



Steve Silbermann, Director of Boulder County Communications.

ANEN/AFPD Train For Incidents

By Gene Mackey

The Allenspark Neighbors Emergency Network (ANEN) and the members of the Allenspark Fire Protection District (AFPD) had an evening of joint training in communications on Valentine's Day this past month. One of the important parts of any incident is proper communications between all concerned. The fire department and the

rest of the emergency services have worked hard to build a reliable communications network between personnel on scene and the resources of ambulance and other services, all orchestrated by the Boulder County dispatch center known just as Boulder Communications. Meanwhile, regular citizens often watch the fire trucks speed by wondering if the danger might affect them also. ANEN hopes to bridge that gap and the joint training was designed for all parties to learn how to work effectively together.

The keynote speaker was Steve Silbermann, Director of Boulder Communications, a taxpayer funded agency that handles dispatch radio traffic for Boulder County rural fire departments and other emergency services. They are one of four dispatch centers in Boulder County with the others being Boulder City, Longmont Police and Fire, and the University of Colorado with their own dispatch center. All are connected with the common CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) system and if there is a problem with any of the four they can move their operations to any of the other dispatch centers. Boulder Communications dispatches five search and rescue agencies and twenty-two fire agencies, which includes the AFPD. Last year Boulder Communications handled 165,000 phone calls, 124,000 CAD incidents, and 15,000 fire and rescue calls in the 740 square mile area they serve.

Most incidents begin with a 911 call. These can come from the traditional land-line or, more often today, from a cell phone. A call from a land-line will give the dispatchers information on the address and name on the phone account. A cell phone call will give dispatchers the cell phone provider and the cell tower that is routing the call and maybe a GPS location of the phone, or the phone can be triangulated using three cell towers, but these are not guarantees to pinpoint the location of the caller (It was noted that getting a cell signal from the top of a mountain could just as easily be from a Wyoming cell tower). In every case you should be ready to give the nature of the emergency and the location. In our area there are also several call boxes that directly connect to the dispatch center. Some of the older call boxes may "time out". If that happens to you during an emergency call press the button again to reconnect.

Other ways you can call 911 are through your com-



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puter, or wifi with your cell phone. These will give the dispatcher the address registered to the account but keep in mind that if you access another wifi with your cell phone it will appear as your home address to the dispatcher. Boulder and Larimer counties also accept text messages to 911 but the location sent to dispatch is limited as with a cell phone. If the phone lines are down to the 911 system (which happened during the flood and after) local calls may still be available. In that event the Allenspark fire station will be staffed. Calls to them will be forwarded to Boulder Communications. The phone number for Allenspark Station One (303-747-2586) should be kept handy for this event.

Both Boulder and Larimer counties send out alerts to residents using a reverse 911 call, targeting a specific area. Information will be relayed in a recorded message about the nature of the emergency and what the resident should do. Residents who wish to get these alert calls somewhere other than their home can sign up for alerts directed to their cell phones, or get alerts from other places specified, such as your work location or a child's school. AFD has a link on their website: allensparkfire.com to sign up for this alert. Since our fire district crosses two counties, residents in Larimer County or near the county line should register in both Boulder and Larimer Counties. There is a link to both on the Allenspark Fire website. Persons who have a solicitor block on their phones may not get these calls. In large incidents like wild-land fires the Boulder County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) will maintain links on emergency status and other information they can offer to the public. Go to <http://www.boulderoem.com> for information. The AFD also maintains a facebook page with information they feel is pertinent or interesting to our public. Find links for this and other information at allensparkfire.com.

Steve Coles, representative for ANEN and AFD board director, stated that "People should take more responsibility for their own safety," and segued to the subject of what ANEN can bring to the table in an emergency situation. ANEN was started in 2011 to link neighborhoods in both preparing for and reacting to an emergency. Its need was especially noted during the flood of 2013 and efforts have been ongoing to maintain leaders in each neighbor-

hood. These Neighborhood Coordinators are the first line of defense linking the emergency squads and the people in a communication loop.

An integral part of that communication is the Allenspark Area Radio Network (AARN), the HAM radio operators scattered around the area. Linked with ANEN, AARN is a group of twenty-four operators who have taken their time to get licensed with the FCC to operate HAM radios. They regularly meet on the air for a net to practice operations and check their equipment. This group can work as a communications arm for the AFD and other emergency operations as needed and directed. AARN works under the umbrella of the Boulder County Amateur Radio Emergency System (BCARES), which operates with the Boulder County OEM. Some of the Allenspark Hams have also joined BCARES.

AFD officers Gary Maguire and Rachel Barkworth completed the presentation with a recap of the Incident Command System and the role ANEN can play. "No Freelancing," Rachel said, stating that all direction will come from the Incident Commander (IC) through the ICS channels. Both Rachel and Teresa Hoffman are certified to act as a Public Information Officer (PIO) for emergency calls. They will be the link between the IC and ANEN. Information will flow both ways with ANEN relaying information back and instructions delivered through the PIO. Discretion is not only nice in relaying information over the radio but it is the law. HIPPA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) is very strict protecting personal information and ANEN will be held to account as an extension of the fire department.

To find out more about ANEN and how to get involved log onto www.anenweb.com.

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