

**LODD note**-we have just posted a tragic story about a South Korean FF who was killed in the Line of Duty today while operating by himself at a structural fire. Our condolences to all affected.

**TEXAS FF'S INJURED:** The massive wildfires stretching across Sterling, Reagan and Irion counties in Central Texas are approaching 500,000 acres. 3 Firefighters were injured in Archer County when two fire apparatus collided head on after one swerved around a car that pulled out into the road. One of the Firefighters was airlifted to an area hospital..he has survived but his condition was unknown. We wish the FF's in Texas the best in gaining control over those fires. Word is their efforts have been outstanding with no deaths and few structures destroyed.

**C.A.D. SAYS:**

....Computer Aided Dispatching is of course what we are referring to. You may have been following the recent story in Texas where the Dallas PD & Dallas FD are dealing with many questions about the death of a police officer. The concern is the time it took to get EMS to Senior Corporal Victor Lozada. The motorcycle officer died last Friday while riding in a motorcade for presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. It took nearly 11 minutes to get a DFD ambulance to the crash scene. Officials admit it took five minutes just to get the city's new automated 911 system to dispatch an ambulance. The system failed to recognize a street viaduct as an acceptable address in its database. The automated system then sent an ambulance to the closest address in the database, which was several blocks away on North Houston Street. Officers had to eventually flag down another ambulance near by.

While not referring to that case specifically, it is another example where CAD says to do this or CAD says to do that. And while CAD may only be as good as the software, the hardware and the data placed in the system, a most critical factor in any CAD system must be the FIRE DISPATCHERS.

CAD is a great tool but so many systems are developed by folks who do not do the dispatching. And while no one group should be the solution to any one problem like that, so many CAD systems are designed, developed and installed without asking some of the folks who will use it...or depend on it. Then it is in, up, running and problems come up. Sometimes the problems are really bad. Headline making problems. Lawyer hiring problems. Funeral going problems.

Years ago, we had some dispatchers who I felt were the absolute best in the business. They averaged "call handling time" (from the time the phone rang until the time the tones went out) of 30 seconds.

**THIRTY SECONDS.** It was amazing to watch these FIRE/EMS TRAINED dispatchers get calls out "right now" ! And it mattered-a lot. The quicker we get there-the quicker the fire gets hit and the quicker we go home. Or the quicker Grandpa gets defibrillated. Or the quicker Mom gets extricated.

The goal is to get the alarm dispatched quickly and accurately.

Some of you may not be great fans of your dispatchers. Your concerns may be valid ..or may be lame. Make sure that you have spent time visiting, learning and understanding what your dispatchers do and how it works "down there" before you go insane without reason or qualification. Just because you are a "listener" to the radio doesn't mean you have a clue as to what the dispatchers do. It isn't as easy as it seems down there-dealing with the public..and us.

We have sat in some CAD meetings where the vendors and the purchasers (none of whom were dispatchers or field personnel) were actually OK with losing call handling time...but gaining great stats!? **W T F !?! STATS?! Stats are nice AFTER we effectively do our job ...but a priority of getting good stats vs "how fast can this system-used by our trained fire dispatchers...process a run?" That's insane. Nothing else matters than getting the companies on the road as quickly and efficiently as possible.**

**Nothing Else Matters.** When Mrs. Smith dials 9-1-1, she wants us there 5 minutes ago. And while we have to get there, and get there without getting ourselves hurt or killed, one of the BEST

ways to reduce RESPONSE TIME is to reduce call handling and call processing time. FD's may be surprised to see how long it takes to get a run transmitted to the due companies in some dispatch centers. Sometimes it is caller problems. Sometimes it is dispatcher training issues. Sometimes it is dispatch staffing issues. But sometimes it is CAD. No matter what, the goal is to get that run out with the critical information: Where is it? What is the phone # you are calling from? What is it? Boom. **Tones**...or stay on the phone after tones for EMD (Emergency Medical Dispatch) or other related needed info. But until the tones go out....we can't help that person having their BAD day. And while dispatcher training is a major concern and issue in some areas, the BEST trained dispatcher can literally be disarmed from doing a great job if the CAD system creates problems. If the CAD system gets in the way of allowing FIRE DISPATCHERS from doing their job, help stops. And, the dispatchers must have the training, skills and authority to do other than what "**CAD SAYS**" if it makes sense to do that. In other words, dispatchers trained to recognize what is right-what is wrong-and have a system, authority and skills to fix that problem...right now.

There are many dispatch centers that used "paper cards" and no CAD system to process their alarms for many years-and the call handling times were excellent-and they did it very well. **Real well**. So well that tones went off before the caller hung up. That fast. Of course, time moved forward and the world became more automated, CAD systems came along as a supposed aid to help the entire process. And there are many CAD systems that do just that-they enhance our ability to get to that run...right now!

Unfortunately though, there are many CAD systems that are focused on being so much else to a department or local government, where those designing it and those purchasing it have often forgotten what the CAD system is for: getting help to the caller very quickly, accurately and efficiently. And in order to do that, if the role of the dispatcher has not been included in the entire start to actual implementation process, the outcome is predictable.

If a trained, professional FIRE dispatcher can get a call out 50% faster without waiting for CAD to tell'm what to do...how does using or purchasing that CAD system like that make sense? It doesn't. At least not to the person that just stopped breathing or whose basement is on fire. That is the only reason we exist. Sometimes that is forgotten. A CAD system should enhance the ability to get help to callers-not slow it down but also offer some "cool" other record keeping features to distract us from the real mission of rapid call handling, processing and alarm transmission.

Once the system is up and running, who is making sure it actually does work as expected without it getting in the way of getting help to those who need it? How often is the system monitored for quality control? Call handling times? FORGET what "CAD SAYS" and go to the radio and phone tapes and do some real quality control and time evaluations. After all, CAD TIMES are only as good and as accurate as those entering the times or pushing the buttons-be it from mobile terminals or at consoles. By periodically listening to the actual tapes-with automated time logging, you can truly see how long it takes your caller's emergency---possibly the worst day of their life---to be handled. A good rule of thumb for some FD's, Fire Chiefs and Dispatch Center Chiefs are to "pull times and tapes" routinely but also on all "serious" calls such as working fires, civilian deaths or near death injuries and related life threatening emergencies. It can't hurt and can pay off big time in evaluating what matters.

Planning ahead and considering the role of the dispatchers (the ones who make it all work) in the process of CAD and related equipment development can make a positive difference. Going to visit other dispatch centers as a part of the process is a big deal as well. And when you go, also talk to those who don't wear suits. Talk to the dispatchers who, hopefully can tell you the good and the not so good about their CAD. Ask, if the CAD system could be ordered again, what would be done differently and why?

When someone needs "us" ...they usually need "us" quick. Sometimes REALLY quick. A part of that "response" includes civilians knowing to call us quickly. Once that call is answered, the call takers, the dispatchers and the dispatch supervisors have to get us on the road...right now, with the right info. They need to operate as if it is THEIR family member that just called needing "**right now**" help. A CAD system is a major "link" (weak or strong) in getting help to those who need it quickly. The last thing anyone involved in the process needs is a CAD system that suggests information that makes no sense along with dispatchers who have not been trained or do not have the training or authority to recognize and immediately correct the problem. If what "CAD SAYS" makes no sense, what's the plan?

Take Care-BE CAREFUL,

BillyG

The Secret List 2-26-08 / 2203 hours

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