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VT State Police – Emergency Communications Dispatcher
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My name is Seth Bride, I am an Emergency Communications Dispatcher at the Rutland PSAP. This week actually marks my 6th year at the PSAP. I am here today to explain how I believe Public and responder safety will be at risk with this consolidation.

We are looking at a reduction of 14 full time and an unknown number of part time dispatchers. 4 PSAPs combined averaged 104,000 documented calls for service for police/fire/ems per year over the last 5 years. Those numbers do not include calls for F&W, or “I Just have a question for you,” or follow up calls looking to speak to a trooper. Those same 4 PSAPs took over 160,000 911 calls in 2014, answering over 75% of the State’s total 911 calls. 911 calls have been steadily increasing by over 3%, or about 7,000 calls per year.

So now we are expected to cover double the area, which is half the state, answer twice the amount of 911 calls, dispatch double the amount of fire/ems/ and police incidents, and answer double the amount of radio transmissions, with at least a 15% reduction in staff. With less dispatchers and more radio transmissions, things are going to be missed. What happens when that 1 transmission missed is a police officer calling for help, or a firefighter calling a mayday, or an EMT asking for another ambulance for a cardiac arrest? What happens when the PSAPs are overwhelmed with 911 calls and the one call that couldn't be answered and was sent to be held in a queue was a suicidal person looking for help? A mother needing help for their choking baby? A husband who’s house is on fire with his wife trapped inside?

We need to look at the growing number of natural disasters we are seeing. During Irene in 2011, the Rutland PSAP was evacuated due to flood waters, dispatchers were sent to individual barracks in NHV and Shaftsbury to dispatch for each area. Other dispatchers were relocated to the Rutland City Police Department to dispatch for the Rutland Area. Rutland County Fire and EMS was dispatched by one of our dispatchers at a local firehouse. 911 calls had to be rerouted to the other PSAPS and they had to pick up the slack. Now take that scenario and try to comprehend what would happen if one of the 2 consolidated PSAPs was hit by a natural disaster and had to evacuate? Is the 1 remaining PSAP going to be able to handle the entire state’s dispatching and majority of 911 calls and still be able to provide the level of public and responder safety that the State has come to expect?

We as dispatchers are committed to the area in which we serve. We know the community because we live in them; we know the streets because we drive them every day; we know the ins and outs of the towns because many of us serve on local fire, police, and EMS departments on our days off. Being a dispatcher within the area you serve is a critical aspect. Knowing the area gives a dispatcher a huge advantage when dispatching a call to a remote location. In a life safety incident where the caller can only give rural directions or a landmark as to where they are, my colleagues, who are local to the area, can instantly take that limited information and

translate it into a solid address, getting the proper emergency agency to that location in a timely manner.

You may have seen or heard my name recently in the Rutland Herald, VPR, WSYB, at various meetings, and on social media for one reason only, I do not want a single person to be injured or killed by this consolidation. I will talk to whoever will listen if it means it will make a difference in saving our PSAPs. We care about you, your friends and family, anyone who makes that 911 call on their worst day. We care about the firefighters, the EMS personnel, the law enforcement community, the AOT drivers. We want the public to be educated with the FACTS and the numbers that support our position that the public and our responders are at risk of death or serious injury if this consolidation happens.