

Annual Report 2021

Regional Dispatch Serving Grand Forks County
and Cities Therein



Grand Forks Public Safety Answering Point
Becky Ault, Director

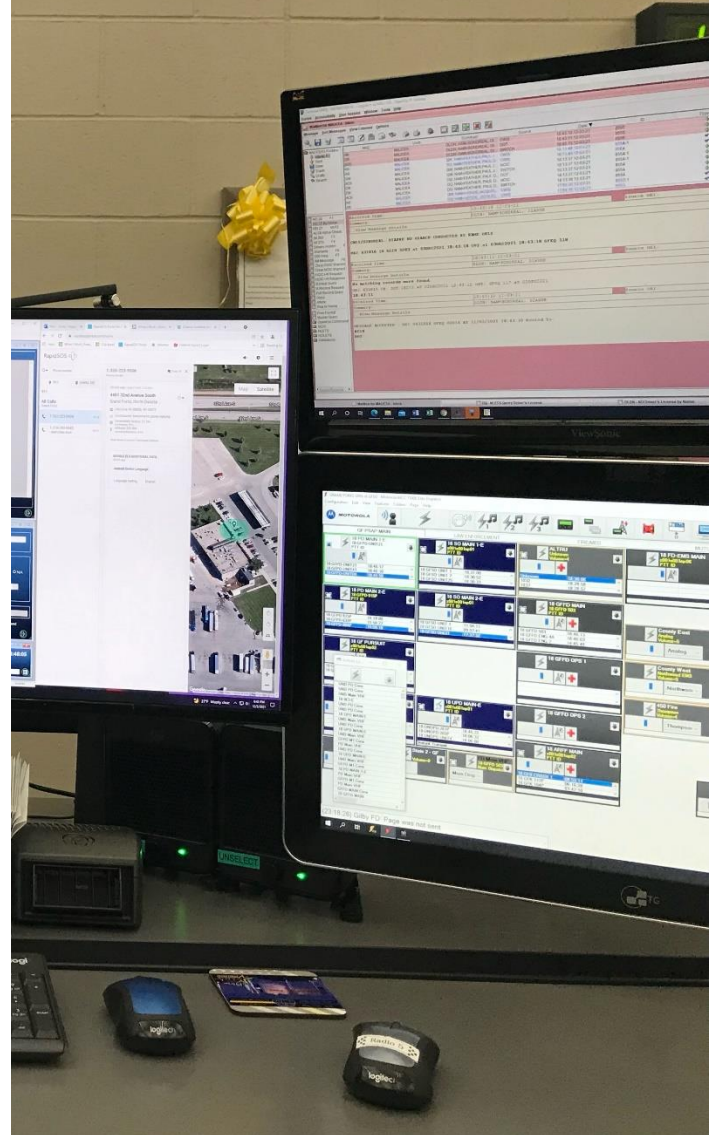


Table of Contents

Director's Report

Mission and Values

Governance

Budget Wrap up

Staffing and Organization

Training and Education

Operations

 Call Volume

 Calls for Service Responses

Radio and Communications

Contact Information/Links

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Shannon LaHaise, Center Supervisor

Christy Senechal, Team Leader

Carly Luney, Team Leader

Nicole Weigel, Team Leader

Molly Marek, Team Leader

Nicole Shjerve, Training Coordinator

Grant Peterson, Radio Systems Coordinator

Debbie Hoverson, Administrative Assistant, Sr.

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Director's Report

Background:

The Grand Forks Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) is a regional asset for 911 and public safety services, working within the region and statewide to achieve reliable emergency communications for our citizens and our emergency responders.

The Grand Forks Public Safety Answering Point joined a Statewide Joint Powers Agreement working with all jurisdictions to plan for and implement initially Phase II wireless phone call location information services in 2005, and expanded into a shared ESINet for Next Generation Call Processing in today's environment. In 2017, we rolled out Text to 911 statewide, and we continue to make advancements in call delivery to citizens across the state by sharing infrastructure statewide to reduce cost and increase efficiencies.

The Grand Forks PSAP works aggressively with our responders to meet their communication needs to reach our citizens in the most efficient manner in crisis situations. We routinely meet with our responders to ensure we meet their needs to ensure they have timely information to respond to citizen needs. We continue to utilize technology to improve service delivery, and balance that with well trained staff and quality assurance reviews ensuring our team provides the best emergency communication services that our citizens deserve. Examples of this in 2021 include migration of ND University Police Department, Grand Forks Police Department, Grand Forks Fire Department, Grand Forks County Sheriff's Department, Manvel Fire, and Altru Ambulance onto the new Statewide Interoperable Radio system (SIRN), operating of a 800 mhz system. We have a plan moving forward to migrate our remaining responders in the next 2 years off of our aging VHF radio infrastructure. We upgraded our radio consoles in February of 2020 just before the pandemic hit and continue to move forward in a multi-step process to improve interoperable communications with our responders and PSAP's across the state. (more information on SIRN can be found at: [SIRN 20/20 | North Dakota Information Technology \(nd.gov\)](#))

Calls for service continues to Increase:

- 2021 brought our Calls for Service in at 106,693, our highest call volume ever. For comparison purposes, our overall calls for service 7 years ago in 2014 were 73,304. A Call for Service statistic is used to quantify police, fire, or emergency medical service activity. Calls for service include dispatched calls and self-initiated/directed calls. Dispatched calls are calls for assistance that are generated by the community, through a call or text to 911 or the non-emergency line. Self-initiated and directed calls are officer-initiated calls for service, which can be initiated in-person or scheduled in advance to proactively address a community issue. The Grand Forks Public Safety Answering Point counts all calls for service where at least one responding unit was dispatched or self-initiated a call.

- In 2021, we processed 101,779 telephone calls. The total 911 calls remained fairly consistent from 23,222 to 24,345; and the non-emergency decreased from 79,127 to 77,434. We have several non-emergency lines –
 - Public Safety Answering Point Phone lines
 - Grand Forks Police Department Lines after selection through an auto-attendant process that the individual needs to speak to a police officer or services of law enforcement
 - Grand Forks Sheriff's Lines after hours
 - University of North Dakota Police Department lines after selection through an auto-attendant process that the individual needs to speak to a police officer or services of law enforcement.

The slight drop in phone calls can be contributed to a combination of reporting tools used by the agencies we serve such as online reporting, social media tools, and other self-initiated activity. We are attributing a portion of that to Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) since some of our call volume was from responders in the field for information. The city auto-attendant feature for the PBX phone system also vets calls for the Police Department 24 X 7 and the Sheriff's office after hours, which does help control call volumes. The same process of an auto-attendant feature is used by the University of North Dakota Police after hours.

Technology Complexity will continue to Evolve: It is very important to note that Emergency Services Communications is much broader than simply E-911. While dialing 911 most often initiates the emergency response, the day-by-day, hour-by-hour communications between dispatchers and responders, the ongoing contact during an emergency, the location information, mapping software, text to 911, and numerous other components make it possible for local emergency services to arrive and deliver services in the shortest time possible. This will become increasingly complex as we continue to work with surrounding PSAP's and as our statewide system Next Generation 911 call delivery continues to develop. We have implemented new call processes to better manage increased calls for service and an increase in radio traffic, in combination with advancements utilizing our Computer Aided Dispatch System. We need to continue to work in tandem with our partners across North Dakota for system redundancies and cost efficiencies. We continue to collaborate with our responders across our county, region, and state to share and gain best practices.

The progressive mission, vision, goals, and objectives of the Grand Forks Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) will allow for expansion of services and promote our Grand Forks 911 Authority Board's vision to provide quality emergency communication service to our Citizens and those that travel through. Becky Ault, Director

The Grand Forks PSAP is dedicated to provide the highest quality service in your time of need, and we have set our Mission, values, and goals to demonstrate our commitment:

Mission:

Deliver exceptional emergency communications to the public and first responders that helps save lives and protect property.

Values:

Safety and service are the top priorities, and we are committed to preserve our vision by maintaining these core values that guide our work and decisions:

- Integrity
 - Remain diligent in performance of occupational duties
 - Seek to maintain highest standard of personal practices and maintain the integrity of dispatch
 - Avoid any conduct that would put responders or public in harm's way
- Leadership
 - Continually seek to maintain and improve professional knowledge, skill and competency
- Teamwork
 - Maintain honorable working relations with peers and all agencies we serve
- Stewardship
 - Endeavor to put the needs and safety of the public above our professional ambitions
 - Continue to look for ways to improve performance and services

Governance Overview

Under a Joint Powers Agreement, the Grand Forks Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) is governed by an Authority Board comprised of nine members representing the following:

- Member of the Grand Forks County Commission
- Member of the Grand Forks City Council
- Chief of Grand Forks Police Dept., Or designee
- Chief of Grand Forks Fire Dept., Or designee
- Chief of University of North Dakota Police Dept., Or designee
- Grand Forks County Sheriff, or designee
- Citizen of Grand Forks County to be appointed by the Grand Forks County Commission
- Director of Altru Hospital Ambulance Services, or designee, who serves as a non-voting member
- PSAP Director, who serves as a non-voting member

The Authority Board is organized to direct the operations of the Grand Forks PSAP and fulfill the purpose contained in the Joint Powers Agreement for dispatch services in Grand Forks County.

2021 Authority Board Members

GFPD CHIEF MARK NELSON, PRESIDENT

UNDPD CHIEF RODNEY CLARK

GFFD CHIEF GARY LORENZ, VICE PRESIDENT

SHERIFF ANDREW SCHNEIDER

DANNY WEIGEL, GRAND FORKS CITY COUNCIL

CYNTHIA PIC, GRAND FORKS CO. COMMISSIONER

KC INMAN, MEMBER AT LARGE

TIM NESDAHL, ALTRU HOSPITAL AMBULANCE

BECKY AULT, PSAP DIRECTOR

Budget 2105 (Infrastructure cost budget):

Revenue projection: \$. \$1,325,401

Actual Revenue: \$ \$ 1,541,190 \$215,789

Revenues in this budget consist of city and county land line fees and wireless phone fees at \$1.50 plus .50 (SIRN fee that goes to state) per month per phone, as well as interest earned and Cash Carry-over.

Expenditure projection: \$ 1,413,977

Actual Expenditures: \$ 1,214,973 **-\$199,004**

Expenditures consist of hardware and software relating to operational PSAP duties, utilities for PSAP, communication tower costs, consultant fees, equipment maintenance agreements, JPA costs for EsiNet, and SIRN fees. Computer Aided Dispatch costs, and other direct 911 operational equipment costs. Also included is education and training and associated travel, as well as insurance costs. Expenditures also include transfers out to other accounts – the Communication Center fee into 2104, IS Services, and the water fund payback loan for the building project. We utilized partnerships with the ND Association of Counties consortium statewide for cost savings on a shared 911 network. Finally, expenditures from this budget include capital outlay.

Cash Carryover to go into 2022: \$1,660,406

- Please note that within the expenditure guidelines, Jurisdictions are directed to perform long range planning and retention of appropriate funds for future investment and emergency repairs or replacement should be planned for.

PSAP Organization

The Grand Forks Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) began operations in 1986, and now provides service as a combined dispatch center for multiple emergency response agencies in Grand Forks County. The population served is 70,795 with square mile area of 1,436.

The service area includes Grand Forks Police Dept., UND Police Dept. Grand Forks Sheriff's Office, 3 municipal Police Departments, Grand Forks Fire Department, 17 volunteer fire departments, 2 rural EMS providers and Altru Ambulance Services.

The Grand Forks PSAP serves as the primary communications network for citizens, as well as those that travel through, to obtain direct services for law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services county wide. We collaborate statewide to ensure needed emergency services are provided to our citizens. In addition, PSAP retains well trained and highly skilled Emergency Communication Team, which:

- Dispatch and protect over our LE, Fire, and EMS agencies
- Process calls for service and dispatch over 100,000 responses ranging from a barking dog to a robbery in progress; with an average yearly increase of 5-8%
- Central point of coordination for all county emergency services

The PSAP Center works to build a team that is honest, responsible, accountable, ethical and drive to provide service to the community and safety to all we come in contact with.

Employment Activity

New Staff:

Shane Nordick	May, 2021	Dispatcher Trainee
Bonnie Sinjem	August, 2021	Dispatcher Trainee
Deserae Werlinger	August, 2021	Dispatcher Trainee
Amber Ostgaard	October, 2021	Dispatcher Trainee
Alesia Terpstra	October, 2021	Dispatcher Trainee
Joshua Smith	October, 2021	Dispatcher Trainee

Promotions:

Nicole Shjerve	June 14, 2021	Training Coordinator
Jessica Groseth	December, 2021	Team Leader

PSAP Personnel

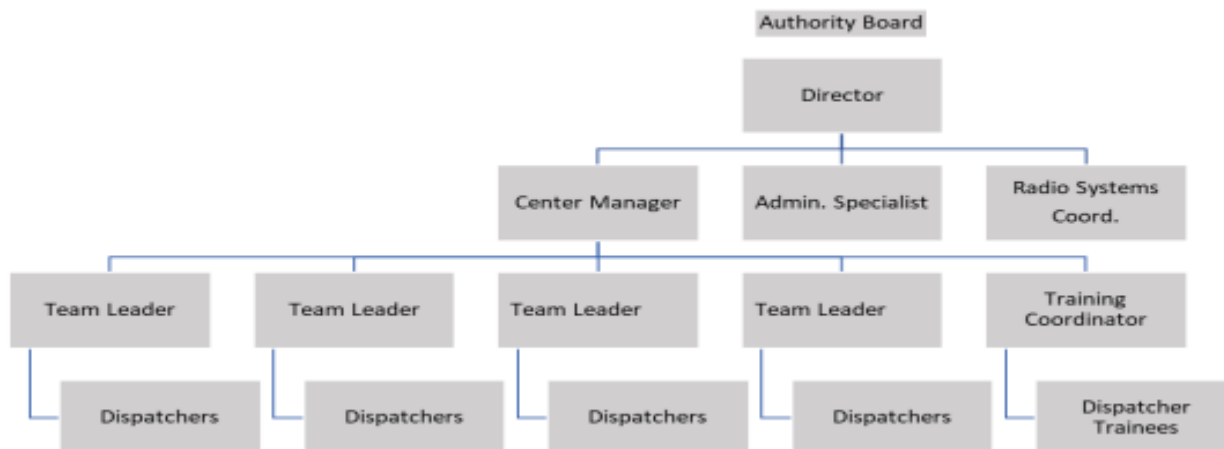
Maintaining staffing levels is a critical component of emergency dispatch operations and ensures services are readily provided to responders and citizens in need. The recruitment process for emergency dispatchers is more extensive than most classified positions. In addition to the standard vetting process involving online applications and interviews, mandatory skill-specific testing identify the relative applicants armed with the aptitude and skills for the pressure and tasks associated with the job.

Technology is leveraged for all aspects of the call-taking and dispatching functions to improve efficiency, situational awareness, communication, and safety. While leveraging the various technologies has improved work flows, Dispatchers are a vital asset, and necessary to coordinate emergency responses. Staffing analyses will be completed routinely to ensure adequate staffing according to NENA and APCO Standards.

Currently, the PSAP consists of the following positions when fully staffed:

Our Team Leaders and Training Coordinator also process calls on the floor:

- 1 Director
- 1 Administrative Specialist, Senior
- 1 Radio Systems Coordinator
- 1 PSAP Center Manager
- 4 Team Leaders
- 1 Training Coordinator
- 13 Dispatchers
- Part time Dispatcher (s)



Hiring, Training and Quality Assurance

HIRING

The recruiting and hiring process for Dispatchers requires additional vetting to inform applicants of the challenging and rewarding position as an Emergency Dispatcher. While working with our Human Resource Dept., improvements to the hiring process continue to be developed and applied for the application and onboarding process.

Training –APCO Law Guide Cards:

Over the past couple years, The Grand Forks PSAP has worked towards consistent call processing procedures by implementing the APCO Guide Cards for both Emergency Medical Dispatch and Fire Guide Cards. The Law Guide Cards were completed and will be implemented with the Intellicom software system in 2022.

As with the EMD, the same process proceeded for the Law Cards as well. A Taskforce consisting of PSAP, agencies served by PSAP worked with APCO to develop a guide-card system that provided a standard method for the call-taker to effectively evaluate the situation, and also provide lifesaving instructions. An additional core component was to develop a set of protocols that allowed for timely deliverance of the necessary information in a minimal amount of time for both the patient and responders.

Quality Assurance

Providing quality to callers and responders is at the forefront of all aspects of what we do in PSAP. To provide continuous feedback to staff and quality assurance, the Grand Forks PSAP teamed up with a private company called Moetivations to implement a quality assurance program utilizing national standards and best practices.

Moetivations has provided multiple aspects of quality assurance including consistent level of quality review of calls for service, coaching recommendations for improvement, and on-site training.

Since the implementation, the overall performance of staff has seen a marked improvement, with positive feedback from staff. Performance remains steady, with average scores at 95% or better.

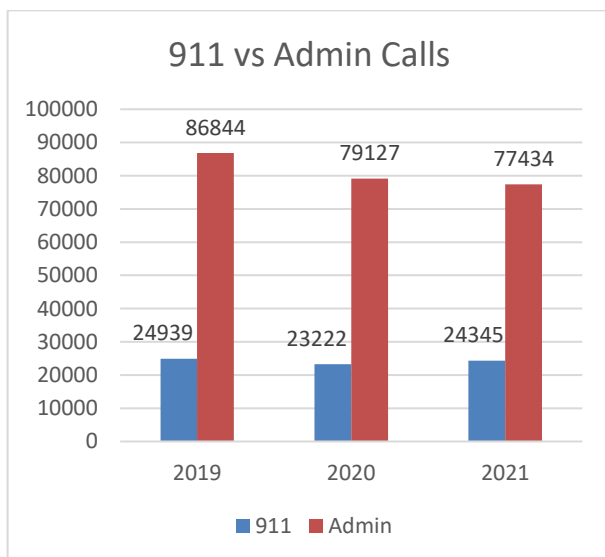
2021 Operations Review

Phone Calls Received

Grand Forks Public Safety Answering Point received both emergency and non-emergency telephone calls for police, fire, and ambulance requests as well as calls from citizens requesting general information and other agency requests. In 2021, Grand Forks PSAP processed 101,779 telephone calls, received through both 911 and administrative lines.

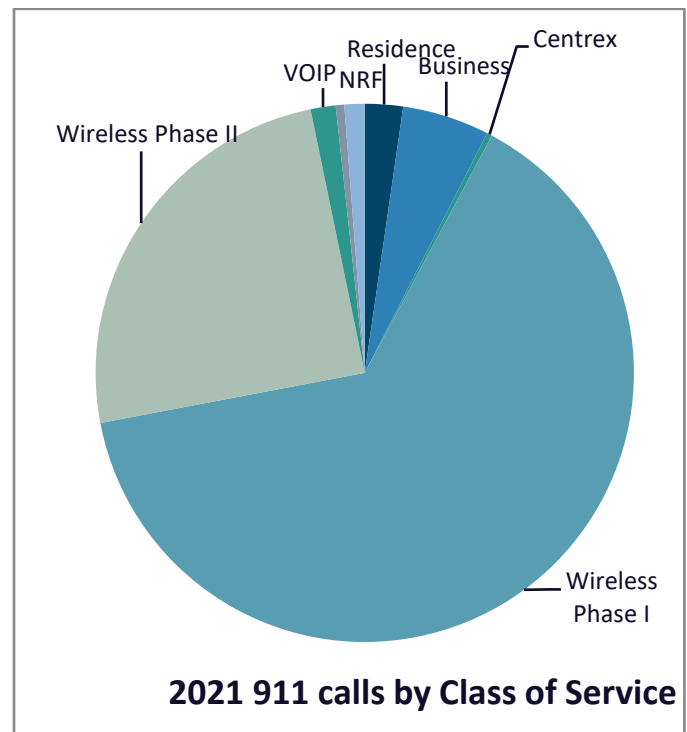
- 911 Lines – 24,345
- Administrative Lines – 77,434
- Text messages – 70, up from 57 last year, but still below 2019 at 81.

The total 911 calls have increase slightly, while those through the administrative lines have decreased slightly, but still on par with recent averages.



911 Call Source

As technology advances, the ability for citizens to contact the Grand Forks PSAP via 911 changes as well. A growing number of incoming calls is through wireless phones. Statistically, 90.08% of the 911 calls received were from cell phones. Grand Forks PSAP also receives 911 calls via Text to 911. In total, 70 calls were received via text to 911



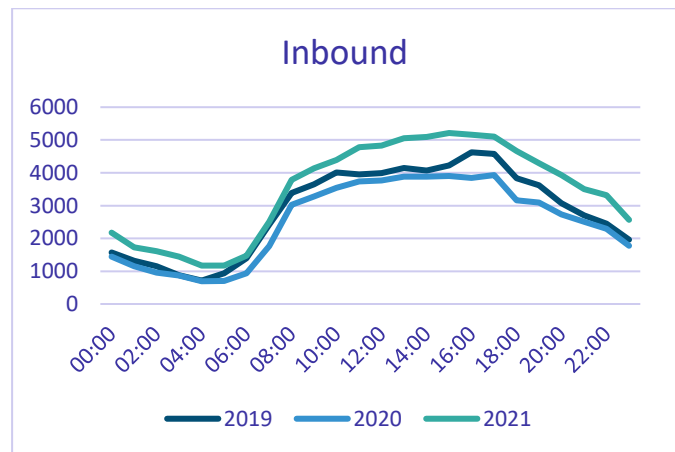
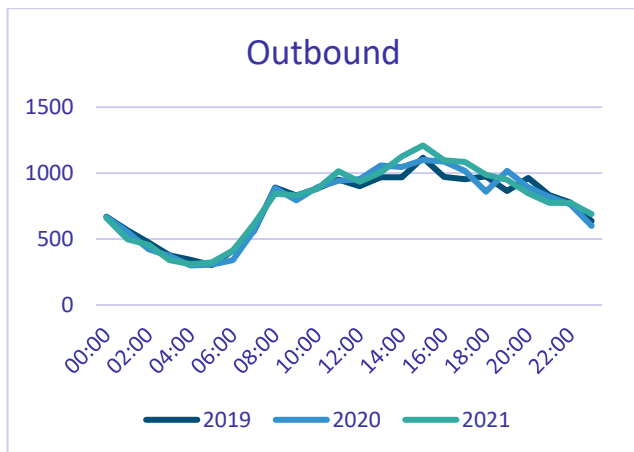
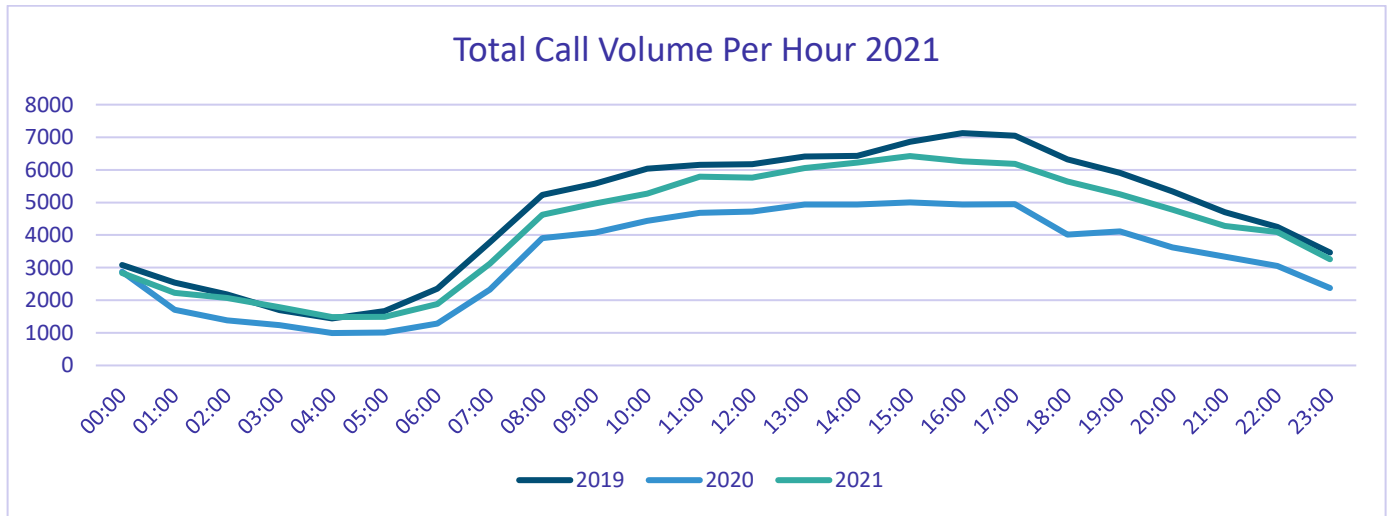
Other incoming 911 calls were received from various sources:

- Business lines – 6.08%
- Residence – 2.31%
- Voice over internet (VOIP) – 1.52%
- Source/No Record Found (NRF) – 1.23%
- Coin – less than 1%
- Centrex (central exchange) – .32%
- Text to 911 - .52%

Monthly Average Phone Calls Per Hour

Grand Forks PSAP processes calls 24 hours per day. During certain times, however, a greater number of incoming calls can be anticipated. This information is used to maintain sufficient staffing levels throughout the 24-hour period. For a number of years, the peak time has consistently been shown to land between the hours of 3:00-5:00pm. As can be seen below, this remains the peak time, but it has widened to a larger time span, requiring more staff to process and dispatching incoming calls for service.

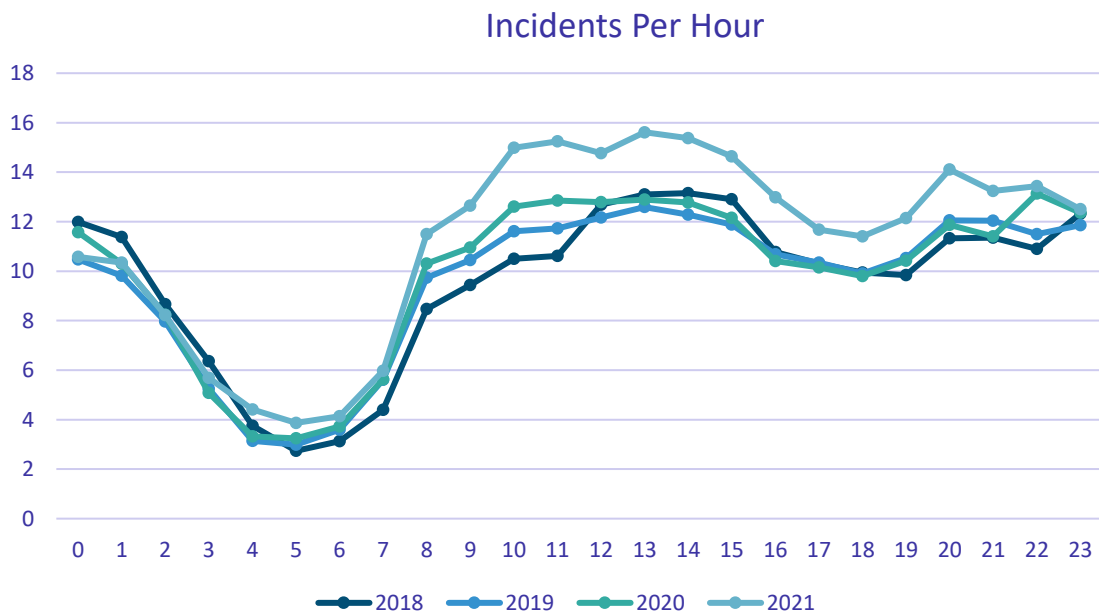
Scheduled events typically create more calls for service, which can increase minimum staffing. Unplanned events such as severe weather or large fires can sometimes create an overwhelming amount of 911 calls for staff; during these events supervisors call additional personnel in to assist.



Calls for Service – LE, Fire, EMS

Calls for service can be initiated via phone calls, radio communications, or other forms of reporting methods such as online reporting tools. Those that require response by Law Enforcement, Fire, or EMS are entered into the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system and responders are dispatched.

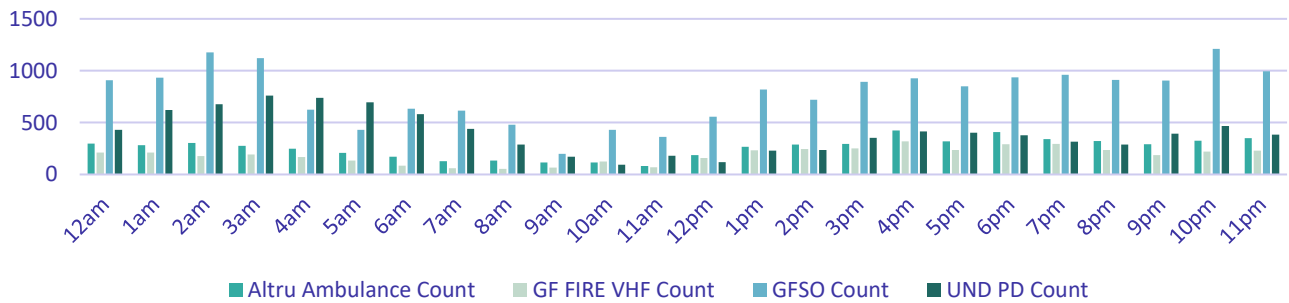
The average calls for service per hour is a core component to determine workload, staffing levels for the roles and responsibilities as Call-Taker and Dispatcher, as well as other operational aspects. For each call for service, the roles and responsibilities as call-taker and dispatcher play a critical role to maintain the safety of the victims and provide information to responders as they respond and prepare for the incident at hand. As with the phone call stats, the calls for service trend have increased, at time the number of incidents has increased from 10 to 15 per hour on average over the past 3 years.



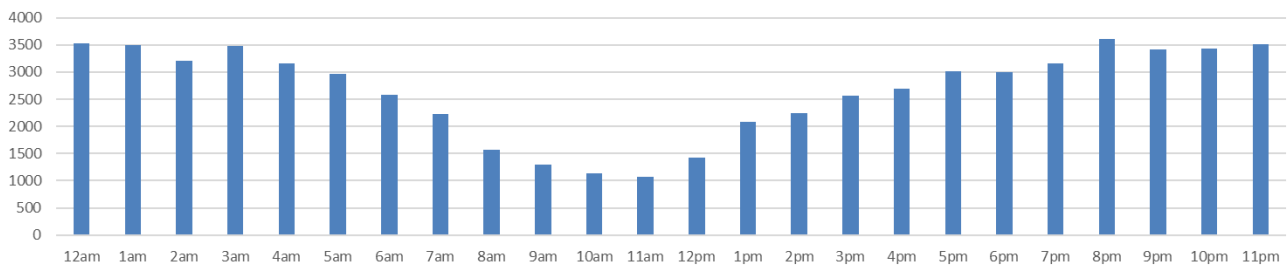
Radio Communications

With the increase in calls for service, follows an increase in radio traffic, as well. Monitoring the safety of responders is one of the utmost important aspects of the job. In order to maintain a balanced workload for staff with the increases, console assignments are utilized to monitor the various radio talk-groups. As the trends continue to increase, roles have adjusted to meet the needs of the radio communication trends.

2021 Radio Traffic Trend - Altru, GFFD, GFSO, UNDPD



2021 Radio Traffic Trend - PD



Recognition for Exceptional Work and Excellence

In keeping with our mission and goal, our center awards and recognizes those who embody the guiding principles of exceptional work and excellence through our Recognition Program. Staff can be nominated for several awards including those below recognized in 2021:

Molly Marek – Molly was recognized on April 14, 2021, during a staff meeting and received a Life Saver Award for an EMS Bleeding call she worked on January 13, 2021. Molly's quick thinking and guidance through CPR helped save a life. Molly was awarded a framed Award of Excellence certificate as well as a Life Saver pin.

Christy Senechal – Christy was recognized on December 15, 2021, during a staff meeting and received a Stork Pin for an EMS Childbirth call she worked on April 15, 2021. Christy's exemplary actions helped a new mother and father welcome their child into the world. Christy was awarded a framed Award of Excellence certificate as well as a Stork pin.

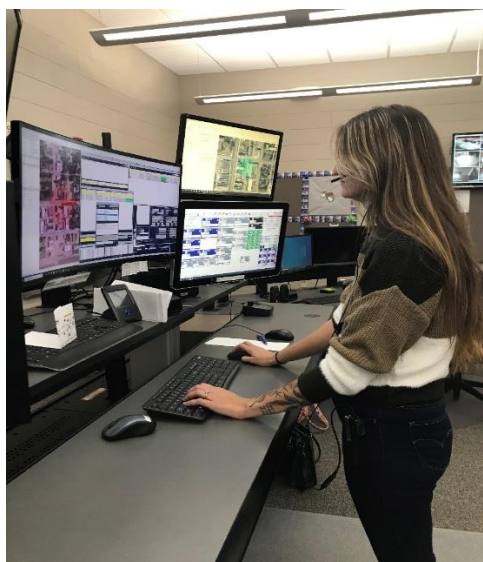
Life Saver Award: This awards any member of the Department, who is on duty, for sustaining or saving the life of any human being. This award is dependent upon individual's recovery and discharge from the hospital. This award consists of a framed certificate and a life saver pin.

Stork Pin: This awards any member of the Department, who is on duty, and assists in delivering a baby over the phone. This award is dependent upon a baby being born prior to first responder's arrival on scene. This award consists of an unframed certificate and a stork pin.

Dakota 911 Conference Recognition: Our Center also received its first award recognition through APCO-The Association of Public Safety Communications Officials. Christy Senechal, Heidi Hillebrand, David Kuznicki, and Kelsey Deslisle were recognized on September 14, 2021, at the APCO Dakota Conference and received the "You Made A Difference Award" for their helpful roles during a Civil Papers call on May 27, 2020 that ended with the loss of one of our officer's and another deputy being shot and wounded. The bravery these dispatchers showed is truly incredible. Our Center received a plaque, and each dispatcher received a framed certificate.

In closing, the Grand Forks Public Safety Answering Point continues to get busier with increased call volumes and expectations of citizens and responders due to technology advances.

We are committed to meeting Today's Public Safety Information Needs and Planning for Tomorrow's Challenges!



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