



BEAVER COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES

YEAR END, 2023 NEWSLETTER

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EARLY DAYS - BEAVER COUNTY'S EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

Wayne Harley, retired BCESC Assistant Director

Recently a milestone was passed when, 50 years ago on November 16, 1973, Beaver County began providing emergency services dispatch to police departments from the basement of the former P&LE passenger train station in Beaver Borough. "Professional Operators" as they were then called, began answering phone calls from the public and dispatched police using a new state-of-the-art 4 channel radio system. Only a few police departments, not fire or EMS, were initially dispatched.

Several years of planning and just over \$150,000 went into establishing the Beaver County system. The primary incentive was to provide a Countywide radio network to connect all police agencies on common frequencies. Although most departments by then had radios, they were on different frequencies and could not communicate with each other. The former Governor's Justice Commission provided 75% pass through federal funds for the startup money, and Beaver County provided a 25% match. The late Bernard W. Cashdollar oversaw the startup and operation of the "Beaver County Police Center."

I had the privilege of working alongside Bernie until his death in 1982. He was a take-charge guy who, after retirement from the FBI, returned to Beaver County to become Chief of Beaver County Detectives. He was concerned with the training of police officers and helped to establish the Beaver County Police Academy (now at CCBC). Bernie was also an original member of the Beaver County Fire Commission, which became the Public Safety Commission. He knew many people and could usually connect any stranger he met with someone he knew somewhere or sometime in the past. Most of you who are reading this probably never met Mr. Cashdollar.

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EARLY DAYS, CONTINUED

FEBRUARY 22, 1978, BEAVER COUNTY TIMES, BEAVER, PA.
(continued on opposite side)



Communications center

At the Beaver County police network center, the county's present answer to 911, are Wayne Herby, coordinator of Beaver County Emergency Medical Service; Bernard

Cashdollar, Beaver County communications director; Ralph Thompson, a dispatcher; and Russell Chiodo, civil defense director.

The photo on the left is taken from a 1978 article from the Beaver County Times and pictures, from left to right myself, Bernard Cashdollar, Ralph Thompson and Russell Chiodo.

Other names from the past were the original dispatchers: Joe Yezzi, Sonya Gingerella, Jim Venneri, John Papsodero, Robert Pease, Bob Grimm, Steve Drobac and David DiVencentes. It's hard to believe, but their names were all listed in a Beaver County Times article from 1973. All of the dispatchers were sworn deputies in the Beaver County (government) Police Department. They were all issued gray police uniforms, a police badge and a pistol. Of those first dispatchers, there are a few still living including Joe Yezzi of Center Township who was Assistant Director to Mr. Cashdollar. Perhaps one reason for the pistols is that there was no security in those early days. Anyone could have walked in.

The original County police radio system was provided by Motorola at a cost of \$97,406. The system included 5 radio towers/base stations, 2 communications consoles, 80 mobile radios and 70 portable radios. There were 2, 70 line telephone panels provided by Bell of PA. The room that the dispatchers operated in was small, being the old washroom/locker room that the railroad employees had used prior to the County buying the building in the 1960's. As most of you know, the Beaver Area Historical Society now owns the old P&LE train station and has restored the 1897 building. The underground addition built in 1987 (for 9-1-1) is now the home of the Beaver County History and Genealogical Center.

I had a recent conversation with Jim Katelan of Economy Borough who was a co-owner of Pittsburgh Communications of Wexford, the Motorola service shop that we used during the years that I worked at BCESC. Jim, Rege and Bert kept our radio system going 24 hours a day. Jim is one of the few people around who still remembers those early days 50 years ago. Pitt Comm, as we called the company, was bought out a few years ago.

Looking back over 50 years, I think another milestone that I had a role in was when the Comm Center added 9-1-1 in October of 1988. I give the late Jerry LaValle, former County Commissioner and State Senator, a lot of the credit for making that happen. The new 9-1-1 Communications Center in Ambridge came after I retired in 2001. We've come a long way in 50 years. I thought I should share some of my memories of those early days for those who continue to serve.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Eric Brewer, Emergency Services Director

As we wrap up another year, we reflect on our accomplishments and look forward to 2024. I'd be remiss if I didn't say that February 3rd, 2023 had a big impact on the Department of Emergency Services: the East Palestine Train Derailment. The response that night was just the beginning and was only a small part of the overall incident. The majority of our involvement was not the hazmat response, it was the emergency management involvement over the months following. This incident was the definition of emergency management as far as the response and recovery phases, which continue to this day. Whether it be participating on one of the Command and General Staff meetings that are ongoing or participating in one of the environmental data reviews, our office continues to be involved on an almost daily basis. Responder health also remains a priority among those involved in the incident.

This past year we also continued our role with school exercises. Our trainings are geared for the school staff to practice their internal plans. We encourage school districts to reach out to the public safety agencies in their district to involve them with their plans as well, so that everyone becomes familiar with what a response might look like. The newest planning phase is "reunification", as Doug Humble mentions later in this newsletter. We are assisting some districts with their reunification plans, and we look forward to undertaking this challenging task.

In recent weeks, Beaver County experienced a cyber attack on one of our municipal water authority sites. If you think it can't happen to your agency, think again. At this time, there is little information because the incident is still under investigation. The Department of Homeland Security has several programs that can assist with planning and training for cyber security.

2024 will be another busy year. During the first quarter, we anticipate being heavily involved with our partners participating in trainings for the hazardous materials response team to keep up to date with the state requirements. Also, the first six months of the year we will be planning and training for the federally evaluated radiological exercise which occurs in June. We look forward to working with our partners in the new year. Until then, have a safe and happy holiday season!

Editor's Note: In August, Director Brewer, pictured at right with the Beaver County Board of Commissioners, received the Friend of County Government Award at the annual County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) Conference. This award is the highest honor awarded to a non-member for commitment to the improvement of county government. Eric Brewer was nominated for the award due to his work with Beaver County during the East Palestine Train Derailment which continues to this day.

Way to go, Director!



SPECIALIST COURSE ATTENDED

Jason Gallagher

In October of this year, we were lucky enough to be able to have 2 of our Hazmat Team Members, myself and Caroline Nalepa, attend the SERTC Tank Car Specialist Course in Pueblo, Colorado.

The class consisted of intensive hazardous materials emergency response training with a focus on freight rail incidents potentially involving flammable and combustible liquids and other hazardous materials transported by rail. We received comprehensive training well beyond that of traditional hazardous material training.

The class consisted of classroom & hands-on training with the more than 50 rail tank cars on-site and focused on 3 specific areas:

- Protective housings, valves, interior cutaways of rail cars, emergency devices and other equipment involved in the rail industry.
- Learning the transfer procedure by recognizing how the various components on a railcar are actually used during transfers and flaring of liquids and gases under normal conditions.
- Full-scale derailment scenario where we utilized all of the skills and knowledge gained throughout the course to be able to respond to a realistic emergency.

We'd like to thank Norfolk Southern for sponsoring this training for our responders. We are grateful for the time we had in Colorado and for the opportunity to train with many of our Region 13 members along with various members from different agencies in Pennsylvania and Ohio.



ACTIVE SHOOTER TRAINING & EXERCISES

Douglas Humble

Beaver County Emergency Services supported several Active Shooter trainings and exercises during the second half of 2023. In addition to partnering with local law enforcement agencies, the FBI has taken an active role with agents participating as controllers and actors in our exercises. The FBI has also designed, in consultation with us, tabletop exercises from the administrative side of emergency incidents. Other recent changes to our exercises and trainings include the addition of “injured person” actors and injects involving a second shooter in some exercise scenarios. Additionally, there have been discussions countywide regarding post shooter actions, specifically reunification plans to include reunification sites, etc. This will likely be a continued focus in coming years. Pictured below from top to bottom and left to right are scenes from the following training and exercise events: August 23rd, Central Valley High School ; August 29th, Western Beaver Jr/Sr High School; October 9th, New Horizon training & exercise; October 27th, Ambridge Middle School.



RADIOLOGICAL PROGRAM UPDATES

Doug Humble

Limerick HAB Exercise

Three members of our EMA staff attended a Hostile Action Based Exercise at Limerick Nuclear Power Plant this fall. The group was observing the activities of the Incident Command Post, Tactical Operations Center, Staging Area and Montgomery County Emergency Operations Center. This visit was intended to observe others to improve our own operations and better prepare our Beaver County community.

2024 Federally Evaluated Exercise

Calendar year 2024 is just around the corner, and we are beginning to prepare for the next BVPS Federally Evaluated Exercise. The County EOC (Emergency Operations Center) portion of the exercise is scheduled for Tuesday, June 11, 2024 in the afternoon/evening. We also have other portions of the exercise that are evaluated on other days, yet to be scheduled. We have begun contacting Municipal Emergency Management Coordinators, School Districts and other agencies to discuss plan reviews and training schedules. We are also currently updating our emergency plans and procedures and need to submit all related plans to PEMA and FEMA in the next couple of months. For those of you who usually participate in BVPS exercises, please plan accordingly, and we thank you for your anticipated cooperation and attendance.

EWDS Training

Beaver County Emergency Services and the Beaver Valley Power Station conducted training with two (Baden and Ambridge) of Beaver County's Emergency Worker Decontamination Stations (EWDS) this fall. Crescent is training and exercising this coming spring and Darlington did extensive training and exercising last year. The Beaver County EWDS's are utilized in the unlikely event there is radiological release from the Beaver Valley Power Station. Their job is to monitor and decontaminate emergency workers and vehicles that may have been contaminated. The EWDS's for Beaver County are located at Ambridge Fire Department, Baden Fire Department, Crescent Fire Department and Darlington Fire Department. Beaver County Emergency Services appreciates the effort, preparation and commitment these departments have displayed to assist emergency workers, if needed. Pictured below are recent trainings at Ambridge EWDS (left) and Baden EWDS (right).



HAZMAT PROGRAM UPDATES

Jeff McKay

Hazmat Technician Training

Three Beaver County Hazmat Team members spent 2 weekends, 32 hours of training, in Washington County attending a Hazardous Material Technician level training provided by the EPA. Jason Gallagher, John Onuska and Caroline Nalepa are now at the Technician level. Beaver County's Team 700 receives 16-hour technician refresher training annually from Christine Wagner and her team from the EPA.

PA Association of Hazardous Materials Technicians Conference

Beaver County Hazardous Materials Response Team 700 members attended the PA Association of Hazardous Material Technician conference held at Seven Springs this fall. The conference provided 4 days of classroom and hands on training. We had a great time networking with friends from other County Teams within the Southwest PA Regional 13 Taskforce. This comradery makes us better in sharing information, and if we would need help at a large incident, we know they got our backs.

Transcaer Exercise

Beaver County received a grant from PEMA to provide a railroad transportation drill for local fire departments. This training provided a scenario involving a train derailment in which we needed to setup the incident command system and work through the initial response to the event.

Training with Shell

Shell Polymers Monaca invited the Hazmat Team to come to the plant and train with their response team on railroad tank cars. A few member were able to attend and had great day. We would like to thank Ben Roussel of Shell Emergency Response and their team for their hospitality.



NEWS & NOTES

Jeff McKay & Schuyler Mu

- Since the last newsletter issue, Laura Popinski & Taylor Zarewicz were hired as **new full time Telecommunicators** at Emergency Services. Welcome aboard!

- Congratulations to those who recently completed their **PEMA Certifications**. Pictured at left with Director Brewer: Jason Gallagher, Municipal Deputy EMC Advanced; Eli Kosanovich, Center Municipal Deputy EMC Advanced; Ron Sullivan, Municipal Basic Staff Member; Brian Murray, County Basic Staff.



- Pictured below and at right, Jack Balser with Energy Harbor and Jeff McKay of Beaver County Emergency Services provided **EMS Radiological Response Training to RESQRS** emergency medical service. This training focused on EMS response to a contaminated patient at the Beaver Valley Power Station and at offsite transportation incidents. Also covered was what equipment contractors may use to inspect their work after completion.



- Beaver County staff attended the **Keystone Emergency Management Conference** at the Blair County Convention Center in Altoona this past fall. This conference is growing each year and provides a wealth of information and education on emergency management. Go to kema-pa.com to view the KEMA website and to become a member. Mark your calendars for the next conference on October 20th to 22nd, 2024.



NEWS & NOTES

Jeff McKay & Schuyler Mu

- **2024 Meeting Dates Posted**

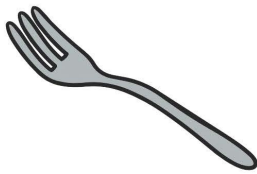
- **Municipal Emergency Management Coordinator Quarterly Trainings** will be held at the Emergency Services Center. Deputies and EOC staff are welcome. You only need to attend one of the two sessions on those dates. If you are going to get your Associate or Professional Local Emergency Management Certification, then you must attend two of these trainings yearly. These trainings will be held at 1:30 & 6:30 PM on the following dates in 2024: February 20, April 9, September 10 & November 19
- **Beaver County VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) and Beaver County LEPC (Local Emergency Planning Committee)** will meet on the following dates at Emergency Services. VOAD meetings begin at 11 AM, and LEPC meetings start at 1 PM on the following dates in 2024: February 13, May 21, August 13 & November 12

- **Communications Update** from Deputy Director Kevin Whipple

- Bearcom continues to program and install radios. Here is the progress report as of December 6, 2023:
 - Police Departments: All are completed
 - Fire Departments: 29 of 38 are completed
 - Ambulance Services: 0 of 3 are completed
- Base stations for everyone will be completed once the mobile installations are wrapped up. Fire Departments will be notified when their microphones arrive at Bearcom, that date is not yet known. We are also adding four additional sites to our current radio infrastructure as well as equipment upgrades at all existing sites, with an anticipated completion date by the end of Summer 2024.
- There are a few agencies that have not paid for their radios. Please contact the commissioner's office if you have any questions regarding payments due.

- Beginning in January 2024 for Tier II Reporting Year 2023, Beaver County Emergency Services and the Beaver County LEPC will be utilizing **a new billing program for Tier II Chemical Inventory fees**. Beaver County will continue to download Tier II reports from the state's PATTS system, and the transition to our new billing software should be seamless. The only change reporting facilities may notice is that their contact for Tier II invoicing from Beaver County will now be LEPC@beavercountypa.gov. This new email address can also be used for any questions or concerns regarding Tier II Chemical Inventory reporting, emergency planning or other EPCRA related issues in Beaver County.

Ralph Dixon Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser



Sunday, January 28th

1-6 pm at the New Brighton Eagles:

900 8th Ave, New Brighton, PA 15066

Ralph has been in the Emergency Services family since 1974, including 25 years as a New Brighton volunteer Firefighter and over 30 years of service at the 9-1-1 Center.

A fall on Thanksgiving night caused him to be severely injured.

All proceeds will help Ralph with expenses and mounting hospital bills.

**To-Go Orders
Available**

**\$12 - Adults
\$8 - Kids 12 &
under**



**Donations are being accepted for auction baskets:
Contact Liz Lane 724-630-5875 or Jane Blanarik 412-671-6730**



*Wishing you a
Merry Christmas
and a
safe & happy
New Year!*

*From Eric Brewer
and the staff of
Beaver County
Emergency Services*



EMERGENCY SERVICES

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The Beaver County Emergency Services Newsletter
is created and published by the Beaver County
Emergency Services center.

Beaver County Emergency Services is a division of Beaver County government, under the authority of the Beaver County Board of Commissioners. Emergency Services manages the county's 9-1-1 dispatch operations center and also serves as the county's Emergency Management office, working under the direction of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) on emergency preparedness, planning, mitigation, response, and recovery.

The Emergency Services center is also the home of the county's Hazardous Materials Response Team, the Local Emergency Planning Commission (LEPC) and is the contact point for many other public safety organizations, including EMS, Fire, Police, and Municipal EMA services. Emergency Services works in conjunction with a number of county and offsite agencies to provide comprehensive public safety guidance and emergency support to Beaver County.

Want to contribute?

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