

A Networking Opportunity Fulfilled with FHP's LWRCC

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Networking is an essential part of the systematic process that any wise organization undertakes towards ensuring the maintenance of a competitive edge in their prospective fields.

In today's ever-evolving professional arena, there is sure to be a staunch visionary that has already brainstormed, created, implemented and perfected a concept, technique or process that could very well catapult another's business or agency to the next professional realm.

This leads us to the fundamental idea and goal of networking, for it is primarily about a win-win meet, greet, explore and exchange of helpful ideas and related information. Productive interactions during a networking adventure can often negate re-inventing of the wheel and reduces the unnecessary duplication of efforts.

It is with this in mind, that the West Palm Beach Dispatch Operations division has undertaken a committed initiative for the duration of the 2008 work year (and beyond) towards the intensification of our networking efforts with all of the surrounding communication centers in our area.

Our ultimate goal within this endeavor is to visit a PSAP center monthly to interact with the staff, tour their facility, exchange important and helpful ideas, and to also bring back information which could benefit our division in varying and exciting ways.

This welcoming external opportunity is a new perk now synonymous to the Communications Training Officer position, as those dedicated to training rightfully understand the core needs of our division (often to a greater degree), and these employees are generally the ones initially selected to learn and help educate others on many newly introduced concepts and techniques.

The CTO Roundtable hosted by PBSO in January 2008 was the jump start to this effort, and it was as an excellent networking situation in every manner to be considered. Not only did several of our trainers garner the opportunity to intermingle with a large number of emergency professionals repre-

senting several different agencies, but we were also afforded the opportunity to brainstorm long-term major topics of concern in a roundtable fashion, while taking away doable ideas and suggestions on different ways to make the idea of training more appealing.

The networking endeavor undertaken in February 2008 consisted of a tour of the brand new state-of-the-art Lake Worth Regional Communications Center (LWRCC), which is responsible for dispatching for the Florida Highway Patrol.

During my scheduled on-site visit, I was most graciously welcomed into the LWRCC arena by District Commander Captain Ibrahim Egeli, who ever so professionally and patiently entertained my vivid interest and non-stop questions for well over two hours.



Captain Egeli was quite pleased with the understanding that our division was willing to extend ourselves to them in such a positive manner, and he embraced with open arms the opportunity to shed light on the recent aesthetical and technological advancements realized by their agency while artfully dispelling a few myths along the way.

The Lake Worth Regional Communications Center is located on the Florida's Turnpike at the 94 mile marker just south of the Lake Worth Service Plaza. The LWRCC has been operational since June 1998, and a new 9,000 square foot addition to the former existing facility now makes up a 12,000 foot state-of-the-art communications center. Personnel assigned to the Center include 37 Duty Officers, 6 Duty Officer Supervisors, 5 Troop Shift Commanders, 1 Computer Systems Specialist, and 1 District Captain.

The LWRCC is responsible for dispatching FHP's Troop K and Troop L. Troop K includes patrol responsibilities over 312

miles throughout 11 counties on Florida's Main Turnpike beginning near Florida City in Miami-Dade County and terminating near Wildwood in Sumter County. Troop L includes patrol responsibilities throughout 6 counties including I-95, I-75, I-595 and US 27.

The LWRCC also provides dispatch services to 8 other state law enforcement agencies including: ABT (ATF), FDLE, DOT, State Fire Marshall, DEP (Park Patrols), Division of Insurance Fraud, Juvenile Justice, Private Investigative Groups, and they are co-located with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission dispatchers.

Captain Egeli commands this regional communication center; his expansive and impressive career of leadership in law enforcement includes 3 years with the Miami Police Department and five years as a Lt. Commander down in Key West. He spoke very highly of his staff and their commitment to excellence and teamwork, and he offered that they are justly excited about recent and proposed future changes.

The Troop Shift Commanders all report directly to Captain Egeli, and their jobs entail monitoring communications between patrol officers and the communications center staff. They also manage all critical incidents to ensure consistency in appropriate and effective response by the law enforcement personnel and they provide timely notifications to command staff concerning significant incidents.

The Duty Officer Supervisors are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the Duty Officers under their command. They also maintain current knowledge of the protocol and procedures of the Communications Center, and they notify field supervisors and Shift Commanders regarding information pertinent to their respective geographical area of responsibility.

The Duty Officers are required to complete their assignments quickly and accurately under the stress of various emergency situations, and they must handle several requests simultaneously and proficiently.

Networking with FHP Dispatch Continued...

(Networking with FHP Dispatch Cont'd)

They answer all *FHP (star FHP) calls and 9-1-1 emergency calls, they document pertinent information from each incident into the CAD system, and they dispatch the appropriate personnel to each incident while maintaining the highest standard of professionalism and ethical behavior at all times.

The LWRCC also just recently transitioned over to the Siemens multi-line telephone system, and this technological upgrade has made a tremendous difference in their ability to decrease the extended wait time as it relates to answering incoming calls for service.

It was very important that this understanding be conveyed to our division in an effort to dispel the erroneous myth of their Duty Officers being oblivious to the extensive number of times their phone lines have rung in the past before being answered.

In the past, much of the delays encountered could be attributed to minimal (or less) staffing, inundated phone lines and their Duty Officers having to voice dispatch and man the telephone positions simultaneously.

Captain Egeli explained that although the concept of *FHP is indeed a wonderful idea, all of the calls were received on the 9-1-1 emergency lines in the past, although all were not of an emergency nature. Their old and antiquated telephone system was unable to make the distinction needed, and this also greatly impacted the availability of 9-1-1 lines unnecessarily.

Their new telephone system can receive up to 23 calls on one line versus the 36 lines total they had to operate with before. Caller ID is also a welcomed feature of this new system that was unavailable to them in the past, which is why their Duty Officers had to initially request or call back for complainant information.

*FHP now has a menu associated with this service that permits callers to select alternative options as determined needed versus all calls being routed through on the 9-1-1 lines as in the past. The menu provides for non-emergency situations with options such as incident reporting and roadside assistance

(Road Ranger), with the Road Ranger service having a dispatcher devoted to it at all times.

Another impressive feature of their telephone system is the 511 information line that provides real time information to travelers regarding traffic conditions. The line is interfaced with the CAD system and this ensures that the information being disseminated about traffic accidents, road closures, etc, is always given in a timely and accurate manner.

The *FHP menu selection also provides callers with information on how to make appointments with DHSMV (they receive a high volume of callers seeking this information), and they now refer callers to the appropriate local district offices for any assistance needed with traffic crash reports.

I took the liberty of visually admiring the environmental surroundings at the new center, as the first thing you see once you have exited the Lake Worth Service Plaza is the rest area accommodations of course, but then immediately after there was an endless fleet of shiny FHP patrol vehicles encasing the main entrance of the beautiful new facility surrounded by expansive landscaping.



The picture above depicts just how small the old LWRCC facility was and how the surrounding area appeared just after the initial ground clearing for the new facility on 12-07-06.

The state-of-the-art center project was long awaited and highly anticipated, as it symbolized greater growth, development, expansion and forward progression for this agency.

The pictures below depict what the LWRCC looks like today, and how all of the how work, effort and dedication to the enhancement project has paid off in a monumental way.

