



Police survey: 911 upgrade 'is a total failure'

CARL LINDQUIST *The York Dispatch*

Updated: 01/08/2010 01:15:57 PM EST

Police officers from five more departments in a survey criticized York County's new 911 network as unreliable and said they lacked confidence it would keep them safe.

The York County Chiefs of Police Association on Monday submitted more results to the county from a survey examining the county's 911 center operations and its new computer-aided dispatch and radio systems.

The additional results were meant to complement an initial November survey of 148 local police officers and county detectives. The follow-up survey contained many of the same questions, although several questions were omitted or altered.

President York County Commissioner Steve Chronister said the county is working to resolve all outstanding problems with the new, \$36 million radio system and wants to ensure that all police officers are kept safe.

Similar: Like the results from the original survey, the 130 officers who responded to the second round of questions said the new, digital system wasn't an improvement over its analog predecessor. They also said the new, portable

radios that officers carry while on duty are unreliable.

Officers with 15 police departments and the York County detectives have now responded to the survey.

"The new system is a total failure," one officer wrote in comments attached to the new version of the survey. "The car radios are OK. The portables suck!"

More than half the officers said they weren't satisfied with the level of service provided by York County 911.

They also said a dispatcher's action or lack of action potentially compromised their safety within the last three months.

More responses: The additional results were given to the commissioners in response to criticism that the sample size of the first survey was too small, said Southern Regional Police Chief Jim Childs, president of the chiefs association.

He said the survey was changed to make it shorter and faster to fill out.

The addition of the new survey results mean that nearly half the approximately 600 sworn law enforcement officers in York County have now participated.

"We believe that police officers are not satisfied

Advertisement

TARGET WEB COUPON **EXPIRES 2/27/10**

25¢ each
with purchase of twenty-five
4x6" Kodak instant prints



This coupon is intended for use by the original recipient only and is void if copied, scanned, transferred, purchased, sold or prohibited by law. Limit one offer per transaction. GiftCards and tax will not be included in determining purchase total. No cash value. Offer available at Target One Hour Photo Labs. Go to Target.com/photo for the location nearest you. One Hour service limited to machine capacity.




9856-0113-1882-4674-0306-4005-84

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™



and something needs to be done," Childs said. "(The responses) are the same as we got from the first round."

Childs said the police chiefs association is hoping to set up a meeting with the county commissioners to discuss the survey results.

Harris Corp., which sold the system to the county, was at a police chiefs association meeting Wednesday and assured the chiefs that the company was working to resolve problems with the radio system, Childs said.

"We have their ear," he said. "They definitely know there's a problem."

The goal of the survey was to impress upon the county the severity and number of problems that officers have experienced since transitioning to the new network in 2008, Childs said.

He said one additional police department turned in results to the chiefs association on Wednesday, but the information came too late to be compiled into the results submitted Monday.

"I think we're going to accomplish what we need to get done with the survey," Childs said. "We identified the problem areas. Now let's fix it and move on."

Response: Harris Corp. takes the results of the survey "very seriously," said Mike Browne, a consultant acting as site manager for Harris.

"For all of us that have worked very hard on this project, it's very disheartening," Browne said.

He said the company is committed to resolving outstanding problems.

For example, Harris has developed and tested a fix to stop the radios from "locking up," which he said is the single biggest known problem affecting users across the county.

Harris is installing the fix on a limited basis to ensure it works properly, and will continue the installations across the county if it works well, Browne said.

The company is also replacing free of charge the lapel microphones officers use with their portable radios, Browne said. Connections sometimes come loose.

Chronister said the commissioners are willing to meet with the police chiefs and any other agency concerned about the radio system.

"Our doors have been open every single day for them to come in," he said. "We are working with the company to fix the problems."

He said that many of the issues identified by police in the survey have already been worked out. As for those that remain, he said the county and first responders must give Harris time to get them fixed.

"We have to let this company work it out," he

Advertisement

TARGET WEB COUPON **EXPIRES 2/27/10**

25¢ each
with purchase of twenty-five
4x6" Kodak instant prints



This coupon is intended for use by the original recipient only and is void if copied, scanned, transferred, purchased, sold or prohibited by law. Limit one offer per transaction. GiftCards and tax will not be included in determining purchase total. No cash value. Offer available at Target One Hour Photo Labs. Go to Target.com/photo for the location nearest you. One Hour service limited to machine capacity.




9856-0113-1882-4674-0306-4005-84

Print Powered By 



said.

"When they finally say 'we can't do anymore, sorry, we're stuck with it,' that's when we litigate," he said. "But that hasn't happened yet. They are working on all the problems and issues they have."

-- Reach Carl Lindquist at 505-5426 or clindquist@yorkdispatch.com .

Advertisement

TARGET WEB COUPON **EXPIRES 2/27/10**

25¢ each
with purchase of twenty-five
4x6" Kodak instant prints



This coupon is intended for use by the original recipient only and is void if copied, scanned, transferred, purchased, sold or prohibited by law. Limit one offer per transaction. GiftCards and tax will not be included in determining purchase total. No cash value. Offer available at Target One Hour Photo Labs. Go to Target.com/photo for the location nearest you. One Hour service limited to machine capacity.




9856-0113-1882-4674-0306-4005-84

Print Powered By 



York County Chiefs of Police Association

"Serving as the Professional Voice for Police Services in York County"

President – Chief James Childs
Southern Regional Police

Vice President – Chief Timothy Hippensteel
West Manheim Police

Treasurer – Chief John Snyder
Newberry Township Police

Secretary – Chief David Sterner
Lower Windsor Township

Immediate Past President – Chief Bernard Dugan
Fairview Township Police

November 13, 2009

The following survey results were compiled into a composite by taking the individual surveys and adding up the responses for each question and providing the totals on a single survey form. There were numerous comments made for various questions and they were included in the results as an attachment or listed in red below each question. Some of those comments had to be explained because they were done individually. For example in question number 5 a respondent crossed out the word "opinion" and penned in "idea" we simply explained this for the purposes of the composite.

The purpose of the survey was to get an idea of both the actual problems being experienced by officers in the field and what perception may be prevalent with respect to radios, MDC's, dispatching/dispatcher training, and overall management of these issues. While not every officer and/or department responded, there was a very good cross section. Departments of all sizes were represented as well as County agencies. There were a total of 148 surveys returned. While this survey may not include every user of these systems it certainly represents and accurate microcosm of both actual problems and some perceptions that overall lead to a lack of confidence with these systems and/or the management of them. Officer safety is by far the biggest concern for not just the officer on the street but for those of us responsible to provide them with the tools to do their jobs. The results of this survey seem to suggest that for the most part, officers from the various agencies feel that their safety is being compromised.

Secretary Molly Miller of the Lower Windsor Township Police Department compiled the results.

Respectfully Submitted:
David P. Sterner
Secretary: York County Chiefs Association

POLICE RESPONSES – 148 RESPONSES TOTAL

York County 911
End User Survey

911 CENTER OPERATIONS / PERSONNEL

1. The 911 Center believes that they are in business to serve the first responders and their agencies.

Strongly Disagree	15
Disagree	33
Agree	73
Strongly Agree	10
I have no opinion	17

- a. **I would like to think so.**
- b. **Officers believe this is what the 911 Center should be doing and they feel that most of the dispatchers believe this also**
- c. **I don't know what they "believe."**

2. I am confident in the ability of the 911 Center to keep me safe and to keep the public safe.

Strongly Disagree	29
Disagree	71
Agree	36
Strongly Agree	3
I have no opinion	9

- a. **At times.**
- b. **Although officers report issues with dispatchers, they seem to indicate that most problems are equipment related. Officers also feel that the dispatchers need more training and that the long hours and mandatory overtime affects them.**
- c. **As in other professions it depends on the employee**
- e. **Incomplete information obtained and relayed regarding suspect; failed to ask simple officer safety relations questions to c/o**
- f. **Depends which dispatchers are working**

3. I am satisfied with the level and quality of service provided by York County 911.

Strongly Disagree	29
Disagree	84
Agree	29
Strongly Agree	2
I have no opinion	4

4. Calls are dispatched and messages are relayed in a timely accurate manner.

Strongly Disagree	24
Disagree	78
Agree	32
Strongly Agree	4
I have no opinion	10

- a. **At times**
- b. **Accurate was circled**
- c. **There is much room for improvement**
- d. **Again it depends on the dispatcher**
- e. **Sometimes**
- f. **Overall most of the dispatchers are dedicated & hard working. I think a huge problem is having a different call taker and another dispatcher dispatching the call - very apparent they are reading info for 1st time as they dispatch it.**

5. When the public calls 911 they are satisfied with the service that they receive.

Strongly Disagree	11
Disagree	37
Agree	23
Strongly Agree	2
I have no opinion	75

- "opinion" lined out replaced with idea**
- Not certain either way**
- Unknown.**
- At least based on what they tell me**
- For the most part.**
- Most of the public questions why the large amount of questions have to be asked**

6. Within the past 3 months my safety was potentially compromised by the action or inaction of a dispatcher.

Strongly Disagree	4
Disagree	48
Agree	52
Strongly Agree	18
I have no opinion	26

- Except when out of Metro area (ie, chases / traffic stops requiring assistance from other agency).**
- Luckily not me personally.**
- On our DA channel, I have had first-hand experience where I have tried to use my portable radio to speak with 911 and my calls were not answered-had to call in by phone.**
- Complaint was made**
- Incomplete information obtained and relayed regarding suspect; failed to ask simple officer safety related questions to c/o**

7. The York County 911 Center is properly managed / supervised.

Strongly Disagree	49
Disagree	46
Agree	14
Strongly Agree	0
I have no opinion	39

- THREE STARS ADDED TO STRONGLY DISAGREE FOR EMPHASIS**
- This radio system switch, not to mention the New World project are a mess!**
- NO**

8. The 911 Center provides adequate dispatcher training and employs only competent dispatch personnel.

Strongly Disagree	26
Disagree	62
Agree	12
Strongly Agree	
I have no opinion	48

- I believe most dispatchers are competent. In my opinion, the problem lies with the current management, the protocol for how calls are taken and then sent to another dispatcher, and the overly long hours for the dispatchers.**
- Underlined and 3 checks made for emphasis**
- THREE stars added to STRONGLY DISAGREE for emphasis**
- When it is your job that you get paid for is it that hard to learn the 10-codes?**
- I do not know what training is provided.**
- Adequate dispatcher training was underlined for emphasis**

9. The 911 Center needs to re-evaluate their protocols and procedures to focus more on officer safety and service to first responders.

Strongly Disagree	2
Disagree	12
Agree	46
Strongly Agree	75
I have no opinion	13

- ONE STAR ADDED TO STRONGLY AGREE FOR EMPHASIS**
- Protocols and Procedures underlined for emphasis**
- Need the Radio Problem Fixed!**

10. The York County 911 Center is in need of drastic changes.

Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	22
Agree	48
Strongly Agree	55
I have no opinion	22

- Some areas, (drastic changes underlined)**
- From top to bottom.**
- SIX STARS ADDED TO STRONGLY AGREE FOR EMPHASIS**
- Drastic is circled for emphasis**
- Better radio and CAD system is needed**

CAD / MOBILE CAD

11. CAD has made our dispatch information more accurate and the overall 911 operations more efficient.

Strongly Disagree	25
Disagree	50
Agree	46
Strongly Agree	5
I have no opinion	22

- Old system was more reliable easier to use.**
- When the information is accurate.**
- A properly working, properly designed, properly used CAD makes dispatch information more accurate and efficient. None of these three conditions describe YC911's CAD with regularity**
- I was dispatched to a physical domestic where the dispatcher made no mention of weapons. Just prior to my arrival I glanced at the CAD and saw information that the male subj. was to be hiding a handgun and shotgun at the time of the call. In my opinion this is due to too much info on the screen which is then sent to yet another dispatcher who then dispatches the call.**
- Old system provided "call history."**
- Rarely works**
- If it works**
- Working is underlined for further emphasis**
- WHEN IT WORKS!**
- Seeing the info on a call on CAD is a benefit. I think a huge problem is having a different call taker & another dispatcher dispatching the call-very apparent they are reading info for 1st time as they dispatch it.**

12. CAD information is usually accurate and timely.

Strongly Disagree	14
Disagree	60
Agree	49
Strongly Agree	3
I have no opinion	22

- Usually info on screen is not relayed the same as on Radio Dispatch.**
- When you can get on.**
- There are times when information is not accurate and it seems it occurs when I need the info the most.**
- "usually" was underlined.**
- When it is working**
- *All info should be placed in CAD**
- WHEN IT WORKS!**

13. A working Mobile CAD makes it easier for me to do my job.

Strongly Disagree	2
Disagree	11
Agree	58
Strongly Agree	59
I have no opinion	18

- a. Working was underlined and highlighted for emphasis.
- b. When it works.
- c. Working is circled for emphasis
- d. WHEN IT WORKS!
- e. Working double-underlined and Strongly Agree circled for emphasis
- f. *If they enter all info without short-hand or provide officers with a short-hand guide
- g. When it works, its great

14. Mobile CAD does not usually connect or work properly for me.

Strongly Disagree	2
Disagree	26
Agree	58
Strongly Agree	42
I have no opinion	20

- a. Has been better in recent months.
- b. Usually was underlined.
- c. Officers collective comments are the CAD is better but it still won't connect or loses connection more than it should.
- d. Unreliable
- e. CAD is not dependable, only boots up 50% of the time
- f. Has gotten a little better but still a problem.

15. Within the past 3 months, I have received an inaccurate call or information from the CAD system.

Strongly Disagree	5
Disagree	23
Agree	57
Strongly Agree	28
I have no opinion	35

- a. Usually info on screen is not relayed the same as on Radio Dispatch.
- b. Previous system (call history) was FAR more reliable & provided more useful background information.
- c. I would like to see prior contact information when running 27 & 28's.
- d. Many times safety information like the guy has a gun is in the CAD but not given on the radio. Officer can't read all details when driving.
- e. The address was incorrect
- f. *Received Late calls, sometimes from days prior

RADIO SYSTEM

16. The new digital radio system is a significant improvement over the legacy (old) system.

Strongly Disagree	77
Disagree	44
Agree	20
Strongly Agree	4
I have no opinion	3

- a. Reception/transmission is better for the most part; Radios are complicated to use; Sound quality, dropped calls are a big issue.
- b. When it works.
- c. Not if we have bad weather.
- d. I do not like the displays in the transmissions.
- e. The old system was better
- f. Placed "x10" beside Strongly Disagree
- g. Old system enabled officers to communicate more effectively and efficiently during critical incidents
- h. Horrible Radio System!! It fails when you need it most
- i. I see no benefits for our officers over the old system, only disadvantages

17. The programming personality of the radio should be changed to make it easier to operate.

Strongly Disagree	2
Disagree	13
Agree	49
Strongly Agree	63
I have no opinion	21

- a. Thank you
- b. Radio is easy to operate

18. The radio usually works when I need it.

Strongly Disagree	19
Disagree	55
Agree	70
Strongly Agree	2
I have no opinion	2

- a. At least lately.
- b. Usually
- c. USER SELECTED ALL 4 above options.
- d. Officer who voted agree and disagree indicate the radios are better but they underlined the word "USUALLY" and/or indicated the radios should ALWAYS work.
- e. But I only use the radio very little.
- f. Usually underlined for further emphasis
- g. However, I dislike the time it takes for the portable to come up when it is turned on.
- h. Usually is double-underlined and "NOT GOOD ENOUGH!"
- i. Multiple attempts required
- j. Numerous problems have been reported
- k. Underwater sound, dispatcher cannot hear transmission
- l. I have had problems transmitting and it always seems to happen when I need it most.
- m. DO I WANT A PISTOL THAT USUALLY WORKS?

19. I believe that complaints or problem reports that I make about the radio system are investigated and resolved.

Strongly Disagree	46
Disagree	54
Agree	21
Strongly Agree	2
I have no opinion	25

- a. Have seen no change
- b. If they are, our radios are not working better
- c. Sgt. Butler does what he can!
- d. Investigated - Yes / Resolved - No
- e. I believe they are investigated but not always resolved

20. I have confidence that the new radio system will provide reliable communication to keep me safe.

Strongly Disagree	65
Disagree	60
Agree	18
Strongly Agree	0
I have no opinion	5

- a. 95% of the time
- b. I hope so but I do not have "confidence" that it will.
- c. But I truly hope it does
- d. When?
- e. Does not work in certain areas, cannot hear other officers
- f. Sometime in the future?

GENERAL

21. I believe the most serious problem at the 911 Center is:

NOTE - SOME RESPONDENTS MADE MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

- | | |
|--|----|
| Training of Dispatchers / Call Takers | 18 |
| Retention of competent Dispatchers / Call Takers | 27 |
| CAD / Mobile CAD | 9 |
| New P25 Digital Radio System | 76 |
| Management / Supervision | 42 |
| All of the above | 7 |
| None were checked | 3 |
- a. Protocols which allow for a timely dispatch
 - b. Management circled
 - c. Management underlined; / protocol written in
 - d. It usually starts from the top and flows down hill.
 - e. CAD disconnects and has small font - too hard to read when driving!
 - f. Wow! Which one should I choose?
 - g. Close 2nd was written beside Training of Dispatcher/Call Takers
 - h. Biggest Concern written beside Retention of competent dispatchers/Call Takers

22. The problem requiring immediate action at the 911 Center is:

NOTE - SOME RESPONDENTS MADE MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

- | | |
|--|----|
| Training of Dispatchers / Call Takers | 18 |
| Retention of competent Dispatchers / Call Takers | 21 |
| CAD / Mobile CAD | 10 |
| New P25 Digital Radio System | 84 |
| Management / Supervision | 42 |
| All of the above | 5 |
| None were checked | 4 |
- a. Protocols for timely dispatch!!!!
 - b. I believe they are short handed and need more manpower with dispatch
 - c. Management circled
 - d. Management underlined
 - e. Bistline should be fired.
 - f. Someone has to take responsibility for the multiple problems currently going on at 911!
 - g. I think all need the same action but the radio is a safety problem.

COMMENTS: Please attach any comments or narratives to this survey on a separate page.

Additional Comments:

I was recently requested by Columbia Borough to assist them with an incident involving a person with a gun. The York Co. dispatcher informed myself and another Hellam Township officer to switch to the National frequency to communicate with Lancaster County Units. We do not have a National frequency and were unable to communicate with Lancaster.

In regards to the Mobile CAD system, Dispatch screens are not updated as new information is added to the incident via YCC. Officers have to clear out the dispatch screen and bring it back up using the active call list or other means. It would be advantageous if officers could receive updates to incidents as they are entered by the dispatchers.

POLICE RESPONSES – 130 RESPONSES
Spring Garden/York Area/Northern/Springettsbury/Southwestern Regional
York County 911
End User Survey

911 CENTER OPERATIONS / PERSONNEL

1. I am satisfied with the level of quality of service provided by York County 911.

Strongly Disagree	21
Disagree	56
Agree	48
Strongly Agree	0
I have no opinion	5

2. Calls are dispatched and messages are relayed in an accurate manner.

Strongly Disagree	14
Disagree	68
Agree	40
Strongly Agree	2
I have no opinion	6

3. Calls are dispatched and messages are relayed in a timely manner.

Strongly Disagree	12
Disagree	66
Agree	40
Strongly Agree	2
I have no opinion	10

4. Within the past 3 months my safety was potentially comprised by the action or inaction of a dispatcher.

Strongly Disagree	5
Disagree	42
Agree	43
Strongly Agree	19
I have no opinion	21

5. Dispatchers provide adequate information related to a call most of the time.

Strongly Disagree	7
Disagree	42
Agree	74
Strongly Agree	4
I have no opinion	3

6. Dispatchers are willing to obtain more detailed information on a call, if requested by an officer.

Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	8
Agree	81
Strongly Agree	34
I have no opinion	6

CAD / MOBILE CAD

7. CAD has made our dispatch information more accurate and the overall 911 operations more efficient.

Strongly Disagree	15
Disagree	40
Agree	44
Strongly Agree	10
I have no opinion	21

8. CAD information is usually accurate and timely.

Strongly Disagree	4
Disagree	34
Agree	65
Strongly Agree	4
I have no opinion	23

9. A working Mobile CAD makes it easier for me to do my job.

Strongly Disagree	2
Disagree	6
Agree	61
Strongly Agree	46
I have no opinion	15

10. A Mobile CAD does not usually connect or work properly for me.

Strongly Disagree	3
Disagree	22
Agree	47
Strongly Agree	37
I have no opinion	21

11. Within the past 3 months, I have received an inaccurate call or information from the CAD System.

Strongly Disagree	6
Disagree	22
Agree	54
Strongly Agree	17
I have no opinion	31

RADIO SYSTEM

12. The new digital radio system is a significant improvement over the legacy (old) system.

Strongly Disagree	64
Disagree	48
Agree	13
Strongly Agree	3
I have no opinion	2

13. The programming personality of the radio should be changed to make it easier to operate.

Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	24
Agree	45
Strongly Agree	50
I have no opinion	11

14. The portable radio is reliable and usually works when I need it.

Strongly Disagree	28
Disagree	56
Agree	38
Strongly Agree	3
I have no opinion	5

15. The mobile radio is reliable and usually works when I need it.

Strongly Disagree	26
Disagree	52
Agree	47
Strongly Agree	1
I have no opinion	4

16. I believe that complaints or problem reports that I make about the radio system are investigated and resolved.

Strongly Disagree	40
Disagree	50
Agree	15
Strongly Agree	2
I have no opinion	23

17. I have confidence that the new radio system will provide reliable communication to keep me safe.

Strongly Disagree	64
Disagree	46
Agree	13
Strongly Agree	0
I have no opinion	7