

COOK COUNTY EMERGENCY TELEPHONE SYSTEM BOARD ENHANCED 9-1-1 EMERGENCY SERVICE FOR COOK COUNTY

Cooperative GIS Project to Result in Updated Addresses, Better 9-1-1 Services

Although Cook County ETSB dispatchers may not notice initially, they – and 9-1-1 callers – will soon be benefitting from the anxiously awaited result of a cooperative GIS mapping project that involves four county agencies.

This project will provide the dispatchers with updated addresses and other information that is critical to 9-1-1 call responses – thanks to the collaborative efforts of the Cook County Bureau of Technology (BOT), the County Highway and Sheriff's Departments, and the Cook County ETSB.

"Since a wrong address can result in loss of life, the GIS project will enable the Emergency Telephone System to improve the public-safety services it provides to our community," said BOT GIS Manager Alan Hobscheid, who has been overseeing this County/ETSB project for five years.

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*Alan Hobscheid, GIS Manager,
Cook County Bureau of Technology*

ETSB Attorney Donald Potts on Active Duty in Iraq

Through May, 2008, attorney Donald Potts served the ETSB by offering legal advice during the Board's regular monthly meetings.

However, for the last seven months of 2008 – and for the first five months of 2009 – Major Potts has been serving his Country in Baghdad, Iraq, along with the rest of his U.S. Army Reserve unit.

An associate with the law firm of Ottosen Britz Kelly Cooper & Gilbert, Ltd., and assistant to ETSB legal counsel John Kelly, Major (JA – Judge Advocate) Potts is now working as an operational law planner in the office of Strategy, Plans and Assessment at Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) headquarters.

A recent email indicated that he is involved in "strategic basing: figuring out which bases we still need as we draw down and which bases we can return to the Government of Iraq.

"The dynamics of this process will likely change once the agreement between the U.S. and the Government of Iraq... is signed," he added.

Potts further indicated that he also briefs the commanding general of the MNF-I (previously Gen. David Petraeus, now Gen. Ray Odierno) with regard to the current status of the basing plan. In addition, he informs the General about upcoming strategic events during morning Battle Update Assessment meetings.

While most Chicagoans complain about our winter weather, Potts and the other U.S. troops in Baghdad have had to endure some extreme outdoor temperatures – as high as 120-135 degrees F at midday. However, "hopefully, [those] days are behind us, and I will be home by the time they return in 2009," Potts said.

NOTE: Potts' one-year tour of active duty is expected to end in June. During his absence, OBK&G attorney Joseph Miller has been advising the ETSB. ●



Recently promoted to major, Donald Potts stands in front of sign sent to him by colleagues at Ottosen Britz Kelly Cooper & Gilbert, Ltd., to identify his Baghdad "law office."

Cooperative GIS Project

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"This project is critical to our future because NG911 technology will rely heavily on GIS systems," Executive Director Morrie Farbman told the ETSB after Hobscheid's project report at the September 23 Board meeting.

Hobscheid is considered by his peers to be Cook County's GIS guru. That's because, in 1987 (four years after joining the County Highway Department), he introduced something called GIS, which he said was "very new to everyone."

Ahead of its time two decades ago – when GIS was first purchased for Highway Department use only, this mapping system has evolved into the County's Enterprise GIS, which was developed for potential/eventual use by all County agencies that need it.

"Prior to 1998, very few departments were using GIS," said Hobscheid, who had transferred to the Bureau of Technology in 1995. "However, when we started the Enterprise system that year (1998) – more County agencies were able to consider using our maps.

"Since BOT maintains the Enterprise system, other agencies can have GIS (including hardware and software) without having to purchase and develop it themselves," he added.

About five years ago, recognizing that Enterprise GIS offered many benefits that would

enable improved emergency telephone services and therefore public safety, the ETSB decided to interface with this County mapping system and approved a contract with CAD vendor Motorola to help make this happen.

Initially, Hobscheid said that he worked with ETSB Member Art Jackson (then ETSB executive director), who helped get the dialogue with Motorola and the cooperative, interdepartmental GIS project underway.

Then, about three years ago, ETSB Database/GIS Manager Natasha Allen-Victor became involved as the ETSB's representative in this effort, which also has included Mike Hammer of the County Highway Department and ETSB consultants Lubna Khan and David Arfa.

"In addition to enabling improved address updating, the Enterprise GIS interface will provide our dispatchers with current data on municipal boundaries, railroads, water sources, reporting districts and the forest preserve, as well as ortho and oblique aerial photo maps," said Allen-Victor.

NOTE: When taking ortho photos, the camera is parallel to the ground, which provides a 90-degree view of what's below – which is necessary for linear measurements. In the case of oblique photos, the viewing angle is 45 degrees, which is preferred by dispatchers and user agencies, because features are easier to see (you can measure vertically and horizontally, which allows you to determine the height of a fence or building, and

you can view all sides of such structures).

"Our (BOT's) mission is to provide the ETSB (and other County agencies) with whatever they need to do a better job of providing community services," Hobscheid said.

At the present time, the ETSB is responsible for house numbers within its jurisdiction – which are created by the ETSB and provided to the County Building and Zoning Department; and the Highway Department gets 90 percent of its information on street designations from the Recorder of Deeds Office.

"However, since it is not efficient for different County agencies to still be using parallel but different systems, the Bureau of Technology and ETSB will continue to work with the Highway and Sheriff's Departments to complete this important GIS project," said Hobscheid.

"Actually, the project will never be completed per se, because the GIS maps are living documents that will need continuous updating," he added. "In other words, this will always be a work in progress."

"The County mapping system will provide the foundation for improvements in our communications center and the services we provide," said Allen-Victor. "Therefore, we also



GIS Manager Alan Hobscheid updates the ETSB during its September 23 meeting.

are fully committed to this cooperative effort.

"Since our primary goal is to ensure that the County GIS maps meet our needs, keeping them as current and accurate as possible always will be critical," she said.

Reaffirming the Highway Department's "total support" of the GIS project and meeting ETSB needs, Mike Hammer summed it up this way:

"A lot has changed and continues to change dramatically – which is why these are exciting times for GIS (and emergency telephone systems)." ●

GIS Project Goals

When the Cook County ETSB, Bureau of Technology, and Highway and Sheriff's Departments decided to embark on their cooperative GIS Mapping Project, they had several mutual goals:

- 1. Develop and implement procedures that would assure efficient data transfer and synchronization between the agencies involved.**
- 2. Reduce duplication of data and effort.**
- 3. Enhance communications between the agencies.**
- 4. Allow proficient and current data sharing between the agencies.**

In order to accomplish these goals, the County agencies agreed that they would need:

- 1. Viable software.**
- 2. Common data management.**
- 3. Supportive networks with acceptable performance.**
- 4. Interoperability between the various systems that would be involved.**
- 5. Viable and accurate data layers, which include unincorporated street midlines, addresses and municipal boundaries.**

NOTE: The street midline layer is the critical data layer that supports 9-1-1 services (there are more than 280,000 street midline segments). It is used for geocoding and serves as boundary information for all existing 9-1-1 data layers. ●



Northlake Communications Center Supervisor Tom Imbordino prepares to give tour of the center's new Incident Command Vehicle, a mobile unit that's ready – when needed – to help provide public safety.

Northlake Mobile Unit Designed to Further Protect Community

Although the Northlake Communications Center routinely provides public-safety services 24/7, it also has a new Incident Command Vehicle that was designed to further protect the community – especially during critical emergency situations.

The mobile command center was created by gutting and refurbishing a 1999 Ford Med Tech ambulance, which was purchased from Clarendon Hills by the City of Northlake.

“We believe in being as prepared for any emergency as we can be,” said Communications Center Supervisor Tom Imbordino, who has always had a special interest in critical incident dispatching.

“The Incident Command Vehicle enables us to be on site – wherever the critical emergency happens to be,” he added. “We want to be at the scene of the incident so that we can react quickly as it evolves.”

In effect, the vehicle is a dispatch center on wheels with an 8' x 22' work space. It will be operated by up to two dispatchers sitting at two dispatch consoles, with access to six radios, two monitors, a laptop computer

with internet and IWIN access, and two Nextel phones.

Also, the vehicle is equipped with comfortable folding chairs, first aid kits, traffic direction devices (e.g., flares, traffic cones, traffic vests), on-scene portable lighting, an electric power inverter, extension cords, two six-bank chargers for portable radios, raingear (ponchos), blankets, maps, and three binders full of “unusual occurrence general orders.”

Operated with diesel fuel, the heated vehicle can run for “an extended period (at least



needs of multiple command personnel, as well as efficiently deploy services and take any actions that might be needed – depending on what's happening at the moment,” said Imbordino.

In addition, “we would be able to provide dispatch services and contact other agencies (local, county, state and federal), without tying up the resources of the Northlake Comm Center itself,” he suggested. Recognizing that the vehicle alone cannot

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Northlake's dispatch center on wheels has an 8' x 22' work space that is fully equipped with two consoles.



24 hours) on a full tank,” according to Imbordino.

Although already well equipped, “we consider the Incident Command Vehicle to be a work in progress,” he said. “Hopefully, in the not too distant future, we will be adding video surveillance cameras with a 360-degree on-site viewing area and infrared night-vision capabilities, as well as a more sophisticated phone system and a fax machine.”

Asked to suggest a hypothetical event that might involve use of the Incident Command Vehicle, Imbordino said that, in a hostage situation, the mobile unit would provide a secure location for on-the-scene, as-needed decision making (perhaps involving Northlake's mayor, police chief, fire chief, and/or a S.W.A.T. team).

“We would be able to meet the

Northlake Mobile Unit

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provide critical incident services, all of the Comm Center's seven full-time telecommunicators have viewed the mobile unit and will receive relevant, specialized training that is currently being developed.

"We will be taking advantage of the excellent training opportunities provided and funded by the Cook County ETSB," said Imbordino.

As for what prompted the creation of the Incident Command Vehicle, Imbordino said that the idea came from talking to peers in Northlake and other communities and from reading FEMA and other emergency-service publications.

For example, Westmont has a fully equipped large bus that provides similar emergency services.

"Our objective is to do the best we can for the citizens of Northlake," which now has a population of about 12,500, according to Imbordino.

"Considering that we are close to O'Hare and two-thirds of the city is surrounded by railways, it is conceivable that an incident of major proportions could happen here," he said.

However, "even though the Incident Command Vehicle is now available (for emergency and non-emergency purposes), we would rather not have to use it," said Imbordino.

"We think that it's better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it," he said, adding that city officials and the public seem to agree.

"So far, the vehicle has been well received by our citizens; we've had a lot of positive feedback." ●

62 Public-Safety Agencies to Receive 2009 Surcharge Reallocation Funds

Sixty-two Cook County municipalities and public-safety agencies will receive Surcharge Reallocation Program checks during the first quarter of this year.

When they do, they should thank the ETSB and Grant Coordinator Linda Davis for their efforts to make everyone aware of the funds' availability.

As was the case a year ago, each agency that participates will receive at least \$1,000 from the \$900,000 budgeted for the 2009 program by the ETSB.

"Everyone had an extra month to apply – until December 29," said Davis.

Also, a November 5 orientation meeting was held to make everyone aware of program guidelines and the application deadline (representatives of 41 agencies attended). And there was a follow-up mailing of this information to all 89 eligible agencies.

In order to receive the Surcharge Reallocation grants, each agency/municipality had to submit a signed intergovernmental agreement along with their application.

"Although our efforts resulted in 62 applicants (compared to 67 in 2008), those agencies that will be getting the grants are planning to put the money to good use – which will benefit Cook County residents and businesses," said Davis.

When the 9-1-1 Surcharge Reallocation program was conceived and approved by the ETSB in 2004, the idea was to provide funds that would help municipal agencies and fire protection districts in the Cook County 9-1-1 System to provide dependable and efficient emergency telephone services.

"The ETSB wanted to enable our public-safety agencies to make additions and enhancements to their communication centers and thus maintain a high standard of quality while handling 9-1-1 calls," said Cook County ETSB Executive Director Morrie Farbman, who led the effort to offer the program.

Public-safety agencies that receive Cook County ETSB Surcharge Reallocation funds must spend the money in compliance with

Northlake Police Center Progressing

Despite the severity of recent winter weather, progress continues to be made on the City of Northlake's new police and emergency communications facility.

Scheduled for completion in 2009, the 28,000-square-foot building will replace the current 6,800-square-foot structure, which was built in the 1950s and renovated in the 1970s.

The new facility will include a 1,500-

square-foot communications center, which now occupies 300 square feet in the old building. The new call center will have three active dispatch consoles and a fourth that will serve as a back-up. Also, it will include lockers and a break room designated only for emergency communications personnel.

In 2008, the ETSB contributed \$272,694 toward the construction of the building. ●



Construction of the new Northlake Police Center continues to progress.

limits established by the Emergency Telephone System Act of Illinois.

Although not all-inclusive, the list of qualifying fund uses includes salaries for telecommunications staff, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), 9-1-1 telephone calltaking equipment, 9-1-1-related training, radio equipment and console furniture, mobile data terminals, computer hardware/software used for call taking and/or dispatching or the maintenance of such equipment, emergency back-up power systems, and communications center infrastructure upgrades.

In 2009, the term of the Surcharge Reallocation Program is January 1, through December 31.

However, since this is not an annual recurring program, these funds will be offered again in 2009-10 only if the ETSB determines that there is enough surplus to allow it to do so. ●

Probationary Telecommunicators Must Complete Six Months' Training

In late October, seven probationary telecommunicators (PTs) began the approximately six-month intensive training process that is required to become an independent telecommunicator for the Cook County Sheriff's Police Communications Center.

The training program – developed under the guidelines of the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) – is broken down into three major parts: foundational training, on-the-floor training and an observation period. New hires are required to complete each of these three phases before being released from the training curriculum.

During the first eight to ten weeks, the PTs are in the foundational training phase, when they learn all aspects of the job.

For example, the curriculum includes

and practice, games to reinforce lessons, and the ride-along program with the Sheriff's Police. "These teaching tools cater to all learning styles," said Dorn. "Also, the probationary telecommunicators take weekly tests to certify that they understand and can apply the instruction given."

Next, the PTs experience on-the-floor training with a Certified Training Officer (CTO) for three months. The CTO in essence is the teacher, coach, mentor, role model and evaluator of the PT, which is why each CTO completes required training before assuming this responsibility.

The PTs – working under the direction of a CTO – apply the knowledge learned while in foundational training.

The CTO is responsible for completing Daily Observation Reports (DORs) on each employee to document the PTs' performance and to let them know how they are doing. The CTO works under the direction of the Training Coordinator during this important stage.

After the three months of on-the-floor training, the PTs will complete a two-week observation period. During this time, each employee will work independently but still have CTO guidance if necessary.

After these three phases of training, when the PTs have met all the requirements and are ready to advance accordingly, they will be released from the training program to work as independent Telecommunicators, remaining in probationary status for one year.

In order to provide the highest quality and most realistic training, the Communications Center has added three new training consoles that, in the future, will double as dispatch positions.

Funded with ETSB Surcharge Reallocation Program grant monies, these dispatch positions are needed because the Comm Center's 9-1-1 and other call activity has doubled since 2000. This increased demand for service also led to the hiring and training of the seven probationary telecommunicators. ●



Training Coordinator Michelle Dorn, second from left, explains "on-the-floor" Communications Center operations to Probationary Telecommunicators, from left, Richard Diver (seated), Latrice Brown, Khaleelah Sneed, Matt Carlson, and Chris Lanuti. Unavailable for photo were PTs Raedell Greer and Lottie King.

Newsletters at ETSB Website, Also Via Email

In addition to hard copies of *Answering the Call* that will continue to be mailed, the newsletter is being emailed to an increasing number of recipients.

"We're hoping to expand the distribution list in this way," said Cook County ETSB Administrative Analyst Shereen Gamble.

Also, you can find current and back issues of *Answering the Call* at the Cook County ETSB website: www.cookcounty911.com

Linda Davis Leaving ETSB in February

Grant Coordinator Linda Davis, who administers the Cook County ETSB Surcharge Reallocation Program, will be reallocating her time at the end of February.

Davis was hired by the ETSB in her current capacity in 2003, shortly after retiring from a "very rewarding" 34-year career with the City of Chicago.

She retired after working in several city departments, including the Department of Environment, where she spent 11 years (1992-2003) – including the last five years as its managing deputy commissioner.

While working full-time, Davis went to school at night for six years, earning a bachelor's degree from Chicago State University.

"It wasn't easy, but it was worth the hard work and time spent," said Davis, who added that her years serving city and county residents have been both interesting and satisfying.

"During my career, I've been fortunate to have made a lot of good friends," she said.

As for her future plans, Davis recently moved from the City to Morton Grove – to be closer to her daughter. So, in addition to taking more time for herself, she will be spending more time with her family, which includes a 10-year-old grandson.

NOTE: Davis' current responsibilities as ETSB grant coordinator will be assumed by Database/GIS Manager Natasha Allen-Victor. ●



ETSB Chairman Albert Pritchett, left, and Executive Director Morrie Farbman offer best wishes to Grant Coordinator Linda Davis, who is leaving the ETSB to spend more time with her family.

ANSWERING THE

Call

Answering the Call is produced quarterly by the Cook County Emergency Telephone System Board (ETSB), which provides Enhanced 9-1-1 services to unincorporated County residents and businesses. Also, these emergency services are provided to Cook County Forest Preserves and the municipalities of Ford Heights, Golf, Northlake, Phoenix, Robbins, Dixmoor, and Stone Park.

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