

## New system aids communication in emergencies

By Brooke Adams  
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New technology that allows dispatchers to share information electronically will save precious seconds responding to calls for help from residents of unincorporated Salt Lake County and allow better coordination between emergency responders throughout the valley.

Salt Lake County officials on Wednesday unveiled the new system, now finishing the testing phase at the Valley Emergency Communication Center, and described it as an advance that moves the valley "light years" ahead in its emergency services communication capability.

"In public safety, seconds mean lives and now we are saving those seconds that could be critical to all the citizens of Salt Lake County," said County Mayor Peter Corroon. "We want the public to have confidence in our emergency systems and I think after today they will have even more confidence."

The system also ends what Salt Lake County Sheriff Jim Winder described as decades of infighting over information sharing between the county and VECC.

"The citizens of this county have spoken in repeated incidences and demanded that these communication issues get resolved," Winder said. "We believe we have achieved a goal that has been needed for over a decade."

VECC handles 911 calls for all entities in the valley except Salt Lake City and the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office.

The new system, which uses components provided by several technology companies, allows incident data to be instantly shared electronically. That ensures information is shared "without fear of dropped calls or missed information," said Don Berry, Unified Fire Authority chief.

It also includes a mapping program that provides real-time displays of incident locations and resources deployed, which will improve communication and ensure efficient use of resources, officials said.

Previously, in fire or medical calls VECC would dispatch responders and then alert the sheriff's office, said William Harry, VECC executive director. In those situations as well as in other 911 calls, county dispatchers will no longer have to re-interview callers.

The center also previously relied on telephone and radio communication to share information with other law enforcement agencies.

The county received a \$993,000 federal grant that covered most of the cost of the new system, with the county picking up the rest. Companies who contributed to the system include Versaterm, Spillman, [Online Business Systems](#) and FlyteComm Inc.

Winder said the innovation is a step toward "multiple public safety answering points, which will immediately begin to reduce people's likelihood of receiving a busy signal at a 911 center or being placed on hold.

"The goal of the sheriff's office and the goal of Salt Lake County is to move towards zero hold time on 911 calls, and that is where we are moving with this technology," he said.

[brooke@sltrib.com](mailto:brooke@sltrib.com)

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