

Richmond Ambulance Authority Completes Major Upgrade of Communications Center

RICHMOND, Va., December 16, 2009 — The Richmond Ambulance Authority (RAA) today announced the completion of a major upgrade of its Communications Center. The upgrade includes significant technological advancements to improve RAA's day-to-day operations, interoperability with the Richmond Fire Department and county EMS agencies and a new ergonomically enhanced infrastructure.

"The upgrade of the Richmond Ambulance Authority's Communications Center and move to the regional 800 MHz radio system are important steps toward a more unified EMS system, both here in the City of Richmond and region wide," said RAA's CEO, Chip Decker. "The Authority now has the ability to directly communicate — swiftly and efficiently — with other emergency responders in the event of a mass casualty incident."

The regional radio system also enables Richmond Ambulance and Richmond Fire to talk directly to one another, unit to unit, during daily EMS operations without having to go through RAA's Communication Center to relay patient information. The City of Richmond donated 50 portable radios and 44 mobile radios to make this improved communication possible. As a result, RAA can now also communicate directly with other localities such as Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico, all of whom are already on the regional radio system. This upgrade also positions RAA for a smooth transition to the next generation of radio communications planned for 2013.

"The interoperability of the new radio system and upgraded Communications Center allows direct and clear radio communications between city and state emergency responders," said Danny Garrison, Director of Communications for RAA. "As a result, Richmond Ambulance can now take its place as a full partner in the region's Emergency Response System."

Additional improvements to the Communications Center include a new phone system and upgrades to various IT systems such as the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) System, along with a new GEO mapping system. The Mobile Area Routing & Vehicle Locating Information System (MARVLIS) is also being upgraded as part of the project. MARVLIS provides demand analysis and management information for the Communications Officer while simultaneously providing routing and patient information for the crews on the street.

The old Communications Center's infrastructure has been replaced with ergonomically designed work stations, including desks able to raise and lower allowing Communications Officers to stand for parts of their shift, reducing back fatigue. In addition, the maximized use of flat screen technology has freed up more work space, and RAA has added two additional work stations able to be manned in the event of a major citywide or regional emergency situation.

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