

# 2019 Communications Center of the year

## **San Diego Police Department**

The past few years have been a struggle for SDPD Communications, but after a lot of hard work on all fronts, definite dedication and commitment to duty, and above all, TEAMWORK, everything culminated into the most impressive year for the Division in a long time. First of all, on the performance front, SDPD handled 1,253,908 calls from the public in 2019. 911 Dispatchers formatted events for dispatch on 520,465 of those calls, and the Radio Dispatchers dispatched 193,978 calls. Dispatchers logged in a total of 104,283 work hours for the year, with an additional 35,764 overtime hours. In the last year, San Diego ... had its share in hosting many large scale events and dignitary visits, is home to professional sports teams, and is prone to homeland security issues ... all of which require SDPD to provide resources for security which cannot be done successfully without outstanding dispatchers ... and the handling of countless major incidents goes without saying. Aside from those huge numbers, the proof in the pudding that shows a Communications Center that can do more with less and exercise the best teamwork is the fact that SDPD Communications has not only met, but exceeded both state and national mandates for 911 answer times for all 12 months last year, with only one minimal dip for one month: - The CalOES standard is that 95% of all 911 calls be answered in 15 seconds or less. For only the month of April did SDPD slightly deviate from that standard, showing a still impressive 94.05% that month, otherwise, performance was between 95.26% and 97.31% for all other months of the year. - The National Emergency Number Association (NENA) standard is that 90% of all 911 calls be answered in 10 seconds or less – SDPD achieved between 90.75% and 95.40% for all 12 months of the year. What also makes the SDPD Communications Division worthy of the Communications Center of the Year Award is the quality of employees that work there and the quality of work they do, despite the seemingly never-ending obstacles that face the Division. All dispatch centers face job stress due to the calls received, major incidents in the field, etc. What makes SDPD dispatchers stand out is how dedicated they have proven to be. Even when staffing levels resulted in mandatory overtime and being denied days off, more dispatchers put forth efforts towards recruiting more employees, mentoring employees in the hopes of increasing retention, and dispatchers started signing up to be Training Officers to be available for both new hires and employees wanting to career advance into the critically understaffed Radio Room. At every level, employees continued to serve a city with 1.339 million people, even with the temptation out there to work for smaller, yet higher-paying agencies. So in the midst of a job that is chaotic by nature, together with a ton of

issues that would drive down morale, the dispatchers of SDPD have persevered in doing what they do best – putting the community first.

## **National City Police Department**

I am proudly nominating the National City PD Dispatchers for Communications Center of the Year. During 2019, this amazing team dealt with a sudden staffing decrease, losing four full time employees in six months, as well as the resignation of their manager, in a center that when fully staffed has 12 full time dispatchers. These challenges were faced head on and have generated one of the most cohesive units I have ever had the pleasure of working with. Working with two employees, occasionally three, per shift, National City PD Dispatch was able to maintain exceptional 911 service by answering 98.73% of their 911 calls in under 15 seconds. The multitasking of the dispatchers is outstanding with the primary dispatcher on occasion successfully working the radio and assisting with incoming 911 calls. In 2019, they answered 31,430 911 calls, processed 80,044 administrative calls and generated 58,677 calls for service. They are also responsible for all entries and queries, monitoring and dispatching on multiple frequencies simultaneously, and completing .2 reports in the NetRMS system for locates they receive. With vacancies comes the need for individuals to take on collateral assignments and have flexibility with their schedules. While this is always a struggle, the team recognized the importance of stepping up. The two lead dispatchers assigned to the unit had to fill a dispatcher shift in addition to handling the scheduling, time sheets, training of new employees, employee evaluations, quality assurance reviews, and keeping up the morale of the remaining staff. Other collateral duties assigned to Communications staff were Agency CLETS Coordinator and backup, new Communications Training Officers, Peer Support, Recruiting, and participating in the department mentoring program. When the manager resigned, dispatch was in the middle of their 911 upgrade to their VESTA phone system and recorder. The dispatch supervisors were coordinating a major upgrade, with no experience, while performing their daily and collateral duties. They kept the project on track the entire time making sound decisions throughout. They successfully went live on the new system in January of this year and are NextGen and Text to 911 ready. Throughout this stressful and sometimes turbulent year, the dispatchers continued to maintain a positive attitude and environment and routinely express how happy they are with the team they have built. Having lost most of their seasoned dispatchers, only two remain with more than 8 years on the job. This young and energetic team is ready to tackle anything thrown at them. They are always thinking up with new team building activities and events to keep their work home a place they enjoy coming to. For these reasons, and many others not

listed, are why I believe the National City Police Department is worthy of being recognized as the Communications Center of the Year.