

Memorandum



Date: July 9, 2007

To: Honorable Carlos Alvarez, Mayor
Honorable Chairman Bruno A. Barreiro
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: George M. Burgess
County Manager 

Subject: Miami Herald Article - 911 Call Center

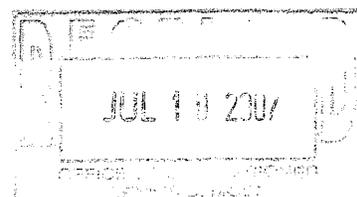
HPSC
Supplement to
Agenda Item No. 7(D)
July 19, 2007

The attached report was prepared by the Miami-Dade Police Department and the Enterprise Technology Services Department. This report provides factual information that corrects inaccuracies in the Miami Herald article of July 2nd.

- The 911 Center has possessed the ability to track cellular phone calls since 2003, and maintains that capacity today.
- The Police Department worked closely with the Herald to answer questions in regard to this system before the article was published. The Major of the Communications Bureau was grossly misquoted in his statement that the system "is not as accurate." He spent a significant amount of time with the reporter, educating him on how the system works. His statement that the system "is not as accurate" was related to the old system, not the new CAD system.
- The Police Department has successfully conducted multiple tests of the system's capacity to track cellular phone calls, which refute the allegations in the Herald article.

Once again, I am disheartened with the inaccuracies portrayed about the County in this article. The Police Department worked closely with the Herald to provide the information they requested and educate them on the details of the system to prevent this type of misinformation.

C: Denis Morales, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
Assistant County Managers
Paula Musto, Director, Communications Department
Robert Parker, Director, Miami-Dade Police Department
Donald Fleming, Director, Enterprise Technology Services Department



Memorandum



Date: July 6, 2007

To: George M. Burgess
County Manager

From: Robert Parker, Director
Miami-Dade Police Department

FC Donald Fleming, PhD
CIO/ Director, Enterprise Technology Services Department

Subject: Miami Herald Article
911 Call Center

Pursuant to your request for additional information concerning the article published in the Miami Herald on Monday, July 2, 2007, the following is offered to clarify the inaccuracies contained within the article and provide the current state of operation of the 911 Center.

The article alleges that based upon information from an employee of Enterprise Technology Services Department (ETSD), the 911 Center has declined since the implementation of the new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) System. The CAD System Project is managed by ETSD and has been an ongoing procurement and implementation project since 2001. This employee did not participate in the writing of the Request for Proposal (RFP); he did not manage the CAD project or take part in the programming, design, or any other operation phase of the CAD system. His responsibilities included managing the telephone system which is just one of many applications that work in conjunction with the CAD System. He is not a designated public information officer of the ETSD and therefore does not represent the department's position.

The article continues with an allegation that the system is a liability to the public because the 911 Center cannot direct rescue resources to the point of service. This is totally inaccurate. The 911 Center dispatches emergency responders to locations by cellular coordinates on a daily basis. This operational functionality is known within the telecommunication and emergency responder industry as Phase II Wireless capability. The Miami-Dade Police 911 Center has been Phase II Wireless compliant since 2003 and continues to be Phase II compliant today.

In order for a 911 Call Center to receive the location of a cellular caller, a caller must be using a Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) enabled telephone and be talking on a cellular network that is also Phase II compliant. The majority of phones sold today include this new technology, as required by the Federal Communications Commission since December 2005. This electronic data must then be delivered by the wireless carrier to the 911 Center for mapping purposes. If a caller is using a non-GPS enabled phone or the carrier is not Phase II compliant, or if there is a disruption of data flow on the part of the carrier, the 911 Center does not have the data available to map the location of the caller. The responsibility to deliver the location of a cellular caller is the sole responsibility of the cellular providers, not Miami-Dade County. The Miami-Dade 911 Center has the same abilities and capabilities today to map cellular caller location as before the system upgrades.

The article continues with a quotation from Major Thomas Gross of our Communication Bureau: "It's not as accurate." This quotation was misrepresented as being related to the current system, when in fact his comments were related to the older mapping system, which was not as accurate. The system is more accurate today with the new system. Miami-Dade County has taken delivery of the mission critical components of the new CAD system and has been operating the 911 Center on the new CAD system since August 2005. The vendor will continue to provide new technology and functionality as it becomes available.

George M. Burgess, County Manager
July 6, 2007
Page 2

The next portion of the article highlights an email from another ETSD employee whose responsibilities lie within the GIS mapping area. The email concerned police officers being dispatched to the area of cellular phone towers. We are still working on tracking this email to determine its relevance to the article. However, the dispatching of police officers to locations, which turned out to be cellular phone towers is not unlike dispatching a police unit to a 911 hang-up at a landline payphone. If a citizen dials 911 from a cell phone and becomes disconnected prior to a more exact location being received, or if the 911 Center can not reconnect with the caller, we have an obligation to send assistance to the last known location. Until emergency personnel arrive on a scene, we cannot assume help is not needed.

There is also a quote from the vendor, which indicates they are continuing in their efforts to refine the system and deliver the required functionality to the County. This type of cooperation is consistent with the implementation of this project throughout the last three years. The additional functionality consists of system enhancements and additional features that the County has requested, but are not the mission critical elements that are already in place.

As an additional test to determine the accuracy and reliability of the cellular mapping capabilities, a Marine Patrol unit was dispatched to approximately 1½ miles off shore and instructed to call 911 as a test call on his cellular phone. The officer connected to the 911 Center and he was tracked via his cellular phone as he was underway within the bay. As his location changed, the 911 Center received updated coordinates as to his location.

While conducting this additional testing, the 911 Center received a call for service from a victim of a rollover car crash. The victim was disoriented and could not provide her location. The emergency call was correctly dispatched to police and fire units based upon her cellular coordinates, and the victim received the aid of first responders which may have helped to save her life.

The article concludes with a reference that this employee is working to correct problems at the Miami-Dade County Water and Sewer Department. That is not correct. His correct job assignment is Regional Supervisor for the south region of Miami-Dade County, supporting computers and telephone systems for ETSD.

The upgrades in technology associated with the 911 Center have spanned three years. Many of these projects actually started, via a Request for Proposals that was issued six years ago. During that time, technology has changed and the way the world communicates has changed. However, what has not changed is our commitment to service to this community. We will continue to utilize the appropriate technologies and support personnel to provide for the safety of the citizens of Miami-Dade County.

RP/tg

c: Alina T. Hudak
Assistant County Manager

Ian Yorty
Assistant County Manager

MiamiHerald.com

Posted on Mon, Jul. 02, 2007

A 911 glitch: Cell calls are hard to track

BY CHARLES RABIN

For nearly two years, Miami-Dade County's 911 emergency call center -- once among the nation's most advanced -- has often been unable to zero in on the precise scene of a crime or a deadly wreck.

The center lost ground after a new, \$13 million Motorola software system was installed, said Kevin Kincaid, a senior technician hired three years ago to expand the center and maintain the system.

Now, calls can often be traced only to the nearest cellphone tower, and a caller's movement generally can't be followed -- stealing precious minutes from first responders trying to save lives, Kincaid said.

"When I first got here we could direct the Coast Guard to stranded boaters. We directed Air Rescue to a helicopter crash in the Everglades," Kincaid said. "Now it's a liability to the public. Someone's going to get killed."

Motorola senior project manager Francie Esterbrook says most of the system's kinks have been corrected.

"I'm only guessing, but I'd say 99 percent of the calls work the way they're supposed to," she said.

Still, Miami-Dade police Maj. Tom Gross, who runs the fourth-busiest 911 center in the country from a bunker-like building in Southwest Miami-Dade, agreed the new system has some shortcomings.

"It's not as accurate" as it was before the upgrade in August 2005, Gross said of the system that accepts more than 6,000 calls a day.

NEW SYSTEM

In 2002, Miami-Dade bought a new multimillion-dollar Motorola system that featured, in part, software called PrinTrak Computer Aided Dispatch, or CAD. The goal: to fine-tune the 911 call center.

It took three years to make the system operational; PrinTrak had problems interacting with the system already in place, said Kincaid.

Once it was online, however, it didn't work as county leaders hoped.

The difficulties were highlighted in a December 2006 e-mail: "I should mention that a call taker and dispatcher explained to me today that officers [especially in the Hammocks District] have been mistakenly driving to cellphone towers to handle calls that come in from cellphones," wrote 911 systems analyst Josh Brashears to a project manager.

"We're working on a software upgrade," that should be ready by the end of this summer, Motorola

4

spokesman Steve Gorecki said.

Gross said tests are under way to find out what's holding back the equipment from consistently locating a caller. He said he can't say for sure which component is to blame.

"We're trying to make that determination. It's a combination of all the systems," he said.

WOMAN'S DEATH

The death of a Miramar woman in a Northwest Miami-Dade canal in February 2001 had prompted the county's move to upgrade 911.

Just before sunrise in February 2001, Karla Gutierrez was driving home in her BMW north on Florida's Turnpike when her car skidded off the road and plunged into a canal. As the car was sinking, Gutierrez spent more than three desperate minutes with 911 operators unable to pinpoint her exact location.

The last thing an operator is heard saying on the 911 tape is, "we lost her."

A year later the county signed its contract with Motorola. But before that system came online, in late 2003, another system called the Positron Public Safety mapping application was installed. It seemed to work fine.

"You could track movement, didn't lose officers, and it didn't have any hiccups. It did work perfectly," said County Commissioner Joe Martinez, who was a county police officer before he was elected to office.

Kincaid, who was transferred out of the 911 center last year, is now working on correcting some problems at the Water and Sewer Department. He blames the 911 system's regression on the difficulties of interfacing PrinTrak with Positron.

For months Kincaid bombarded his bosses with e-mails and letters, some of which went to County Mayor Carlos Alvarez. Kincaid even contacted the county's Inspector General's office.

Alvarez said he has not yet responded to Kincaid's letter. But, in part because of Kincaid's concerns, the county has conducted recent tests of a new Motorola software.

Alvarez said a police patrol boat was sent 1 ½ miles offshore, and the boat's location was accurately tracked as it moved.

Other tests have worked correctly, too, said Alvarez, who admitted the implementation of the system "has not been a flawless effort."

"I am confident that Miami-Dade County is doing everything possible to protect the public and track incoming emergency calls," said the mayor.

Kincaid, meanwhile, says he wants his old job back.

"But I want this taken care of," he said. "That's first."

5

OPERATORS WORRIED

County Commissioner Rebeca Sosa, who chaired the committee that eventually recommended the upgraded system, said she's received several calls from operators concerned with the tracking problem. During a visit to the center she said the system completely crashed.

Martinez said commissioners last year instructed the county manager to withhold final payment to Motorola, "until everything is worked out."

County spokeswoman Cynthia Martinez declined to say how much has been withheld.

"Payment is based on Motorola achieving certain benchmarks, which have not all been reached," she said.

© 2007 Miami Herald Media Company. All Rights Reserved.
<http://www.miamiherald.com>

6