

Testimony on the Plan to Close Public Safety Answering Points

Good evening.

My name is David Moakley. I live on Mountain Spring Road in Chittenden, Vermont and am a firefighter with the Chittenden Volunteer Fire Department. I am here this evening to testify in opposition to the proposed closing of the Rutland and Derby Public Safety Answering Points, and the consolidation of the dispatch services into two centers for the purpose of saving money.

Access to emergency services is extremely important to rural mountain communities like Chittenden. The spine of the Green Mountains divides Chittenden, with a drive from the western part of the town to the eastern part of the town taking up to 45 minutes by road traversing 3 towns. To reach the northernmost border off Route 73 you pass through 2 other towns. The majority of the land in Chittenden is Green Mountain National Forest, with the Long Trail running the length of the town and a NFS campground in our boundaries. Neither is easily accessible from the town center. Due to the topography, cell phone reception in many places is, notwithstanding the Vermont government's pledge of universal service, at best spotty. It is possible to call in a location to 911 that would be best dispatched from a different town. Local dispatchers with knowledge of the area and of the customs of emergency responders in the area are critical. Rescues of people from the Long Trail are not uncommon, and with 17,000 acres of forest to

search, getting the location right is important. The same goes for dispatching medical and fire services. If a dispatcher gets the location or the part of town wrong due to a lack of local knowledge serious consequences, including death may result. I believe this is not something that has been envisioned for this mission to save a few dollars.

There is a problem of redundancy that is involved here also. The technology industry measures acceptable measures of failure in 9's. 99.99 percent reliability sounds good, but that means that the system is not working for 87 hours, or almost 4 days, per year. The chances that 2 PSAP's will coincidentally be down at the same time leaving the state with no 911 dispatch services are not small when you have that type of window. The chances that all 4 PSAP's will be down at the same time are much smaller. The problem with Fairpoint's lines should be considered here, too. The Nov. 28, 2014 statewide outage, due to a weather related failure of a line in New Hampshire was the second system failure in four months. If there is a more localized failure in Vermont this could take a center off the air. In the case of a widespread natural disaster, like Irene, an early winter snow with the leaves still on the trees or an ice storm, the chance of losing 2 PSAP's to downed wires is much greater than losing 4.

Lastly I wish to bring up the State of Vermont's record with respect to technology. I am sure you all are familiar with the less than stellar performance in the roll out of the State Health Insurance program. That

inconvenienced, and still is inconveniencing the citizens and businesses of the state. The State Police, who are in charge of this plan to close the PSAP's, were recently fined 6300 dollars by VOSHA for failing to provide a safe work environment due to a "substandard" radio system. All alarms from the PSAP's are transmitted via radio. The problem the State had with Fairpoint after awarding them an 11 million dollar contract is well known. There have been a number of times that CVFD has staffed our station with volunteers to make sure 911 calls were dispatched. These examples point to a problem in managing and introducing technologies that should be unacceptable in emergency services.

I hope you will choose to reverse this ill advised foray into new technology and keep the PSAP infrastructure as it currently exists, with the redundancy that 4 entry points provide and the local knowledge and dedication of the dispatchers we currently employ intact. Thank you for your time.