Last Night's House Fire / Aspenwald Drive

05/29/10 85 W - **+** 6 - 5

Two alarms at 11921 Aspenwald Drive, with Bay Leaf units finding heavy smoke on arrival at a two-story, wood-frame dwelling, with 3,128 square-feet. Built 1995. Second alarm requested on arrival for engines (manpower) and tankers. Dispatched 10:39 p.m. Units on scene included Bay Leaf P251, P258, L25, Falls P212, Falls tanker, Durham Highway pumper, EMS 4, EMS 122, D4, T1. 'Twas during a period a severe thunderstorm. This NBC17 story says a lightning strike is suspected as the cause.

[Missing photo]
NBC17 photo

Listening to the incident, and hearing the Bay Leaf officer request a second alarm, the dispatcher then asked for which units to send to said second alarm. Are there any automatic protocols in place, or perhaps under consideration, that would free incident commanders from having to specific specific units and departments, and instead would let the dispatch system assign those closest/in-service?
Legeros - 05/29/10 - 11:32

After hearing the traffic last evening for the incident, it was clear that the Incident Commander spent several moments talking back and forth to the dispatcher regarding what units to come and where they would come from. He initially stated: "Send Me a Second Alarm". To me, the dispatcher should have copied the transmission and sent the request to dispatch. With that, the incident commander would have been dispatched the same, similar units to the call. Downside to that, a department such as Bay Leaf with such a large apparatus fleet it would continue to send the closest units: either from Bay Leaf, Falls, Stony Hill, etc. Who is to say the units at Bay Leaf are staffed or have volunteers ready to respond. It is easy, the Telecommunicator puts the request into the system and sends the dispatch. For a Bay Leaf Incident: It may require Two Pumper/Tankers, One Ladder, One Rescue, and One Air Truck, etc. For the next request or second alarm, it would send the next closest Two Pumper/Tankers, Ladder, Rescue, and Air Truck. It is no different than another house fire being dispatched two doors down. You find incident commanders at departments with such a large apparatus fleet doing this, because even with the three extra engines, pumper/tankers you have sitting at the station, he knows they are not staffed or ready to respond. Should We Have Three Fire Houses with Ten Pieces of Equipment in them at service all at once?
WestSide Rescue - 05/29/10 - 11:47

Oops, my question takes us into dead horse territory! Maybe you can't consider automatic dispatch protocols without the in-service/staffing piece.
Legeros - 05/29/10 - 11:48

I guess I didn't think through my question, since there are presumably different types of second alarms needed. Structural, with hydrants. Structural, no hydrants. So at least two types.
Legeros - 05/29/10 - 12:05

I am told there is no second alarms entered into the CAD for any county or municipal agencies other then Raleigh (which is not surprising). I am not sure why. I know where I work we are trying to get it programed but apparently it is like trying to move a mountain. Not sure why that is too. Something to do with the CAD.
Spanky - 05/29/10 - 13:12

With only 6 companies on scene, this is more like a one alarm fire.
lee - 05/29/10 - 13:19

One "hack" for the system— to reduce the time that incident commanders spend on the radio specifying resources— could be a cheat sheet carried by each officer and apparatus, and constructed on a per-department basis. It would contain the language to read over the radio, so the IC can just spit out and go.

"Second alarm for manpower – Central, dispatch one engine from This FD, one engine from That FD, etc."

"Second alarm for water supply – Central, dispatch one tanker from This FD, one tanker from That FD, etc."

I am guessing many departments already have this, or know that language by heart.
Legeros - 05/29/10 - 13:26

As I understand, CAD can be programmed to dispatch the 2nd alarm, however ECC will not implement the changes unless approved by the Fire Marshal and ALL chiefs support it. So, who's fault is it… well, it is definitely not ECC's, however if all chiefs were to possibly come together on the initiative, it strongly feel it would happen. Yes, some departments have cheat sheets for tankers (the "Tanker Strike Team") and can specify agencies that are not part of the original dispatch. You do have to think on your feet though otherwise it will not work well.

One way to somewhat relieve the 2nd alarm dilemma is to dispatch adequate/enough resources on the first alarm to cover the initial and successive fire attack and water supply needs. You'll receive more personnel by virtue of the auto-aid. So, it is really not a discussion on "un-staffed resources;" it is a discussion on the establishment of proactive first alarm run orders. Remember, "everyone wants to come to the fire," so why not harness that energy that exists within all firefighters? When you arrive and find the resources are not needed, they may be easily returned to service.
A.C. Rich - 05/29/10 - 13:51

Couple years ago, there were HUGE dispatches to all structure fires. What was that, AC? Was that when the new CAD was installed, and the Fire Marshal office asked each department for a custom list? I recall a funny story, related to me, with one department asking the county "why are you dispatching all those units to our fires?" To which the county answered "because those were the units that you wrote down on the data form!"
Legeros - 05/29/10 - 14:08

I work for Moville. So AC, are you saying if we wanted to add a second alarm into the dispatch then we would need to get all the Chiefs to sigh off on it even though we are a municipal fire department? Just as a side note, we have 5 (yes 5) engines, one or two ladder(s), and one rescue coming to our fires. So a second alarm for us is rare. Our Chiefs will just request a specific unit or units.
Spanky - 05/29/10 - 14:42

Regarding the 2nd alarm: I am repeating what I was told (truth or fiction…), so it may be a county/non-profit/contracting department thing only. Ask Todd to speak to ECC and maybe something can be worked out as Morrisville is municipal. Maybe ECC can give some insight and direction – they have always been very helpful when answers are needed. To achieve a 2nd alarm, I would naturally assume that a specific "call class" would be developed by ECC that identified certain resource capabilities you establish (i.e. 3 engines or pumpers, a rescue, or "x" tankers, a ladder, etc.). CAD would then look to the closest resources that met your capability designation and dispatch it. CAD recommends and dispatches the closest "available/in-service" resource capability you designate for the specific call type and specific polygon (map area). It's confusing at times, but here's an example from Stony Hill – for a structure fire: 3 Pumper capabilities, 1 tanker capability, 1 rescue capability, 3 pumper auto-aid capabilities, and additionally in some areas (polygons) Brassfield (Granville) or Youngsville (Franklin). I don't know if this helps or not, but it was a try.
A.C. Rich - 05/29/10 - 15:24

If it helps, all trucks with in CAD have up to 10 different tags on what capabilities they posess. One of these tags is a PA tag which as A.C. stated is for pumper auto aid. Each station is supposed to only have one truck with this tag, thus when a department such as stony hill requests 3 PA it gets 3 different departments coming instead of depleteing the next closest station. If CAD could establish a second alarm as something to the extent of 3 PA a ladder and rescue, then bay leaf for example wouldnt have to worry about dispatching 3 of their remaining unmanned trucks because it would dispatch the next 3 stations that have a truck with this tag instead. Depending where the fire is a bay leaf second alarm could recieve a truck from stony hill new hope durham highway falls or western wake rather then additional from themselves. Hope that clarified a little bit.
tricky CAD - 05/29/10 - 16:26

Two Pumper Tankers and a Ladder is not sufficent for a non-hydrated response. End of comment.
Foolish - 05/29/10 - 17:09

CAD is arranged on agencies. County Fire is an agency. Raleigh Fire is an agency. EMS is an agency. Changes have to be requested and agreed upon as an agency. Individual depts have specific run orders based on call class. The issue, as was touched upon above, is that if your second

alarm requests the next closest three engines and those are three engines in the stations that have already responded, will there be manpower to staff and respond them? If not, would you not set up your second alarm system to skip all agencies already on the call?

In CAD, you are either in-service or out-of-service. To effectively ensure that you are going to get staffed first, second, third, etc alarm companies to a scene, they would have to be in service and staffed engines. Does anyone see a way around that? We can beat this dead horse time and time again, but until there is a fundamental change to how the County Fire agency is viewed in CAD, this will continue to repeat itself.

It's time that some common sense started being applied systemwide and put an end to the monarchies
Common Sense - 05/29/10 - 17:59

Another crazy aspect to all this is the way Cary and ECC interact with each other. I have been on calls where a Cary unit is dispatched 3-4 minutes before a Morrisville unit in Morrisville's district. If Cary gets the call by cell phone, they dispatch the Cary unit that is requested in their CAD for mutual aid and then they call Raleigh on "tri-comm". Raleigh then takes that call and dispatches the rest of the needed units.

The fact a second alarm can not be stored in the CAD for any agency of what ever kind is also crazy.

Another problem is the fact departments do not mark trucks out of service even if the resources are not available to man the units. If those trucks are available for calls in the CAD then they should properly maned. I know this is all old problems but hey, maybe one day the world will be perfect.
Spanky - 05/29/10 - 19:07

Can anyone clarify what equipment was sent on inital dispatch?
firedriver - 05/29/10 - 22:19

Original dispatch BLP251,BLP258 & BLL25 After dispatch BLP122 & BLA12 From sta.3 added themselves also BLP366 from sta.2 was also added to the call. Hope this helps, all this conversation is great but wish you all could have been there "one heck of a good stop" attic fire and contents burned due to a possible lightning strike. Stay Safe out dere !
BLVFD - 05/29/10 - 22:37

2 Engines and a Ladder for a reported structure fire? Typo maybe?
??? - 05/29/10 - 22:40

BLP258 is the first out tanker at sta #1. ??? what is your impression on what should have been dispatched ? Our run order on structure calls is one pumper one tanker and the ladder (closes station) then the other stations add themselves as necessary. Typically we have 4 to 5 units rolling to structure calls immediately after dispatch. Hope this helps again stay safe out dere !!
BLVFD - 05/29/10 - 22:46

The bottom line is this:

Our CAD is so dang screwed up by all the tags that you can place on apparatus, and how they are dispatched that all this talk is for nil. It is so dang screwy that if you mark a truck out of service and it has a specific "tag" assigned to it, and your other trucks don't, it is possible that you will be passed over for a call in your own territory!

I am a huge fan for marking trucks that aren't staffed as being out of service, but in these county stations we play merry go fire truck. If we have a pumper, tanker, rescue and brush rig in the house, and 3 people working then at that time each of these rigs could be "in service." If we're dispatched for a tanker and a brush truck we can get these out the door. At this point the rest of the house should be marked out of service. If we are requested for a rescue to go, then the others are out of service. This is the only way that this will work with the current apparatus deployment and staffing situation as it is.

The only way for a true way to have this county (and all cities/towns) work together is to have STAFFED equipment, adequately deployed throughout the county, with similar training requirements, similar operational plans and staffing. Staff the ladders, staff an adequate number of rescues, and staff ONE engine at each house. if you need a brush rig, drop one off the engine, and take em both.

Tie all units together regardless of the names on the door, dispatch closest units, as we'll all be staffed, trained and equipped the same and playing out of the same playbook.

/rant

Sounds like the brothers did a great job with a good stop, kudos, and stay low and let it blow.
CFP 7021 - 05/29/10 - 23:03

I believe CAD is simply giving us outputs that are purely based on the inputs "WE" provide. Specifically, if departments would initially collaborate with their neighbors and then strategically label and list their resource capabilities (per apparatus), I strongly feel (ok, I know) CAD would "appear" much more efficient on dispatches. Spanky is correct… there should only be one "PA" (pumper/auto-aid) capability per station to prevent the duplication of dispatch. This request is also one key components in the mythical "2nd alarm" call class possbility. If "PA" and "2nd alarm" capabilities are assigned to the first our pumper at each station, you could then have you 2nd alarm and not deplete your neighbor nor your other stations(s).

Next, for thought… if you place resources out of service in CAD based on paid staffing methodologies (i.e. the truck is staffed), it will work well for weekdays only. The department may not receive the "page" for the second or successive incidents. We must not forget that there are many departments in Wake Co. where volunteers still respond to the stations for the 1st, 2nd, etc. duty calls. For example, Bay Leaf's fire on Aspdenwald was an all volunteer response (with a quick knock-down).
A.C. Rich - 05/29/10 - 23:40

Heres an idea. How about command ask for exactly what they want instead of asking for a general second alarm which doesnt even exist for the county at this point because all county departments have a different initial response to a structure fire. If you want 5 tankers, say "I want 5 tankers". If you want a ladder and 2 engines, say "I want a ladder and 2 engines". I heard on the radio a few weeks ago command ask dispatch for help in a way that eliminated all confusion on both sides. He said, "send me 5 tankers and make sure you get them from departments not already dispatched to this fire". It was straight forward and gave them direction on where to pull them from. Seems like an easy fix to me.
Voice of Reason - 05/30/10 - 08:42

Same story….different day! Again I ask, what's it going to take for the leadership of this county to wake and come into the new century? The fire service of today is not was it was 20 years ago and people need to learn that, no matter what affiliation you are a member, career or volunteer. Like some on here, I am all for some type of system overhaul. I personally think that it should be a centralized system, but I understand that that will take quite a while to happen as some leaders are too afraid to give up some sand in their sandbox. The next best and probably the most realistic system would be one where there was an association set up (or chnage the dynamics of the fire commission) that would be the "policymaker" for the county. This association would be responsible for setting disptach protocols for the county, staffing/training requirements, and apparatus location/allocation. While some would disagree, I think it is time to take SOME things away from the chiefs of this county so that there can be some consistency in operations. A structure fire in X's area should get the same response as a structure fire in Y' area. It shouldn't be left up the chiefs any longer because too many of them still have "My Kingdom" complexes. There are some great chiefs in this county who do "do the right thing" and try to get the best response to their calls, while others are too worried about "that department" running calls in "my area". There are many combination systems out there that work…Roanoke Co. Va, Loudoun Co Va, Prince William Co, Va, Montgomery Co, Md, Prince George's Co, Md. All people have to do is put their ego aside for the betterment of the whole. Start enforcing duty crews and marking units out of service if you don't have the manpower on hand to get it out the door. I'd love to see any apparatus that fails to respond to dispatchs within 5 mins greater than 90% of the time be removed from that station by the county. There is absolutely no need in filling a firehouse with nice equipment when there are no trained people to put on them. Either way, until someone in the county leadership grows a set and steps up, we will be stuck with….Same story, different day.
Be safe out there folks
Wayne - 05/30/10 - 11:06

As always, great points Wayne. In reality, and due to the varied perspectives and influences, it almost becomes an impossible task unless Wake completely takes over all of the non-profits (rural and non-governmental municipal departments). Only then could truly consistent control(s) occur. It really all boils down to "who" sets the value. That person or group will then be considered the true "county leadership." Anyway, until that change occurs, we'll all keep on doing our best and be advocates for positive working relationships, relative training, and sound resource management within the constraints imposed on us.
A.C. Rich - 05/30/10 - 18:51

BLVFD- Do you not have automatic aid dispatched on structure fire calls?
firedriver - 06/01/10 - 22:15

No, no auto aid.

Acratech Viewing Angle Gauge

05/29/10 72 W - **+** 12 **-** 5

Neat accessory found in a photography magazine. Ensures you're viewing your laptop screen at a right angle, which is paramount to correct brightness and contrast when processing photos. You know how that works. Have your screen tilted slight less or more, and your images are a little more or less bright. Then you print or view the things elsewhere, and they seemed whacked. Read more.

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To prevent spam we require you to answer this silly question

What are the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word 'fire'?

(Register your username / Log in)

Notify: Yes, send me email when someone replies.

Hide email: Yes, hide my email address.

Small print: All html tags except <b> and <i> will be removed from your comment. You can make links by just typing the url or mail-address.