

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



FROM: Supervisor Bob Buster

SUBMITTAL DATE: July 26, 2011

SUBJECT: Evaluation of Riverside County's Dispatch System for Medical Aid Calls

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

- 1) Direct the Riverside County Emergency Medical Services Agency to research and develop a plan for the integration of computer aided dispatch (CAD) system to increase efficiency and decrease response times to medical aid calls.
- 2) Direct the Riverside County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency to review Riverside County's medical-aid dispatch procedures with the goal of transitioning to a more effective and cost-efficient emergency medical dispatch priority system, similar to those used by EMS agencies across the United States.
- 3) That the Board Direct the EMS Agency to facilitate a Board Workshop in September to discuss improvements to the Riverside County Emergency Medical System.

BACKGROUND:

More than 80 percent of 911 calls to the Riverside County/Cal-Fire Department are for medical aid and many of those calls stem from non-emergent and non-life threatening incidents. Currently, 911 calls are first received by the Riverside County Sheriff's Communication Center. The Sheriff dispatcher transmits fire and medical aid calls to the Riverside County Fire Department/Cal Fire, which subsequently transmits medical aid calls via radio to the county's ambulance service provider.

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Supervisor, 1st District

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This outmoded system results in potentially critical delays in ambulance deployment and patient transport to a hospital emergency room. Implementing a state-of-the-art integrated public safety Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system would streamline the call process from the initiation of the incident by eliminating duplication of efforts and delays associated with radio transmission to ambulance responders. An integrated CAD system utilizing Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) protocols would allow Emergency Medical Service (EMS) providers to immediately identify the nature of the emergency and share automated data concerning the location of the caller, thus decreasing ambulance dispatch and response times. It is well known in a true medical emergency that every minute counts and that the rapid treatment and transfer of patients with conditions such as critical traumatic injuries, heart attacks, stroke and cardiac arrest to the care of an emergency room physician improves patient outcomes and saves lives. A CAD system utilizing MPDS protocols can be enhanced and made even more beneficial to 911 callers and EMS agencies with the safe and competent delivery of EMS. This begins with EMS dispatch by matching EMS resources to the needs of the 911 caller. In jurisdictions across the country and locally in the cities of Riverside, Corona and San Bernardino, dispatchers are trained to use the regimented interrogation system provided for through MPDS protocols to ascertain the caller's needs and provide callers with EMS pre-arrival instructions. A medical physician routinely inspects the responses to ensure that protocols are followed. A MPDS system enables the dispatcher to coach bystanders on how to deliver immediate lifesaving measures such as CPR until paramedics arrive, resulting in saved lives and improved patient outcomes. By appropriately matching EMS resource response to a patient's medical needs MPDS also enables dispatchers to efficiently deploy necessary resources while allowing additional assets to remain ready to respond to another emergency call. The result is overall improved EMS system efficiency and a significant financial savings for EMS provider agencies. Presently, Riverside County Fire Department deploys a full cadre of assets; fire engine, advanced life saving (ALS) equipment, two firefighters and a fire fighter/paramedic responding with red lights and siren to all medical aid calls whether or not there is a need to deploy significant resources. Additionally, an ambulance staffed by a paramedic and EMT with ALS capacity is also deployed on each medical aid call. Responding with a full array of assets with red lights and siren to every medical aid call – many of which first responders call "band-aid calls" takes emergency response units out of service unnecessarily and contributes to increased response times in life-threatening emergencies when units located farther away must be dispatched. Dispatch priority systems have been used by EMS agencies for more than a decade and have had time to evolve into state-of-the-art programs. As Riverside County searches for ways to enhance public safety and reduce costs, it makes sense to explore measures that EMS agencies across the country have implemented successfully, and to the benefit of 911 callers and taxpayers.

I request the Board of Supervisors to direct the Riverside County Emergency Medical Services Agency to initiate implementation of an integrated public safety computer aided dispatch system and to review Riverside County's medical aid dispatch protocols with the goal of transitioning to a medical dispatch priority system within two years.