

## Regional 911 System Grows in Santa Cruz County, Calif.

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(TNS) — SANTA CRUZ, Calif. — A new emergency-management call system unveiled by [Santa Cruz Regional 911](#) last week removed low-priority calls from public airwaves and put computers in most participating first responders' vehicles.

The Santa Cruz Regional 911 system, also known as Netcom, is the emergency communications center for most police and fire agencies in the county. The independent local government agency is paying \$180,000, starting this fiscal year, annually a decade for the \$1.8 million project, General Manager Dennis Kidd said.

Netcom is the primary telecommunication service for public safety agencies in Santa Cruz County except Scotts Valley police and UC Santa Cruz.

The new Motorola PremierOne system became active in Santa Cruz County on April 18. It is the agency's first computer-aided dispatch (CAD) overhaul. Kidd said the system replaces a computer-assisted Motorola operation.

The new system will relay incident information to all responding units — “a goal we have long sought,” Kidd said.

“In the long run, it will help,” Kidd said.

In 2017, most Netcom-affiliated agencies in Santa Cruz County experienced an increase of calls for services from 2016 call totals, according to Netcom data. Only Watsonville Police Department had a drop of about 2.5 percent among agencies in Santa Cruz County, which had more than 26,000 additional calls last year than in 2016, according to Netcom.

Now, the agency's 38 dispatchers are entering a busy season for assistance calls with a new system that [Motorola Solutions](#) designed to improve response times. Dispatchers work 10- or 12-hour shifts and mandatory overtime is in place, Kidd said of the understaffed agency that has 43 positions. In the previous system, most law enforcement officers in the county had computers in every emergency vehicle, but other first responders, such as firefighters, did not, Kidd said.

"This is pushing it out to everybody," Kidd said.

The new system connects responders' computers with active calls, reducing the time it might take to contact them by dispatch, Kidd said. Having computers in the field automatically provides Netcom with the responders' locations. The system helps dispatchers know which officers, firefighters or medics already are closest to an emergency, Kidd said. The previous system used a matrix to calculate which responders might be closest to the scene of a crime or emergency.

"Now, the computer says who's closest," Kidd said. "With this system, everybody in the field can be connected to us and each other."

The system is designed to reduce radio traffic for transmissions completed electronically, Kidd said.

The new system's rollout has been seamless, Kidd said.

"There were a few minor bumps, but it is going good," Kidd said.

All priority calls — calls in progress, crimes involving people or property crimes, or calls requiring mutual units — will be aired on the radio waves, Kidd said.

"We'll still prioritize anything that's priority on the radio," Kidd said.

The update comes on the heels of an effort by [Santa Cruz Police Chief Andy Mills](#) to have something done to manage frivolous, but time-consuming, calls for service. In a previous interview, [Mills](#) referenced calls about dog feces in a gutter, a crying panhandler and a man playing guitar terribly downtown.

"This suggests the need to better manage and screen calls for service, eliminating those calls which are not specific to a police responsibility or a priority to the community," Mills wrote in a report to Santa Cruz City Council.

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