

County celebrates 25 years of 9-1-1 service

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Today marks the 25th anniversary of the first 911 phone call in Montgomery County. The 911 system was implemented to give the public fast and easy access to police, fire and emergency medical personnel. According to a Jan. 13, 1988, article in The Woodlands Villager, the new system replaced more than 50 different seven-digit phone numbers that were used to contact emergency services in the county. The number to be dialed depended on the type and location of the emergency.

A standard three-digit system originally was conceived in 1957, but the idea developed slowly over the next two decades. When the Montgomery County Emergency Communication District (MC 911) answered its first call for assistance in 1988, only 50 percent of the U.S. population had access to 911 service.

Today, 96 percent of the land area in the country is covered by some type of 911 service (This is based on information found at <http://www.nena.org/?page=911overviewfacts>).

The week following the systems upgrade, MC 911 Executive Director Robert Webb presented a call summary to the district's Board of Managers providing a daily call volume of 175 to 200 calls. In 2012, more than 187,000 calls were delivered by the MC 911 system, an average of 512 calls per day. Despite the heavy volume, 99 percent of all calls are answered within 20 seconds. According to current Executive Director Chip VanSteenberg, this far exceeds the industry-recommended standard of 95 percent.

MC 911 partners with four emergency service providers to answer 911 calls. All calls are answered originally in one of two primary public safety answering points, or PSAPs. If the call is made from within the city of Conroe, MC 911 routes the call to the Conroe Police Department. All other calls are routed to the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office. The personnel at the primary PSAPs will process all calls for law enforcement, which represents 80 percent of all 911 calls. If the need is for fire, rescue or emergency medical services, the call will be transferred to one of the two secondary PSAPs on the MC 911 system. The Montgomery County Hospital District and The Woodlands Fire Department receive those calls and dispatch fire trucks, rescue vehicles and ambulances as needed.

MC 911 was created in November 1985 when Montgomery County voters approved a measure to authorize an emergency communication district by a margin of 81 percent to 19 percent. The district operates under the Emergency Communication District Act, which was passed by the Legislature in 1984. MC 911 is funded by services fees applied to telephone lines, cell phones and VoIP service (voice over internet protocol). The district collects approximately \$9.20 per person per year in fees.

For more information about Montgomery County 911, log on to www.mc911.org or call 936-523-5911.