

My Name is Thomas Lague. I am a 911 Call taker and an Emergency Communications dispatcher for the Department of Public Safety at the Derby PSAP. My talking points today come from testimony heard on Monday 2/23/15 on PSAP Consolidation.

It has been said that the radio coverage will not change, this may be true, but what has not been said is that currently there are radio coverage issues period. There was a documented problem with the radio system that they have worked on to fix, however there are still numerous problem spots and poor coverage in some areas.

One of the arguments for this consolidation is that there is technology that is able to replace and or support dispatch functions. MDC's or Mobil Data Consoles are one piece of that technology. MDC's are reliant on cell coverage. Verizon is the primary provider, at this time I have been advised they do not roam. As we all know there are still huge areas where there is no cell coverage in the state. The idea that the Troopers can substitute an MDC for a dispatcher, while good in theory, will not reduce the workload on the dispatchers due to the lack of data coverage. Also they can only be used if the Trooper is stopped. If a Trooper is responding to a "hot call" or in a "no coverage zone", he or she will be fully relying on a dispatcher for info.

We are due to get a new 911 system to replace the current one sometime around July of this year. They stated that there has been new fiber optic cable run to both Derby and Rutland with a cost of 100k to support this. When the new system comes online there will be a learning curve not only for the Dispatchers on new equipment, but there will be a "de-bugging" period while the unanticipated kinks of the installation are worked out. Further on the subject of the 911 system, there are times that have happened when the number of incoming calls to the system has been more than the number of Call takers that were available. For example, a few years ago a fire at a tire retailer on a busy stretch of road during rush hour. This local incident made the system answer the calls with a recorded message to stay on the line, then "parked" calls for the next available call taker. The callers then hung up and dialed 911 again, adding even more calls to the "waiting list".

The comment was made that there is not enough room, or connectivity to expand Derby. By rearranging the main floor there is plenty of room for two more desks to be added for a total of six. Three more desks could be set in the current supervisors office for a total of 9 positions. That's the same number they are setting up in Williston. A communications technician advised that the only old lines into Derby are 3 "copper wire" lines that were left for three seven digit lines to be used in case of a system failure. These three "old" lines allow Derby dispatchers to plug in 3 "rotary/pulse" style phones so that they can keep taking calls for service if the system goes down. Everything else is now up to par for the systems that are currently being used and that system is the one that will be used after the consolidation.

In eliminating two PSAPs, there is increased risk that one of those could be debilitated in an emergency as happened in 2011. During Tropical Storm Irene, one of the PSAPs had to evacuate. With only two PSAP centers, there is reason for significant concern that the systems could easily be overloaded without consideration for adequate redundancies.

The two remaining centers would start understaffed right from the beginning, which of course would increase overtime. On paper it looks like they would be fully staffed, however, that is only if VSP trained dispatchers go to the other centers. It takes 1-2 months for the testing/hiring phase, then an additional 5-6 months on the job training before that person is a stand- alone dispatcher. During that time they are

side by side with a Dispatch Trainer. So at the start you would not only pay for 2 people to work one job side by side while training, but would have to pay someone overtime to cover the vacant shift they were being trained for. Add to that you can't train everyone at once and factor in the greater than 50 percent drop rate for people who don't make it through training. If you could start with 8 with a 50 percent loss rate, it could be 32 months before you are up to speed, and that's if you don't lose anyone for any other reason. From this point it takes a dispatcher a good two years before they even feel comfortable in the position.

One example of the inconsistencies which has raised concerns is the stated goal of savings of \$1.7M dollars which hinged on eliminating 20 positions from Derby and Rutland. Now the number of dispatcher positions being eliminated and being absorbed by Rockingham and Williston is 14, however the "cost savings" has stayed the same. That seems curious.

In closing, because of the lack of transparency, in the way this consolidation plan is being presented, , there has been placed upon the dispatchers in the four call centers an added amount of unneeded stress. Our job is already stressful enough. Please, visit a dispatch center to see firsthand what the job entails and meet these dedicated dispatchers. They are the vital link and should not be eliminated or consolidated.

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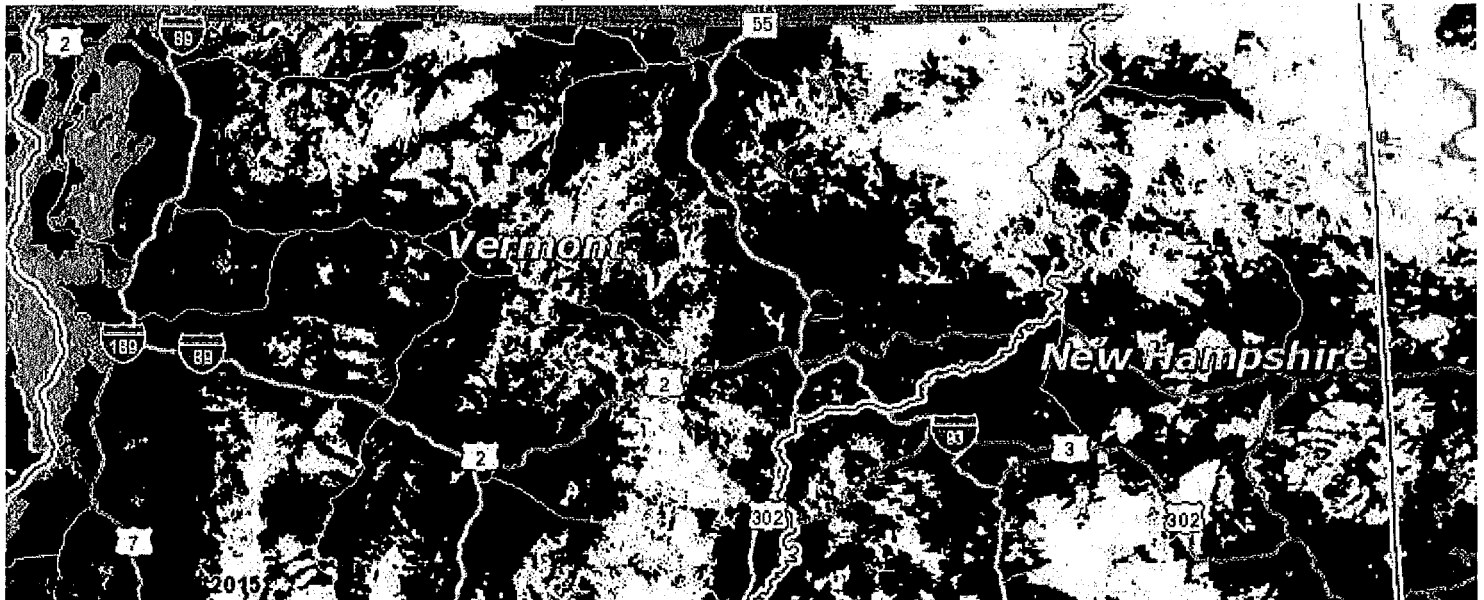
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- Extended 3G
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