



# **SOLANO COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY**

2022-2023

## **SOLANO COUNTY EMERGENCY DISPATCH REPORT**

**June 23,2023**

# **Solano County Emergency Dispatch Report**

Solano County Civil Grand Jury 2022-2023

## **I. SUMMARY**

Time is of the essence for emergency service personnel to respond to calls for help. Delays in responding to such calls can be the difference between life and death. As a result, the 2022-2023 Solano County Civil Grand Jury (Jury) investigated and found there is a lapse and sometimes inappropriate delays between receipt of incoming calls and fulfillment. This greatly affects a rapid response to emergency issues. Dispatch delays increase the danger for property and lives.

This jury toured and interviewed various public safety entities and their employees, to include sworn officers, fire fighters and other staff. The Jury determined that there is a major disparity within the departments relating to dispatch and emergency response times.

A consolidation of all dispatch centers to one facility would adequately serve the residents.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

Solano County was formed in 1850 and served seven jurisdictions. Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun City, Vacaville, and Vallejo as well as unincorporated areas. As jurisdictions voted to become cities the primary responsibility to provide safety for residents fell onto the lap of the cities, themselves. Some Cities took charge immediately on incorporation while some took a “wait and see” attitude. All seven became cities by 1903.

There are seven cities and one Sheriff’s department in Solano County, most with their own communications or dispatch systems.

## **III. METHODOLOGY**

Interviewed/toured:

County Department of Information Technology

Dispatch Centers

Fire Departments

Police Departments

Sheriff’s Department including the Office of Emergency Services (OES)

Articles:

[www.fire.ca.gov](http://www.fire.ca.gov) - The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

[www.Gilroydispatch.com](http://www.Gilroydispatch.com) – CDF Changes Name to CAL FIRE, dated January 31, 2007

## **IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS**

During interviews with staff, the Jury discovered a general acceptance to the idea of a consolidated dispatch center for Solano County.

Dispatch centers in Solano County operate on three different radio systems. The cities of Benicia and Vallejo are part of the East Bay Regional Communications System Authority (EBRCSA). Fairfield, Vacaville and Suisun City operate on the Solano County Regional Communications System (SCRCS) and the Sheriff Department, Rio Vista and Dixon operate on an analog UHF/VHF system. EBRCSA and SCRCS utilize the P25 platform which is the digital standard for radio communications with the ability to transmit and receive both voice and data. The Sheriff Department has the capability to communicate with either the EBRCSA or the SCRCS.

**SOLANO COUNTY RADIO COUNT BY ENTITY**

	<u>Radios</u>		<u>Radio System(s)</u>
Solano County	1,458	33.8%	VHF/UHF
Fairfield	798	18.5%	P25 (SCRCS)
Vacaville	680	15.8%	P25 (SCRCS)
Vallejo	530	12.3%	P25 (EBRCS)
Benicia	201	4.7%	P25 (EBRCS)
Suisun City	180	4.2%	P25 (SCRCS)
Dixon Police	58	1.3%	P25 (SCRCS)
Rio Vista	36	0.8%	VHF
<u>Fire Protection Districts</u>			
Suisun FPD	93	2.2%	VHF
Montezuma FPD	84	1.9%	VHF
Vacaville FPD	72	1.7%	VHF
Cordelia FPD	62	1.4%	VHF
Dixon Fire	59	1.3%	VHF
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,311</b>		

Emergency communications in the County are transmitted and received by strategically placed antennae towers. Communications throughout the county are fractured due to the topography and radio systems separating Benicia and Vallejo from the rest of the county.

The County has developed a proposal with the Motorola Corporation to provide antennae towers to bridge the communication gap. As of the time of this investigation funding has yet to be identified and the land to erect the towers has not been acquired.

All dispatchers in Solano County are cross-trained to serve both the fire and law enforcement departments.

As of 2022: the following details the fire and police departments in each jurisdiction and their dispatch:

**A. BENICIA**

- Population 26,819 (5.9% of Solano County)
- Fire and Police Departments and dispatch center
- The Dispatch Center staff: 11
- 2017 through 2022 dispatch center calls:
  - 311,882 non-emergency
  - 36,513 emergency (911)
  - 317 texts (911)
  - Average processing time of the 911 call until fire/police dispatch: 86 seconds

**B. DIXON**

- Population 18,974 (4.2% of Solano County)
- Fire Department
- Law enforcement is performed by the County Sheriff / OES provides dispatch services

**C. FAIRFIELD**

- Population 119,705 (26.5% of Solano County)
- Fire and Police Departments and dispatch facility
- Dispatch Center staff: 13 full time dispatchers, including four dispatch supervisors and three part time dispatchers.
- 2017 through 2022 dispatch center calls:
  - 282,195 emergency (911)
  - Average processing time from receipt of the 911 call until fire/police dispatched: 61 seconds

**D. RIO VISTA**

- Population 10,533 (2.3% of Solano County)
- Fire Department
- Law enforcement is performed by the County Sheriff / OES provides dispatch services

**E. SUISUN CITY**

- Population 29,165 (6.5% of Solano County)
- Fire and Police Departments and dispatch center
- 2017 through 2022 dispatch center calls:
  - 63,312 emergency (911)
- Dispatch center staff: 10 full time positions
- The average processing from receipt of 911 call to dispatch of fire/police: 92 seconds

**F. VALLEJO**

- Population 124,886 (27.6% of Solano County)
- Fire and Police Departments and dispatch center
- Dispatch center staff: 11 dispatchers including four supervisors

- 2017 through 2022 dispatch center calls:
  - 584,613 emergency (911)
- Average processing time from 911 call until:
  1. Fire dispatch: 7.06 minutes
  2. Police Dispatch 84.26 minutes

**G. VACAVILLE**

- Population 103,078 (22.8% of Solano County)
- Fire and Police Departments and dispatch center
- Dispatch center staff: 19 dispatchers and four supervisors.
- 2017 through 2022 the dispatch center calls:
  - 153,299 emergency (911)
  - Average processing time from receipt of 911 call to dispatch of police/fire dispatched: 24.15 seconds

**H. UNINCORPORATED AREAS (Including Elmira and Birds Landing)**

- Population 18,556 (4.1% of Solano County)
- Responsibility for responding to unincorporated areas and those residences lies with three agencies, Solano County Sheriff’s Department, Montezuma Fire District and the Vacaville Fire Protection District.
- Average processing time from the receipt of the 911 call to dispatch of fire/sheriff: 62 seconds

**V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FINDING 1** – Emergency service communication is fractured throughout Solano County and puts the Solano County residents and residences at risk.

**RECOMMENDATION 1** – The County should install a uniform and consistent communications system that connects all emergency services.

**FINDING 2** – The Vallejo Dispatch Center reported 911 call processing times for Fire and Police far longer than every other agency in the County.

**Recommendation 2** – Identify and correct issues to bring average call processing times in line with other County dispatch centers.

**FINDING 3** – There is a general acceptance among emergency service providers in the County to the idea of a consolidated dispatch center.

**Recommendation 3** – Solano County Board of Supervisors should approve and begin the implementation of a consolidated dispatch center

## **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

### Cities of

- Benicia Police and Fire Departments Finding 3
- Dixon Fire Department Finding 3
- Fairfield Police and Fire Departments Finding 3
- Rio Vista Fire Department Finding 3
- Suisun City Police and Fire Departments Finding 3
- Vacaville Police and Fire Departments Finding 3
- Vallejo City Manager Findings 2 and 3
- Vallejo Police and Fire Departments Finding 3

Solano County Board of Supervisors – Finding 1 and 3

Solano County Sheriff Finding 3

### **COURTESY COPIES**

Benicia City Manager

Dixon City Manager

Fairfield City Manager

Rio Vista City Manager

Suisun City, City Manager

Vacaville City Manager

Vallejo City Manager