



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wildwood Crest to join county dispatch system

WILDWOOD CREST – The Borough of Wildwood Crest has authorized a shared services agreement with the County of Cape May to provide public safety call answering and dispatch services for emergency calls relating to police, fire and emergency medical services on behalf of the borough through the Cape May County Office of Emergency Management.

The measure was passed by resolution at the regular meeting of the Wildwood Crest Board of Commissioners on Dec. 27, 2018.

This shared services agreement is tentatively scheduled to take effect on or about March 1.

Local municipalities were first informed of the opportunity to enter into a county-wide dispatch system in 2014. At that time, the county contacted all of its municipalities to gauge interest in participating in a county-wide dispatch system. Upon receiving a favorable response, the county engaged InterTech Communications to do a study on all local dispatch needs. The county forged ahead while constantly communicating with the local municipalities and ultimately built the Cape May Communications Center, which opened in June 2018 at the Cape May County Airport.

Wildwood Crest is latest to enroll in the countywide dispatch system, joining the Township of Lower, Avalon-Stone Harbor (fire and EMS only) and the Cape May County Sheriff's Office. According to Cape May County OEM coordinator Marty Pagliughi, two other municipalities are set to join the county dispatch system before the end of the calendar year.

Pagliughi said the county dispatch system allows Wildwood Crest to cut costs while also increasing public safety through the streamlining of the dispatch communication system and the use of the latest dispatching technology that is currently not available in Wildwood Crest. It is anticipated that the level of services provided by the county dispatch system will improve over what is currently in place in Wildwood Crest.

"Time is of the essence in the event of an emergency and the county dispatch system improves the time of response significantly," Pagliughi said.

The county dispatch system is also expected to provide an increased level of service with respect to response to non-emergent matters, Life Alert and other medical alert systems.

The Wildwood Crest Police Department will continue to diligently monitor Crest Memorial School and other public buildings and places throughout the borough.

Residents of Wildwood Crest will not have to register into the county dispatch system. The transition will happen automatically and without any interruption in service.

Wildwood Crest is expected to save between \$90,000 and \$150,000 per year by entering into this shared services agreement. All interested current dispatchers with the Borough of Wildwood Crest have been offered the opportunity to apply for employment in dispatching with the Cape May County Office of Emergency Management through an inter-governmental transfer.

The county dispatch system will feature a total of 16 dispatchers when fully operational. It is likely that three of these dispatchers will be from Wildwood Crest's current dispatch staff. Each shift will feature a four-person dispatch crew that includes a supervisor and three dispatchers.

The county's system includes some of the latest dispatching technology, such as Next-Generation 9-1-1 and Emergency CallWorks. Next-Generation 9-1-1 allows cellular users in Wildwood Crest to text to 9-1-1 and receive a text response from a dispatcher, while Emergency CallWorks allows dispatchers to pinpoint the location of a cellular call to 9-1-1 to within 150 feet. None of this technology is currently available under the current local dispatching system in Wildwood Crest.

Representatives from the Wildwood Crest Police Department met with Cape May County and reviewed the county's dispatching technology prior to the borough's decision to join the county's dispatch system.

"The long-term benefits of entering into the county dispatch system are very significant to the residents and taxpayers of Wildwood Crest," said David Thompson, Wildwood Crest Commissioner of Public Safety. "Not only are we anticipating a savings of about \$100,000 per year or more but we're also entering into a state-of-the art dispatching system that is a substantial upgrade over what is currently in place in Wildwood Crest. There also are tremendous benefits to this move to the county dispatch system in terms of the upkeep and maintenance of equipment, the basic radio systems and all of the technology involved with it. That will all produce further savings and an increased level of service to the taxpayers of the Crest."

According to Pagliughi, Atlantic County is the only county in the State of New Jersey that currently does not have some form of a county-wide dispatch system.