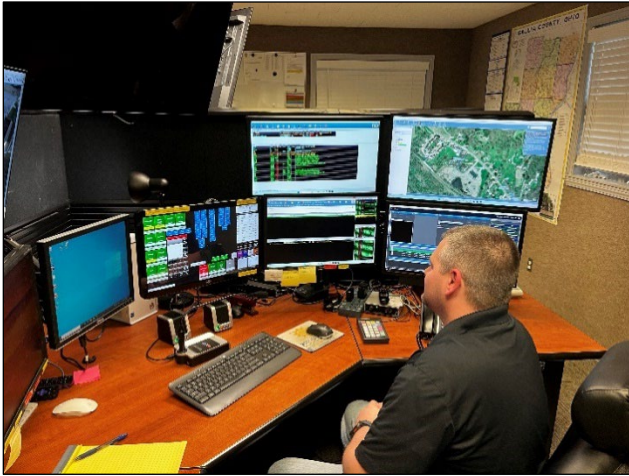


Ohio

Community Facilities | Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program

Rural Ohio 911 Dispatch Center Gets Upgrade with USDA Help



Dispatcher Zach Thompson sits behind one of the four new Computer Aided Dispatch (CDS) stations at the Gallia County 911 Communication Center near Gallipolis, Ohio. USDA Photo.

Gallia County’s police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS) each employed separate dispatchers. Sometimes this created confusion when coordinating emergency responses across the county’s 400 square miles.

When the Gallia County 911 Communication Center came online in 1997, its newly minted Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system allowed dispatchers – now consolidated in one place – to receive, evaluate, and effectively manage inbound emergency calls.

However, technology evolves, and computer systems have comparatively short lives. Gallia County’s original CAD has already been replaced once, its supporting software updated. Eventually the CAD system’s warranty expired, leaving it vulnerable to freezes and “lockups” with no available tech support. As a result, dispatchers resorted to rebooting the frozen system, a potentially perilous situation during inbound emergency calls.

“There were problems with shutting down and locking up creating a delay in logging information for people who were calling in,” said Sherry Daines, director of the Gallia County 911 Communication Center and the county’s emergency manager. “It was definitely time for an upgrade.”

In 2022, Sherry, who has been the communication center director for 15 years, saw an opportunity to make the change.

To upgrade the CAD system without straining the county’s budget, Sherry worked with their grants administrator to find funding, and learned the county was eligible to receive a low-interest loan and grant combination through USDA Rural Development’s [Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant](#) program.

Community Facilities – Gallia County 911 Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) System

“Thankfully, we were able to qualify for funding and we were very grateful to participate,” said Sherry. “This helps the county all around because we didn’t have to take money from the general fund for the project.”

With its USDA funding, the county purchased a new Motorola 911 CAD system and upgraded the Multi-Agency Radio Communication System, or MARCS. Together with a new mapping feature, the upgrades help Gallia County’s 20 full- and part-time dispatchers coordinate responses quicker and more accurately.

“The old system was simpler because you were able to point and click,” said Zach Thompson, a dispatcher who started right out of high school. “But the new system is more multi-use; there are many ways to achieve the same goal because [the new system] does more things and helps us manage information better.”

Before becoming a dispatcher, trainees undergo three months of on-the-job training and must pass a 40-hour state required course, along with a 32-hour Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) course. Dispatchers staff the Gallia County call center 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“This is a high-stress job, and we have dispatchers who have prior experience as first responders,” said Sherry. “It is important for the public to be able to call in and speak to trained people who can get them help quickly. We take our responsibilities very seriously.”

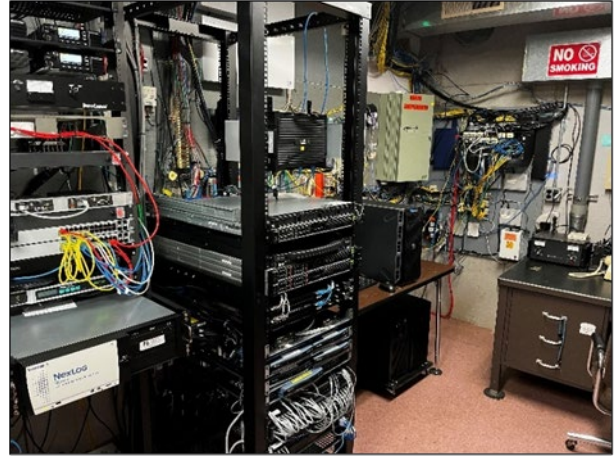
The new CAD has been operational since June 2024.

“USDA funding made it possible for the county to have a better system and make sure everyone can be as safe as possible,” said Sherry. “This has been a game changer for what we can do for our citizens to get them the help they need quickly.”

Obligation: \$244,000 loan / \$50,000 grant

Obligation Date: June 1, 2023

Congressional: U.S. Rep. David Taylor (OH-02); U.S. Senators Bernie Moreno and Jon Husted



The “nerve center” inside the Gallia County’s 911 Communication Center Computer that powers its new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. USDA Photo.