication to fostering a culture of trust, integrity, and excellence in service to the community.

## Registered Public Safety Leader (RPL)



The Registered Public Safety Leader (RPL) Program is an advanced professional development opportunity aimed at public safety leaders, particularly those in the 911 industry, emergency communications centers, law enforcement, fire services, and emergency management. Designed for individuals who hold leadership roles and have significant experience in the field, this certification aims to elevate leadership skills, enhance organizational strategies, and deepen the knowledge necessary to navigate the complex public safety challenges of today's world. As a seasoned 911 Director, I can confidently affirm that participating in the RPL program enriches personal leadership skills and serves as a catalyst for improving organizational performance. It provides specialized knowledge that equips leaders to excel in the dynamic environment of public safety operations, which continue to evolve with technological, regulatory, and operational demands.

To be eligible for the RPL program, candidates must meet specific qualifications, which include having substantial experience in the public safety field, typically a minimum of 5 to 10 years in a leadership capacity, or progressive leadership responsibilities. Applicants should be in senior roles such as 911 Director, Communications Manager, Shift Supervisor, Lead, CTO, or similar positions that involve strategic oversight and responsibility for personnel and operations. In addition to professional experience, candidates must demonstrate a commitment to continuous professional development, which might include prior certifications, leadership roles, and a history of contributing to agency improvement. Furthermore, candidates need organizational support, as the RPL program requires agencies to allow participants the time and resources necessary to engage in coursework, complete assignments, and apply the learning without compromising their daily responsibilities.

Earning the RPL certification requires dedication and significant investment. The program consists of multiple modules covering critical topics such as leadership and management skills, strategic thinking, organizational development, legal and ethical considerations, resource management, and crisis management. Participants are required to complete coursework, engage in case studies, and actively participate in discussions to learn best practices and share insights with peers. The program emphasizes real-world application, encouraging participants to reflect on their own agency's policies, procedures, and operations and develop actionable plans that can be implemented in the workplace. This hands-on approach ensures that the knowledge gained is not only theoretical but directly applicable to the day-to-day challenges faced by public safety leaders.

At the conclusion of the program, candidates must complete a capstone project or final assessment that requires them to develop a comprehensive plan or proposal addressing a key challenge within their agency. This project demonstrates the ability to synthesize the learning and apply it to real-world public safety leadership scenarios. Additionally, the RPL program fosters a strong network of peers and mentors, offering opportunities for collaboration and support among professionals who share a commitment to improving leadership within the public safety sector. This network provides invaluable resources for ongoing professional development and helps participants address common challenges with guidance from others who have faced similar issues.

The RPL program offers numerous benefits for public safety leaders, including enhanced leadership skills. Participants gain tools and knowledge that help them lead more effectively in complex and high-pressure environments, strengthening their decision-making abilities, interpersonal communication skills, and management of people and resources. The program also contributes to organizational growth by equipping leaders with fresh ideas and improved strategies, which they can apply to strengthen their agencies. Furthermore, the knowledge gained through the RPL program helps leaders align their agencies with industry standards and best practices, leading to better performance and long-term success.

Another benefit of the RPL program is the positive impact it can have on employee morale and retention. When agencies invest in leadership development, staff members see that their leaders are committed to personal and professional growth, which fosters trust and confidence in their leadership. This, in turn, improves employee satisfaction and retention. Additionally, RPL-certified leaders are better equipped to create positive work environments that promote collaboration, growth, and respect among staff members.

The program also enhances strategic thinking and decision-making capabilities. RPL participants are trained to anticipate challenges, develop long-term plans, and make informed decisions that benefit their agencies and communities. By sharpening these strategic thinking skills, leaders are better prepared to tackle future challenges in the public safety sector and ensure their agency's continued success. Additionally, the networking and industry recognition that comes with earning the RPL certification helps public safety leaders build valuable connections and gain recognition for their commitment to excellence in the field.

Earning the RPL certification is a significant accomplishment that requires hard work, dedication, and a strong commitment to professional growth. It is not a certification that can be obtained without substantial effort, but the rewards it offers—both professionally and personally—are immense. For leaders in the 911 industry, the RPL program is an exceptional opportunity to improve leadership skills, contribute to agency growth, and enhance the overall effectiveness of public safety organizations. It provides both professional development and a means for organizational improvement. As I reflect on the impact of the RPL program, I highly recommend it to any 911 leader who is serious about advancing their leadership capabilities and making a meaningful difference within their agency.

For individuals like Caitlan Reineke, who expressed interest in the RPL program, the benefits are clear. Enrolling in the program is an investment in personal and professional development that will pay off not only for the individual but also for their agency. The skills and knowledge gained through the program will improve leadership effectiveness, strengthen the agency, and ensure that public safety leaders are well-equipped to meet the challenges of an ever-evolving field. The RPL program is an invaluable resource for those who are committed to becoming better leaders and improving the quality of service provided to the community. Caitlan Reineke is projected to complete her certification process May, 2025.

## **Training Accomplishments – Just a few to Highlight**

**PST1 (APCO Basic 40hr)** ~ An introduction to the critical principles in support of public safety and techniques for handling domestic violence, potential suicide, hostage, and civil unrest situations as a public safety telecommunicator. Techniques to overcoming barriers, achieving effective communications, handling difficult callers, listening effectively and resolving conflicts will be addressed. This course will provide the information necessary to understand the job of a public safety telecommunicator and is the foundation to begin working in police, fire and EMS or a combined service communications center. Ideal for training the new-hire or as a refresher for existing staff, APCO's PST1 course covers the basics skills, knowledge and abilities every successful public safety telecommunicator needs to meet the demands of this critical work.

Students successfully passing the final exam receive APCO Institute certification demonstrating completion of a training course that meets and exceeds industry accepted national basic training standards, including the APCO/ANS 3.103.2.2015 and NFPA 1061 2014 Edition.

Building on foundational topics such as communication skills, call taking and radio techniques, the PST course blends in the most up-to-date information on technology and work-related issues in public safety communications centers. "Hot" topics include NextGen 9-1-1, emerging technologies, continuing ed., and liability.

**EMD 5.4 (Basic 40hr pre-requisite)** ~ An introduction to the critical principles in support of public safety and techniques for preparation needed to receive a call requesting assistance for emergency medical services (EMS) and allocate community resources in response to such requests. Techniques to overcoming barriers, achieving effective communications, handling difficult callers, listening effectively and resolving conflicts will be addressed. This course will provide the information necessary to understand the job of an emergency medical dispatcher and is the foundation to begin working in a fire, EMS or a combined service communications center. Topics covered provide the student with the knowledge and foundation to answer calls for emergency medical service and properly prioritize the response. The course also provides the student with the knowledge needed to convey proper pre-arrival instructions to the caller when needed. Topics include: Roles, Responsibilities, and Resource Allocation; Legal & Liability Issues – National/State Standards; Calltaking and APCO EMD Guidecard Information; Chief Complaint Types Review; Anatomy and Physiology; Quality Assurance and Recertification; and Stress Management. The classroom setting provides practical exercises to help the new EMD become familiar with the theories and practices of EMD and students will practice with either their agency's APCO EMD Guidecards or the APCO Institute Training EMD Guidecards in simulated EMD calls.

**APCO EMD Illuminations** ~ EMD Illuminations is an invaluable resource for Emergency Medical Dispatchers (EMDs), emphasizing the critical importance of continuing education in maintaining and enhancing the skills required for this vital role. Recognizing the ever-evolving nature of medical emergencies and the protocols that guide effective response, this program provides monthly topics tailored specifically to the needs of EMDs. Each course focuses exclusively on medically related subjects, ensuring that dispatchers remain well-equipped to handle diverse and complex medical scenarios. By participating in these sessions, dispatchers not only deepen their knowledge but also earn Continuing Dispatch Education (CDE) credits, which contribute to their bi-annual recertification requirements. This ongoing education fosters a culture of excellence and readiness, reinforcing the commitment to delivering precise, informed, and compassionate assistance to those in need during critical medical emergencies.

### **911 Communicator Response to the Active Shooter/Active Assailant ~ Five 911**

Communications Specialists from the Marshall County Communications Center attended an advanced presentation focusing on the critical role of telecommunicators in responding to hostile mass violence events. This comprehensive training session delved into real-world case studies, providing an in-depth analysis of lessons learned and identifying key areas for improvement in emergency response. Participants explored the collaborative roles and responsibilities of law enforcement, fire personnel, EMS, and emergency management in such crises.

The training emphasized vital concepts to enhance performance and decision-making during high-stakes incidents, including benchmark communications, protocol deconfliction, and prioritization of calls under pressure. Specialists gained insights into managing suspect descriptions effectively, utilizing social media platforms to gather actionable intelligence, and understanding the pivotal role of tactical dispatchers. Additionally, the presentation covered the complexities of addressing law enforcement ambushes, equipping telecommunicators with strategies to manage these highly volatile situations. This training underscores the Center's commitment to continuous professional development, ensuring that its team remains prepared to deliver exceptional service during the most challenging emergencies.

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**APCO/NENA State Spring Conference** ~ This year's APCO (Association of Public Communications Officials) and NENA (National Emergency Numbers Association) State Conference provided motivational and dynamic speakers. Attendees had the privilege of engaging with four exceptional speakers who addressed a range of topics critical to the professional growth and operational excellence of 911 professionals. The conference provided valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges and responsibilities faced by emergency telecommunicators, offering both practical strategies and inspirational messages.

The training sessions included *Training is a Team Sport* by the Denise Amber Lee Foundation, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and shared responsibility in developing effective training programs. The *Tips to Testify* session, led by the Iowa Attorney General's Office, provided essential guidance for telecommunicators who may be called upon to provide testimony, focusing on best practices for courtroom preparation and presentation. Roxanne Van Gundy delivered two compelling presentations: *Why Stay?* and *Recruitment and Retention*, addressing the crucial topics of workplace satisfaction and strategies to attract and retain top talent in the 911 field. Lastly, Trent Vileta from the Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) shared a detailed analysis of the high-profile Molly Tibbetts case, highlighting the critical role that 911 professionals and law enforcement collaboration play in solving complex cases.

In addition to the enlightening sessions, the conference also served as a platform to recognize exceptional contributions within the field. Shannon Wegner, a valued member of the Marshall County Communications Center, was honored with the *20 Years in the Industry Award*, celebrating her two decades of dedicated service to the profession. This recognition underscored her unwavering commitment to public safety and her significant impact on the 911 community.

**APCO/NENA State Fall Conference** ~ This year's APCO (Association of Public Communications Officials) and NENA (National Emergency Numbers Association) State Conference provided two extraordinary days of professional development and collaboration, offering 911 professionals the invaluable opportunity to learn from peers across Iowa. The conference highlighted Lessons Learned during critical, high-stress events that occurred within the state, allowing attendees to gain insights and actionable strategies for managing similar challenges in their own agencies. Participants also received a detailed update on the ongoing efforts related to 911 Reclassification, an essential initiative aimed at enhancing the status and recognition of emergency telecommunicators as first responders.

A significant focus of the conference was the well-being of first responders, with specialized training on PTSD, stress management, and resilience. One of the event's highlights was a keynote address by Dr. Michelle Lilly, a licensed clinical psychologist and professor of clinical psychology at Northern Illinois University. Dr. Lilly is nationally renowned for her expertise in addressing PTSD, suicide risk, and stress among first responders. Her presentation offered attendees a comprehensive understanding of the mental health challenges faced by 911 professionals and practical techniques to build resilience and maintain well-being in the face of high-pressure situations.

This immersive conference reinforced the importance of mental health awareness, professional growth, and peer support within the emergency communications industry, leaving participants equipped with the knowledge and tools to better serve their agencies and communities.

**INTD (Incident Tactical Dispatch / FEMA)** ~ An Incident Tactical Dispatcher (INTD) is a highly trained professional capable of operating away from the traditional dispatch center to provide vital communication and coordination support during emergencies and planned events. These individuals work in command posts, base camps, or directly at incident scenes, leveraging their multitasking, communication, accountability, and documentation skills to enhance public safety operations. Incident Tactical Dispatchers are an essential resource during extended incidents such as hostage situations, multi-alarm fires, search and rescue operations, bombings, and active shooter events. They may serve as a single resource or as part of an incident tactical dispatch team supporting the Communications Unit.

The INTD course equips participants with a foundational understanding of the roles and responsibilities of an incident tactical dispatcher in tactical environments. Course pre-requisites include ICS (Incident Command System / FEMA) certifications: IS-100 (Introduction to the ICS), IS-144 (Telecommunicators Emergency Response Taskforce), IS-200 (ICS for Single Resources and Initial Incidents), IS-700 (National Incident Management Systems NIMS Introduction), and IS-800 (National Response Framework NRF Introduction).

In 2024, joining those that have successfully been certified as INTD's were two additional members of the Marshall County Communications Center having successfully completed the four-day INTD training and earned certification: Lead Shane Andrews, and 911 Specialist Zac Mann. This training represents a significant accomplishment, as participants must now complete their incident task books within two years to achieve full recognition as Incident Tactical Dispatchers by the state of Iowa.

Demonstrating their commitment to this certification process, Andrews and Mann participated in the Story County COMMEX in June 2024, contributing to the successful completion and sign-off of two task books. Their involvement in these exercises reinforces the center's dedication to maintaining operational excellence and providing enhanced support during critical incidents.

**The Healthy Dispatcher: Getting Back to the Basics in Your Comm Center** ~ The long-term success in any team environment, especially in the high-stakes world of 911 communications, requires a steadfast commitment to the foundational principles that define excellence. Much like a skilled coach who ensures their team stays grounded in the basics, this course emphasized the importance of returning to the core values that are critical to the profession. By focusing on the bedrock principles of 911 operations—delivering exceptional customer service, mastering effective communication, fostering cooperative teamwork, embracing principled leadership, and skillfully navigating conflict resolution—participants were reminded of what truly matters most in their roles. This back-to-basics approach reinforces the essential skills and values that empower 911 professionals to succeed, adapt, and thrive in a demanding and ever-changing field.

**The Public Safety Group: How to Save a Life-Yours** ~ This course took an in-depth look at the unhealthy habits and behaviors that can impact 911 telecommunicators, offering a comprehensive examination of how stress manifests and affects both physical and mental health. Participants explored the physiological impacts of stress, including the fight, flight, or freeze response, and the damage caused by prolonged exposure to stress hormones like epinephrine and cortisol. Furthermore, the course emphasized the risks associated with these harmful hormones and provided actionable strategies to minimize their production. A key focus is on Metabolic Syndrome—what it is, who is at risk, and how to reverse its effects—along with an honest discussion about the potentially deadly dangers of energy and diet drinks.

Participants also learned about healthy eating habits and their importance in sustaining long-term wellness, especially in high-stress environments. The course examined public safety personalities and offered guidance on navigating challenging interactions while maintaining professionalism. Morale, both its challenges and potential improvements, was addressed with practical advice on fostering positivity and reducing negativity within the workplace. The training provided equips 911 telecommunicators with the knowledge and tools to prioritize their health and well-being, creating a more resilient and effective workforce.

**Civilian Response to Violent Incidents Training** ~ This impactful training equips participants with the knowledge and skills to respond effectively in the event of a violent incident, emphasizing both personal safety and situational awareness. Attendees gain critical insights into the dynamics of such high-stress scenarios, including how to assess threats, make informed decisions, and take appropriate actions to ensure their safety and that of others. The course also provides an overview of law enforcement response protocols during violent incidents. By bridging the gap between public safety personnel and first responders, this training enhanced preparedness and fosters collaboration, ensuring a more cohesive and effective approach.

**Complacency and Critical Decision Making** ~ This vital course focused on the often-overlooked challenges that can compromise the effectiveness and integrity of public safety dispatch centers. Emphasizing the significant dangers posed by complacency, the training explored how routine and familiarity can lead to diminished vigilance, increased errors, and missed opportunities to provide life-saving assistance. Participants are guided through strategies to overcome complacency and foster a culture of excellence in teamwork, accountability, and professional decision-making.

The course also examined the ripple effects of negative attitudes, inconsistent performance, and poorly informed choices, offering practical solutions to mitigate these risks. By highlighting the importance of staying engaged, proactive, and committed to high standards, this training reinforced the critical role of 911 professionals in public safety and prepares them to navigate the complexities of their responsibilities with focus and precision.

**De-escalation Training for Dispatchers** ~ This comprehensive course focused on equipping 911 professionals with essential de-escalation skills to effectively communicate with callers during high-stress and emotionally charged situations. Participants gain proven methodologies to encourage voluntary compliance, ensuring a more controlled and constructive interaction while safeguarding both public safety and professional integrity. By mastering these communication techniques, telecommunicators enhance their ability to navigate challenging calls, reduce the potential for escalation, and foster positive outcomes.

Under the guidance of experienced instructors, participants explored the principles of Verbal Judo—a tactical communication approach designed to defuse tense situations and achieve cooperation. They learn how to apply these strategies in real-time, understanding how such techniques improve operational efficiency, enhance professionalism, and mitigate complaints or liabilities. Beyond the workplace, these skills offer benefits in personal interactions, promoting reduced stress and more effective communication in all areas of life. This training reinforced the critical role of 911 professionals as calm and skilled mediators during moments of crisis.

*Throughout the year, dispatchers had the opportunity to attend specialized courses designed to enhance their skills and knowledge, ensuring they remain at the forefront of public safety communications. These courses, tailored to address the evolving demands of the profession, and provided in-depth training on critical topics. In addition to these focused sessions, numerous supplementary training opportunities were offered, allowing team members to engage in continuous professional development. These additional learning experiences supported the mission of delivering exceptional service, reinforcing core competencies, and fostering growth in areas such as stress management, de-escalation techniques, and effective teamwork. By participating in a diverse array of educational opportunities, the team at the Marshall County Communications Center reaffirmed their commitment to excellence and adaptability in the ever-changing landscape of emergency services.*

*Training is a cornerstone of any professional organization, serving as a vital tool for enhancing skills, expanding knowledge, and building confidence among employees. When team members are provided with robust training opportunities, they not only improve their professional competencies but also gain the confidence needed to perform their roles with efficiency and effectiveness. Consistent and meaningful training has a profound impact on overall performance, fostering a workplace culture of excellence and innovation. Furthermore, organizations that prioritize employee development—through coaching, structured training sessions, and leadership mentoring—demonstrate a commitment to growth that resonates deeply with their workforce. Employees who are given regular opportunities to learn and advance are not only more proficient but are also more likely to remain loyal to their agency. For 911 Communications Specialists, professional development is an ongoing process aimed at strengthening individual and collective performance. While training often begins with onboarding or promotion, its value extends far beyond, benefiting all staff and fostering growth that is truly immeasurable.*



## Personnel Actions

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Verbal Warning / Training	Continuous Training	Continuous Training	Continuous Training
Counseling	4	8	6
Written Reprimand	1	4	5
Suspension	0	4	7
Termination	0	0	0
Fit for Duty / Retirement	0	0	0
Total	5+ Training	16+ Training	18+ Training

## Warrants

<b>Category</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Active	203	212	203
Served	1,003	1,004	1132
Recalled	88	87	99
Detained	19	24	16
Posted Bond	16	18	27
Cleared	1	2	5
Cancelled	21	20	46
Total	1351	1,367	1528

## NCO's – No Contact Order / Exparte

<b>Category</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Served	213	205	217
Not Served	16	38	23
Not in Effect	101	84	56
Total	330	327	296

## 911 Dispatch Statistics

<b>Calls Received</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
911	16,037	14,473	15,654	15,379
Administrative	60,524	60,322	59,707	60,495
Crime Stopper	400	273	266	332
Ring Down	4,343	3,350	3,393	3,147
Total	81,304	78,418*	79,020	79,353

National standards 3.1 as published in the NENA Call Answering Standard/Model Recommendation 56-005.1 (revised 2017). Ninety percent (90%) of all 9-1-1 calls arriving at the Public Safety answering Point (PSAP) shall be answered within ten (10) seconds during the busy hour (the hour each day with the greatest call volume, as defined in the NENA Master Glossary). Ninety-five (95%) of all 9-1-1 calls should be answered within twenty (20) seconds. The Marshall County Communications Center greatly exceeds this standard with an average ring time of three (3) seconds.

## Call for Service Statistics

<b>Fire Related Incidents</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Marshalltown Fire Department	3466	3467	3503
Albion Volunteer Fire Department	76	70	67
Clemons Volunteer Fire Department	29	27	23
Ferguson Volunteer Fire Department	0	10	5
Gilman Volunteer Fire Department	66	52	65
Green Mountain Volunteer Fire Dept	58	62	84
Haverhill Volunteer Fire Department	44	58	56
Laurel Volunteer Fire Department	30	31	23
Legrand Volunteer Fire Department	82	81	59
Liscomb Volunteer Fire Department	53	51	46
Melbourne Fire Department	53	58	78
Rhodes Volunteer Fire Department	48	57	63
State Center Volunteer Fire Department	145	111	98
.... TOTAL ....	<b>4,150</b>	<b>4,135</b>	<b>4170</b>

<b>Medical Related Incidents</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Unity Point Hospital	4,898	4869	4657
Albion First Responder	135	162	151
Gilman First Responder	172	165	126
Green Mountain First Responder	109	154	146
Haverhill First Responder	0	0	0
Laurel First Responder	0	0	0
Legrand First Responder	210	188	167
Liscomb First Responder	137	164	151
Melbourne First Responder	162	157	161
Rhodes First Responder	158	154	150
State Center First Responder	209	264	212
.... TOTAL ....	<b>6,190</b>	<b>6,277</b>	<b>5921</b>

<b>Law Enforcement Related Incidents</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Marshalltown Police Department	27,711	30,679	31,508
Marshall County Sheriff's Office	24,217	26,571	26,831
Melbourne/Rhodes Department	35	<b>MCSO</b>	<b>MCSO</b>
State Center Police Department	1,272	1,906	1,597
Outside County / SCSO ~ ISP ~ Tama	24	27	64
.... TOTAL ....	<b>53,259</b>	<b>59,183</b>	<b>60,000</b>

## Call Handling Procedures

The Marshall County Communications Center continues to advance its operations by refining policies, procedures, and guidelines to maintain excellence in handling all types of service calls. Communications Specialists meticulously evaluate each call to determine whether it constitutes an emergency or a non-emergency. The Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system is programmed to prioritize incidents based on call types, while dispatchers retain the discretion to alert field personnel and assign additional resources to higher-priority situations when appropriate. A significant operational enhancement includes the implementation of CommsCoach, a GovWorx product, to manage Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Improvement (QI) processes. This tool provides a streamlined and systematic approach to reviewing calls, ensuring compliance with standards and identifying areas for continuous improvement.

The EMD IntelliComm system continues to play a vital role in processing priority and special response calls, providing Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) instructions as needed. This system, introduced on November 1, 2021, now works in tandem with CommsCoach, further enhancing the quality and consistency of service delivery.

Every request for service is carefully documented, capturing essential details such as CFS number, date and time of the request, complainant information, incident type and location, units dispatched, response times, and final dispositions. Misdirected calls are promptly rerouted, and database errors are corrected to maintain operational accuracy and efficiency.

The Center's personnel have undertaken a wide range of specialized training programs to stay at the forefront of the profession. Courses completed include Emergency Medical Dispatch, Public Safety Communications (40hr Basic), Incident Tactical Dispatcher (INTD), Tactical Dispatch Fundamentals, 911 Staffing Crisis Summit, Active Shooter Incidents for Public Safety Communications, and resilience-focused programs. Attendance at events such as the Iowa State APCO/NENA Spring Conference, APCO National Conference, and numerous webinars and Continuing Dispatch Education (CDE) credit courses highlights the team's dedication to professional development. These efforts reflect a commitment to providing Marshall County's emergency responders with an exceptional standard of care aligned with the Center's mission, vision, and core values.

Handling emergency and non-emergency calls remains an inherently demanding responsibility, with telecommunicators often supporting callers through highly traumatic events. Specialists are trained to ask targeted, scenario-specific questions, determine the nature and extent of incidents, and dispatch the appropriate resources. Recognizing the importance of maintaining peak performance, the training program has undergone significant enhancements. New hires now participate in a rigorous 20-week training program, complemented by continuous education for all personnel. This includes weekly and monthly sessions on police and fire-related topics, online training, in-person seminars, and scenario-based exercises. Together with the QA/QI support provided by CommsCoach, these initiatives ensure the team is well-equipped to meet the complex and evolving demands of their critical role.



## Communications Center Achievements - 2024

In 2024, the Marshall County Communications Center (MCCC) placed significant emphasis on team building, continuous improvement, and preparation for upcoming agency projects. The leadership team remained steadfast in its commitment to enhancing customer service, elevating the quality of service delivery, and strengthening staffing levels. Substantial energy and efforts were devoted to fostering a positive workplace culture, creating an environment where employees could thrive and perform at their best. As a testament to these efforts, the MCCC was honored by Prepared Live with the prestigious designation as a Center of Excellence for Innovation in Emergency Response, a distinction shared by only one other agency in the state of Iowa. This recognition reflects the Center's dedication to operational excellence, innovation, and service to the community. As the MCCC moves into 2024, it proudly continues to hold this esteemed title, reaffirming its commitment to leading the way in emergency response and public safety communications.

**Technological Advantages** ~ In a significant stride toward leveraging technological advancements, the Marshall County Communications Center (MCCC) implemented CommsCoach, an innovative product by GovWorx, designed to elevate Quality Assurance standards and enhance customer service levels. By utilizing cutting-edge AI technology, CommsCoach evaluates calls for service with precision, assessing adherence to established protocols while also analyzing tone, language, and accuracy. This holistic approach not only ensures protocol compliance but also provides valuable insights into the nuances of communication, such as caller interaction and empathy. The implementation of CommsCoach has fortified the core skills of call questioning, offering dispatchers a comprehensive understanding of their performance and enabling targeted improvements. This forward-thinking initiative underscores MCCC's commitment to delivering exceptional service, leveraging AI to refine processes, and fostering a culture of excellence in public safety communication.



**Best of the Best** ~ In 2024 the Marshall County Communications Center was chosen as Best of the Best in the Times-Republican in the category of Emergency Services. While the Marshall County Communications Center is the only option for Marshall County residents to be chosen under the Best of the Best Reader's Choice Awards is an honor!



WINNER

Marshall County Communications Center

**Commission Directives** ~ Throughout what can only be described as another tumultuous and unpredictable year, marked by disasters and the ongoing challenges, the Marshall County Communications Center has remained steadfast in executing the directives set forth by the Commission. While navigating the complexities of 2024, MCCC has embraced a forward-thinking approach, moving beyond questioning the status quo to actively preparing for "what's next" and anticipating future challenges. A cornerstone of this preparedness lies in the center's commitment to excellence through comprehensive Quality Assurance (QA) practices. Unlike the national standard of reviewing 7-10% of calls, MCCC has implemented a rigorous process to evaluate 100% of calls that meet QA criteria. This unwavering dedication ensures that operational standards are not only met but consistently exceeded, fostering a culture of accountability and continuous improvement. By maintaining this level of diligence, MCCC reinforces its mission to provide superior service and remain a trusted resource for the community during times of crisis.

**Training** ~ In 2024, the Communications Training Officer (CTO) program at MCCC continues to evolve through regular reviews and restructuring to better leverage the skills and talents of in-house Communications Specialists. The program spans 18 weeks, culminating in a final shadow phase, and provides comprehensive training that includes one-on-one, on-the-job instruction, scenario-based exercises, and classroom instruction. Trainees receive certifications in APCO's Public Safety Telecommunicator (40-hour Basic) and Emergency Medical Dispatcher (EMD) courses, learning the critical disciplines of call reception and dispatching for police, fire, and EMS services. CTOs play a vital role in the program's success, acting as both role models and mentors to new employees as they embark on their careers with MCCC. Their guidance is instrumental in shaping the next generation of dispatchers, ensuring they are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed for success. The MCCC leadership team will continue to monitor and refine the training program to ensure its ongoing effectiveness and to support the continued growth and development of its personnel.

**Staffing** ~ Staffing has remained a top priority for the Marshall County Communications Center over the past several years, and the efforts to maintain a well-equipped team have proven successful. With the approval of an additional position during the 2024/2025 fiscal year budgeting cycle, we were able to plan ahead and ensure that this position was filled promptly by July 8th, 2024. Since then, the Communications Center has achieved a significant milestone: being fully staffed with no personnel in training. This accomplishment is particularly notable given the nationwide staffing challenges within the 911 communications profession, where understaffing and high turnover rates are common. The ability to maintain a fully staffed center, with each team member fully operational, is a testament to the effectiveness of our recruitment and retention efforts, as well as the commitment of our staff. This is an exceptional achievement that not only ensures the continuity and reliability of our emergency response services but also allows for more efficient operations and an improved work environment. It speaks to the strength of our workplace culture, where team members feel supported, valued, and equipped to succeed. This success has been made possible by the collective dedication of the Communications Center staff, as well as the continued support and understanding from the commission. By recognizing the unique challenges of the 911 profession and providing the necessary resources, we are able to maintain the high level of service that Marshall County residents expect and deserve.

**Tactical Dispatching Program** ~ The specialized position of Tactical Dispatcher has proven to be an invaluable asset to the Marshall County Communications Center, and the Tactical Dispatch Team continues to thrive. The core mission of the Tactical Dispatch Team is to provide critical emergency field communications support during high-stakes incidents or events that fall outside of routine operations. Whether operating from the communications center or directly at the scene, the team is equipped with the skills, technology, and expertise necessary to effectively manage communications during major events. The functionality and success of the Tactical Dispatch Team depend heavily on the dedication and capabilities of the staff at the Marshall County Communications Center. This specialized team is composed of select communications personnel who are specifically trained to respond to major incidents, with the ability to facilitate and support operational communications in both field and command post environments. Tactical Dispatchers bring a unique skill set to the table, including multitasking, attention to detail, active listening, and the ability to stay focused under pressure, all of which are essential in coordinating large-scale operations or mutual aid incidents. Their primary responsibilities include ensuring effective communications, maintaining accountability, documenting critical information, and managing resource allocation during emergencies. Continued development ensures that Marshall County is prepared to manage high-pressure situations with precision and professionalism.

**Recruitment** ~ As part of our proactive approach to staffing and ensuring the continued success of the Marshall County Communications Center, we have made strategic efforts to plan for future growth and maintain operational excellence. Recognizing the importance of long-term stability, we have initiated the process of creating an eligibility list for potential future openings. This forward-thinking strategy not only positions us to quickly address any vacancies that may arise but also ensures the uninterrupted continuity of operations by maintaining a pool of qualified candidates ready to step into key roles as they become available. By establishing this eligibility list, we are safeguarding against staffing shortages that could impact the efficiency of our center, ensuring we can continue providing exceptional service to the community. This initiative also streamlines our hiring process, reduces recruitment time, and helps attract top-tier talent with the expertise required to thrive in the demanding world of public safety communications. It underscores our commitment to proactive workforce planning and operational readiness, ensuring that the Marshall County Communications Center remains fully staffed with skilled professionals prepared to meet the evolving needs of the community and the dynamic challenges faced.

As a 24/7 public service organization, recruitment and retention remain central to our success. These efforts are crucial to maintaining staffing levels and supporting a healthy work-life balance for our employees. However, as in previous years, MCCC has faced challenges with operating at full staffing capacity, due in part to typical workforce turnover, personal life events, and some individuals not completing the training program. Despite these challenges, our forward-focused recruitment and staffing strategies remain essential to meeting the demands of our critical work.

**Industry Recognition** ~ Director Braudis actively contributes to the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) Training Updates Committee, where she plays a vital role in ensuring that courses are consistently reviewed and updated to align with the latest industry standards. As part of this ongoing effort, several dispatching photographs featuring the dedicated professionals of the Marshall County Communications Center have been prominently included in the training manuals. These images not only showcase the hard work and commitment of the staff but also serve as a powerful testament to the agency's achievements and the exceptional team driving its success. This inclusion not only highlights the skilled individuals within the Communications Center but also promotes the agency as a whole, reinforcing the positive reputation and accomplishments of the center in the broader public safety community.

## **Communications Center Goals - 2025**

**Emergency Medical Dispatching** ~ A critical and ongoing responsibility at the Marshall County Communications Center is the continuous review and refinement of guidecards and systems to ensure accuracy, adherence to best practices, and alignment with evolving protocols. The review of the electronic guidecards within IntelliComm remains a priority, with regular assessments conducted to ensure they meet industry standards, maintain protocol compliance, and support quality assurance efforts. While the fundamental use of guidecards remains unchanged, significant improvements in efficiency have been made, particularly with the integration of information directly into the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. This seamless flow of information eliminates the need for excessive toggling between systems, significantly lightening the workload of 911 Communications Specialists. As a result, staff are better able to focus their attention on the caller's needs and coordinating with responders in the field, ultimately enhancing the quality and responsiveness of the service provided.

**Grants** ~ Budgets continue to present challenges within emergency services, making grants an essential resource for acquiring equipment and funding training initiatives. In 2025, the team remains committed to actively pursuing additional grants to support future growth and expansion.

***Training / Continuing Dispatch Education*** ~ Training is a cornerstone of excellence in the 911 communications profession. By the end of 2023, the Marshall County Communications Center aims to ensure that all personnel, including new hires, are fully trained in the essential areas of Public Safety Telecommunications (Required Basic-40hr), Emergency Medical Dispatch (Required EMD), and Fire Service Communications. Additionally, the center will continue to seek out specialized training opportunities to further enhance skills and foster ongoing improvement, reinforcing its commitment to providing the highest level of service and preparedness.

***Policy & Procedures*** ~ Annual review of policies and procedures is a critical practice to ensure that they remain relevant, effective, and aligned with industry standards. To streamline this process, the Marshall County Communications Center has implemented Frontline’s Policy Tracker program. This advanced system allows for more efficient management and distribution of policies, enabling personnel to easily receive, review, and update critical documents. By utilizing Policy Tracker, the center can enhance communication, ensure consistent adherence to policies, and maintain a clear, up-to-date record of all procedural changes. This proactive approach not only supports compliance but also fosters a culture of continuous improvement and accountability within the Communications Center.

***911 CAD System*** ~ In 2019, a member of the volunteer fire department proposed the use of Run Cards, but at the time, the CAD company offered little support without charging significant fees for the project. Due to the potential costs, the initiative was put on hold. However, in 2023, while assisting the Marshalltown Fire Chief with their RMS program, the project was revived. With a clearer path and no impact on the budget, the project officially began. This initiative involves multiple phases, and we are currently in Phase III, a detailed and time-intensive process of data entry, as we work through the 17,008 addresses across Marshall County. While this phase has provided substantial progress, the next step involves updating the mapping system. Through further collaboration with the CAD company, we’ve developed a strategy to enhance the mapping system. We are now nearing completion, with meetings scheduled to refine responder boundaries, determine who will respond to specific areas, and identify backup responders for each region.



## Summary

The Marshall County Communications Center (MCCC) has experienced significant growth and development in 2024, driven by a commitment to operational efficiency, quality assurance, and team-building efforts. A critical component of this success is the continuous improvement and adaptation of policies, procedures, and systems, such as the integration of CommsCoach by GovWorx, which has greatly enhanced the center's ability to evaluate calls for service. This technological advancement not only supports protocol adherence but also enables a deeper analysis of communication tone, language, and accuracy. By refining these aspects, MCCC is able to enhance the overall quality of service, improve call questioning skills, and streamline workflows, allowing staff to focus more on responders and callers in need of assistance.

Staffing remains a pivotal area of focus. With the addition of a new position in the 2024/2025 fiscal year, MCCC was able to reach full staffing levels by October 2024, a remarkable achievement in a profession that typically struggles with staffing shortages. This unique accomplishment speaks volumes about the dedication and hard work of the Communications Specialists and the leadership team, creating a healthy workplace culture while meeting the community's needs. By building an eligibility list for future openings, the center ensures long-term stability and minimizes recruitment challenges, reinforcing MCCC's ability to provide uninterrupted, high-quality service to Marshall County residents.

Training continues to play an essential role in maintaining the center's success. MCCC set the goal of having all personnel and new hires trained in Public Safety Telecommunications, and Emergency Medical Dispatch, ensuring a high standard of service across all areas. The center is committed to ongoing professional development, with additional training opportunities aimed at continuously improving the knowledge and skills of the team. Specialized training programs, such as the Incident Tactical Dispatcher program and the Communications Training Officer (CTO) program, were strengthened to further build expertise and ensure readiness for critical incidents. These efforts ensure that MCCC is prepared to meet the challenges of the ever-evolving 911 communications landscape.

The process of implementing Run Cards, initially proposed by a volunteer fire department member in 2019, is another example. While the project was significantly stalled due to high costs and lack of support from the CAD company, the initiative was revived in 2023 through collaboration with the Marshelltown Fire Chief and the RMS program. Today, the project is in Phase IV, focusing on the tedious yet crucial task mapping accuracy across Marshall County. This phase has already led to substantial progress with collaborative efforts with the Marshall County GIS department. Collaborations with the CAD company have paved the way for system enhancements, and MCCC is now preparing to finalize responder boundaries and establish backup responders for each designated area.

Through continued focus on training, staffing, technological integration, and forward planning, MCCC remains dedicated to delivering the highest quality of service to the community. These efforts, along with the strategic development of policies, quality assurance practices, and mapping improvements, ensure that MCCC will remain an effective and resilient communications center. The center's commitment to operational excellence and continuous improvement has reinforced its position as a leader in public safety communications. As MCCC continues to evolve and adapt to the changing demands of the 911 profession, the foundation laid in 2024 sets the stage for a bright future, one where staffing levels are stable, training is ongoing, and technological advancements enhance the service provided to Marshall County residents.

\*\*\*\* IN CASE YOU MISSED IT \*\*\*\*

## Council approves modified 911 communications utility reimbursement agreement

FEB 16, 2024

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T-R PHOTO BY ROBERT MAHARRY — During Monday night’s meeting, the Marshalltown city council voted unanimously to approve a \$12,000 annual utility reimbursement agreement with the Marshall County Communications Commission (MCCC) for the use of space at the Police/Fire building at 909 S. 2nd St. Mayor/Acting City Administrator Joel Greer also declared that 911 dispatch employees will again be allowed to use the gym. The council voted to terminate the previous \$1 a year lease with the MCCC last February.

Almost exactly a year after voting to terminate a lease that provided space to the Marshall County Communications Commission (MCCC) at the new Police and Fire Building in Marshalltown, the city council unanimously approved a new utility reimbursement agreement during Monday night’s meeting.

When the previous lease, which charged the MCCC just \$1 a year for the use of the space, was first terminated by a 5-1 vote last year, charging the MCCC as much as \$18,000 a year in rent was discussed, but the parties settled on an annual utility reimbursement of \$12,000. During a brief public hearing, there were no comments, and City Clerk Alicia Hunter said the MCCC would also need to hold a public hearing at its April meeting before the new agreement would go into effect on July 1.

Gary Thompson, the lone councilor to oppose the lease termination last year, said he would still vote yes on the resolution but found it “hard to believe” that the exact utilities the MCCC uses, whether more or less than the \$12,000, couldn’t be determined.

“Maybe I’m out of the loop, and I know I am, but maybe the cost to do that after the building’s already been built is so astronomical that it makes sense to do this rate that it is,” Thompson said. “I just find it absurd that a tenant has to pay a rent fee based on an unknown.”

With no further comments, a motion to approve the formal resolution passed by a 7-0 vote. Greer also indicated that he had made an executive decision as the acting city administrator to allow the 911 staff to have access to the gym. Previously, they had not been granted access because they are not city employees.

“For the morale purposes of those that are taking these 911 calls and the morale of the fire department and the morale of the police department, they’re gonna be able to use the gym from now on,” Greer said.

MCCC Director Rhonda Braudis was happy about the news on the gym access front for her employees.

“It’s nice that they’re being included again. When we (first) moved into that building, we did have access,” she said. “It’s something that my folks felt excluded from, so to offer the inclusion, again, from Mayor Greer, it’s just very appreciated. My dispatchers are thrilled. They’re absolutely ecstatic.”

# Reflections on National Telecommunicators Week

APR 16, 2024

RHONDA BRAUDIS

Marshall County 911 Communications director

As National Telecommunicators Week approaches, I am writing to express my heartfelt appreciation and admiration for the dedicated and hard-working 911 Communications Specialists and Leaders of the Marshall County Communications Center. These individuals are the unsung heroes of public safety, providing crucial support and assistance to our community members in their times of greatest need. Their unwavering commitment, professionalism, and compassion make a profound impact on the lives of others, and it is high time we recognize and celebrate their invaluable contributions to our community.

The role of a 911 Communications Specialist is a challenging and demanding one, requiring individuals to remain calm, composed, and focused under extreme pressure and in high-stress situations. They serve as the first point of contact for individuals in crisis, providing critical assistance, gathering essential information, and dispatching appropriate emergency services to the scene. Their ability to multitask, make quick decisions, and effectively communicate with callers, first responders, and other stakeholders is vital to ensuring the safety and well-being of our community members.

The Marshall County Communications Center is a pivotal hub of public safety operations, serving as the primary point of contact for emergency calls within our jurisdiction. Our team of dedicated 911 Communications Specialists and Leaders work tirelessly around the clock, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, to ensure that every call for help is answered promptly, every emergency is managed effectively, and every individual in need receives the assistance they require in a timely and compassionate manner.

Despite the critical nature of their role, the contributions of 911 Communications Specialists and Leaders often go unnoticed or unappreciated. They operate behind the scenes, away from the spotlight, and their efforts are frequently overshadowed by the heroic actions of first responders on the front lines. However, the reality is that the work of our Communications Center team is essential to the overall success of emergency response operations and plays a pivotal role in safeguarding our community and enhancing public safety.

As the 911 Communications Director, I have the privilege and honor of working alongside an exceptional team of professionals who are truly committed to serving others and making a positive difference in our community. Their dedication to excellence, continuous learning, and collaboration is commendable, and it serves as a source of inspiration and motivation for us all.

Each day, our 911 Communications Specialists and Leaders face a myriad of challenges and obstacles, ranging from handling multiple emergency calls simultaneously to coordinating complex rescue operations and managing critical incidents with limited information. Despite the inherent challenges and pressures associated with their roles, they approach each situation with professionalism, empathy, and resilience, ensuring that every caller receives the support, assistance, and reassurance they need during their time of crisis.

Our team's ability to remain calm under pressure, provide clear and concise instructions to callers, and effectively coordinate with first responders and other emergency services is a testament to their dedication, expertise, and commitment to public safety. They work diligently to ensure that every call is handled with the utmost care, attention to detail, and professionalism, and their efforts have a direct and positive impact on the outcomes of emergency situations.

The collaborative spirit, teamwork, and camaraderie within our Communications Center are truly remarkable, and it is a testament to the strong leadership, mutual respect, and shared commitment to excellence that permeates throughout our organization. Our team members support and uplift one another, share knowledge and expertise, and work together cohesively to overcome challenges, solve problems, and achieve our common goals.

In addition to their core responsibilities, our 911 Communications Specialists and Leaders are also dedicated to ongoing learning, professional development, and continuous improvement. They actively participate in training programs, classes, and webinars to enhance their skills, expand their knowledge, and stay abreast of the latest trends, technologies, and best practices in emergency communications and public safety.

Their proactive approach to learning and their willingness to embrace new challenges and opportunities for growth are indicative of their passion for their profession, their commitment to personal and professional development, and their desire to provide the highest level of service and support to our community.

As we celebrate National Telecommunicators Week, let us take this opportunity to honor, recognize, and appreciate the remarkable work of our 911 Communications Specialists and Leaders. Their dedication, compassion, and professionalism make a profound impact on the lives of others, and they are truly the unsung heroes of our community.

I encourage everyone to take a moment this week to express your gratitude and appreciation to our dedicated Communications Center team. Whether it's a simple thank you, a kind gesture, or a heartfelt message of support, your words of encouragement and recognition will undoubtedly uplift their spirits, boost their morale, and reinforce their commitment to serving others.

In closing, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to each member of the Marshall County Communications Center team. Your hard work, dedication, and sacrifice do not go unnoticed, and I am incredibly proud to work with such an exceptional group of individuals who are truly making a positive and lasting difference in our community each and every day.

Thank you for your extraordinary service, your unwavering commitment to excellence, and your relentless pursuit of excellence in emergency communications and public safety. You are genuinely valued, admired, and appreciated by all, and I am honored to serve as your 911 Communications Director.

Rhonda Braudis is the Marshall County 911 communications director.

# Two Marshall County dispatchers recognized with Golden Headset Award

APR 20, 2024

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**Mann**



**Reineke**

National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week is an opportunity to thank the “forgotten heroes” who take 911 calls and help people in some of their worst moments for the difficult work they do. It was also a great time for Marshall County 911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis to announce that two of her dispatchers, Zac Mann and Caitlan Reineke, received the Golden Headset Award for Outstanding Collaboration from Zetron.

The incident that garnered the nomination for Mann and Reineke was their response to a house fire in rural Marshall County in the early hours of June 22, 2023, when a male caller advised Mann that he had five kids in the house and couldn’t get to them. Three deputies were dispatched immediately and told there were five children trapped inside.

While most house fires could be considered a “normal, everyday occurrence,” this one was anything but — when Deputy Jon Rogers arrived on the scene, two adults and five children were still trapped inside the home.

The deputy then advised he had to break windows, and it was later learned the smoke was so black that all he could see were small hands on the window. There was no way to get into the house and get everyone out safely in a conventional way, so Rogers made a choice to break those windows — a risky but ultimately successful plan. He was able to get everyone out of the house, even as Rogers himself was choking from the smoke billowing out of the structure.

“Working in dispatch at any given time during your career, you understand the moments from the start of a call to the conclusion of a particular type of call. Getting the residents out and knowing all were safe is intense,” Braudis wrote in her nomination. “We have certain knows, and an understanding that if you dispatch for the county, help isn’t just right around the corner in many cases and may take a hot minute to get there.”

Mann and Reineke recognized the situation and leapt into action, getting additional help started towards the fire from deputies, ambulance and volunteer Fire/EMS units while continuing to handle administrative lines, other 911 calls and the fire with children trapped inside at the same time. Mann focused his efforts on the fire incident, and Reineke dealt with everything else, from the overflow of this incident to the administrative lines to additional requests coming in from other responders within Marshall County.

“This is easy work for a team, right? This team not only handled the incident, but they also handled overflow and all superfluous traffic to assist each other in staying focused on the tasks at hand,” Braudis wrote. “Through all of this, Communications Specialist Mann and Lead Reineke sat laser focused on their screens getting help there. They have made the calls, sent the help and are now simply praying (that) their responders and those children make it home safe — knowing the dangers of not only the fire and smoke inhalation but the potential of a backdraft from breaking a window, which ultimately saved the children.”

Through it all, Braudis added, they kept their cool and did their jobs with the highest level of professionalism.

“They were focused, zoned in on the tasks at hand and calm for their responders in the field and the community they serve, which, as we know, is desperately needed at times such as these. Some might say this is common for any dispatcher. This is what we do,” Braudis wrote. “That doesn’t take away the stress, anxiety, or impact on the dispatcher at the end of the day and at the end of these incidents. Any incident of this caliber is stressful, to have a team of such variance in tenure work so flawlessly together speaks volumes beyond measure.”

She commended the duo for performing like “seasoned dispatchers,” never wavering in their calm demeanor or in their stance while always displaying a controlled presence of mind as the ordeal unfolded, continuing through the resulting investigation and ensuring all was well. “Throughout the incident, this team continued to not only perform each function as requested of them but anticipated the needs of those responders on scene that were also clearly affected by the events unfolding,” Braudis said. “Fires are not an everyday occurrence, although they happen. They are intensive, stressful and adrenaline filled.”

Speaking to the T-R on Thursday, Reineke said she never foresaw herself receiving such a prestigious national award, but it was especially noteworthy for she and Mann as they have known each other for seven or eight years and previously dispatched together in Benton County before both eventually found their way to Marshall County.

“We’ve always worked really well together, and I think it’s kind of cool for me especially that we were able to get that teamwork, collaboration award. It’s just kind of cool that it all came out that way,” she said.

Mann reciprocated the compliments about how well the two work together — they’re so familiar, he said, that even if they don’t speak for four hours during a shift, they know exactly what the other will do, what they’ve already done and what they’re thinking about doing. They’re also thankful to work at an agency where the leadership — in this case, Braudis — is willing to nominate them for such awards.

In reflecting on the fire that day, Reineke said she can usually tell shortly after Mann takes a call whether it’s routine or something major, and she quickly had a sense that the situation was serious. That unspoken bond and trust came in handy as she called in additional help.

“He knew I was gonna do this. I knew he was gonna do this, and it all worked seamlessly. It’s a good feeling to work with a partner that you know has your back,” she said. “It was super smooth.”

And of course, even as they were taking this call, they were dealing with several others at the same time and continuing to dispatch the appropriate responding agencies to those situations. While they don’t do the job for awards or recognitions, Reineke and Mann feel that a commendation like this one pushes them to aim for greatness every day.

“We work so hard. We work very hard at what we do to be the best that we possibly can be, and I feel like every single one of my coworkers, we are all striving for that. And that’s what Caitlan and I strive for every single shift,” Mann said. “To be able to be recognized for our hard work and what we’ve done, it’s truly rewarding for us. We don’t actively want to go out and be recognized because I sit behind a phone and a headset and so no one ever sees me. And that’s

something that I personally like. I don't want to be face to face with some of the stuff our responders see, but it's nice to get recognized and I appreciate it so much. And I appreciate Rhonda nominating us. It truly means a lot."

Mann has been with Marshall County since August of 2018, and Reineke joined the team in May of 2020. Both came with previous experience at other agencies, and Braudis is proud to have them onboard.

"Trying to get a compliment from themselves is like pulling teeth. My leadership team, they go out and they look for those different things to make sure that I'm aware of them and look them up, go into detail and do these nominations because without that... (It's just) this is what we do. This is our job," Braudis said. "And they do this every single day. I can't even tell you the number of good things that they do. I can't say it enough. This is an amazing team, and Marshall County is very, very lucky."

# Behind the scenes of 911 communications

MAY 11, 2024

RHONDA BRAUDIS

Contributing Writer

In the tapestry of emergency response, there exists a cadre of unsung heroes who work tirelessly behind the scenes, guiding callers through what may seem like their darkest hour. These individuals, often referred to as “headset heroes,” are the men and women of 911 who exhibit extraordinary leadership and compassion in the face of adversity. As the Director of 911 services, I am compelled to shine a spotlight on their invaluable contributions to our community and acknowledge the profound impact they have on the lives of those they serve.

Every day, our 911 Communications Specialists stand at the frontline of emergency response, fielding calls from individuals in distress, crisis, and need. They possess an innate ability to remain calm under pressure, providing reassurance and guidance to callers during some of the most harrowing moments of their lives. Whether it’s a medical emergency, a natural disaster, or a threat to personal safety, our 911 Communications Specialists are unwavering in their commitment to serving the needs of our community with professionalism, empathy, and unwavering dedication.

Leadership within the 911 community extends far beyond the traditional notions of command and control. It encompasses qualities such as empathy, compassion, and resilience — attributes that our headset heroes exemplify each day as they navigate the complexities of emergency response. In the midst of chaos and uncertainty, they serve as beacons of hope and stability, guiding callers through tumultuous circumstances with grace and poise.

What sets our 911 Communications Specialists apart is their ability to forge human connections in the midst of crisis. They possess an intuitive understanding of the emotional needs of callers, offering words of comfort and support in their darkest moments. Whether it’s a gentle reassurance to a frightened child or a calming presence to a panicked adult, our headset heroes possess an extraordinary capacity to provide solace and guidance when it’s needed most.

The work of our 911 Communications Specialists is characterized by its selflessness and sacrifice. They are the silent warriors who work long hours, often under challenging conditions, to ensure the safety and well-being of our community. Their dedication knows no bounds, as

they tirelessly answer calls, dispatch emergency services, and coordinate response efforts with precision and efficiency. Theirs is a labor of love — a testament to their unwavering commitment to serving others with compassion and integrity.

In times of crisis, our 911 Communications Specialists are the lifeline that connects individuals in need with the help and resources they require. They serve as the first point of contact for those experiencing emergencies, offering guidance and assistance with professionalism and compassion. Their role is not merely to facilitate communication, but to instill a sense of calm and reassurance in those they serve, providing a beacon of hope in times of despair.

The leadership exhibited by our 911 Communications Specialists extends beyond the confines of their roles within the 911 center. They are champions of resilience, perseverance, and strength, embodying the spirit of service and sacrifice that defines our profession. They inspire others through their actions, demonstrating courage and compassion in the face of adversity and adversity.

As Director of 911 services, I am profoundly grateful for the dedication and commitment of our 911 Communications Specialists. They are the heart and soul of our organization, the backbone of our emergency response system, and the true embodiment of leadership within our community. Their contributions often go unnoticed and unheralded, but their impact is immeasurable, leaving an indelible mark on the lives of those they serve.

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Rhonda Braudis is the Marshall County

911 Communications Director.

# Holiday safety: Tips for trick-or-treating and fall festivities from your Marshall County 911 Dispatch team

OCT 5, 2024

RHONDA BRAUDIS

Contributing Writer

As the leaves begin to change and the air turns crisp, the excitement of the fall season takes over Marshall County. Halloween is just around the corner, with children eagerly preparing for trick-or-treating and families looking forward to fall festivals. While this time of year is filled with fun and festive activities, it's also a season that requires us to be extra vigilant when it comes to safety.

At Marshall County 911, our primary goal is to ensure the safety and well-being of our community. This is why we want to share some important reminders and safety tips to help you enjoy the season while staying safe. From trick-or-treating safety to fire prevention and making sure your kids know when and how to dial 911, we've got you covered. Whether you're out enjoying the festivities or simply staying warm on colder nights, these tips will help keep your family safe.

## **Trick-or-treating safety**

Halloween is a magical time for kids, but as they head out in costumes to collect candy, safety is the number one priority. Our 911 dispatchers handle calls every year related to Halloween, from lost children to traffic accidents, and we want to help you prevent emergencies before they happen.

1. **Stay Visible:** As the days grow shorter, trick-or-treating often takes place after dark, and it's crucial that children can be seen by drivers. Equip your child's costume with reflective materials, and have them carry a flashlight or glow stick. These simple additions can make them more visible to passing vehicles and keep them safe while they walk through neighborhoods.

2. **Safe Routes:** Make sure your children are sticking to well-lit, familiar neighborhoods. Avoid alleys, back roads, or unfamiliar streets. Plan out the trick-or-treating route in advance, and remind your kids to stay on sidewalks and cross streets only at designated crosswalks. If your

child is young, it's important that they're accompanied by an adult who can ensure they're following the proper safety precautions.

3. **Costume Safety:** While it's fun to get creative with costumes, make sure they don't present safety hazards. Avoid long costumes that may cause tripping, and ensure that masks or accessories don't obscure vision. Remind your kids that while their costumes are meant to be fun, they also need to be practical for walking and navigating safely.

4. **Check Candy:** Once trick-or-treating is over, it's important for parents to inspect their children's candy before letting them dig in. Look for any unwrapped or suspicious items, and discard anything that looks tampered with. It's always better to be safe than sorry.

5. **Stranger Danger:** Remind your children never to enter someone's home or car while trick-or-treating, even if invited. Stick to knocking on doors and collecting candy from the doorstep. Teach them to always stay with their group and to alert a trusted adult if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

### **Staying safe at fall festivals and gatherings**

Fall is also a time for harvest festivals, bonfires, hayrides, and other seasonal activities. While these events are fun, they can also present certain risks. Here are a few tips to ensure that your family enjoys fall festivities safely.

1. **Bonfire Safety:** Bonfires are a popular way to celebrate cooler weather, but they can also be dangerous if not properly managed. Always supervise children around open flames and ensure that the bonfire is a safe distance from any structures, trees, or flammable materials. Make sure there's a water source or a fire extinguisher nearby in case of an emergency.

2. **Proper Clothing:** With the temperatures dropping, it's important to dress appropriately for the cooler nights. Make sure your kids are wearing layers to stay warm, especially if they'll be outside for extended periods. Gloves, hats, and scarves can help prevent the risk of cold-related illnesses.

3. **Hayride Safety:** Many fall festivals offer hayrides, which can be a fun way to enjoy the season, but it's essential to ensure that the ride is safe. Only participate in hayrides that are supervised and run by reputable organizations, and make sure that all riders are seated and following safety instructions.

4. **Pet Safety:** Many families bring their pets to fall festivals, but it's important to ensure that they're kept on a leash and away from open flames, large crowds, or unfamiliar animals. Be mindful of how your pet reacts to the excitement, and keep an eye on them to prevent any accidents.

## **Fire safety during the colder nights**

As we head into the colder months, many families will start using their fireplaces, space heaters, and candles to stay warm and cozy. While these sources of heat and light can add a sense of warmth to your home, they also come with risks if not handled properly. At Marshall County 911, our responders are frequently sent to calls related to house fires during the fall and winter, and we want to help you prevent these types of emergencies.

1. **Fireplace Safety:** If you have a fireplace in your home, it's important to have it inspected and cleaned annually. Chimneys can build up creosote, which can become a fire hazard if not removed. When using your fireplace, always use a protective screen to prevent sparks from escaping, and never leave a fire unattended. Make sure that flammable items, such as furniture, blankets, or curtains, are kept a safe distance from the fire.
2. **Space Heaters:** Space heaters can be a great way to heat up small areas, but they can also be a fire hazard if not used correctly. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions, and make sure the heater is placed on a flat, stable surface away from flammable objects. Never leave a space heater running when you're not in the room, and keep children and pets away from the heater to prevent accidents.
3. **Candle Safety:** Candles are a popular way to create a warm, inviting atmosphere during the fall and winter months, but they can also lead to fires if not used carefully. Always place candles on stable, heat-resistant surfaces, and never leave them burning unattended. Blow out candles before going to bed or leaving the house, and keep them out of reach of children and pets.
4. **Smoke Alarms:** Make sure that your home is equipped with working smoke alarms. Test them monthly, and replace the batteries at least twice a year. Smoke alarms are your first line of defense in detecting a fire and getting your family to safety.

## **Teach your kids how and when to dial 911**

One of the most important safety lessons you can teach your children is how and when to dial 911. While we hope that emergencies never happen, it's crucial that your kids know what to do in case of an emergency.

1. **Know the Right Time to Call:** Teach your kids that 911 is for emergencies only. Explain that emergencies include situations where someone is hurt, there's a fire, or a crime is happening. It's important that they understand not to call 911 for non-emergency situations, such as losing a toy or arguing with a sibling.
2. **Memorize Information:** Make sure your children know their full name, address, and phone number, as well as their parents' names. This information is critical for 911 dispatchers to send

help as quickly as possible. If your child is too young to memorize this information, keep it written down in a place they can easily access, when using the phone.

3. **Stay Calm and Follow Instructions:** In an emergency, it's important for your child to stay calm and listen to the dispatcher's instructions. Practice with your kids so they know how to speak clearly and provide the necessary information. Let them know that the dispatcher is there to help and will guide them through the process.

### **Preparing for the worst: What to do in an emergency**

Despite our best efforts to prevent emergencies, sometimes they happen. In these situations, it's important to know what steps to take to protect yourself and your family. As your local 911 dispatch team, we're here to help you through any crisis, but the first few moments are often the most critical.

1. **Stay Calm:** In an emergency, it's natural to feel panicked, but staying calm can make all the difference. When calling 911, take a deep breath and try to speak as clearly as possible. The more information you can provide, the faster we can get help to you.
2. **Follow Instructions:** Once you've provided the necessary information, listen carefully to the dispatcher's instructions. Whether it's performing CPR, evacuating a building, or waiting for emergency responders, following these instructions can help save lives.
3. **Prepare for the Arrival of Emergency Services:** While waiting for emergency responders to arrive, do what you can to keep the situation under control. If it's a fire, evacuate the building and stay a safe distance away. If someone is injured, follow the dispatcher's instructions for providing first aid.
4. **Know Your Surroundings:** In an emergency, knowing your location is crucial. Make sure that your house number is clearly visible from the street, and if you're at a large event or outdoor area, be aware of landmarks or points of reference that can help emergency responders find you quickly.

Stay safe, and enjoy the holiday season!

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Rhonda Braudis is the Marshall County

911 communications director.

