

RICHMOND DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS
NEWS RELEASE: System to aid emergency response wins its 12th project award

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Karen L. Gill
Communications and Marketing Analyst
804-646-8234 (office)
804-938-0776 (mobile)
Karen.gill@richmondgov.com

NOTE: High-resolution images available for download at
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/911rva/albums/72157696824481415>

**Automated alarm system developed by City of Richmond wins
2019 City Government Experience Award**

RICHMOND, Virginia – A system to improve the response to alarms that was developed by the City of Richmond and spread across the country has won its 12th project award.

The system, Automated Secure Alarm Protocol or “ASAP,” reduces the time and increases the accuracy for 911 emergency communications centers to dispatch first responders to homes and businesses when alarms are activated.

On Sept. 18, the City of Richmond was named a 2019 City Government Experience Award winner for the ASAP system by the Center for Digital Government, a national research and advisory institute focused on information technology policy and best practices in state and local government.

Through the ASAP system, alarm notifications are entered automatically into Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) systems, bypassing the need for alarm companies to make telephone calls into 911 emergency communications centers.

“This system frees up call-takers to answer 911 calls, because the alarm notifications go directly to dispatch,” said Stephen Willoughby, director of the Richmond Department of Emergency Communications, where the system was originated and first used. “It saves time and decreases errors.”

Each 911 call into the center takes an average of 84 seconds to process. During the June 30, 2018, to July 1, 2019, fiscal year, Richmond’s emergency communications center received nearly 10,000 automated notifications through the ASAP system, meaning that the system saved a total of 212 hours of call-takers’ time and resulted in faster response times, he said.

Since it was developed and fully implemented in Richmond in January 2009, the ASAP system has won 11 previous national and state awards. The 2019 City Government Experience Award is the first one to be based on the system's outcomes in use, according to Bill Hobgood, technology lead for application services with the City of Richmond's Department of Information Technology, who wrote the program.

It is now used by 20 alarm monitoring companies and more than 60 911 emergency communications centers across 15 states, plus the District of Columbia. These agencies report reduced 911 processing times equating to faster response times, more law enforcement apprehensions, fires extinguished more quickly and lives saved, Hobgood said.

“We have received reports from several agencies that use the ASAP program of cases of bad guys being arrested, and fires being extinguished quicker, all because of this program, and a quicker response by public safety resources,” Hobgood said. “It makes me feel great that we were able to produce a product that other agencies can use and experience the same benefit that Richmond has experienced.”

Hobgood wrote the original Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system for the city of Richmond in 1979-1981, which was used for 26 years until the hardware manufacturer went out of business. He then worked with several partner agencies to replicate the system with an interface to send alarm notifications directly into the CAD, bypassing the need for telephone calls for these notifications, which eventually became the ASAP system.

“Bill has immense talent, which we have been fortunate to be able to put to use in continuing to make the Department of Emergency Communications even more efficient,” Willoughby said.

The system was approved as an American National Standard by American National Standards Institute in January 2009 and renewed in 2014. The combined population it serves is about 20 million, which is expected to exceed 32 million by the end of this year, Hobgood said.

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The city of Richmond's Department of Emergency Communications answers and dispatches all 911 and non-emergency calls as well as provides and supports public safety infrastructures. For emergencies, call 911 if you can, text if you can't. For non-emergency information, call 804-646-5100. We are always interested in meeting qualified job candidates. Apply at <https://agency.governmentjobs.com/richmond/default.cfm>. News media resources at <http://www.richmondgov.com/EmergencyCommunications/OnlineNewsroom.aspx>. Follow Richmond Department of Emergency Communications on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/911RVA/> and on Twitter @911rva.