

Standard-Examiner

Livestreamed 911 calls help Weber deputies save lives

By Mark Shenefelt

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OGDEN, UTAH — A new program that streams 911 calls to deputies in their patrol vehicles may have helped save two lives already in its first three weeks of operation, the Weber County Sheriff's Office says.

"As soon as emergency dispatch picks up the phone, the 911 call is automatically broadcast to deputies' computers," Lt. Colby Ryan, Sheriff's Office spokesperson, said Wednesday. "The deputy can directly hear what the 911 caller is saying."

Ryan explained first how calls are handled in the typical fashion, without Live 911. At Weber Area Dispatch, a call taker answers the phone, collects the pertinent info, and that information is sent to dispatchers, who then send officers and/or medical personnel to the scene, Ryan said.



Photo supplied, HigherGround

In this undated photo, a police officer uses the Live 911 system, which allows officers to hear live 911 calls, helping them get to emergency scenes more quickly.

"With this there's always a little delay, but with Live 911 response times are down to some of these critical calls," he said. A deputy listening to Live 911 can act in real time to the same information being received by a dispatch center call taker.

On Saturday, Jan. 28, sheriff's Cpl. Jose Leon heard a 911 call coming from a youth basketball game in Farr West, Ryan said. Leon was on the Marriott-Slaterville and West Haven border and immediately went to the game site.

On the dispatch channels, Leon heard the emergency being dispatched as he was heading in the doors at the emergency site, Ryan said. "He was on scene before anybody else

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The Weber County Sheriff's Office recently deployed the system and already has helped save two lives by arriving first to administer CPR to cardiac arrest patients.

Lt. Colby Ryan
Sheriff's Office spokesperson

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and provided CPR until the Weber Fire District got there and took over care."

The boy was airlifted to a hospital and underwent surgery. "We got word Monday that he was being released to go home to finish his recovery," Ryan said. "It just shows how effective this is."

On another call, Leon was alerted by Live 911 to a rollover crash with injuries at 800 W. Wilson Lane. "He started heading that way and as he arrived he heard they were dispatching units," Ryan said. "The female driver was suffering a medical incident and was in cardiac arrest. The deputy started CPR immediately until Ogden Fire and Rescue arrived." Personnel were able to restore the woman's pulse and she was sent to a hospital in critical condition.

Response times are sped up two to five minutes on some Live 911 calls, according to Ryan. "As our dispatchers put it, every second counts," he said. "Your heart muscle, every second it isn't beating it's breaking down."

Leon "is really stoked about this system," having been there to render live-saving aid with the help of Live 911, according to Ryan. "All of our deputies have a new respect for what the dispatchers do," he said.

The sheriff's office splits Weber County into four patrol sectors. In a patrol vehicle

equipped with Live 911, a deputy can choose to listen to 911 calls only in the sector where they're working, Ryan said. With GPS gear, the system also recognizes the vehicle's location and the patrol deputy can set it to receive 911 calls within a certain radius.

At the dispatch center in downtown Ogden, dispatchers are able to track patrol vehicles' locations so they can dispatch the deputy who's closest to the scene of an emergency.

The sheriff's office began researching Live 911 after deputies went to the Chula Vista, California, police department to see its drone program in action. "They have an amazing drone program," Ryan said, and the Weber agency later deployed a drone program here.

Lt. Mark Horton, supervisor of the Weber sheriff's search and rescue operation, was on the drone research trip and while there saw the Live 911 system being used by Chula Vista. On return to Ogden, he suggested the sheriff's office look into a local implementation of Live 911.

Ryan said Weber apparently is the first law enforcement agency in Utah with such a system. "We just hope that it takes off with other agencies surrounding us," he said.

