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## MISSOURI CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT'S NEW TECH LETS OFFICERS HEAR 911 CALLS EN ROUTE

By Tracy Maness, Staff writer

New technology at the Missouri City Police Department is designed to decrease response times and increase safety.

Captain Brandon Harris said the department is Texas' first law enforcement agency to go live with Live911 software that enables officers to hear emergency calls firsthand as they are responding.

**"We were always looking for ways to improve our services to the citizens and to improve the safety of the officers. And with Live911, we're actually accomplishing both," Harris said. "It decreases our response times and allows for the officers to kind of develop a response plan as they're hearing the information from the 911 caller en route to the call."**

MCPD purchased five software licenses, so at any given moment five officers will be able to use the technology. Once a call pops up on the computer in an officer's car, they will be able to click and immediately hear what's going on between the dispatcher and the caller.

Live911 works with existing software to help officers further pinpoint a location, allow them to see a location on a map and gain a headstart. Harris said an officer may know the location is a park, for example, but hearing the caller say they are by a shed or other landmark within the park will help lower response times as officers cover the same beat daily and will likely recognize the location better than a dispatcher.

Although the officers won't be able to communicate with the 911 caller, they will be able to listen to what's being said and better understand the caller's tone and sense of urgency. That knowledge, Harris said, will help them plan more effectively for arriving on the scene and potentially help in de-escalating situations because they can hear a real person on the line and not just secondhand information.

**"It's a time issue. It decreases the time," Harris said. "And like I said, the officers — the more information they have going to a call, the better off they are. And they can make decisions based on what they're hearing firsthand."**



MCPD has up to 12 officers in the field at any given moment. Harris said the department will likely expand the program in the future so that more officers can take advantage of the technology.

He said the five licenses were purchased with seizure funds, or from arrests where cash was seized.

A retired police captain from Chula Vista Police Department in California came up with the idea for the technology. Public safety specialist HigherGround launched the software in July 2020. CVPD was the first agency nationally to go live with it.

Tom Goodwin, HigherGround vice president of product marketing, said there are around 25 agencies across the nation already using the Live911 software. He added there are more than 60 other agencies currently in discussion with the company about the technology.

HigherGround Communications Specialist Jake White recounted that a CVPD officer using the software was listening to a call about a scene a block away about an unconscious man not breathing. The officer quickly arrived and determined the man had overdosed. He was able to administer Narcan, start CPR, get a pulse and some shallow breathing before fire and medics arrived a few minutes later. The man was taken to the hospital and was expected to live.

Other agencies across Texas like Irving Police Department are preparing to start using the Live911 technology as well, Harris said.

City Manager Charles Jackson is enthusiastic about the program.

**“Once again, the Missouri City Police Department has raised the bar for outstanding customer service by thinking outside of the box,” he said in a news release. “This Live911 system will provide our officers with real-time information that can help save lives and improve citizen and officer safety. This is a win-win for everyone involved.”**

Harris added MCPD officers are looking forward to seeing the software’s impact in their jobs and in their communities.

“Our officers are extremely excited about this new technology,” he said. “Anything that will make their jobs safer and allow them to help more people, get to the call sooner, they’re in for.”

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Tracy Maness is a reporter for Houston Community Newspapers.

Tracy covers issues and happenings in Fort Bend County and has previously worked in the HCN Katy, Bellaire and Memorial beats. Areas of special interest include education, features, nonprofits, health and anything that is ripe for a good story.

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