

Unit 6 Activity 6.1

Over the past 18 months, all Central City Police, Fire and EMS have been under tremendous scrutiny for slowed response times and troubled services. In response, both the fire and police chief have also been critical of 911 dispatch personnel, blaming them for the delays. Unions for all three divisions agree there are problems with 911 Center personnel, but also blame current administrative and city leadership as causes, have fueled this criticism. Currently there exists a long period of finger pointing and blaming. Recently the Police, Fire and EMS Chiefs have raised concerns about EMS field personnel “hiding out” at hospitals, taking themselves out of service for extended periods or claiming unsubstantiated communication problems, with both radio and mobile data terminals.

A month ago, Carlos Alejandre called 911 and police, fire and EMS were dispatched to his Central City home. The initial call was for an “ill infant.” Mr. Alejandre is a nationally known Civil Rights and Immigration expert. He has served in the past as an advisor to several Presidents, a University Professor and is the recipient of numerous national and international awards and recognitions. Recently, Carlos has been very outspoken regarding the diversity of local first response and Central City governmental agencies and their agency hiring practices.

The initial response to the Alejandre home took more than 18 minutes for the first CC Police Officer to arrive. Fire and EMS units arrived several minutes later. After an evaluation of the child, EMS paramedics suggested a cold bath for the child’s high fever and for the family to call their family physician. All units then left the Alejandre home. Within thirty minutes of leaving the Alejandre home, units were called back to an infant in cardiac arrest. Sadly, the child died.

News of the death moved quickly through the community and has at times reached a boiling point. The EMS Chief has had no explanation other than to say the first ambulance dispatched for the second call caught fire while enroute and a second ambulance was needed to be sent from a greater distance away. Police to date have taken a hands-off stance as have fire leadership. They simply are insisting they have no comment. It has also come to light since that no less than three ambulances have caught fire, two of which were totally destroyed by these fires in weeks leading up to the Alejandre request.

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The Alejandre family has retained legal representation and here is what legal inquiries have discovered. This has also been shared with the community and local media since the death of their child:

A number of ambulances have caught on fire prior to and since the Alejandre call.

The training and certification records of the fire and EMS personnel records do not exist anywhere in system. No records.

The initial Alejandre call to the 911 Center was identified at the “Alpha” level, indicating low priority. (So was the second call reporting a Pulseless None-Breathing Infant.)

Police were wondering around the house while EMS and Fire were with patient and family. Alejandre’s claim they were searching the house illegally.

There was another Central City ambulance even closer (only two blocks away) when Alejandre call 911 a second time. The crew appears to have remained silent, failing to indicate their proximity to the Alejandre home.

According to the Alejandre family, when paramedics arrived the second time, they came in without equipment, having to return several times to the ambulance to get things they needed. It also appeared as though the EKG equipment was not working either.

Carlos Alejandre’s anger was further escalated when police began to interview him and his wife. He claims to have been treated like a guilty individual, even as paramedics worked on his child.

Communications equipment failures have dogged all departments and problems have been well known and lasted for years prior to the Alejandre call. Recently the public learned that the Central City’ new computerized dispatch system was also failing. The system sends ambulances and fire trucks to the wrong location or even to locations outside their assigned areas, has failed to dispatch the nearest vehicle, or has sent emergency vehicles in the wrong order. Occasionally, the system attempted to dispatch a vehicle already assigned to other emergencies while ignoring available vehicles. Front-line staff have complained they have received no training prior to the system’s activation **Fire Chief Kendal Bravery’s** tenure has generally been considered to be very troubled, with controversies over hiring and promotions, training, and even firefighter grooming, as well as multi-million dollar equipment failures.

The recent appointment of **Scott Werth** as EMS Director has led to a number of investigations. Werth’s tenure has been plagued by repeated scandals, including several involving his very own hiring. Other controversies during his tenure include several expensive uniform changes, higher overtime pay, new communication policies, charges of lying over how to count EMS runs in the city, and retaliation against numerous department employees. Controversial changes and ambulance staffing have never been implemented. Even today, active controversies exist over costly fire engine and ambulance repairs, the availability of vehicles for emergencies, and the location of vehicles.

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Background Information:

The troubled CC EMS division has continued to have problems for a couple of years. Former Kingston EMS Director Scotty Werth was named CC Chief of EMS, even though he personally...as well as.... the Kingston EMS Division as a whole were being sued by the family of James Elvord, who died of gunshot wounds while being treated by Kingston EMS paramedics. Elvord's family argued that Director Werth ordered responders to stop treating the victim in the mistaken belief that Elvord had a gunshot wound to the head and was already dead.

Ten African American firefighters and paramedics filed a racial discrimination suit accusing Central City of tolerating a racist work environment within its first responder employees. The suit names about ten white male firefighters who were accused or convicted of crimes — including [assault](#) (sometimes with knives), sexual harassment (emailing images of their genitals to female colleagues), illegal possession of a firearm, public nudity in the firehouse, and [stalking](#) — but never disciplined. However, the city always punished or terminated black firefighters accused or convicted of similar crimes. The lawsuit also alleged that the department purposefully allowed a current promotions list (which had many black candidates on it) to expire.