The Board of Directors of the Utah Chapter of The National Emergency Number Association, is proud to present the award for Communications Center of the Year to the Salt Lake City 911 Communications Bureau during National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week 2021.

Dealing with a global pandemic, political tension during a U.S. Presidential Election, chronic civil unrest nationwide, and seemingly daily natural disasters, made 2020 a very trying year for all 9-1-1 Communications Centers nationwide. Here in Utah, the 9-1-1 professionals of the Salt Lake City 911 Communications Bureau were particularly affected.

On March 18th, the SLC911 dispatch center fielded 2,728 calls as a result of a 5.7 magnitude earthquake; the first earthquake of its size to have hit the Salt Lake Valley since 1962. This natural event was only a preview of the year that was in store for the communications center.

On May 30th, the Salt Lake City Public Safety Building fell under attack as a result of the riots that surged nationwide following the in-custody death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN. In addition to the damage done to the lobby and ground level of the building, there was damage discovered to the dispatch center windows on the third floor. The building was placed on lockdown and the on-duty staff of SLC911 had to remain on premise, while others reporting for duty reported to the Salt Lake Valley Emergency Communications Center in West Valley to ensure their safety. The staff members in the Public Safety building began their shift at 0700 hours and had to stay until it was safe to leave. All dispatchers, whether at SLVECC or SLC911, worked tirelessly to provide the best possible customer service to their communities given the circumstances. Over 3,000 calls were taken that day and even with the alternate operating location at SLVECC, most callers were unaware that the local dispatch center had even been evacuated. Finally, as 2130 hours that evening, staff was given clearance by SWAT and other Law Enforcement Agencies to leave the Public Safety Building. Protests remained constant all summer long, but none were as severe in Salt Lake City as those on May 30th. SLC911 Director Lisa Burnette described seeing the dispatch floor empty of staff and silent as “unnerving”.

On September 8th, SLC911 received 4,093 calls due to a severe weather event. The hurricane-force wind storm that struck Utah on that day uprooted trees, trapped citizens in their homes, and reached a Beaufort scale rating of 12. The wind storm killed one citizen and left 200,000 residences without power. Governor Gary Herbert declared a state of emergency due to the event for the first time since 2011, when the Utah National Guard was called for the Davis County wind storm.

In addition to all of the emergencies that the SLC911 staff handled in 2020, COVID-19 was the day-to-day burden of the center. As with many centers, plastic console dividers were installed and wearing masks became normal procedure. But even without a light at the end of the tunnel, these dispatchers continued to show up and give their community 110%. Their commitment to excellence while enduring a truly horrific year that has taken a tremendous emotional toll on so many, makes SLC911 more than deserving of this honor.

Thank you, SLC911, for your outstanding performance in the face of adversity, and your continued professionalism and dedication to your community, first responders and the 9-1-1 profession.

Sincerely,

The Utah NENA Board of Directors