

It is all about... *time*

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*HOW MANAGING THE 9-1-1 CLOCK CAN LEAD TO  
IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR YOUR LOCAL  
COMMUNITY.*

# Introduction

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- **Christopher Blake Carver**
  - PSAP/9-1-1 Operations Director for the National Emergency Number Association
  - Started my career as a Fire/EMS Dispatcher for Truro Township, just outside of Columbus
  - Then worked for the New York City Fire Department, rising from Dispatcher to Director.
  - Came to work for NENA in 2015
  - Reside in Columbus

# The Components of an Incident

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- We must know where it is
- We must know what it is
- We must take the proper action
- We must undertake that action in the proper amount of **time**

# It is pretty easy right?

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- The first three of these are fairly consistent, no matter what type of incident we are processing
- That makes things pretty easy, or at least straight forward.
- But the last one— Time— is what makes things much more complex but also where we as 9-1-1 professionals can truly impact a situation in a positive manner.

***COMPLACENCY KILLS!***

# Many 9-1-1 Calls are not time critical

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- This is something we learn very quickly
- Although callers may be annoyed if there is a delay in response, many incidents are not impacted significantly with a one or two minute increase in how long it takes someone to arrive.
- Think of a property crime, a minor auto accident, or a loud noise complaint.
- **Generally**, the outcome will be the same if a police car arrives in three minutes or in four.

# But this is not always the case

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- In some instances seconds lost can lead to dramatically different outcomes for the caller, field responders, and the community.
- Examples of these types of events include:
  - High-priority law enforcement incidents—
    - “in progress”
    - person in house with perpetrator;
    - Weapons
    - Pursuits/Chases
  - High-priority medical incidents— cardiac arrest, choking, etc.
  - Structural Fires and Technical Rescues
    - Especially where there is someone trapped

# Understanding our Role

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- Sometimes it is challenging for new dispatchers or dispatchers new to the fire/ems role to understand just how important “time” is to a successful response
- One of the most important things we can do as 9-1-1 professionals is to recognize this importance, train on it, and ensure that our policies and procedures support effectiveness
- The 9-1-1 center will play an ever more central role in the management of responses and resources

# How long is it supposed to take?

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- Fortunately, there are standards on how long both the call answering process and the call dispatch process are supposed to take.
- NENA is in the process of issuing new guidance on call answering times that will be consistent with those of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)
- The standard used in the Ohio Revised Code for call answering will state:

Ohio PSAP Operation Rules, specifically 5507-1-18 states: **“90% of 9-1-1 calls / requests received will be answered within 10 seconds; with 95% of 9-1-1 calls / requests received being answered within 20 seconds.”**

# The Ohio Revised Code Times are Only a Start!

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- Your agency or County 9-1-1 Planning Committee may have adopted stricter standards, such as NFPA or other standards. Note, your fire agencies are graded on the NFPA times even if you have no awareness of them— it is a part of their ISO rating.
- Although you must meet the state standards within the PSAP Operations Rules, these additional local standards may also apply.

***Stop recording here to review any additional local county or agency standards concerning answering times.***

# Additional Standards on Time: Part One

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- Processing and Dispatch Time for the following incident types shall occur within 90 seconds 90 percent of the time and 120 seconds 99% of the time for the following call types: (NFPA 1221)
  - Calls requiring EMD
  - Calls requiring language translation
  - Calls requiring TTY/TDD device or audio/video relay
  - Calls related to criminal activity that require information for responder safety
  - Calls related to HazMat & Technical Rescue
  - Calls required additional effort to determine location
  - Calls received by text message
- **NOTE:** The transfer process shall not exceed 30 seconds for 95% of all alarms processed (according to the NFPA)

# Additional Standards on Time: Part Two

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- For ALL OTHER types of Fire/EMS/Rescue responses:
  - **90% of alarm processing shall be completed in 64 seconds and 95% of alarm processing shall be completed within 106 seconds.**
  - When does the clock start?
    - When the call is answered
  - When does the clock stop?
    - When a unit is notified to respond to the incident
      - Note: the clock does NOT stop when all units have been dispatched or when the dispatcher disconnects the call.
      - This permits the agency to NOT be penalized for remaining on the call to offer pre-arrival instructions.
  - How is this measured?
    - Monthly– according to the BUSY HOUR– the hour over the month that was your busiest.

# WHY is time so important? An EMS example:

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- Each year, 350,200 people in the U.S. experience EMS-assessed out-of-hospital non-traumatic SCA, and nine out of 10 victims die. This is roughly equivalent to the number of people who die from Alzheimers' disease, assault with firearms, breast cancer, cervical cancer, colorectal cancer, diabetes, HIV, house fires, motor vehicle accidents, prostate cancer and suicides *combined*.
- SCA victims can survive if they receive immediate CPR and are treated quickly with defibrillators. To be effective, this treatment must be delivered quickly—***ideally, within three to five minutes after collapse.*** (Sca-aware.org)

# WHY is time so important? A Law Enforcement example:

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- Considering a Domestic Violence Call, a victim may only have a short window of time to place an emergency call for help. It is crucial 9-1-1 telecommunicators are available and answer the call quickly to ensure the best chance of getting critical information to send help.

# How about fires?

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- **Fire is FAST!** In less than 30 seconds a small flame can turn into a major fire. It only takes minutes for thick black smoke to fill a house or for it to be engulfed in flames.
- **Fire is HOT!** Heat is more threatening than flames. Room temperatures in a fire can be 100 degrees at floor level and rise to 600 degrees at eye level. Inhaling this super-hot air will scorch your lungs and melt clothes to your skin.
- **Fire is DARK!** Fire starts bright, but quickly produces black smoke and complete darkness.
- **Fire is DEADLY!** Smoke and toxic gases kill more people than flames do. Fire produces poisonous gases that make you disoriented and drowsy. Asphyxiation is the leading cause of fire deaths, exceeding burns by a three-to-one ratio. (ready.gov)

# How can dispatchers save time and lives?

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- First, the more you know, the better you will be able to dispatch effectively. There is no replacement for knowing the geography of the area you serve.
- Second, know your technology— use the tools at your disposal to ensure you are sending to the right location and sharing vital information with responders.
  - Does the map location on ani-ali match where you are sending apparatus? If not, you should know why— it may be a clue about a serious issue
  - Is there special information responders should know— such as a street closing, delayed response of a mutual aid partner, or additional calls reporting the same condition— all of these help improve the response.

# Other Time Saving Strategies: Prioritization

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- Dispatchers, depending on agency policy, may be empowered to redirect units that are responding to low priority calls to higher priority calls.
  - Example 1: Medic-1 is responding to an ill-person and a call is received in their district for a Cardiac Arrest. Many agencies will permit the dispatcher to automatically assign Medic-1 to the higher-priority incident and replace them on the ill-person
  - Example 2: You have many calls during a storm. An Engine is responding to a fire alarm and a house fire comes in, are you allowed to redirect the engine to the house fire call?

# Time Saving Strategies: Continued

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- Dispatchers, depending on agency policy, may also be responsible for ensuring effective coverage during a major incident.
  - Example: A major fire occurs in a town and all of the town's resources are committed to the fire. A nearby department may be asked to "cover" or "stand-by" at the fire station in the town with the fire to reduce response times on any subsequent incidents that may occur. This may be a process ordered by the incident commander or undertaken automatically under certain conditions.
- Dispatchers may also be permitted to reduce responses to certain event types during busy periods such as storms. This helps to ensure units are available for subsequent calls and reduces response times.

# How do we get the right number of people there?

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- 9-1-1 Centers and their personnel should work with their agencies to determine how many units and personnel are needed for each type of event and ensure that policies allow for dispatchers to take necessary action.
  - For example: if an agency is dispatched to a serious medical event and is having trouble getting a crew out, there should be an automatic plan in place to dispatch an additional agency to ensure there is a response. This additional department can always be cancelled if the original agency is able to respond.
  - The same would apply to a building fire or a serious law enforcement event.
- Dispatchers should be empowered to help ensure successful outcomes!***

# Ohio and Local Rules

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- **Ohio PSAP Operation Rules, specifically 5507-1-18 states: “90% of 9-1-1 calls / requests received will be answered within 10 seconds; with 95% of 9-1-1 calls / requests received being answered within 20 seconds.”**
- **Please consult local rules to ensure compliance in your jurisdiction.**

# Conclusions

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- Dispatchers and field responders must be partners in ensuring that emergencies are responded to in both a timely and effective manner.
- This process starts with answering the call in a timely manner, ensuring it is dispatched according to national standards and with an appropriate and effective response.
- The dispatcher can perform additional roles, based on agency policy, that help ensure a timely response to serious incidents.
- Understanding the importance of time and how it can be saved will help every dispatcher, every agency, and every community to improve their skills and ability to positively impact incident outcomes.