
Brentwood Fire Chief's Office Interoffice Memorandum

To: Steve Disbennett
Dan Fitzgerald

From: Chief Ted Jury

Subject: Dispatch Issues at the Sports Attic Fire

Date: April 24, 2012

Steve,

I wanted to bring to your attention a number of dispatching issues we encountered during the fire of April 13, 2012 at the Sports Attic located at 8212 Manchester. There were a number of errors, some serious, on the part of both Brentwood and East Central Dispatch, though the most serious errors were on the part of ECDC. The point of this memo is not to get any one person in trouble, but to find out what went wrong, why it went wrong, correct the problem, and prevent these issues from happening again.

Through a combination of human error and technical malfunction some important equipment we needed to fight the fire at the Sports Attic never got dispatched. Since the fire, as I am sure you are aware, we found a technical problem that we did not know existed that caused at least one pumper, Frontenac 2914, to not be dispatched, and Bud is working on a solution for this problem. Also, in listening to the dispatch recordings, it is apparent that [REDACTED] the dispatcher on duty that night was not familiar with the numbering system used to identify fire equipment throughout the count, and it is obvious the dispatcher on duty for ECDC also did not understand the truck numbering system. Not understanding the numbering system, plus the lack of follow up by both our dispatch and ECDC to confirm that units were actually dispatched and en-route was a serious issue that eventually led to us not getting the proper equipment. Finally, the Brentwood dispatcher did not dispatch all of the equipment that was listed on the running cards, and in at least one instance he deviated from the run cards by sending the move-up company to the fire scene.

The most important problem the fire department encountered in the initial onset of the fire was the fact that Maplewood 3114, which was properly dispatched by Brentwood, was never sent by ECDC, for reasons still unknown. When our crews arrived on the scene and found heavy smoke coming from the building they immediately called for a first alarm response and began making forced entry into the building. Once they forced the front door, they entered the building and began to make their way to the rear of the building, the whole time they assumed they had both Maplewood and Rock Hill outside providing backup for them. This was not the case, as only Rock Hill with their three personal were on the scene. This created a very dangerous situation for the Brentwood crew inside of the building because the crew from Rock Hill was

assisting the Brentwood driver in establishing a water supply, thus leaving no one to assist our men if the situation deteriorated, which it did when the floor began to collapse.

I have reviewed the dispatch recordings from that night and have attempted to create a timeline by highlighting on the important events that occurred. This timeline does not include every conversation or every recorded event. The items that I feel need addressing are highlighted in the text.

The following is a summary and time line of the events of April 13, 2012.

- 03:55 Brentwood dispatch receives a call from Erker Security that they have an alarm from 8212 Manchester, kitchen heat detectors are activated.
- 03:56 Brentwood dispatches a three company still alarm per protocol. Brentwood 2514, Rock Hill 3414 and Maplewood 3114 are dispatched. The dispatcher does simulcast on mutual-aid, **for unknown reasons ECDC does not respond.**
- 03:57 2514 & 3414 call en route, **Brentwood dispatch does not inquire about the status of Maplewood.**
- 03:58 Brentwood Police arrive on the scene and find heavy smoke coming from the building and notify dispatch. Dispatch notifies 2514 who advises Brentwood to dispatch a first alarm and notify 2500.
- 03:59 2514 calls on the scene, they pass command to the next unit in and begin pulling hand lines.
- 04:00 First alarm is dispatched, Ladue 3914, Richmond Heights 2114, Webster ladder truck 2015 and 2517. Rock Hill arrives on the scene and takes command. ECDC does acknowledge the call for 2114 and 2015. **Maplewood is not mentioned by either agency, Brentwood should have asked about 3114 and ECDC should have known that Maplewood should have been dispatched on a first alarm to this address.**
- 04:03 2514 advises dispatch they have made entry to the building and are advancing a line into the building. 2517 arrives on the scene. Ladue 3914 calls en-route.
- 04:05 Webster ladder 2015 calls en-route. 2500 & 2501 call en-route.
- 04:08 Command calls dispatch for a second alarm. 2500 advises dispatch to notify utilities and respond a move up company. **No one from Brentwood or ECDC has noticed that Maplewood has not been dispatched. At this point the Brentwood crew has crawled to the kitchen located in the SW corner of the building. They are seeing intense heat and fire from their thermal imaging camera. ECDC finally realizes that Maplewood has not been dispatched and calls Brentwood to ask if they need Maplewood, Brentwood advises yes, ECDC states they did not copy the request for Maplewood. At this point the only trucks on the scene are Rock Hill and Brentwood and 2517. The crew of 2517 has geared up and is beginning to attempt to assist the crew of 2514.**
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- 04:09 Richmond Heights 2114 arrives on the scene. Brentwood dispatches Ladue 3924, Ladue ambulance 3917, Clayton Ladder truck 3212 and Glendale 1414 for the second alarm. **Brentwood dispatcher does not ask for Shrewsbury 1814 or Crestwood 1210, both of which are on the second alarm running card.** ECDC calls Brentwood dispatch with an offer to help, they advise they will notify utilities for Brentwood. 2500 arrives on the scene. **Maplewood 3114 calls en-route, 13 minutes after the original three company dispatch.** An unknown police officer calls dispatch and asks if the dispatcher needs help which is evidently declined.
- 04:10 **Maplewood 3114 arrives on the scene with a ten minute delay,** Webster ladder 2015 arrives on the scene.
- 04:12 ECDC calls Brentwood Dispatch and advises them they have contacted utilities and they are on the way. Brentwood dispatch is now handling multiple calls from ECDC and BPD at this point.
- 04:13 ECDC calls, advises that 2015, 2114 and 3114 are on the way. **Clayton Ladder truck 3212 still has not been dispatched by ECDC.** At the same time 2500 is calling to advise the building is being evacuated and fire operations are going defensive, and BPD officers are calling to have Hanley shut down.
- 04:15 Monarch 2230 is called for move-up. 2501 along with 2nd alarm companies starting to arrive on the scene.
- 04:16 2500 calls Brentwood dispatch and ask, "what's our other ladder truck coming in"? **Dispatch responds "3924 is en-route there",** (3924 is not a ladder truck). Knowing that 3924 is not a ladder truck, 2500 asks the dispatcher to dispatch an additional ladder truck.
- 04:18 Brentwood dispatch calls ECDC and the following conversation takes place:
- Brentwood Dispatch: "Do you guys have any ladder trucks in service over there"?
- ECDC Dispatcher: "I'm sure Clayton has one, I'll have to check and see, do you want a ladder truck from Clayton"? "3214 I think (she is reading from something)...pumper platform, 3212 will probably be the ladder, I'll have to look and see on our cheat sheet which one is the ladder truck. I'll get you somebody, do you want Clayton or, let me look and see who else I have, I have Webster 2015, I'll get you somebody".
- Neither the ECDC dispatcher nor the Brentwood dispatcher knew what a ladder truck was or what the truck numbers indicated. Clayton Ladder truck has still not been dispatched 9 minutes after being asked for by Brentwood for the 2nd alarm called out at 04:09.**
- 04:19 The Brentwood dispatcher is trying to handle both police and fire traffic together.
- 04:20 2500 calls dispatch to inquire who is the second ladder truck coming in. Dispatch advises that he called ECDC and they will have Clayton coming in.
- 04:21 ECDC calls on the air to advise Brentwood that 3212 is responding.
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- 04:22 Brentwood dispatch calls ECDC on the phone and asks if 3212 is a ladder, ECDC responds "it's a ladder".
- 04:24 **Clayton ladder 3212 calls Brentwood to advise they are en-route, a full 15 minutes after the original 2nd alarm was dispatched.** 2500 called Brentwood dispatch to have dispatch call with a list of who is on the scene.
- 04:25 On the scene at this time is 1414, 2015, 2514, 2517, 3212 is en-route, 2500 asks if we got our full second alarm companies. 2500 states "that can't be our full 2nd alarm".
- 04:26 Police traffic, handling phone calls from the media.
- 04:28 2501 gives directions for 3212 to approach the scene.
- 04:29 **Clayton ladder 3212 calls on the scene, 20 minutes after request from Brentwood.**
- 04:30 Brentwood dispatch advised by 2500 to call owner of the Dean team to respond to the scene to move vehicles.
- 04:31 Brentwood dispatch attempting to reach wrong contact person for the Dean team.
- 04:32 **Rock Hill 3414 called Brentwood dispatch and asked if 3400 had been notified, he had not, Brentwood advised he will be called, almost 40 minutes after first report of fire.**
- 04:33 **3400 notified of the fire for the first time.**
- 04:35 Brentwood dispatch called N. Central dispatch for a move up for Rock Hill.
- 04:36 Glendale dispatch called asking if Brentwood dispatch needed help, help was declined.
- 04:37 Called wrong company about moving vehicles from Dean Team lot.
- 04:38 2500 called dispatch to have U-City 2615 dispatched.
- 04:39 **Brentwood dispatched called U-City PD to request their ladder truck, U-City PD does not dispatch the fire department and has not for several years.**
- 04:40 Brentwood dispatch calls N. Central for U-City ladder.
- 04:47 2500 calls for 3rd alarm.
- 04:48 3rd Alarm dispatched. Brentwood did dispatch all of the correct equipment though he never confirmed any responses. For reasons still unknown U-City 2614 was never dispatched and it was not noticed by Brentwood. The dispatcher also never called for Kirkwood Ladder 1535 even though it is listed on the run card. The dispatcher did call for Frontenac 2914 but his request was never heard by Central County due to a technical problem. The Brentwood dispatcher never called to confirm Frontenac had been dispatched and showed Frontenac to be on the scene for the remainder of the fire.
- 04:57 3400 arrives on the scene over one hour after the start of the incident.
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05:06 2500 calls dispatch to have U-City 2614 disregarded. When the Brentwood dispatcher calls N. Central they state that U-City 2615 is already on the scene. They do not understand the request since 2614 was never dispatched and they believe that the Brentwood dispatcher is mistakenly referring to U-City ladder 2615. N. Central is not aware that 2614 was ever called for and the Brentwood dispatcher is confused as to what U-City truck is already on the scene.

End of this section.

Issues that need to be addressed by both Brentwood Dispatch and ECDC

1. In the initial 3 company still alarm dispatch Maplewood 3114 was called for by Brentwood but never dispatched by ECDC. The Brentwood dispatcher never followed up with ECDC to confirm 3114 to be responding.
 2. When the First Alarm was dispatched neither the Brentwood dispatcher nor the ECDC dispatcher noticed that Maplewood had not been dispatched. Rock Hill Chief Halloran should have been notified, he was not notified until almost 40 minutes had passed.
 3. When the Second Alarm was dispatched the Brentwood dispatcher failed to call for Shrewsbury 1814 and Crestwood 1210, both trucks are listed on the run cards. At the same time ECDC failed to dispatch Clayton ladder truck 3212 even though was called for by Brentwood. This ultimately led to a twenty minute delay in getting a needed ladder truck.
 4. When the Third Alarm was dispatched the Brentwood dispatcher did call for U-City Pumper 2614 but it was never dispatched and the Brentwood dispatcher never followed up to check if the truck was on the way. Brentwood dispatcher never followed up with any department or agency for confirm responses.
 5. Neither the Brentwood dispatcher nor the dispatcher for ECDC had any knowledge as to what the truck number indicate, despite the fact that this information is in the fire department dispatch information located at the dispatch console. This lead to confusion by both agencies as to what trucks were being asked for and what type of trucks were already on the scene.
 6. The Brentwood dispatcher deviated from the run cards when dispatching the Third Alarm, never sending Kirkwood ladder 1535. Additionally he never checked to confirm that Frontenac had been dispatched.
 7. The Brentwood dispatcher was asked on at least three separate occasions if he needed help and he declined. I know from past experience that a single dispatcher cannot handle a multiple alarm fire on their own. A plan should be in place to have an additional person come in to assist in the event of a multiple alarm call.
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8. The Brentwood dispatcher is extremely hard to hear on the phone, is due to a technical issue or should the dispatcher be wearing headphones?
9. Contact information for business was not updated.
10. Dispatcher did not know how to access code for move up company to enter Rock Hill engine house.
11. Trucks that were either ever called for or delayed due to dispatch issues.
 - Maplewood 3114 – delayed 10 minutes
 - Clayton Ladder 3212 – delayed 20 minutes
 - U-City 2614 – never dispatched by North Central, no follow up
 - Frontenac 2914 – never dispatched by Central County, no follow up
 - Crestwood 1210 – never called for
 - Shrewsbury 1814 – never called for

Recommendations:

As stated earlier in this memo, the intent of this review is not to discipline anyone, the intent is to find out what the issues are and fix them. It is my recommendation that the Fire Department put together a basic review class on fire dispatching that would be mandatory for all dispatcher. This class should cover everything from explaining the fire truck numbering system to dispatching still alarms up to multiple alarm fires. If you or Dan has an additional recommendations or idea's please let me know. On a whole I think our dispatchers do a good job, and I believe with some remedial training we can avoid these issues in the future.