



## **BERRIEN COUNTY FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION**

**Call to Order:** 0830-0930

**Date:** April 20, 2022

**Old minutes:** Old minutes emailed out. Motion to accept old minutes and seconded. Motion passed. None opposed.

**Treasurer's Report:** March 2022 statement. Starting balance: \$4514.94. Three Deposits: \$396.50. Check 1047 for \$293.00 for Bibles. Check 1048 for \$100.00 Chief Davidson Plaque. Ending balance: \$4518.44. Motion to accept treasurers report and seconded. Motion passed. None opposed.

**Communications/Bills:** Chief Chiarello presented a document titled: The Importance of Monitoring the Fireground Channel By Berrien County 911 During Structural Fire Incidents. Chief Chairello stated the document is the result of last months discussion on dispatch wanting fire departments to move to a TAC channel for operations. Chief Chairello stated he, Brian Kazmierzak and the departments listed in the document met two weeks ago to discuss this. The document is supported by the departments listed in the document. Discussion followed with several departments wanting to know why this was not shared with all agencies, including dispatch? Most department stating this is the first time they are seeing it. While all understand the importance of dispatch monitoring the fire ground talkgroups, we need to try to work together with dispatch to come to an agreeable resolution. Dispatch has never monitored the VHF fire grounds previously, but all agree there is a need to have dispatch monitor the fire ground talkgroups. Dispatch just does not have the staff to dedicate a dispatcher to just Fire/EMS. Chris from dispatch stated they are losing three more dispatches over the next thirty days, plus the dispatchers they are still down. It takes at least six months to train a dispatcher. Dispatch currently runs with a dispatcher for the following: COMN; METN; COMS; LEIN; Call Taker. Five dispatchers. Fire/EMS picked up by other dispatchers as well as other dispatchers having to take calls when more calls than the call taker can handle. Chris stated if dispatch had the staff to dedicate a Fire/EMS dispatched this would probably not be a problem. Chris stated it has been five plus years since dispatch has been fully staffed. Everyone feeling the brunt of low staffing. Chris also stated there is a lot of unnecessary chatter on the radio that adds to problem. Frank reminded all that we need to also police are own agencies and use our proprietary talkgroups for the unnecessary chatter. Consensus is that the group needs to send the document to all agencies including dispatch to get additional input for further discussion and we need to all work together collectively to come to an agreement on the matter.

Discussion also on not every truck going enroute needs to notified dispatch. Dispatch needs to know agency is clear on the call, first truck enroute, truck on scene, Clear the scene. Additional units going enroute to the same call needs to call enroute to command or first truck enroute.

Bill Boyd brought up the need for dispatch to track ambulances as well. Because of this Medic-1 has their own dispatch to track their ambulances for calls. Bill stated Medic-1 dispatch works well and in conjunction with county dispatch to accomplish this.

Discussion on the flier Damon Nichols give back benefit. The Nichols family wishes to thank all first responders and dispatchers for their support. The will be providing a free meal to first responders, Police/Fire/EMS, and dispatchers on Saturday April 23, 2022. The event will start at 1700 hrs at the North Shore Event Center. The event will run until all meals are gone. There will be 260 meals available.

Chief Jesswein stated Buchanan Township hosted a benefit for firefighter Kyle Mullin. The benefit brought in just over \$10,000.00.

The following benefits are coming up:

Pancake Breakfast April 24, 2022 Niles Township.

Pancake Breakfast April 24, 2022, Sodus Township.

Fish fry May 07, 2022 Buchanan Township.

Pancake Breakfast May 07, 2022 Bertrand Township.

**New Chief/Visitor:** None

**Committee Report:**

**ByLaw:** Had first meeting. Working on getting an online platform. Had a hiccup with the online platform. Thanks to Chief Weich for getting the online format corrected and running.

**Sheriff:** Working with BHDPS, Benton Township, SJDPS on the upcoming PGA event. Sheriff department also has staffing problems. Benton Harbor DPS and Benton Township PD staffing are also down. Benton Twp. PD Chief is retiring. Sheriff department is being asked to cover these shortfalls. Sheriff has three openings on the road. The county has 85 positions currently open, and currently not getting any applications. Sheriff stated he may have to start putting operations staff on the road. Niles township and Benton Township are the busiest with Lincoln township next busiest. Sheriff department losing staff to neighboring departments. While the neighboring agencies can offer more pay, the sheriff department offers 25 and out to retire. Others have higher retirement dates. Sheriff discussed how the county and country has lost the inner cities to high crime rates and murders. Sheriff stated Chicago is so bad he has been told by officers in Chicago not to come over to Chicago. Chicago crime is so high and they are not allowed to peruse anyone.

Working on the following events for the year:

Redbud. There will be two events this year.

Blossom parade, Three Oaks Flag Day.

Sheriff stated God Bless.

Chief Mattix reiterated it is hard to get people.

**Red Cross:** None. Give Blood.

**Great Lakes Drone:** See attached report.

**SEMCO/MI GAS:**

**Dispatch/911:** Staffing issues. Frank brought 800 paging issues. Frank stated a call last night at 2202 that was dispatched by Berrien the all call talkgroup was used instead of the medical paging talkgroup. Both Niles and Berrien are using the Niles all call paging talkgroup for medical calls. Need to use the medical paging talkgroup for medical calls and the all call for the fire calls. Chris stated she will look into it this afternoon.

**DNR:** None

**Funeral:** Berrien Springs

**Emergency Management/LEPC:** Continuing to work on the mitigation report. Working on PGA. Working on a mobile command unit. Will take 8 months to a year to deliver. When delivered it will have a full mobile dispatch inside.

**EMS:**

**Medic-1:** Currently fully staffed. Working on PGA and Blossomtime events. If you have a community event and are in the Medic-1 coverage area contact Medic-1 if would like a unit at your event. Functioning as normal.

**S.M.C.A.S.:** Currently fully staffed. Two Redbud events. Nationals Event over July Fourth weekend and the International event September 23-24, 2022. Will having staffing issues with the events. Overworked with mandatory. To cover shifts. Currently have three eligible to retire. Currently holding our own.

**Med Flight:**

**Med Control:** None

**BCFA:** Reminder of the car benefit on June 18, 2022. Fliers available. Need fire trucks and personnel to help. Cars will start showing up at 0600. Expecting over 1000 cars. Sheriff will be giving a speech at 0900. Is Medic-01 aware of the event? Bill will check. Royalton will be providing a pancake breakfast. Next meeting May 04, 2022 at Niles City Fire. Lest We Forget will also be having their event that weekend. Working with them as well.

**Training:** Check SMOKE. Chief Mattix reminded all that the US Fire Academy allows one free class per firefighter per year. Take advantage of it. Sheriff reminded all that LT Burks has rearranged his schedule to be available for the high school class and then come into work. The Sheriff suggested the firefighters thank Dispatcher Burks for long hours Corey has spent working.

County FF 1/2 and CTE class coming to an end. Written and practical test on May 21, 2022. Please help if you can. The more help the faster the testing can go. If can help, please let Corey know.

**HazMat:** Went to MI Hazards Materials Conference last week. Excellent conference. Is not just for hazmat personnel. Anyone that responds to a hazmat situation can attend.

**MITRT5:** None. Training tonight vehicle in trench, in Dowagiac. Team structure will be changing.

**MABAS:** None. April meeting was cancelled.




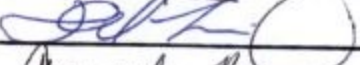


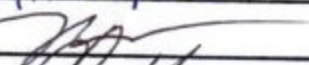
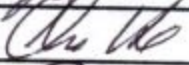

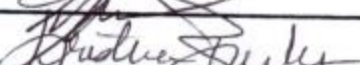
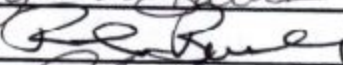

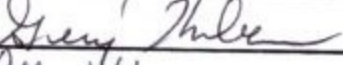
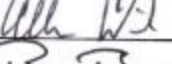
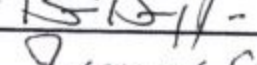
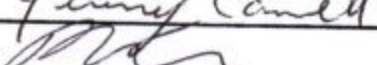
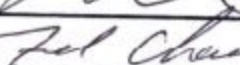

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:** None

**Next Meeting:** May 18, 2022 Lincoln Township 8030.

**Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn 0931.

**Berrien County Fire Chief's Association  
Attendance Sheet  
April 20, 2022**

	<b>Print</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Temp</b>	<b>Dept.</b>
1.	Mike Mattix			NBFR
2.	Foone Delatorre			NILES
3.	Bin Knisely			Bertrand FD
4.	Daniel Linn			SNEAS
5.	Amanda Bronson	Amanda Bronson		WESAW
6.	Ashley Munson			GLDC
7.	Doug MYERS			BSO FD
8.	Rob HARPER	R. Harper		BC TFD
9.	MARIL BELLEN			Med Flight
10.	Chris Hester			D.B.C.F.P.
11.	JAMIE FLICK	J. Flick		NB TFD
12.	Jim Jesswein			NILES Twp / Arch Twp
13.	Kris Burks			911
14.	Paul Bailey			BCSO
15.	Brandon Chiavelli			Lincoln
16.	Gerry Kabelman			S.J.C.T.F.D. #1
17.	Allen Weich			Chikaming
18.	Bill Boyd, Jr			MEDIC 1
19.	Jeremy Camell			SJDPS
20.	Matt Owen			GLAC
21.	Teal Chase			GTFD
22.				

# "Damon Nichols Dedicated Dispatcher Give Back Benefit"

Please join us at the drive-thru benefit event in honor & memory of Berrien County Dispatcher Damon Nichols #1005. We appreciate all the love and support that was shown to Damon & us thereafter. But this benefit is also to recognize you all for the jobs you all hold and to say thank you for all you all do! So, please join us at the drive-thru chicken dinner benefit.

For All Dispatchers,  
All Berrien Co. employees  
All POLICE AGENCIES,  
All FIREFIGHTERS, +  
All MEDIC  
Employees ONLY!!  
1 meal per  
employee



260  
meals  
Available

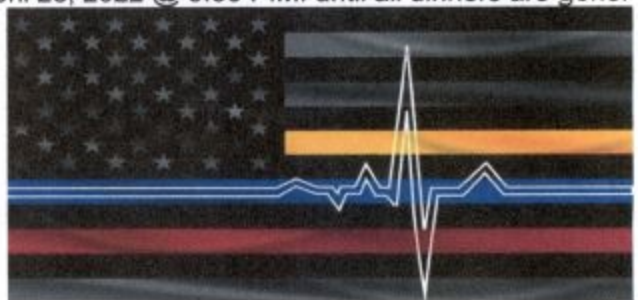
Chicken meals will be catered by Piggins & Grinnin restaurant St. Joseph, MI

Meal will include: Grilled chicken, Mac & cheese, coleslaw. Cake provided & made by Martin's Supermarkets, & your choice of a pop or water.

Drive-thru or pull over and chat! Event will be an outside event. Restrooms available but please help keep clean 😊



Event location:  
North Shore Event Center  
2655 M-63  
Benton Harbor, MI 49022  
Saturday April 23, 2022 @ 5:30 P.M. until all dinners are gone.



Sponsors: North Shore Event Center, Fisher Body Shop, Martin's Supermarkets, Piggins & Grinnin, Taylor Rental, Gordon's Food Service, Honor Credit Union, Sandra Drake Gordon, Ola Nichols, Amelia Gibson & Briyanna Nichols AT+T St Joe  
Thank you all kindly for your donations and support  
Organized by: Millie Nichols - Thank you all for the love and support from the entire Damon Nichols family



# Great Lakes Rescue

## April 2022 Report

### UPDATES



1. Responses since last meeting—9
2. Total calls in Berrien County 2022—9
3. Lindsay has stepped away due to ongoing health issues, please keep her in your thoughts. She will return in a different role in the future.
4. We have 10 full time positions and 18 part time positions currently open in our rescue division. Some are seasonal and some are long term. Please visit our website or social media and pass the word along.
5. We have added a new M300 UAS to our fleet which will provide a significant impact on our operations in the future. Feel free to ask or google it to learn more.
6. We attended the Michigan Fire Chief's Presidents Dinner by special invitation and received our MABAS Accreditation for Type 1 UAS response Team. Currently only 6 in the State. Copy given to Chief Mattix.
7. Our boat should be in service by June 1st and we will be announcing our USLA Accreditation soon as well.
8. Reminder we have 3 State licensed Medical First Response units, one is always staffed 24/7 within the county. Usually the north county car is staffed most often.
9. Currently 15 pilots across 3 counties with an overall support staff of 36 in our UAS response division.

## Response Review



On 4/2/22 we were requested by Berrien Springs/Oronoko Fire Department and the Michigan State Police to assist on a possible missing persons/drowning. Upon arrival we had two aerial drones checking the shoreline and river for 1 mile in each direction. 4585 our new command unit arrived to handle the data flow and provide further management assistance for the integrated response teams. Our sonar team was deployed and the initial sonar contact was made at 17:00 hrs during AI review of the sonar data. The subject was not scene visually by any team on the water, but was found by the AI review system,. Dive Team was notified of location. Subject was retrieved on Day 2 due to weather and other concerns at the time further down the river. On 4/13/22 we assisted St Joe City on a missing persons along the bluff. Upon arrival we were able to clear the bluff for a mile in each direction within 12 minutes of arrival.

Pursuant to Act 368 of 1978, as amended, this license to operate a Life Support Agency in the State of Michigan is issued to:

**GREAT LAKES RESCUE**

**Effective Date**

03/03/2022

**Expiration Date**

03/31/2023

**Highest Level**

Medical First Response

**Service Type**

Medical First Response Service

**EMS Agency ID**

111133

**Licensed Vehicles**

See Attached Vehicle List

**Service Area(s):**

Berrien County MCA

THIS LICENSE IS VALID FOR 60 DAYS  
PAST THE LISTED EXPIRATION DATE

PLEASE POST IN A PROMINENT PLACE



Certificate of Achievement

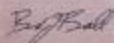


MICHIGAN MABAS ACKNOWLEDGES THAT

**Berrien County—Division 3501**

HAS COMPLETED THE MICHIGAN MABAS SPECIAL OP'S VALIDATION PROCESS FOR

Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) Team—Type I



CHIEF BRIAN BALL, PRESIDENT

April 12, 2022

DATE

# THE IMPORTANCE OF MONITORING THE FIREGROUND CHANNEL BY BERRIEN COUNTY 911 DURING STRUCTURAL FIRE INCIDENTS

## PROJECT MAYDAY – 2021 UPDATE

[www.ProjectMayDay.net](http://www.ProjectMayDay.net)

- 35.6% of all firefighter maydays were missed on their 1<sup>st</sup> call
- 67% of the time it was (sidewalk/portable radio command) – by far the most common in Berrien County as we lack resources for Strategic Level Incident Commanders in most cases
- 27% Rear/Outside Vehicle Command
- 6% Inside a vehicle
- Hearing is simply the act of perceiving sound by ear. Listening, however, is something you consciously choose to do. Listening requires concentration so that your brain processes meaning from words and sentences.
- Dispatched needs to be engaged in fireground radio traffic in order to react by automatically sounding additional alarms and requesting additional medic units to the scene.
- Dispatch should operate with a structural fire checklist to help keep track of the incident

## RECCOMENDATIONS

- **Dispatchers would never NOT monitor a high-speed chase or a shooting in progress, why would they not monitor firefighters operating inside a working structure fire in the hazard zone?**
- All working major incidents (Structural Fires, Haz-Mats, Technical Rescues) will be monitored on the fireground channel by BC911 until the incident is placed under control. Major Incidents will be the ONLY fireground radio traffic monitored by BC911. Dispatch should also give units operating 10-minute time notifications until the incident is placed under control or deemed unnecessary by the Incident Commander.
- Firegrounds 1-2 will be reserved for working fires – other incidents needing a fireground channel should use Fireground 3-4-5 as assigned by the dispatcher. Agencies can also use private channels or 8TAC channels (not monitored or recorded). Fireground 3-4-5 can also be used for structural fires if needed.
- Dispatchers should receive training on their roll in fireground and Mayday operations – Several fire instructors have volunteered to develop a video based on their expertise in the subject matter, serving on nationwide committees, consulting on the topics of Maydays, firefighter line of duty deaths and 911 center operations. The video will allow for training on demand.
- BC 911 and the Berrien County Fire Chiefs should develop a joint communications and mayday policy! This policy should pertain to ALL departments not just MABAS departments.
- BC 911 should attempt to comply with both NFPA 1221 and 1225 in order to insure the best training and operations for the Berrien County Fire Departments – specifically NFPA 1225 – Incident Tactical Dispatcher Requirements – Chapter 6.
- Fire & Public Safety Departments must do their part as there is WAY too much unnecessary traffic on F911 – EMS Call, Minor Incident and POV response radio traffic should be limited. **Major Incident traffic should never take place on F911 – units should switch to the assigned fireground on dispatch.**
- Due to the importance of this subject matter and the strong feelings of several fire chiefs, not only will this document be presented to BC 911 at the April Berrien County Fire Chief's Meeting, it will also be presented to the BC 911 Advisory Board and the County Commissioners.

## SUPPORTING FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Benton Harbor DPS, Benton Twp. FD, Bertrand Twp. FD, Lake Twp. FD, Lincoln Twp. FD, Sodus FD, St. Joseph DPS, Watervliet FD, & Weesaw Twp. FD.



# THE IMPORTANCE OF MONITORING THE FIREGROUND CHANNEL BY BERRIEN COUNTY 911 DURING STRUCTURAL FIRE INCIDENTS

## FIREFIGHTER SAFETY & RADIO COMMUNICATION BY CURT VARONE

<https://www.fireengineering.com/firefighting/improving-fireground-radio-communications/>

If there is one consistent factor that the case studies show, it is that we simply cannot depend on the IC alone to monitor fireground radio communications. The reality is that incident commanders will miss messages. It is therefore incumbent on us to ensure that our fireground radio communication systems are designed to take this reality into account.

Having a trained dispatcher monitoring the fireground radio channel for missed messages is the best solution. The dispatcher is in a secure environment, isolated from fireground distractions and noise. The dispatcher should have access to playback technology that will allow him to listen to hard-to-understand messages a second or third time, if need be, to get it right. The dispatcher should also have access to "identifier" information that will allow him to ascertain which portable radios are making which transmissions.

All fireground radio communications should be on the same channel. Having crews at the same incident operating on different channels creates the risk that some crews will miss vital information that could warn them of a dangerous condition or an impending disaster or that might dictate a change their tactics. It also creates the risk that if a crew gets into trouble, the IC and others who may be in a position to aid them or who might also be imperiled will not learn of the situation until it is too late.

Like any other aspect of our profession, all of our people need to be properly trained before being assigned to a critical task. In the world of fireground operations today, effective radio communications are absolutely critical, and the dispatcher is one of the most critical components in our radio communications systems. Proper training of a dispatcher involves more than teaching which buttons to push and how to figure out what companies to send where. Dispatchers need a thorough understanding of incident command, fireground tactics, firefighting vernacular, and what their role is during emergency operations such as a Mayday, roll calls, or building evacuations. Dispatchers must also understand the critical role they play in handling missed messages. Investigators have cited untrained or poorly trained dispatchers in several of the fatality incidents we have reviewed, including Hackensack, Brackenridge, and the Regis Tower fire in Memphis. In the Hackensack and Regis Tower fires, dispatchers had information that a firefighter was in distress yet failed to act on that information. Dispatching is not a job that should be left to just one person who may be called away from monitoring the fireground radio to field telephone calls or dispatch runs. Dispatchers who monitor a fireground radio channel must be able to put 100 percent of their concentration into listening for missed messages and providing support to companies on-scene. Ideally, one dispatcher should be assigned to each fireground channel in use.

## VOICE RADIO COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE FOR THE FIRE SERVICE BY THE UNITED STATES FIRE ADMINISTRATION

[https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/voice\\_radio\\_communications\\_guide\\_for\\_the\\_fire\\_service.pdf](https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/voice_radio_communications_guide_for_the_fire_service.pdf)

The life safety of firefighters and citizens depends on reliable, functional communication tools that work in the harshest and most hostile of environments. To operate safely in these dynamic environments, it is imperative that firefighters have the ability to immediately communicate information accurately. The mayday is often the "last chance" to get outside assistance, and the fire service's ear is always listening for that call of distress. During the initial attack, fireground communications are fast-paced and chaotic to the untrained listener. The dispatch center assumes a support role and simultaneously documents specific fireground events, handles requests for additional resources, etc. All fireground radio traffic shall be recorded, just as police tactical radio traffic is recorded.