

# County gets new dispatch center

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By Duane Barbati, Staff Writer

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Otero County Sheriff Benny House showed off the new Robert Hedman Memorial Annex building Tuesday to the members of the Otero County Local Emergency Planning Committee.

The Hedman Annex is the county's public safety answering point, which houses the Enhanced 911 dispatch center for the Otero County Sheriff's Department. It's located at Alamotero Lane and Eddy Drive (the old Pepsi plant). The Alamogordo Department of Public Safety has a similar Enhanced 911 dispatch center housed inside ADPS's building, 700 Virginia Ave.

House said he believes the Enhanced 911 system and purchase of the old Pepsi plant with surrounding acreage cost the county about \$500,000.

He said OCSO has two full time dispatchers for each shift and one part-time dispatcher during heavy emergency call periods.

"We may have to have four full-time dispatchers on duty for the Enhanced 911 system," he said. "It has to do with the ISO rating for insurance purposes. ADPS's system will work as a backup to our system if ours goes down during an emergency. Our (OCSO) system will work as a backup for ADPS."

House said he plans to get a memorandum of understanding between the city and the county.

"We have to work out the details with the MOU with ADPS," he said. "We've got to work together and as professionally as possible during an emergency."

The PSAP has five Enhanced 911 dispatch stations. Four of the five stations are for dispatchers and the fifth station is for a supervisor.

OCSO dispatch assistant supervisor Terry Mackewich said the goal of the sheriff's department is to have three people on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"Right now we have two people on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week," Mackewich said. "When I am on duty we have three because I work the supervisor desk. I can train people from my station which we can't do from the other four stations."

She said the Enhanced 911 system has a mapping program and GPS capability.

"We can map our 911 calls," Mackewich said. "We can also look up GPS coordinates to locate what address or location the caller is telephoning from."

She said dispatchers can pull up address information, what type of home a caller is located at and how many driveways allow access to the residence.

"We can get what fire district the caller is located in," Mackewich said. "The map will show us where the driveways are in case it comes off a different road from the home. If, for example, the address is for Amador but the driveway entrance is on another street, we would be able to find the driveway on our screen map."

She said the system would allow dispatchers to give responding emergency personnel GPS coordinates for callers stranded or needing assistance in remote desert areas.

"We started using the system on Jan. 26," Mackewich said. "I love the new system. It makes my job easier. It improves safety for the public and law enforcement."

She said if a person is computer literate, it's easy to learn and be trained on it.

"I was able to come in and train myself on it," Mackewich said. "It's a plus to be a dispatcher first then learn the system. I can type in a land line telephone number, which will give me an address, the fire district and who we should call for law enforcement response. It will tell me everything about what type of road the home is on."

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Otero County Sheriff's Department assistant dispatch supervisor Terry... (J.R. Oppenheim/Daily News)