

# KITSAP 911

## VALUES STATEMENTS



K I T S A P 9 1 1 • A L W A Y S R E A D Y

As critical members of the public safety team, we are defined by the following attributes:

### INTEGRITY

We are honest and consistent with colleagues and customers. We hold ourselves accountable to the highest standards of moral and ethical conduct.

### SERVICE

We are dedicated to exceeding the standards set for our profession by providing excellent, professional, and responsive service. We provide high quality results on or ahead of schedule.

### PRIDE

We take pride in ourselves, our profession, and our colleagues.

### TEAMWORK

We promote partnerships with internal and external customers. We treat one another with respect and communicate openly. We foster collaboration while maintaining individual accountability.

### OPEN COMMUNICATIONS

We discuss potentially contentious issues directly and quickly. We take responsibility for our own communication and conflict resolution. We do not gossip, triangulate, or spread rumors.

### INNOVATION

We thrive on creativity and ingenuity. We seek the innovation and ideas that can change our profession and improve our service delivery. We are flexible and learn from our experiences. We encourage the best ideas to surface from anywhere within the organization.

### DIVERSITY

We value our community's diversity and work to reflect and respect that diversity in our staff and in the delivery of our services.

### POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

We maintain a positive work environment which supports our employees and enhances job quality. We embrace the principles of participative management and personal responsibility and accountability.



# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT





# 2020 | ANNUAL REPORT

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## OUR MISSION

We are Kitsap 911, providing exceptional public safety emergency communications services every day.

## OUR VISION

*“Kitsap 911 will be the benchmark provider of public safety emergency communications services in the state as evidenced by innovation, professional excellence, reliability and customer service. We will be a self-sufficient and fiscally stable agency known for good stewardship and transparency. We will employ and develop highly effective professionals in an employee friendly, service focused environment.”*

## PARTNER AGENCIES

### POLICE DEPARTMENTS

- Bainbridge Island Police Department
- Bremerton Police Department
- Kitsap County Sheriff's Office
- Port Gamble Police Department
- Port Orchard Police Department
- Poulsbo Police Department
- Suquamish Police Department

### KITSAP COUNTY

- Community Development
- Code Enforcement & Fire Marshall
- Coroner's Office
- Emergency Management
- Juvenile Corrections

### FIRE DEPARTMENTS

- Bainbridge Island Fire & Rescue
- Bremerton Fire Department
- Central Kitsap Fire & Rescue
- Fire District 18 (Poulsbo Fire)
- North Kitsap Fire & Rescue
- South Kitsap Fire & Rescue

### OTHER

- Bainbridge Island Ambulance Association
- Department of Corrections
- Kitsap Animal Control
- United States Navy
- Port Gamble Natural Resources

# 46+ YEARS OF SERVICE

**CENCOM** was founded in 1973 as an effort to improve emergency medical dispatching within Kitsap County. In 1976, CENCOM went live as the first consolidated police, fire, and EMS dispatch center in Washington State. Callers dialed 911, but the system did not include any of the features associated with the 911 of today. In 1983, CENCOM became the second dispatch center in Washington State to deploy "Enhanced 911," which included a display of the caller's address for the dispatcher. The initial intent was to provide:

- A single emergency reporting number (911) for all Kitsap County citizens;
- An expanded emergency communications network for centralized coordination of police, fire, and medical;
- A reduction of response time;
- Elimination of 29 seven-digit emergency numbers;
- Consolidation of 12 separate dispatch systems;
- The ability for emergency response agencies to exchange information; and
- Enhancement of overall public safety functions.

### THE ABILITY TO MEET INCREASED DEMAND FOR SERVICES

The first staff included a director, supervisor, administrative staff, and 20 dispatchers to manage a 24hour, 365-day operation. Site design, facility construction, and formation of operational policy and procedures were completed by the end of 1976. This design also included installation of the electronics system, which included a "geofile," the location information base file for emergency 911 CAD systems. By 1993, 911 had expanded to cover the entire county and dispatch function for all public safety agencies. Ongoing funding originated from the passage of telephone tax initiatives.

In the late 1990s, CENCOM's Policy Board supported a funding methodology and development of a multiple-site radio system to improve service for Kitsap County's Fire/EMS and Law Enforcement agencies. The radio towers, electronic equipment, buildings, and ground space are supported by reliable commercial and back-up generator power. These facilities continue to attract wireless service providers who have agreements with CENCOM to use the facilities and provide us with revenue, which offsets the cost of utilities and maintenance.

CENCOM began utilizing Mobile Computer Terminals or "MCTs" in emergency response vehicles to enhance communication while also lessening congestion on radio frequencies in the early 2000s. Since that time, the fleet of mobile computers has tripled, and CENCOM has taken on maintenance and repair for all member agencies.

Shortly after the Nisqually Earthquake in April of 2001, CENCOM asked the voters of Kitsap County to support a property tax lid lift for construction of a new 911 and County Emergency Operations Center. Fortunately, citizens recognized that the old 911 center was inadequate. In 2002, they passed a \$10.5 million, five-year property tax initiative. Voters approved another ballot measure in 2003 that enacted a dedicated 1/10th of 1% sales tax to provide a long-term, reliable funding source for CENCOM, eliminating the remaining three years of the property tax lid lift.

Planning for the new facility began in early 2002. The goal was to construct an all-new facility that would meet every one of CENCOM's current and future needs. Most importantly, the new building would be constructed to modern seismic code standards. The state-of-the-art building was commissioned on May 10, 2005. It took a little over three years to construct and install the equipment on budget. On December 7, 2006, the final bond loan payment was made on the

new facility. With the 2007 budget year, CENCOM reduced fees charged to cities, the county, and fire districts for 911 and dispatch services. The organization simultaneously upgraded critical communications equipment for police, fire, and emergency medical responders.

To further enhance services, on-line reporting was implemented in 2008 for all interested law enforcement agencies within Kitsap County. It allowed citizens to 1) submit their reports on-line for a pre-defined set of crimes with no suspect information, and 2) not have to wait for an officer to respond to their residence or need to call in.

In 2012, Kitsap County CENCOM saw the need for extra radio coverage in southern Kitsap. At the same time, Pierce Transit was looking for a site in the same area to get better coverage for them and for Pierce County 911. Pierce Transit, Pierce County Emergency Management, and CENCOM ultimately partnered to build this tower. They linked it to CENCOM's existing Gold Mountain tower site. This arrangement allowed each agency to place their equipment on the other's tower rent-free, which provided better coverage and improved interoperability. CENCOM's portion of the project was funded through CENCOM's Operations fund without any user fee or tax increases.

In 2015, CENCOM began taking Text-to-911 events--a momentous step for 911 communications. This innovation allowed greater access to 911 for those within the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. It also provided more immediate response and protection for those in dangerous situations who could not speak freely. CENCOM was proud to be the first 911 center in the State of Washington to offer Text-to-911.

In 2020 Kitsap 911 was the first 911 center in the State of Washington to begin taking and dispatching 911 calls remotely.

# KITSAP 911 PUBLIC AUTHORITY

In July 2015, the CENCOM Board decided to bring our leadership under a single umbrella so that we could become more responsive to changing needs and demographics in the region; more effective at managing resources; more nimble in increasing the ability to quickly solve problems and take advantage of opportunities; and more transparent by presenting plans and decisions with clarity.

Since then, CENCOM has worked through a strategic transition, moving from Kitsap County Central Communication, a department of Kitsap County, to Kitsap 911 Public Authority. Kitsap 911 Public Authority began operations on December 26, 2016.

Kitsap 911 is governed by the Board of Directors, which is made up of the same elected officials that served on the CENCOM policy board. Members include the three county commissioners and the sheriff; the mayors of Bainbridge Island, Bremerton, Port Orchard, and Poulsbo; three fire commissioners; and two Bremerton City Council members. The Board meets at least once per quarter. That schedule is located on our website at <http://www.kitsap911.org/governance/>.

Kitsap 911 Board of Directors appoints the Kitsap 911 Executive Committee to 1) exercise a certain limited authority, and 2) make decisions that are necessary in ensuring the efficient operation of Kitsap 911. However, the Board retains final decision-making authority for matters concerning the following:

- The annual Kitsap 911 Operations budget and funding, cost share distributions, the Enhanced 911 Tax Revenue Fund and Five-Year Expenditure Plan, and the accumulated Kitsap 911 Capital Reserve Fund;
- Amendments to these Bylaws;
- Strategic Plan Adoption;
- Appointment of the Kitsap 911 Executive Director; and
- Any other matter of major importance.

The Kitsap 911 Executive Committee consists of five Board members and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Strategic Advisory Board as non-voting members. This committee meets twice per month.

The Executive Committee makes recommendations to the Board on matters reserved for Board action. It also has limited authority, as provided by the Board, to make necessary decisions that ensure the efficient operation of Kitsap 911. These actions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Providing direction to and managing the performance of the Executive Director;
- Authorizing budget amendments, including expenditures from the reserves;
- Providing advice and recommendations to the Executive Director regarding labor agreements, staffing, or personnel issues; and
- Providing recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners regarding excise tax levels and other such matters.

The Strategic Advisory Board is composed of police and fire chiefs of Kitsap 911 participating agencies. This board provides advice and input to the Kitsap 911 Board of Directors, Executive Committee, and the Executive Director on topics that may cover:

- Significant administrative issues and policies, staffing and service levels, and funding;
- Budget proposals, operational procedures, and other matters related to day-to-day operations; and
- Any other duties delegated by the Board or Executive Committee.

Today, Kitsap 911 staff includes a diverse management team, combined IT and radio technical systems group, administrative group, and 59 supervisory and dispatch personnel that manage the 24-hour, 365-day operation. The Kitsap 911 of today is vastly different from the CENCOM of 1973. Continued exploration into ever-changing technology and broader funding mechanisms, along with proactive long-term planning, continue to remain the mainstay of our organization.



# 2020 KITSAP 911 | BOARD OF DIRECTORS

# 2020 KITSAP 911 | STRATEGIC ADVISORY BOARD



**LESLIE DAUGS**  
Bremerton City Council



**DAVE ELLINGSON**  
Fire Commissioner  
Executive Committee



**BECKY ERICKSON**  
Poulsbo Mayor  
Executive Committee



**CHARLOTTE GARRIDO**  
Kitsap County Commissioner



**ROBERT GELDER**  
Kitsap County Commissioner



**HANK TERAN**  
Bainbridge Island Fire Chief



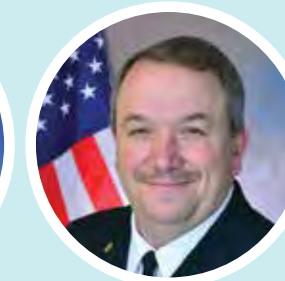
**JOE CLARK**  
Bainbridge Island Police Chief



**PAT MC GANNEY**  
Bremerton Fire Chief



**JIM BURCHETT**  
Bremerton Police Chief



**JOHN OLIVER**  
Central Kitsap Fire Chief



**KOL MEDINA**  
Bainbridge Island Representative



**BOB MUHLEMAN**  
Fire Commissioner



**ROB PUTAANSUU**  
Port Orchard Mayor



**GARY SIMPSON**  
Kitsap County Sheriff  
Executive Committee



**GREG WHEELER**  
Bremerton Mayor  
Executive Committee



**JOHN GESE**  
Kitsap County Sheriff's Office Undersheriff



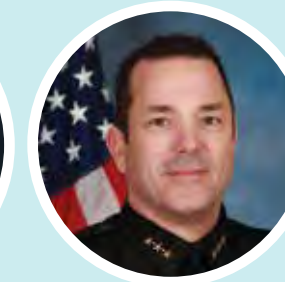
**DOMINGO ALMIROL**  
Port Gamble Police Chief



**MATT BROWN**  
Port Orchard Police Chief



**JIM GILLARD**  
Poulsbo Fire Chief



**DAN SCHOONMAKER**  
Retired Poulsbo Police Chief



**DUSTY WILEY**  
Fire Commissioner  
Executive Committee



**EDWARD WOLFE**  
Kitsap County Commissioner



**ERIC YOUNGER**  
Bremerton City Council Member



**RON HARDING**  
Poulsbo Police Chief



**STEVE WRIGHT**  
Retired South Kitsap Fire Chief



**JEFF FAUCETT**  
South Kitsap Fire and Rescue Chief



**MIKE LASNIER**  
Suquamish Police Chief

# DIRECTORS



Richard Kirton, *Executive Director*



Maria Jameson-Owens, *Deputy Director*



Since our inception more than 45 years ago, Kitsap 911 has pursued opportunities for growth and development. Our goal: to provide seamless Operations, cutting-edge Technology, superb Customer Service, comprehensive Coverage, and top Training and Staffing for the benefit of every resident and visitor of our Kitsap community.

Kitsap 911 employees are professionals that value and work to fulfill Kitsap 911's mission and values. Together they achieve and surpass expectations by working as a team. They step up to challenges, seeing opportunity in the chaos. They continue to learn, learn, and learn more as time and technology progresses. This is one of today's most challenging and rewarding careers. Our employees are a dynamic group, flexing and shifting their communication and performance to meet the need. They are simply the best of the best and they proved that beyond a doubt in 2020. Kitsap 911 hires multiple times a year. If you are interested in joining our team visit our website at [kitsap911.org](http://kitsap911.org).

Change is a huge element of working in a 911 environment. 2020 increased the need for quick, efficient change in order to effectively work through the COVID19 pandemic. In order to ensure Kitsap 911 was able to maintain services and maintain a healthy and safe environment for our employees, we implemented an aggressive emergency response at the onset of COVID19. Due to these measures, Kitsap 911 was successful in maintaining service levels and keeping COVID19 out of our work environment. This required significant change in how we do our jobs as well as substantial effort to develop and deploy technologies for remote work.

The ever-growing world of 911 and all the associated changes often bring challenges along the way. Kitsap 911's radio system is one of those challenges that we are currently facing. Our current VHF radio system is far past its prime and no longer fulfills our needs due to growth and progress in public safety. We have pushed this system as far as it can go. We need a system that allows for increased communication between jurisdictions as well as increased radio coverage countywide to fulfill the demands of those working in the field. We must deal with how we finance a digital radio system capable of accomplishing the needs of Kitsap 911, local law and fire agencies, as well as provide interoperability with our neighboring counties. It is essential that Kitsap 911 address this issue in order to fulfill the demands of today as well as to provide efficient and effective communications during significant emergency situations. Such implementation requires a \$30 million-plus investment. Working with our Board of Directors and Strategic Advisory Board we will determine the right path for this issue. In 2021 we will lay the groundwork for the new radio system. The complete project will take around 5 years to complete.

In the years ahead, we will continue to encounter and overcome all the challenges that come our way and we will continue providing the exceptional level of service Kitsap 911 is known for.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Richard Kirton in black ink.

Richard Kirton  
*Executive Director*

Handwritten signature of Maria Jameson-Owens in black ink.

Maria Jameson-Owens  
*Deputy Director*

# MANAGEMENT TEAM



Richard Kirton



Maria Jameson-Owens



George Hazard



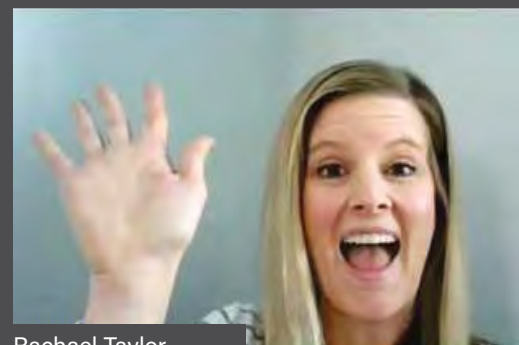
Brandon Wecker



Jamie Donley



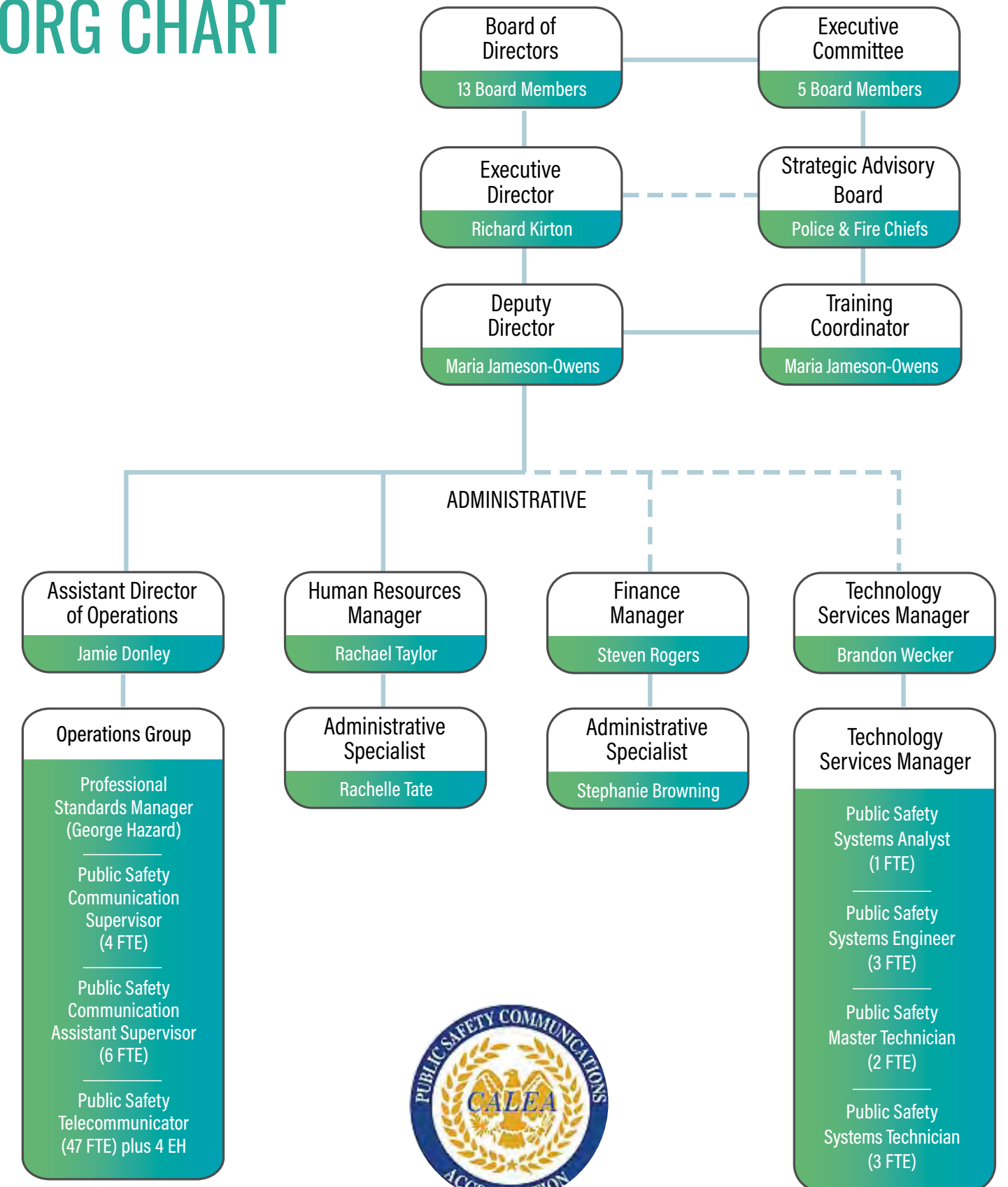
Steve Rogers



Rachael Taylor



# KITSAP 911 ORG CHART



# FINANCE

2020 was an interesting year in the world of finance. Many of the traditional methods used in forecasting, budgeting, and analysis were heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as were virtually (pun-intended) all of our day-to-day processes. Beginning in March, the finance group began working from home and that seemingly small detail forced several significant, structural changes in how we now operate. Although the timing was not what we had originally planned, many of our processes are now paperless, and consequently more streamlined, efficient, and transparent to the public.

In its third annual audit by the Office of the Washington State Auditor for the 2019 calendar year, Kitsap 911 received another clean audit report on both its Accountability and Financial audits. While these results were not the least bit surprising, it was welcomed confirmation that the financial controls, procedures, and policies that everyone at

Kitsap 911 adheres to do exactly what the finance department designed them to do: meticulously safeguard the taxpayer dollars entrusted to it.

Last year, we said we "...look forward to 2020 as another great year..." We admit, this did NOT age well, but all things considered we believe the finance group wrapped up the year having made some incredible improvements to our organization that will benefit our employees, vendors, and customers for years to come. This time, in an attempt to not kick the hornet's nest again, the finance group instead hopes 2021 is completely boring with nothing interesting happening whatsoever - picture a square room with beige carpet, beige walls, and a white orange peel-textured ceiling.



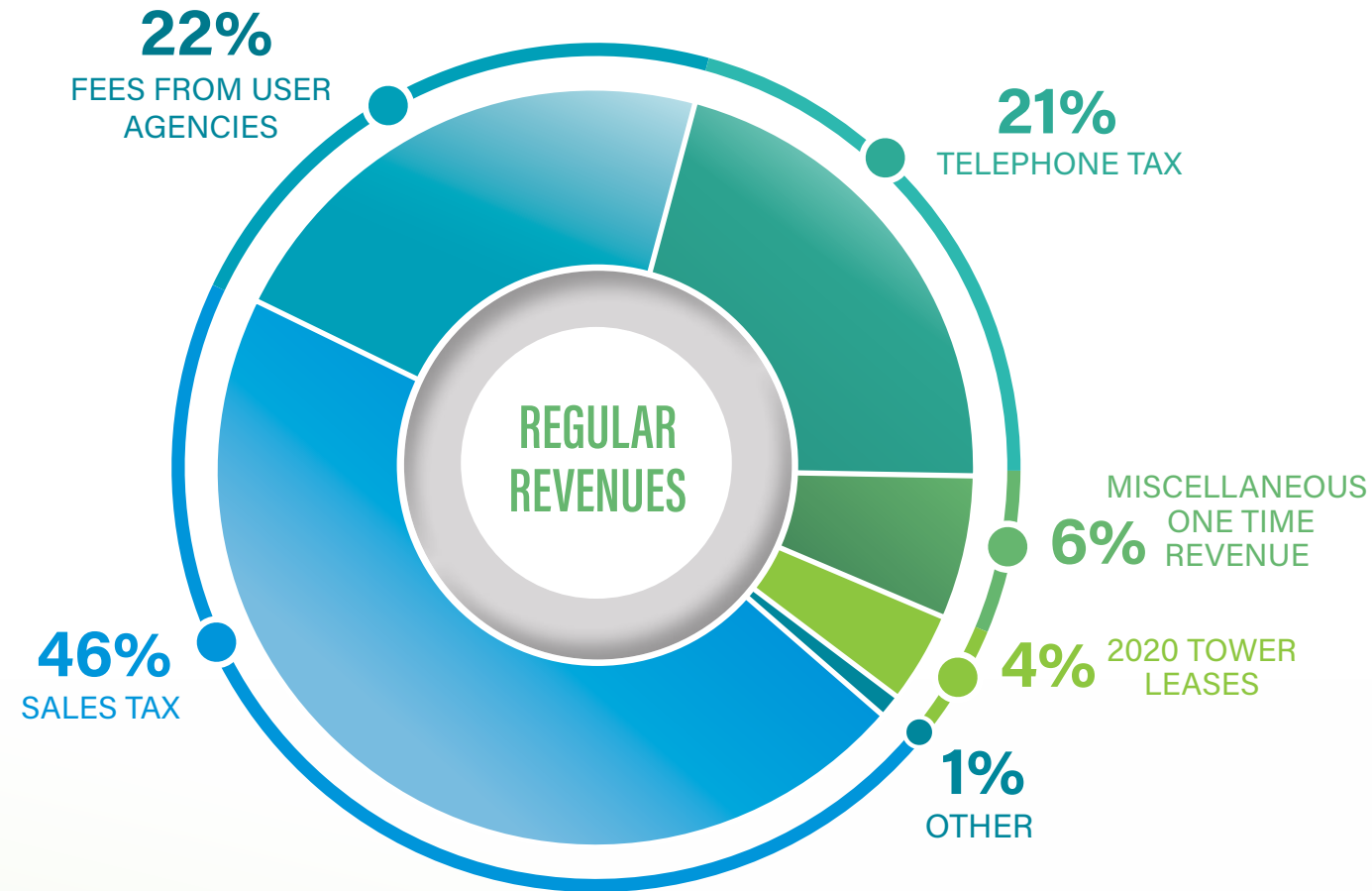
Stephanie Browning



Steve Rogers



# 2020 KITSAP 911 | REGULAR REVENUES



The primary source of regular revenues for Kitsap 911 is dedicated 911 taxes (e.g., the 1/10th of 1% sales tax and 911 excise tax on wireless, wireline, VoIP, and prepaid wireless telephone services). In 2020, we received approximately \$8.1M (67%) from these sources, 68% of which came from sales tax alone.

We receive revenues for dispatching fire, law enforcement, and emergency medical calls. In 2020, we received approximately \$2.7M from our customer agencies for providing these services.

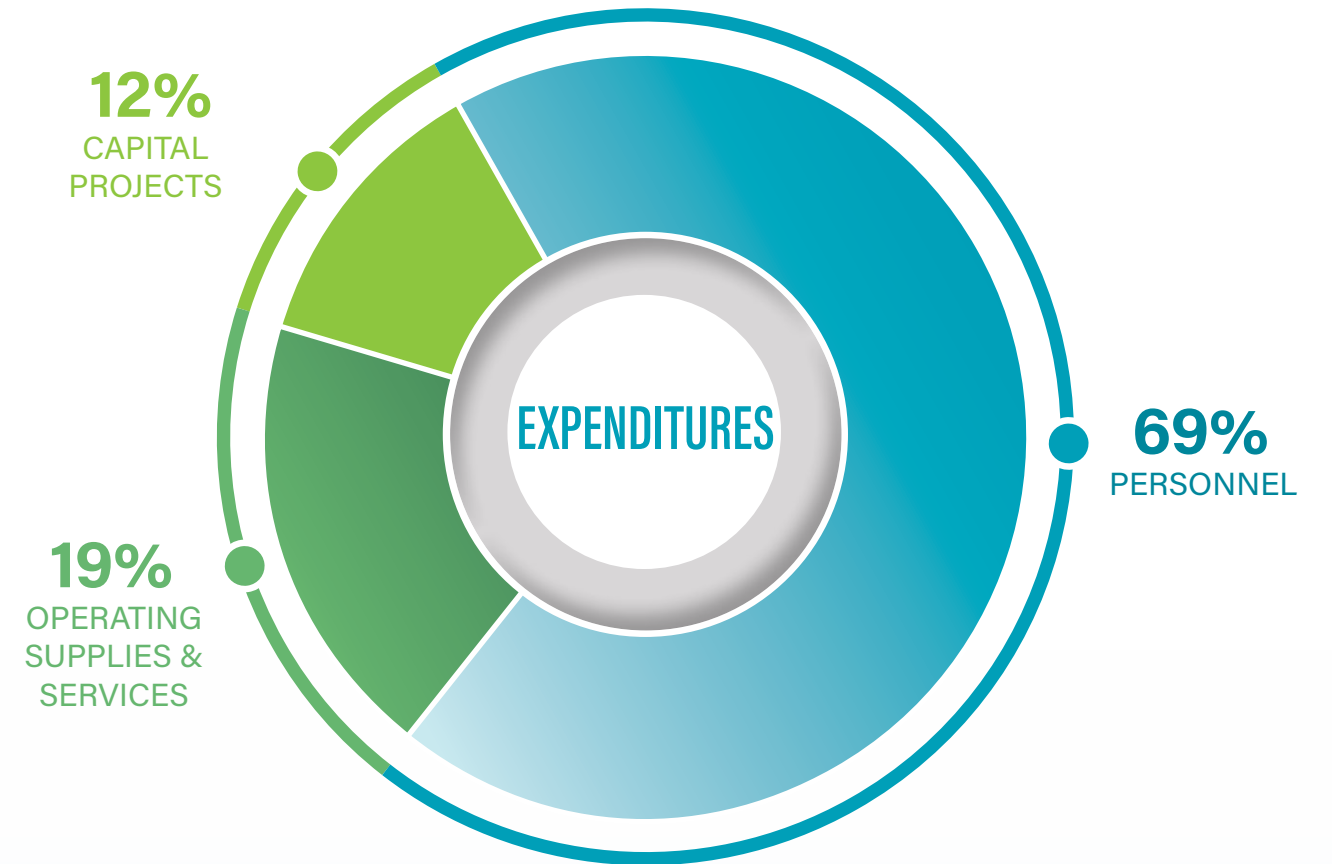
Miscellaneous, one time revenues primarily consist of receipts from Federal, State, and DUI grants. In 2020, we received approximately \$0.8M from these sources, over \$0.7M of which was related to the CARES Act.

We also receive regular revenues by leasing unused space on our radio towers. In 2020, we received approximately \$0.5M from these contract partners.

## 2020 REGULAR REVENUES

Sales Tax .....	\$5,521,389	46%
Fees from User Agencies .....	\$2,680,267	22%
Telephone Tax .....	\$2,588,798	21%
Miscellaneous One Time Revenue .....	\$783,457	6%
2020 Tower Lease Revenues .....	\$529,621	4%
Other .....	\$29,957	1%
<b>Total 2020 Revenue .....</b>	<b>\$12,133,489</b>	<b>  100%</b>

# 2020 KITSAP 911 | EXPENDITURES



In 2020, Kitsap 911 appropriated approximately \$11.2M in operating expenditures. Of this, we expended approximately \$10.2M.

Approximately \$8.0M (or 79% of our total operating expenditure budget) of our 2020 operations expenditures was from personnel costs. Labor from our 64 FTEs comprised approximately 69% of our total appropriation.

Operating supplies and services expenditures totaled approximately \$2.2M for 2020. Kitsap 911 did not incur any debt service expenditures in the current year, as the final payment for our only debt obligation occurred in 2019.

Capital expenditures and other non-operational expenditures totaled \$1.4M.

## 2020 EXPENDITURES

Personnel.....	\$8,025,352	69%
Operating Supplies & Services .....	\$2,183,979	19%
Capital Projects .....	\$1,407,654	12%
<b>Total 2020 Expenditures.....</b>	<b>\$11,616,985</b>	<b>  100%</b>

# HUMAN RESOURCES

Overall, 2020 was a successful year for the Human Resources Team at Kitsap 911. In a year of uncertainty, Rachael Taylor, HR Manager, and Rachelle Tate, HR Administrative Specialist, quickly pulled together and accomplished our goals, and then some.

In March 2020, when we learned that we would be working from home remotely for the unforeseeable future, we quickly adapted and turned our basements and dining rooms into workspaces. We learned as we went, adding in the equipment needed to make us fully functional from home.

Soon after, we found ourselves wondering how we were going to conduct virtual hiring, knowing that our number one priority was to keep our workforce staffed. The HR Team quickly pulled together to not only test applicants virtually through the National Testing Network, but to also conduct virtual interviews and floor observations, all the while making sure we stayed organized and efficient while still delivering an outstanding experience for our applicants. Not only did we deliver on all those things, we developed practices that will serve us well long into the future after we return to the building.

The HR Team also developed an entirely paperless process while hiring. From application and criminal history reviews, to interviews and testing, it's all done now without the need to print, saving us time and storage space. Our team has learned that we are able to work together to do things that we didn't know were possible a year ago.

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced many new situations that we never saw coming. From creating new policies and procedures for our staff to even enter the building, to guidelines for employees to bring their dogs to work, it seemed that every week brought something different. But we were able to adjust priorities and adapt at a moment's notice through communication and teamwork.

Our goal as Kitsap 911 Human Resources continues to be to maintain an efficient and effective HR department that supports Kitsap 911's mission and values, and to make continuous improvements every year. Our main priority is the people in this organization and making sure they are able to serve our community. In 2021 we will continue to focus our efforts on recruiting an outstanding, diverse workforce and on retaining our amazing employees.



Rachelle Tate



Rachael Taylor



# TECHNICAL SERVICES GROUP

The Technical Services Group meets Kitsap 911's needs for support, operation, maintenance, and repair of all technical systems and services. This includes all radio systems and information technology systems. The team also assists with the maintenance and operation of Kitsap 911's facility and tower sites, with support ranging from building maintenance (both preventative and repairs) to card access systems and site security.

Each year this team completes numerous projects to improve the technology and systems critical to providing high quality 911 service to residents of Kitsap County, and to provide necessary resources to all of our member agencies.

## SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS

There was a significant shift in projects at Kitsap 911 during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some projects were paused while others were added or escalated in priority and completion deadline. All the projects completed in 2020 contributed, in one way or another, toward making Kitsap 911 a safer, more resilient working environment in the event of a workforce disruption due to COVID-19.

One of the projects carried forward from 2019 related to improving network security and Criminal Justice Information Systems (CJIS) compliance. As part of this improvement, Kitsap 911 deployed multi-factor authentication for all Mobile Computer Terminals (MCTS). The implementation of this project was completed in early 2020.

In 2020 we added the ability to access criminal justice records via Mobile Responder, which is a phone/tablet-based system that allows our Fire, EMS, and law enforcement partners to interact with the CAD system when they are away from their vehicle. While we saw a full-scale deployment of this solution in 2019, we completed the expansion of this capability in 2020.

Another significant effort completed in 2020 was to roll out Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL)-based deployments to the agencies not completed in 2019. Known as Closest Unit Dispatch, AVL deployments use the vehicles location to determine the fastest appropriate response to fire and EMS calls.

A new project added in 2020 was the documentation and evaluation of our current radio coverage and cellular

service coverage. This work was completed in early 2020 after Kitsap 911 performed a large number of drives across the county testing all radio channels. During these drives the vehicle was outfitted with multiple monitoring systems to take radio and cellular coverage measurements. The information gathered supported the need for upgrades to our current radio and microwave systems. Based on the success of this project, Kitsap 911 will be performing drive coverage testing as part of our continuous improvement process.

One of the first projects undertaken as the COVID-19 pandemic began was the migration of all Kitsap 911 in-house chat systems to Microsoft Teams. In addition to this, Kitsap 911's internally hosted SharePoint site was also migrated into the Office 365 cloud. These were essential first steps towards the remote work landscape which quickly became commonplace. These changes allowed for greater access to files and increased communication and collaboration.

In early 2020, Kitsap 911 began exploring the possibility of 911 operations staff working remotely. This included the ability to answer and process incoming business and 911 calls as well as work a radio frequency remotely. Many of the tools put in place as part of our previous technology monitoring and server virtualization projects played a key role in making this project possible. Over the course of the year our solution saw many iterations and improvements. As early as April we began testing with operations staff on the feasibility and functionality available. After each round of testing we took the feedback provided and implemented improvements to achieve a workable solution that enabled staff to provide the standard level of service required. By the 4th of July, which is our busiest time of the year, we had the remote 911 system in such a state that we successfully utilized remote 911 dispatchers to fulfill the staffing needs of the dispatch center.

Our remote 911 capabilities were further enhanced in the fall when we received CARES funding to make system improvements we had been evaluating. This project was a huge leap forward for us as we have completely changing the paradigm of 911 call taking. There was a large amount of work that needed to be completed in order to meet the funding requirements and many of the tasks had short turnaround times and deadlines. These improvements included additional server hardware and software to support the back end system, additional phone and radio system licenses, a 911 phone upgrade, a large number of remote 911 kits containing all equipment needed to remotely take 911 calls and dispatch, and professional services to assist with the fine tuning of the system. These items were received and the work was completed in time to meet the funding requirements and further improve Kitsap 911's ability to respond to the changing pandemic landscape.

Another project which provided significant improvement to Kitsap 911 and its member agencies was the rollout of a digital alerting system for fire and EMS. The evaluation and vendor selection process was completed in 2019 with the implementation beginning in April, 2020. This involved major system changes including the change to a digital voice announce of fire and EMS events. This change provides a uniform dispatch voice and cadence that is helpful to units in the field. In addition, this allows the two fire dispatchers to focus their attention on events in progress, while the automated voice handles the initial notification. The second half of this project was to deploy the digital alerting system to all career fire stations which included the creation of a dedicated secure transmission network for the call data. Call information is transmitted over this network to alert fire stations of a call for service. This process is significantly quicker than our previous analog alerting system. Kitsap 911 started working with the vendor and fire agencies to install the necessary equipment at every staffed fire station in 2020 with the remaining agencies to be completed in early 2021.

## TECHNOLOGY GROUP

This year continued the trend of significant changes to the makeup of Kitsap 911's technology team. Filling a vacancy for a System Engineer, focused on Computer Aided Dispatch administration, was a critical and challenging endeavor. While the process began early in 2020, we were not able to find the right candidate for some time. A highly qualified individual was hired and began work in November of 2020 after he relocated to Kitsap County from another public safety agency in Louisiana.

In July, Kitsap 911 began recruiting for a full-time Public Safety Systems Technician. This position was filled in November 2020 with an employee transfer from the operations floor.

To assist with the heavy workload throughout the year, we also hired two short term extra-help employees to assist with the major projects. Both were trained on the necessary elements and helped the technology group complete these projects on time.



Bandon Wecker



Terese Ungren



Khris LaPlante



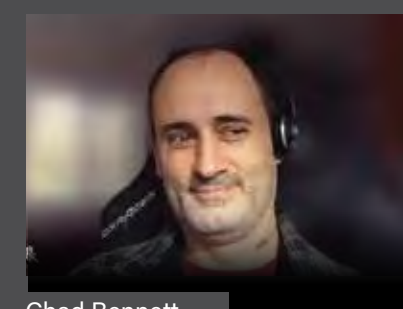
Eadie Kaltenbacher



Kyle Boeddeker



Ryan Rorie



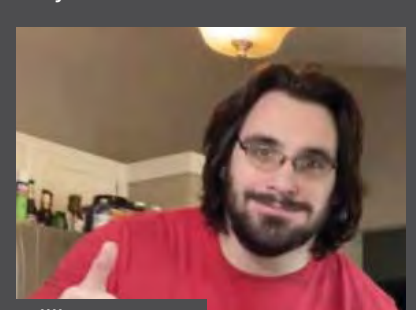
Chad Bennett



Katy Graham



Tim Simonson



William Jones



# THE OPERATIONS GROUP

Kitsap 911 is the primary public safety answering point in Kitsap County, WA. We are the unseen partner of emergency services, providing services to seven law enforcement agencies, six fire districts, Kitsap Animal Control, and the Coroner's Office. We also work closely with Washington State Patrol and Military Police.

Kitsap 911 runs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The operations staff is composed of call takers who answer 911 calls and dispatchers who are responsible for not only answering 911 calls but also dispatching and tracking law enforcement and fire/EMS units. The operations floor is staffed by one to three call takers and five to seven dispatchers per shift. First-line supervision includes four shift supervisors (Mary Valerio, Brandy D'Intinosanto, Shawn Handel, and Jenn Andrews), four assistant supervisors (Chris Law, Drew Tetrick, Jason Meeder, and Jana Oliver) and three acting assistant supervisors (Randy Dasho, Becca Stipp, and Sheila Ring.)

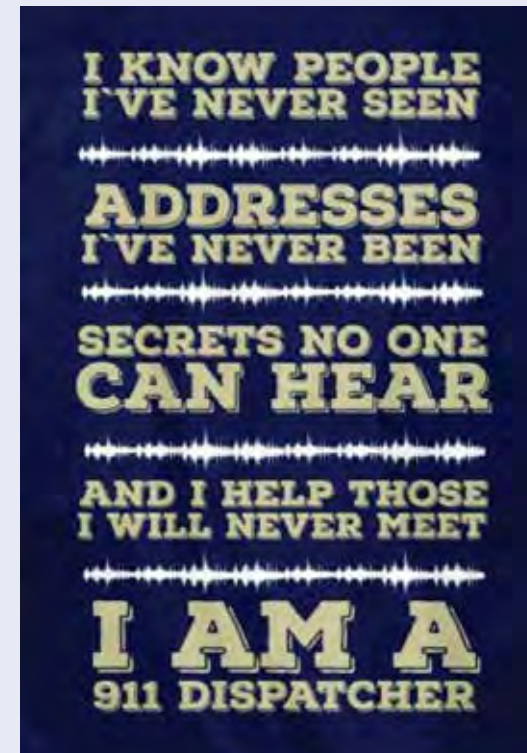
Operations employees have a base schedule of four 10-hour shifts a week. With mandatory overtime, it is not uncommon for most operations employees to work 12-hour shifts, along with overtime shifts on days off. In 2020, operations employees worked a total of 11,544 overtime hours. While this is down from 14,000+ hours in 2019, it is far more than we would like to see.

We have 37 full-time dispatcher positions, 12 full-time call receiver positions, 6 full-time assistant supervisor positions, and 4 full-time supervisor positions at Kitsap 911. In 2020 operations, vacancies were as high as 14 positions. One of the largest

*From Sergeant to call taker  
"You saved a life tonight."*

*Whoever the call receiver and dispatcher were on the  
drowning in the last hour.... spot on! They did a great job.  
Baby is crying and at Mary Bridge.*

struggles most 9-1-1 centers have nationwide is maintaining qualified, trained personnel capable of dealing with the challenging tasks required of an Emergency Telecommunicator. In addition to being capable, we struggle to find employees who have the drive to want to do this job. Being an emergency telecommunicator is not something many kids dream of being when they grow up unlike being in law enforcement or the fire service. The vital role of the 911 emergency telecommunicator is often under-appreciated and misunderstood. This is perhaps due to a lack of visibility into what they do on any given shift. Dispatchers are often just a voice on the other end of the radio but there are so many elements to the job that require them to make sound decisions quickly and



effectively based on information they can extract from various sources. Emergency telecommunicators have information coming at them from all directions, from phone to text to radio to computer-based alerts – they must effectively manage these numerous sources of information to efficiently and accurately provide the necessary resources.

Emergency telecommunicators must maintain their calm and communicate effectively to work through difficult events. They handle every type of call you can imagine from the mundane to those in which their actions save a life. They are often times the lifeline a caller needs to survive a situation. They provide support and encouragement to someone in their worst moment. They listen for the unsaid words and send help when it cannot be asked for. The emergency telecommunicator is truly a special person who fulfills a vital role in the public safety team.

Our emergency telecommunicators are highly trained and dedicated to providing the best service possible to callers and emergency responders. It is because of our operations team that we are able to fulfill Kitsap 911's mission every day.



# OPERATIONS

## Call Answering Performance

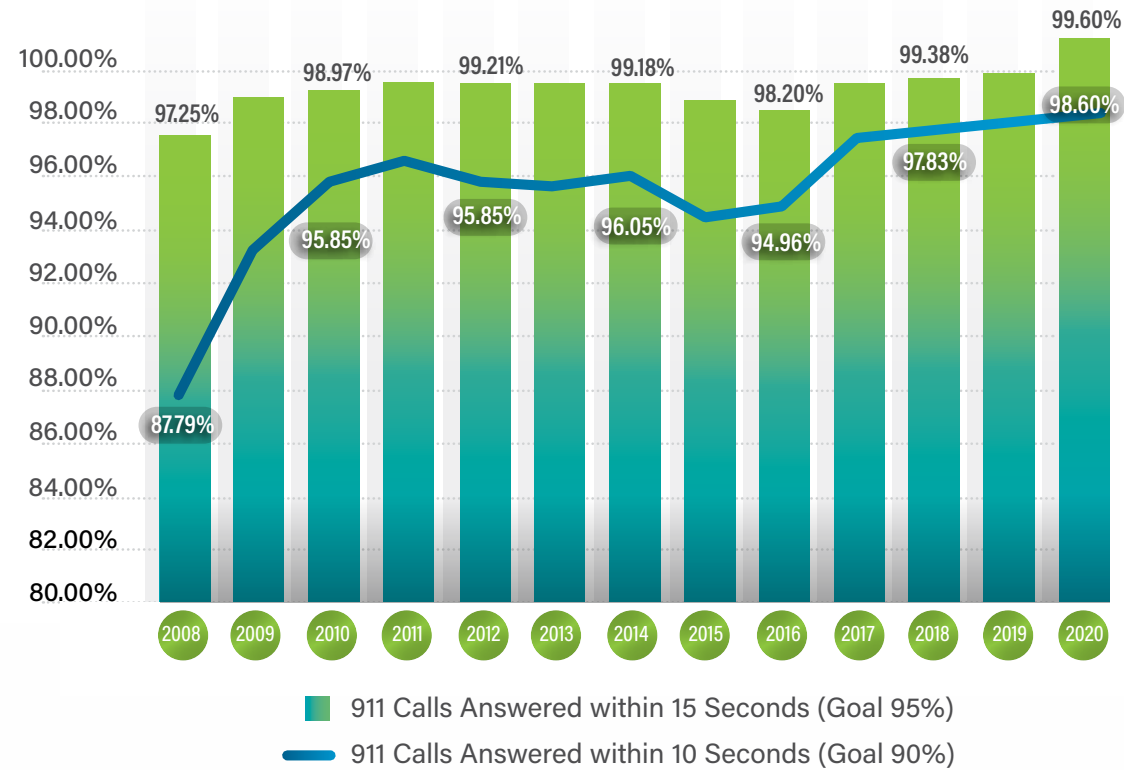
First we look at NFPA 1221. This goal is 95% of all calls answered within 15 seconds.

We continued to exceed this standard in 2020 with 99.6% up slightly from 2019's 99.5%.

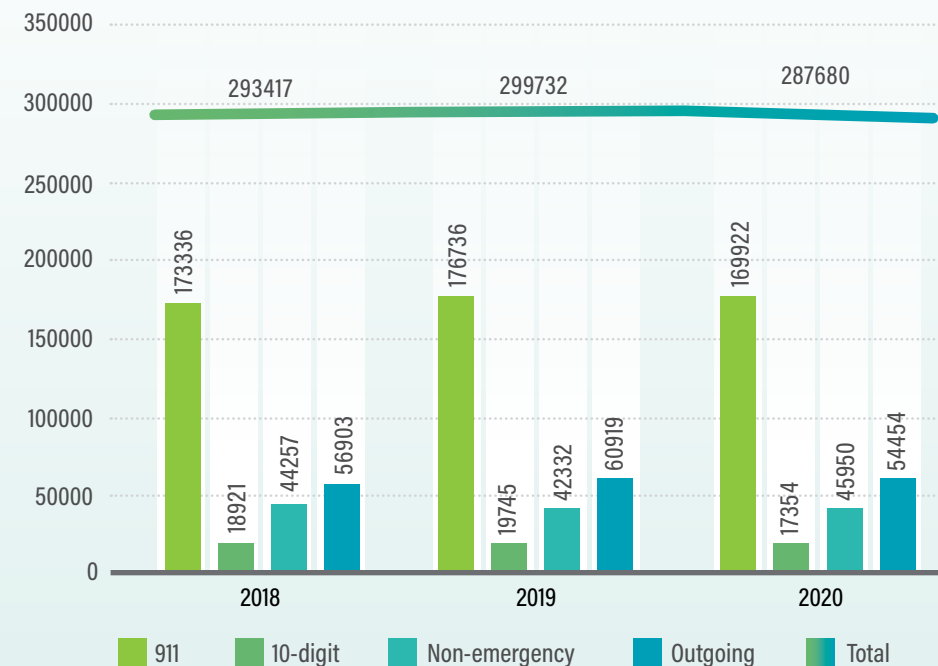
We also look at Kitsap 911's internal goal of all 911 calls answered within 10 seconds 90% of the time.

We also exceeded this goal with 98.6% up from 2019's 98%.

## 911 ANSWERING STATS



## CALLS PROCESSED ON THE DISPATCH FLOOR



Kitsap 911 handled 287,680 calls in 2020, down from 299,732 calls in 2019.

169,922 of those were 911 calls

17,354 were 10 digit emergency lines

45,950 were non-emergency

54,454 were outgoing

The dispatch floor processed 330 text to 911 events in 2020 up from 254 in 2019.

The highest increase was for events that would have been better as a call to 911.

# DISPATCH PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

PRIORITY 1 LAW ENFORCEMENT	2018	2019	2020
90% Dispatched Within 64 Seconds	29	30	26

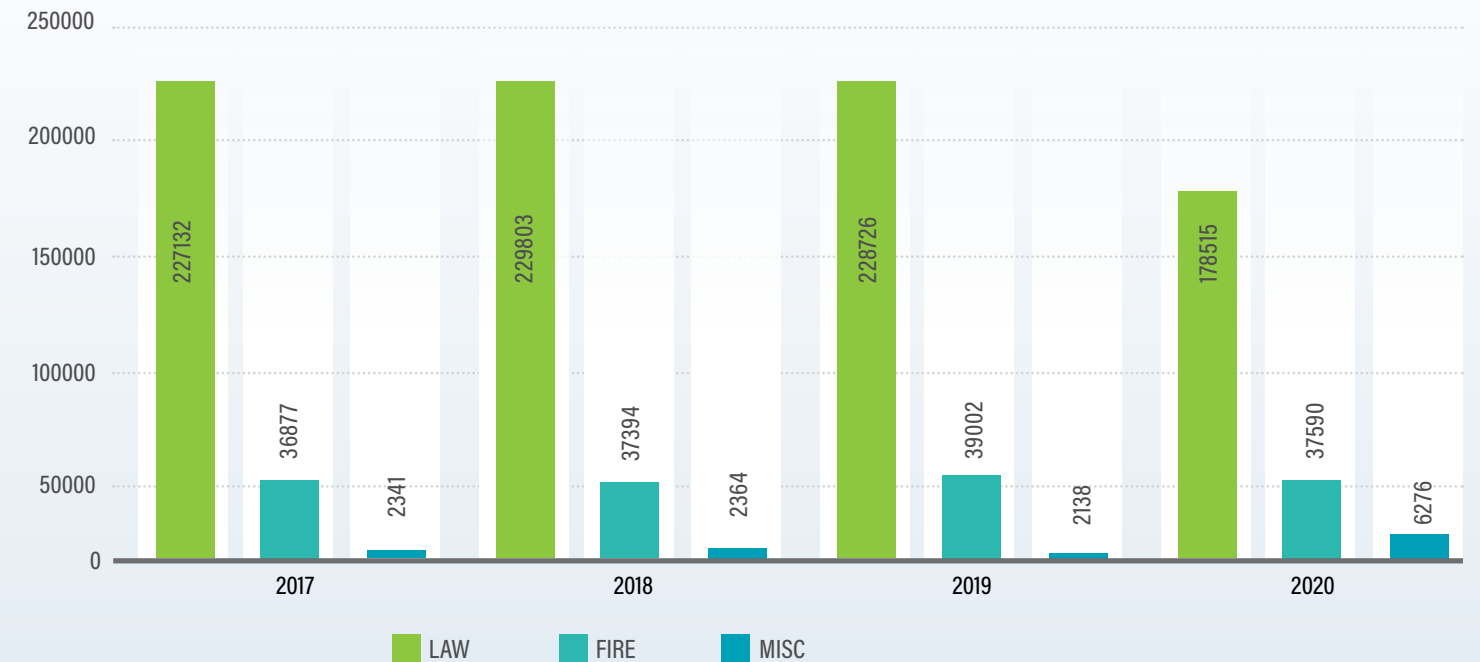
FIRE/EMS STANDARDS	2018	2019	2020
90% Dispatched Within 64 Seconds	84%	81.5%	75.6%
95% Dispatched Within 106 Seconds	96%	96.6%	96%
Answered to Dispatched	:47	:47	:52

Processing times for priority 1 law enforcement events has remained steady the last few years. The goal is to dispatch these events within 30 seconds of their appearance in the CAD system. We met the goal in 2020 with a 26 second average.

Processing times for fire/EMS events have remained solid for both NFPA categories after the implemented changes to fire/ems dispatching in in early 2018. For the first category - 90% of events dispatched within 64 seconds, our average for 2020 was 75.6% within 64 seconds, a decreased from 81.5% in 2019. For the second category, 95% of events dispatched within 106 seconds, our 2020 average was 96% a slight decrease from 2019's 96.6%. These decreases are directly related to required screening questions for COVID as well as a triage line that was implemented for a few months in 2020.

Our 2020 average from answer to dispatch increased to 52 seconds, again due to required screening questions for COVID as well as a triage line that was implemented for a few months in 2020.

## DISPATCHED EVENT HISTORY



Kitsap 911 handled 222,381 events on the dispatch floor in 2020 - down from 269,866 events in 2019.

- Law accounted for 178,515, a drop from 2019's 228,726.
- Fire 37,590, a drop from 39,002.
- Other events totaled 6,276 up from 2,138 in 2019. This was due to increased access and usage of Coplogic, the law enforcement online reporting system since March 2020.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

By Christina Schiano

Growing up, I always knew that I wanted a job that was a bit unconventional, something exciting, somewhere where I could make a difference. I knew that I needed to work somewhere that had a little bit of variety and spontaneity to keep me on my toes. I had no idea if such a job existed or where to even start looking for one, but I hoped it was out there.

I spent years trying to find the perfect job for me, but it all seemed useless after a while. After years of searching, it practically landed right in my lap, and I haven't turned back since! That was almost four years ago, and I can honestly say that I am so thankful for it. My shifts are spread out around the clock and you never know what kind of a day you're going to have or what kinds of calls you'll get to handle. If things really start to get crazy, I know that I can rely on my teammates to work together through the event and come out on top. I love knowing that at the end of the day, I get to go home knowing that I made a difference in somebody's life, no matter how small it might seem.

Some days in this job are tough. Working long hours, being mandated for overtime shifts, spending holidays and birthdays away from family and friends, the "stress rollercoaster", and listening to the terrible and tragic events being reported all on top of the regular day to day stress we deal with – relationships, finances, our health, trying to decide what to make for dinner. After a while, all of these events add up and can be extremely overwhelming. Our health starts to deteriorate, we become short tempered, tired, and we stop taking care of ourselves.

For the first three years of my career, I was working in a very small center with a countywide population equal to that of the city of Bremerton. We were half-staffed at the time working regular 12-hour shifts, which meant there was a lot of overtime. I'd often find myself working 12-18 hour shifts switching between days/nights so that we had coverage. Over time, I found myself exhausted – mentally, physically, and emotionally. It was difficult to keep up. Our morale as an agency suffered because we were all overworked and uninspired. Not before long did I start to lose my passion for the job. It took a lot of time and consideration, I finally made the decision to move back home to be closer to my family and support system. It was a difficult decision because I felt like I was giving up, but I had to make the choice that was best for me.

Since starting at Kitsap 911 mid-August of 2020, I have experienced nothing but pure joy in my job. I have never worked in any place where the work seems to happen so seamlessly. The amount of effort and dedication contributed

by each employee is inspiring to watch. Everyone here has welcomed me warmly and with open arms. They are constantly showing me encouragement in my job and offering support and feedback when needed. Management takes a huge interest in their employees and encourages growth and involvement within the agency. There are several committees aimed at employee wellness and recognition, working with user agencies, and so many more. I have always been proud of my work as a Public Safety Telecommunicator, but there is a newfound sense of pride and accomplishment I feel for my job since starting at Kitsap 911, one that I am sure will last for the tenure of my career.

## DISPATCHERS TOOL BOX

By Dawn Perry

Kitsap 911 is my working life's second career. Having worked in a 911 center when my first child was just an infant, I fell in love with the job. When my second child came along, I had to leave my dispatch job because of the need for child care at night. At that time I pledged to return at my first opportunity.

Fast forward 21 years and I was fortunate to become an employee at Kitsap 911.

I've worked at Kitsap 911 since September of 2016. A week rarely goes by that I don't encounter a detail that reminds me how far from 1990's Sacramento Police Department I am now. While I'm confident they have also advanced technologically, it is a good reminder to reflect on how the updates and changes have impacted the job...as they can be taken for granted.

Primarily I think about officer safety. The ability to see where a unit is on a map is an enormous benefit: for setting up containment positions; for sending help to a unit unable to speak freely; for watching as aid units come into the area on a CPR detail.

And the radio banner is a compliment to officer safety and to the ability for the dispatcher to confirm what they heard. While we're taught not to rely on the radio banner, it's a resource that is invaluable when: trying to confirm the unit that had traffic; having a starting point for a transmission that is not readable but may sound as if a unit is in trouble.

These two elements of change to the dispatchers tool box are greatly appreciated by me (*and certainly the entire floor*), as I recall many roll calls and grid searches earlier in my career. I'm grateful for these tools and their addition to my ability to do the best job possible so that everyone goes home to their family.

## MAGICAL MYSTERIOUS PEOPLE

By Jessica Jimerson

I have worked at Kitsap 911 a little over 4 years. I applied to work at the 911 center having minimal experience with law enforcement or first responders in general. I come from a community that is hesitant to rely on the services 911 provides, and I thought long and hard about how I would fit in with this profession. Ultimately, I knew I would feel gratified helping others, so I decided to pursue dispatching as a career. The first time I stepped on the dispatch floor, I could not believe how calm the everyone seemed especially under stressful conditions. Seeing a dispatcher multitask quickly and efficiently, capturing invisible details to the naked eye was like watching a superhero at work. I wanted to be part of that world. Little did I know, it was the beginning of a journey filled with some tears, but also great triumphs and reward.

Starting a job at a 911 center requires more than a willingness to do the job. I quickly found that out after 8 weeks of academy. Disciplined, focused, awareness of self, trusting the process were all skills that I needed to build upon, and Cencom provided the resources for that. I started as a call receiver taking 911 calls. With the help of my trainers, I developed the interviewing and critical thinking skills among many others to be able to do the job. I learned things like better identifying the difference between an accidental dial and person who maybe could not speak freely. I learned not only event types and situations for law enforcement, but the ones for fire & medical, and how important it was allocating the correct resources to people in need.

At first, it was overwhelming learning the culture, procedures, and the changes that the job entails. Luckily, being creative, or resourceful are qualities that fit in well with this job. The little changes are not so hard, such as changing a greeting from "What's your emergency" to "are you reporting a life threatening emergency". During my dispatch training, I learned how to remain calm for one of the bigger changes like going from one page of data to 8 pages. Then being a newly signed off dispatcher, I had to and work through the changing dynamic of the dispatch floor due to a vigorous training program of the next class.

At the end of the day, when you just need that little extra something to get you through the challenges of training, call receiving and then dispatching, you have your coworkers there every step of the way. Some you lean on more than others, but everyone there wants you to succeed. When I first stepped into the 911 center, I thought the people who do this job were magical mysterious people. After 4 years, I still admire my coworkers strength and ability to do the job, and am grateful to them for helping with confidence that I could do it too!

## GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN 2020

By Eadie Kaltenbacher

GIS (*Geographic Information Systems*) is the art and science of mapping combined with technology. At the end of 2019, Kitsap 911 brought GIS services in-house with the addition of a GIS Analyst to the Technology Services Group, providing support for a variety of location-focused business processes.

One of these businesses processes is the transition to Next-Generation 911. In our existing statewide infrastructure, calls are routed to the correct PSAP based on a database storing a list of telephone numbers and their associated PSAP. In Next Generation 911, PSAP routing will be determined by the actual location of the caller. This process will improve call routing accuracy, enable location when contacting 911 from other internet-enabled devices (*such as wearable medical devices or collision detection systems*) and allow for redundancy across the state and even the nation in case of large-scale disasters. Next Generation 911 requires GIS data to be complete, current, and accurate; and one of our main efforts this year has been preparing our source data to meet these standards.

Another focus for 2020 was refreshing and refining the map roll process. Our dispatch center strives to perform a map roll quarterly, which updates the maps used by calltakers and dispatchers, as well as those used in MCTs. Our Map Testing Team is highly valued as they thoroughly check that each newly created map performs as expected before going live.

In 2020 we also launched our first online web mapping applications. One of these is an analysis of locations where radio and cell coverage is diminished. We used GIS to create optimized driving routes which enabled a driver to get within one square mile of the entire county's jurisdiction, using specialized equipment to measure signal strength over the entire area. These results were displayed visually on a web map, and will be used to inform future decisions regarding cell and radio signal improvement.

**Did you know the Kitsap 911 CAD map includes:**

- 28,000+ road centerline segments
- 102,000+ address points
- 106 Emergency Service Zones for Law Enforcement
- 252 Emergency Service Zones for Fire Districts
- 8200+ fire hydrants
- 380 trail rescue locators

# TRAINING PROGRAM

This year was quite challenging for the Training Program as 2020 was an unforeseen year of challenges and obstacles, many of which had never come up before for us. The members of our Training Cadre stepped up, as they always do, and delivered yet another great year of training to new hires and tenured employees with some flexible and out-of-the box creative thinking in order to do so.

At the end of February, Stephanie George, our long-time Training Manager with a wealth of experience and knowledge, retired from the agency. This meant finding an interim replacement to keep the Training Program running seamlessly. This was shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic was unveiling itself on the nation. In order to maintain staffing and keep the training program running smoothly, Kitsap 911 created a one-year Training Coordinator position which would be an employee who continued to work a dispatch position 20-hours per week and fill the Training Coordinator position the remaining 20-hours per week. Christine Law, Assistant Supervisor and 21-year Senior Communication's Training Officer was selected for the role and began managing the Training Program April 1st, 2020.

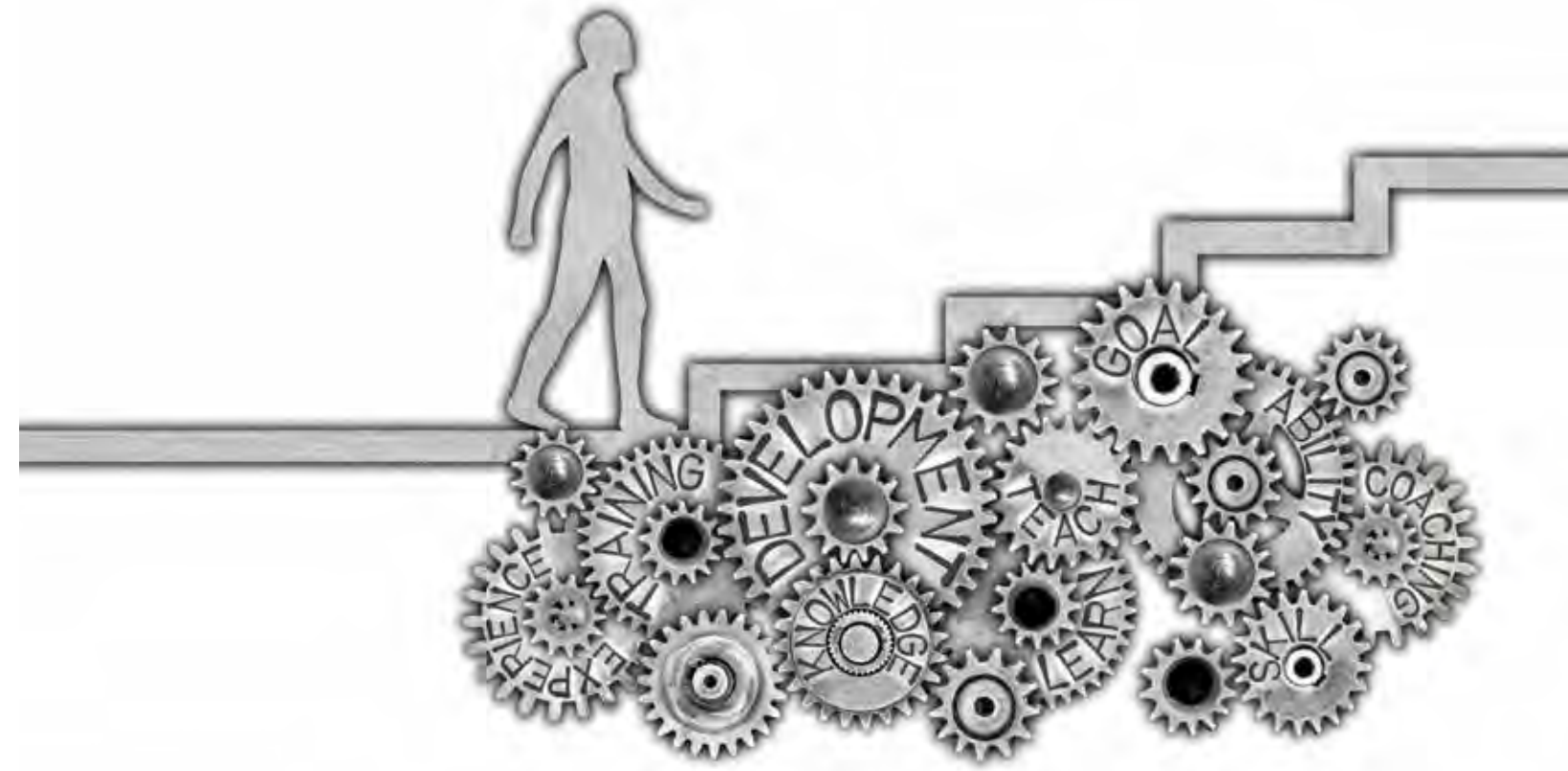
We held two Primary Call Receiver Academies (PCRA) this year. The first in February with three new call taker trainees and the second in September with two new call takers. During the first academy, while those three were wrapping up their classroom academy time end of March, we were being faced with a new challenge of how we would train new people while in the beginning of a nationwide virus and maintaining social distancing. It is not easy to train a new call taker under the best of circumstances when a trainer can sit directly next to them, let alone 6-feet away and through a shielded barrier. Due to the distancing, the trainers needed to be flexible to discovering new ways to communicate via technology, new ways to flex how they train (hands-on, messaging feedback, navigating new ways to take over calls if need be due to physical distancing and separate consoles.)

With the potential for COVID-19 to start effecting our staffing levels, we needed to come up with some back up contingencies if our certified 911 Call Takers and LE/Fire/EMS Dispatchers started becoming ill or worse,

were unable to work. Since the 911 center cannot close due to staffing, we spent time cross-training employees from other divisions within Kitsap 911 in order to keep 911 services running to the citizens of Kitsap County. Members of our Office Administration, the Finance Manager, our Human Resources Manager, all members of our Technical Services Group went through several virtual training classes with our Training Coordinator learning how to process 911 calls, dispatch law enforcement, dispatch fire/EMS events, and handle non-emergency calls for service if we ever reached a need to have to implement emergency staffing. Imagine, having some familiarity but never fully understanding the job then getting a crash course to do so if the normal workforce became gravely ill. That's enough to scare anyone, even those interested in this field as a career. Yet, all of our staff came together and opted to pitch in and help where they could, signing on for the quick lessons, and recognizing these are unprecedented times that called for unusual ideas.

During the month of April, a few operations employees began remote testing taking screened non-emergency 911 calls from their homes with remote kits, and testing remote LE and Fire/EMS dispatching from home. This testing continued until it was certified to be ready to go in the event people could still work, just couldn't come into the building based on potential exposures to COVID-19 or oncoming symptoms that could develop into COVID-19. Remote call taking and dispatching was a huge success here in our county with the efforts of our Kitsap 911 staff at all levels!

In June, Academy Facilitator and Senior CTO Emily Garner held a two-week Law Enforcement Dispatch Academy (LEDA) for six students. These were previous certified call-takers now moving on to LE dispatching. This would be the first time in Kitsap 911 history, we had to manipulate a classroom environment and how we deliver this training due to COVID-19 restrictions and the Governor's orders on social distancing and group gatherings. As we are essential employees, we need the dispatchers, training must go on while we adhered to the State's orders. Partnering with our Technical Services Group (TSG,) many of which were working remotely, Emily was able to utilize the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the building and space



out the students. Our TSG members had to move our regular Training Room simulation computers out of our normal small Training Room and in to the EOC in order to accomplish facilitating the academy.

Then came August. We had a need for fire trained dispatchers as we now had many new LE only dispatchers. We trained two new fire dispatchers, who spent two weeks feverishly learning all things fire related. They successfully completed their training and are fully certified to work any discipline within Kitsap 911.

The second PCRA in September found us with two more brand new call takers. After spending the June LEDA figuring out how to deliver training with distance or via remote learning, the September PCRA started putting some of our lessons learned from June in to place for this classroom learning. They both attended a 6-week shortened classroom program and are currently on the dispatch floor taking live calls with their trainers.

Outside of training new employees, and with some expected retirements and upcoming vacant leadership roles, we had a need for developing potential future applicants for Supervisory roles. We promoted four employees to Acting Assistant Supervisor. These four signed on to participate in a 9-month leadership development course designed to enhance their knowl-

edge of becoming an Assistant Supervisor, learning the skills required to become an effective leader, and allowing each employee to decide whether promoting in the future would be something they would be interested in pursuing after spending some time in the role. Three of them are currently wrapping up their training and have made several positive comments regarding this temporary appointment opportunity.

Our Trainers are amazing and spend an abundant amount of time documenting trainee performance, updating training curriculum, facilitating academies, editing academy manuals for new processes and policy revisions, thinking of innovative ways to increase retention and new methods of delivering learning. Those who dedicate their time to the Kitsap 911 Training Program and its success can never be recognized enough.

This brings us to the end of the year, which most people would say good riddance 2020. While it seems fitting to say we hope we never have to face again, this continued nationwide pandemic and all the other turmoil in the world to date, it also seems highly fitting to say "we rocked this year" with the not-so-great cards we were dealt and we will continue to rise to the needs of our employees, our citizens, our responders, and each other!



# 2020 KITSAP 911 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

## DAWN PERRY

*This award is chosen by Kitsap 911 employees from one of the quarterly award recipients.*

# 2020

## APCO AWARD RECIPIENTS

*APCO International presents awards to public safety communications personnel who have demonstrated the highest levels of personal and professional conduct and performance in the line of duty.*



### APCO International Supervisor of the Year JASON MEEDER

Jason is a knowledgeable, well-rounded, dedicated supervisor. Jason looks at issues from multiple perspectives before making a balanced decision. Jason is invested in the development of employees at every level of our organization providing mentorship, direction and resources.



### APCO International Trainer of the Year RANDY DASHO

Randy is a perfect example of what type of Telecommunications Trainer we need in our industry. He is self-driven to develop his skills and learn more about delivering solid training to new hires. He demonstrates setting the example on what right looks like and what it means to be a team player by not waiting to be asked to help, just jumping right in without hesitance.



### APCO Washington Technician of the Year CHAD BENNETT

Chad is a technical wizard with an unparalleled work ethic. Chad is dedicated to getting the job done and done right. He has high initiative and strong accountability. Kitsap 911 has become better and safer, and the reliability of systems have been extremely enhanced due to his work.

# QUARTERLY AWARDS

## 1ST QUARTER 2020 | DAWN PERRY

*Public Safety Telecommunicator II*

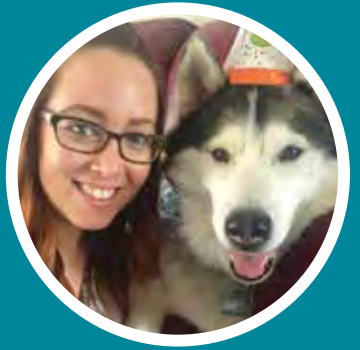
Dawn was nominated for three specific things: working as the South dispatcher during an hour of chaos, being brought up twice during PCRA with specific examples of giving great customer service and her overall demeanor on the floor. Dawn is known for her positive, helpful attitude. She goes out of her way to help newer employees and is one of the first to volunteer when there is a project that needs to be completed. She makes the atmosphere on the floor noticeably brighter.



## 2ND QUARTER 2020 | SHARICE CLARK

*Lead Public Safety Telecommunicator II*

Sharice was nominated for consistently going above and beyond to help out whenever she sees an opportunity. When there is schedule work to complete, she often volunteers to review the mandate sheet or complete the work herself to free up the supervisor for other tasks. She regularly jumps in to help her co-workers, as well, often before they have even asked. We can always count on Sharice to verify our data entries! She is also off the chart when it comes to answering phones!



## 3RD QUARTER 2020 | JASON MEEDLER

*Public Safety Assistant Supervisor*

Jason was nominated for his handling of the graveyard shift in the absence of the assigned supervisor. He did a great job of keeping everything up to date and running smoothly. He also developed a monthly focus for the shift, and presented it in a positive way.



## 4TH QUARTER 2020 | CHRIS LAW

*Training Coordinator/Public Safety Assistant Supervisor*

Chris was nominated for her work as Training Coordinator. She hit the ground running when she took on this new role and has shown her commitment to making needed changes and improvements. She sought out feedback from employees early on, to get an idea of what was needed, and has given input on things that can be changed to make processes run more smoothly. She has been responsible for her many Training Coordinator tasks while also working 20 hours per week on the floor.



## 4TH QUARTER 2020 | WILLIAM JONES

*Public Safety Systems Engineer (IT)*

Will was nominated for his tireless work to make improvements to Kitsap 911 and its technical systems. He goes above and beyond nearly every day. One of his biggest accomplishments has been his work with Remote Dispatch and Remote 911, particularly during the fourth quarter. He worked with frequent short and strict deadlines to purchase, build and deploy the Remote 911 solution funded by CARES. Will is constantly recommending new technologies and improvements, and he is not afraid to put in the work needed to get projects off the ground and across the finish line.



# PEER SUPPORT TEAM

Kitsap 911's Peer Support Team (PST) consists of eight members who have volunteered their time to provide emotional and physical support to their peers.

For the year 2020, our Peer Support Team continued to support employees at Kitsap 911. The members of this team provided confidential help to those who reached out or showed signs that help was needed, on a case-by-case basis. Our team offered their time, experience and understanding to help their peers going through a rough day or traumatic event, which caused a negative response. We do not have a specific amount of contacts but from the ones reported, we doubled our contacts from last year. While we did not introduce any new members to the team, we will continue our efforts in 2021, to reach out to those who are interested and/or appear to be a good fit for our team.

The Peer Support Team identified the need for a structured procedure on requesting a Chaplain for employees while on shift. After some research and reaching out to those who serviced other agencies in our jurisdiction, the procedure was solidified. In April of 2020, it became official that we would use the Bremerton Chaplains as a first option when requesting assistance for our employees. In April of 2020, we conducted a meet and greet, which allowed our employees to get to know the Chaplains.

We continued to publish multiple editions of the Wellness Newsletter. This Newsletter is a combined effort with our Peer Support Team and the Wellness Group. The Newsletter offers employees physical, mental, and non-work-related ways to help with stress.

# PUBLIC EDUCATION

Kitsap 911's Public Education Committee (PEC) consists of eight employees who volunteer their time to develop and present educational material about 911 to the public. We attend community events throughout the year, as well as give presentations to public and civic groups when requested. We also assist with the hiring process, educating potential applicants about 911 and Kitsap 911's role in providing emergency services to our county.

This year Kitsap 911 Public Education Committee members were challenged in unexpected ways. Without the ability to meet in person or attend local events for most of the year, we needed to find new avenues to educate people about 911 in Kitsap County. The committee had to redefine our goals and shift our focus to partnerships with other groups within Kitsap 911, revisiting the basics of our education program, and developing new virtual content.

Members of our committee worked closely with Kitsap 911's Human Resources Group to develop a virtual observation experience as well as a promotional video for our hiring process. Rather than our typical floor observation, they were given the opportunity to meet virtually with a supervisory member of the public education committee to explore what it meant to be a Public Safety Telecommunicator and a Kitsap 911 employee. She was able to answer their questions in real time and help them gain a thorough understanding of the position and if they would be a good fit for our profession.

A collaboration between the Human Resources Group, members of the Technical Services Group, and Public Education Committee members resulted in a promotional video documenting the realities of a shift on the dispatcher floor. Kitsap 911 Public Safety Telecommunicators were filmed at their consoles, handling 911 calls and dispatching both law enforcement and fire/ems calls. Actual 911 calls and radio traffic were used in the video, which gave viewers a glimpse of the skills and abilities necessary for the positions. The promotional video was also used to supplement virtual training and tour the Public Education Committee provided for the West Sound Tech Skills Center, Criminal Justice Program Summer Session.

During the first quarter of 2020, our committee was able to attend a few of our annual events and host some tours of our facility, such as the BIPD Citizen's Academy and the Kitsap Sun Story Walk in February. With the cancellation of the rest of our annual events, we turned our focus inward to build up some basics within our program. We replenished our promotional education supplies and organized our storage spaces, evaluating old products and letting go of what was no longer relevant. The committee chair also attended FEMA online training for Special Event Planning and Public Information Officer Awareness.

As we move into 2021, the committee is already hard at work developing educational content that can be shared virtually and through social media so we can continue to provide 911 education for Kitsap County residents.

# 2020 | GONE TO THE DOGS

When COVID hit hard around March of 2020, things changed rapidly at Kitsap 911. There was fear not only over COVID, but also stress caused by all the changes that were occurring in a short period at work, home, and in the community.

In an effort to help decrease stress at work, Kitsap 911 started to think about allowing dogs in the workplace. Studies have shown that pets in the workplace are a stress reliever for the owner as well as their co-workers. The Human Animal Bond Research Institute has studied the effect of dog presence on group problem-solving. Their research indicates improved cohesion, trust, and cooperation in groups with a dog. They have also conducted a nationwide survey showing greater employee engagement and retention in pet-friendly workplaces.

To determine how to make this work we did a survey of all employees asking their thoughts on having dogs in the workplace. Remember the dispatch floor is one large open room with cubicles throughout. Employees do not have separate offices to keep their dogs. There were concerns about large dogs, misbehaved dogs, and messes. Our Director, Richard Kirton, discussed the concerns with individual employees to determine if this was possible and if so, how.

In April 2020, Director Kirton implemented a policy allowing dogs in Kitsap 911 with a set of rules that included:

- Employees sign a waiver before bringing their dog to work
- Dogs must be under 30 lbs., socialized and up to date on vaccines
- Only one dog at a time on the dispatch floor
- Dog's presence must not interfere with work or cause problems for co-workers.

This policy change received rave reviews from our employees. A number of employees now routinely bring their dogs to work. There have been a few sporadic barks on the dispatch floor but none that were impactful to the job. Employees have really bonded with the dogs, bringing an already tightknit work group even closer. Employees appreciate having the dogs around, noting that the dogs lighten the mood during difficult times and offer stress relief throughout shifts.

Employees also raised funds to build a dog run on the property. This allows dogs some time outside off leash while at work.

The power of petting a dog is strong and has shown to be beneficial in the Kitsap 911 environment.

*#Kitsap 911 We Love Our Dogs.*

## Dogs not your thing, Kitsap 911 has you covered

In October 2020, Kitsap 911 adopted two cats, Ross and Rachael. Local residents who lost their home to a fire were looking for a safe and caring permanent home for them. A Kitsap County Deputy reached out to Kitsap 911 and once we heard the story, we simply had to adopt them.

Ross has acclimated well to his new home. He spends most of his time curled up in the large outdoor cat condo, coming out to visit as employees come outside. He is well feed and gets plenty of attention. Unfortunately, Rachael decided she had better options. She stayed with us for several weeks and then took off for greener pastures.

We also have a stray cat that has adopted us. He has gone from skittish when seeing people to almost friendly. Hopefully a little more time and he will give up his wild ways and stay at Kitsap 911.

Not only do the cat helps employees de-stress, they also help with rodent control around our facility.

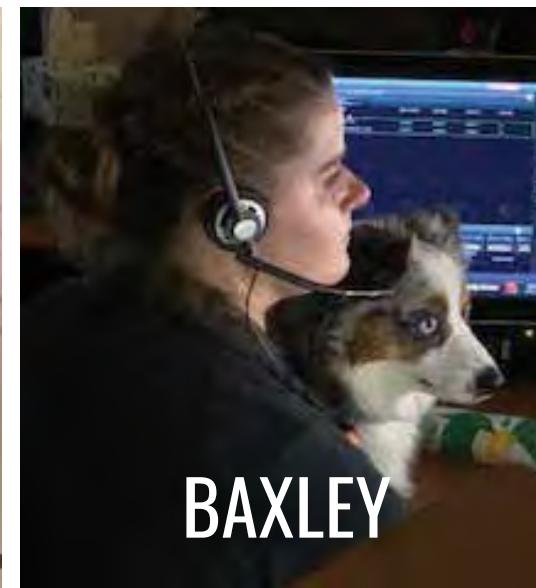
*#Kitsap 911 Working Cats*



**ROSS** 2020 Kitsap 911



**LUCY**



**BAXLEY**



**ROSCO**