

History of the Emergency Communications Center



Station X in 1964

The Emergency Communications Center, as it is known today, was first established in 1931 as "Station X" inside Cincinnati's City Hall; that marks the first time the city's responders were dispatched by radio to emergencies. Over the years, ECC's operations and technology have evolved significantly. The center has moved physically from City Hall to Eden Park, on to Police Headquarters and finally to "Knob Hill" in South Fairmont, where it overlooks Union Terminal and the city's downtown. The name of the center has changed several times - but the mission of ECC, getting help to people in Cincinnati, has been a constant for 90 years.

Emergency Communications Before ECC

The Cincinnati Police Department dates back to a night watch established in 1802, with the police force being organized in 1859. Shortly after the Civil War, in 1866, a telegraph system replaced the need for messengers running between police stations. This system linked stations and some public locations in the city. Telephones were adopted in 1879, which allowed for the installation of the Police Call Box in locations around the city. It also enabled officers to periodically check in with their station while out on patrol. The Greater Cincinnati Police Museum has call boxes on display and [a history of their use on the museum website](#).

The Cincinnati Fire Department was established in 1853, and in the late 1800s, a fire watchtower was manned to spot fires and ring bells to alert the city's firefighters. A Fire Alarm Telegraph Office served the city in the early 1900s, receiving alarms and signaling fire companies. You can learn more about [Cincinnati Fire Department history](#) on the CFD website.

Station X

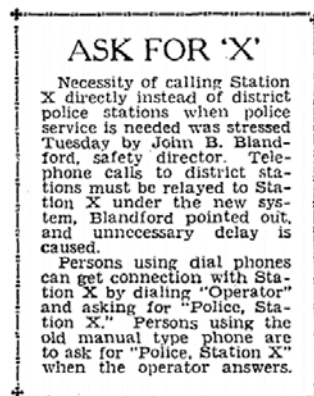
The **Cincinnati Emergency Communications Center**, as it is known today - a place the citizens of Cincinnati could contact when they needed help, and that help would be dispatched by radio - was created in 1931. On June 16th, 1931, a place named **Station X** was born, and with it came the first radio broadcast that dispatched Cincinnati first responders. The WKDU radio transmitter was brought online and began broadcasting from Eden Park, remotely controlled from a new hub in City Hall that was called Station X. It was part of a departmental reorganization and was credited as the brainchild of Safety Director John B. Blandford Jr. and Police Chief William Copelan.



What was Cincinnati like then? In 1931, the Western Hills Viaduct was under construction, due to open the following year. Union Terminal had been under construction for three years and would open in another two. It was the tail-end of prohibition in America. Up until the debut of Station X, Cincinnati's police officers out patrolling their beats were to check in by telephone call box once per hour. They could not know about an incident requiring their response until the next time they checked in. For the first time, a voice over the air could direct police officers immediately, and it dramatically changed the way our city was policed. Callers received prompt service, criminals were caught in the act, and everyone was fascinated with the revolutionary technology that drove Station X. Citizens bought radios that could pick up WKDU so they could hear what was going on in their city.

Fifty-one police autos were equipped to receive the broadcasts from Station X at its inception. These were strictly receivers; no one transmitted except for Station X. Police officers would still check in with Station X by telephone when they arrived at the scene or to confirm receipt of the message. It would be another eleven years before a two-way system was put in place allowing police and fire to answer Station X from their vehicles. The ability for police to remain in touch away from their vehicles, with portable radios, did not come until the 1970s.

"Ask for 'X'," read an announcement in the July 14th, 1931 edition of the Cincinnati Post:



The Early Success of Station X

Three days into the operation of Station X, on June 19th, the Cincinnati Post wrote:

"The new police radio system has been in operation only a few days, but it is catching the crooks with a certainty and speed far beyond the expectations of delighted police officials. One stolen auto was recovered within one minute after its theft was reported. Within half an hour after another car was stolen, the car was found and the thief was in custody. A burglar was caught in the act within a few minutes after his presence in a house was reported. A citizen telephoned police when he saw a street fight; three cruising police cars nipped that fight before it got fairly started. In one case, police arrived on the scene of a theft while the person reporting it still was telephoning to police headquarters. The new Station X at City Hall is the scene of continuous and exciting drama. Tough times are ahead for the criminal element in Cincinnati. The automobile gave wings to the criminal, but radio, with the speed of light, is clipping his wings." Read [the full article](#).

On February 11th, 1932, a "violent gale" swept through portions of the city, and the Cincinnati Post wrote about how Station X battled the storm:

"The operators sitting at the microphone in Station X were like generals in a dugout back of a battle firing line. As rapidly as telephone calls came in - and they came in a flood - the police shock troops were dispatched by wireless orders directly to the points where they were most needed. It was a magnificent demonstration of the mobility which the radio has given Cincinnati's police force." Read [the full article](#).

On June 17th, 1932, approximately one year into the operation of Station X, the Cincinnati Post marveled at the ability to quickly gather the city's police force thanks to radio technology:

"Let's imagine the clock turned back to the time when all policemen walked beats, rode horses, or sat in station houses. An emergency, such as a riot or a great fire, requiring the presence of large numbers of policemen at a given spot, occurs.

First, the reserves, two men at each of the seven police stations, are notified by telephone and they make their way on foot, on street cars or in commandeered slow-moving vehicles to the scene of action. Then slowly, one by one, as the patrolling policemen make their hourly calls, the men on the nearest beats are summoned. It takes anywhere from two to four hours to assemble one-half of the patrol force.

Contrast this tortoise-like speed with the quick mobilization of more than one-half of the motorized patrol force which was made Thursday in celebration of the first anniversary of Station X in Cincinnati." Read [the full article](#).

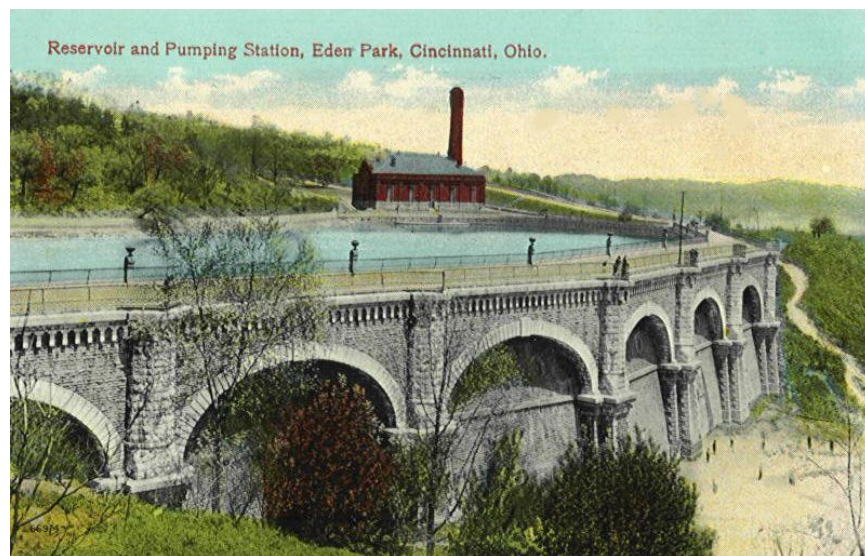
The Creation of the First Police Radio System

According to a [1971 feature published by the Cincinnati Enquirer](#):

"In early 1930, Guy Forest Lampkin, an electrical engineering graduate student from the University of Cincinnati, was hired as a consultant to design, construct and install a radio system for the Cincinnati Division of Police. Under his supervision, six radio technicians constructed a 500-watt transmitter, 50 TRF receivers powered by 135 volts of "B" batteries, 10 station house receivers, and a five wire cage "T" type antenna."

Lampkin was interviewed in 1971 regarding the construction of Station X:

"I suppose I was chosen because my Master's thesis at UC was about methods and systems of two-way radio communications," he said. "The job took about nine months. Police departments in Indianapolis and Detroit were working on installing police radio systems at the same time we were and we kind of helped each other out. The transmitter and radio maintenance shop were located in an unused waterworks pumping station in Eden Park. By the time Station X went into operation, we had 60 mobile receiving units installed in Model A Fords, which served as police cars in those days. I remember that the hardest part of communicating with cars was when they were down the river in Sayler Park. That was an awful area to receive radio transmissions! The police dispatching part of Station X was located in the basement of City Hall, near Central Station."



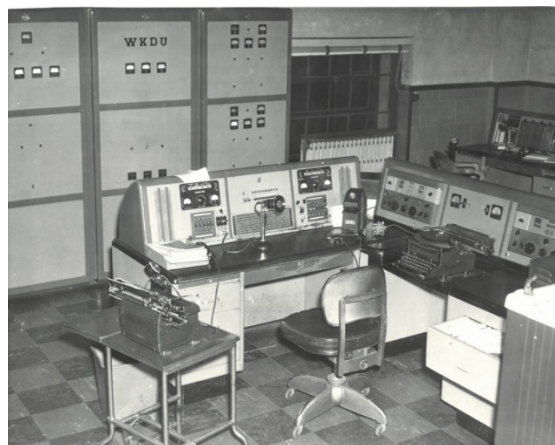
The Station X transmitter was located at the Eden Park pumping station, seen in this postcard illustration, just beyond the reservoir. (source: cincinnativiews.net)

On the Cutting Edge

Two years into the operation of Station X, it was the hub of police activity for 25 cities and villages in six counties. Cincinnati had its Station X a year before New York City began routinely dispatching by radio, according to a 1933 article in the Cincinnati Post. Cincinnati was "among the first to try radio in apprehending criminals," the article said. "Chicago recently sent a delegation here to see how Station X held its finger on the pulse of 850,000 people."

Read more: [Nerve Center of a Community of 850,000 - That's Station X, Cincinnati's Watchdog - July 13, 1933](#)

In this undated photo from the 1940s, after the dispatchers had moved to the Eden Park facility, you can see a radio dispatcher's workstation and the WKDU transmitter equipment:



This is a photo of the same space from a different angle, which allows you to see the Radio Dispatchers' Map. This map displayed a light for each police unit in the city, indicating whether that unit was available to be dispatched or out of their car on an investigation:



What is the origin of the name?

“Station X” became the term everyone in Cincinnati knew, the place you reached out to when you needed help. It was as common a term to Cincinnatians for the next four decades as “9-1-1” is today.

But where did the name come from? Asking our tenured staff members what they recalled, all shared a different version of the oral history that they had picked up in their time here. The most entertaining explanation was that, when the city’s dispatchers broadcast from City Hall, there was a small problem with people walking into a large plate glass window. That problem was solved with a large X made from tape, and the name Station X stuck.

But that did not turn out to be true, as amusingly believable as it might be.

The Real Story

In a 1983 obituary for Major Rudolph Wehking, the Cincinnati Post wrote:

“Henry Sandman, former city safety director [...] credits Maj. Wehking with naming the police radio station as “Station X” when it was formed in 1931. Sandman said Mr. Wehking, then major in the Cincinnati Police Department, was helping a daughter with her algebra studies in which “x” was the unknown quantity in equations, just as the new police radio was a new and unknown quantity. The officer’s suggestion of Station X became a fixture in Cincinnati’s language.”

Perhaps Major Wehking and Safety Director Blandford collaborated on the name. According to the engineer who constructed the original Station X, Guy Forest Lampkin, said this in a 1971 interview:

"The idea of naming it Station X was that of John B. Blandford, the safety director at that time. He wanted a name with popular appeal that was easy to remember by citizens calling the operator to request police assistance."

The day before Station X went on the air in 1931, the Cincinnati Post commented on the name:

“The name ‘Station X,’ given to the central police headquarters, is a happy choice. It should appeal to the popular imagination. It has all the thrill of a detective story mystery. It is positively ‘sleuthy.’ Symbol of the unknown quantity, it is decidedly pat, for isn’t it the unknown quantity that a good detective always seeks?”

No Longer Station X, Officially...

The name was officially put to rest in 1972 by then Police Chief Carl Goodin. The Cincinnati Post reported on March 21st, 1972:

“The police radio has been known as ‘Station X.’ Officially, Station X now has been abolished. An administrative note from Chief Carl Goodin’s office directs all officers to refer to the radio station as the ‘Police Communications System.’ We suspect the Police Communications System will have some difficulty catching on. Remember what happened when the Cincinnati Reds tried to change their name to Red legs? They simply stayed Reds, that’s what.”

The Cincinnati Post wasn't wrong. Although the "Station X" term faded from public memory, it is still a term we hear to this day within the public safety community.

High-Level Historical Timeline

1931: Radio dispatching began in Cincinnati with the creation of Station X on June 16, 1931, operating from the basement of City Hall in the Ninth Street and Central Avenue corner. Station X (WKDU) used a one-way AM radio transmitter to make broadcasts to police and fire vehicles equipped with receivers. Since police and fire could only receive, they could not acknowledge or reply by radio. Police officers continued to use police call boxes to phone in.

1935: Station X moved from the basement of City Hall to a new space on the third floor, Central Avenue side. Up until this time, there was a "front counter" component to Station X, which handled the City Hall lock-up and registration of prisoners for the detective headquarters. With the move to the third floor, Station X's mission became exclusively that of receiving complaints, dispatching radio-controlled cars, and operating the teletype system. The "front counter" duties were left with the Central Registration bureau of the police department. (Read more: [Cincinnati Enquirer - June 19, 1935](#))

1941: In addition to dispatching Cincinnati's first responders, Station X was at this time broadcasting for thirty-four other municipalities and subdivisions in six counties. It had been doing so for free up to this point. In 1941, Cincinnati began charging fees to provide Station X service to neighboring communities (20 cents per broadcast). Some municipalities served by Station X began making plans to establish their own police radio systems in lieu of paying these fees.

1941: Station X moved from the third floor of City Hall to a former water-pumping facility in Eden Park. This location had served as the radio transmitter site since the inception of Station X, and dispatchers had remotely controlled the equipment from City Hall. With this move, the entire Station X dispatching operation was under the same roof as the radio equipment.

1942: Station X put a two-way radio system into service, allowing police and fire to respond by radio from their vehicles.

1949: Station X, long known alternatively by its FCC callsign WKDU, had a new government-issued identity when it was forced to change radio frequencies. The new FCC callsign was KQA387. (Read more: [Cincinnati Enquirer - February 13, 1949](#))

1958: Cincinnati began testing portable radio receivers to be carried by police officers assigned to a foot beat. Up until this point, unlike radio-equipped motorized patrols, foot officers continued to check in once per hour by police call box and were otherwise out of communication. After a one-year test, portable radio receivers were fully adopted in 1959.

1960s: The Cincinnati and Suburban Bell Telephone Company introduced seven-digit dialing in 1962. A new emergency number was established to reach Station X (then 241-1212).

1964: Station X's police radio station switched to a new frequency band due to an FCC order, causing citizen listeners to scramble for new radios that would allow them to continue listening to police activity in Cincinnati.

1971: On February 3, Station X moved from the Eden Park building to the new communications center facility on the third floor of police headquarters, at what was then 310 Lincoln Park Drive. The upgrade offered 10,000 square feet of space and eight manned radio-telephone consoles, compared to 2,500 square feet and four consoles at Eden Park. The "Fire Tower" (CFD dispatch) remained in the Eden Park facility.

1973: Civilian police dispatchers were hired as a pilot project to return patrolmen to policework. Although there had been a civilian component to Station X since the beginning, in terms of radio technicians, clerks, and operators, the dispatching of police cars had traditionally been done by sworn officers.

1988: Police and fire dispatching came together again under one roof, with fire dispatchers moving to the communications center above police headquarters in preparation for the implementation of 9-1-1 service. A split operation of call-taking and dispatching began, and the city hired a large quantity of new staff in a new E-911 Operator job classification to handle the expected increase in call volume.

1988: At noon on August 17, the 911 system officially went into operation in greater Cincinnati.

2005: On April 7, 2005, the Emergency Communications Center moved to a new state-of-the-art facility on Knob Hill.

- **2018:** The City of Cincinnati announced the implementation of Smart911 Safety Profile technology, enabling citizens to create profiles with life-saving information that would be made available to 911 operators in the event they call for help.
- **2019:** Text-to-911 service became available in Cincinnati.

9-1-1 Service in Cincinnati

The Cincinnati and Suburban Bell Telephone Company began offering telephone service in Cincinnati in 1877, and the Cincinnati Police Department began using telephones in 1879. Up until 1931, if you had a telephone, you had to ask the telephone company switchboard operator to connect you with police. That was something people continued to do for quite some time (ask the operator for the police, or for Station X), but dialing capability arrived in June 1931. For those who had the proper telephone equipment, there were now emergency numbers in Cincinnati: CHerry-1212 for police emergencies, and CHerry-2525 for the fire department.

In 1968, the Bell Telephone system made an offer to governments across the United States: we will establish a universal emergency number, 911, if you want us to. The Cincinnati and Suburban Bell Telephone Company echoed that offer to local communities, and Cincinnati and Hamilton County told the company they would both like such a system if it could be worked out. In 1969, the Hamilton County Police Association (HCPA) convened a committee to discuss the proposed 9-1-1 universal emergency number. Telephone company officials indicated that they could implement the new number within six months, but only if there were one or two communications centers handling the emergency calls. At the time, thirty-eight communities in Hamilton County were serviced by nineteen communications control points. The HCPA recommended the issue be studied further.

The biggest issue was, ultimately, how to pay for it. Telephone companies pointed out that it would be expensive to implement - estimated at \$4.1 million for the greater Cincinnati area - and local governments couldn't afford it on their own. Finally, in 1985, Ohio Governor Richard Celeste signed into law a mechanism to fund creating a 9-1-1 system in Ohio. Telephone companies would receive a tax credit to fund the installation of the systems that made 9-1-1 work, and (landline) telephone customers were to be charged 15 cents per month to cover the operating costs.

Beginning on August 17th, 1988, Cincinnatians could dial 9-1-1 in an emergency. While the region was twenty years behind Haleyville, Alabama, where the first 9-1-1 call was made, the system here was far more advanced, [according to a profile in the Cincinnati Post](#). For one, it was computerized. "Every call is routed through a computer which tells the operator who answers the address and phone number of the caller. Children, stroke

victims, and callers frightened to the point of temporary amnesia, won't have to say anything to get help." The system was also enormous. "Two states, six counties, a major metropolitan city, 1.5 million people, 170 public safety agencies, 21 locations where 911 calls are answered. It is believed to be the largest single 911 system to go into operation."

Brief History of Current 9-1-1 Center



Today, the Cincinnati Emergency Communications Center operates from a state-of-the-art Regional Operations Center, a facility that serves multiple purposes in emergency preparedness and response and that is a cooperative effort between Cincinnati and Hamilton County. The center is atop Knob Hill, which the [Cincinnati Enquirer profiled on November 17, 2016](#). Some of the hill was blasted away in the late 1920s to early 1930s to fill in the area where Union Terminal was to be built.

What remained of the hill was purchased by Cincinnati entrepreneur Will Radcliff in 1978, the creator of Slush Puppie frozen drinks. He used the land to develop an industrial park where he constructed Slush Puppie headquarters. Radcliff sold the Slush Puppie business in 2000, and the headquarters facility was purchased by the City of Cincinnati in 2003. With the help of homeland security grant funding, it was converted into the Regional Operations Center.



Today, the ECC operates from a facility that can accommodate up to 16 call-takers, 2 teletype operators, 10 police dispatchers, 5 fire dispatchers, and shift supervisors. In this photo, Emergency 911 Operators answer the city's emergency and non-emergency calls for the police and fire departments.

Detailed Historical Timeline and Related News

1931

Station X begins operation in the basement of City Hall on June 16, 1931, and Cincinnati dispatches its first responders by radio broadcast for the first time.

In the first partial year of operation (June 16 to December 31, 1931), Station X radiocast 52,500 messages, an average of 270 a day, and twice that many telephone messages were handled. ([Cincinnati Post - February 3, 1932](#))

1932

Police cars operated by Cheviot and the Cheviot police station were equipped with short-wave radio receivers to obtain signals of Station X. This was part of a Regional Crime Commission's plan to obtain speedy apprehension of criminals in the area. Station X began broadcasting messages for Cheviot police when the occasion demanded. ([Cincinnati Post - January 11, 1932](#))

Mariemont joins Station X, installing a radio at Mariemont police headquarters and in a police auto operating in that suburb. ([Cincinnati Post - January 14, 1932](#))

Station X Lends Aid After Newport Holdup ([Cincinnati Post - February 17, 1932](#))

Station X Helps Covington Police Capture Suspects ([Cincinnati Post - February 22, 1932](#))

"The city of Cincinnati has placed its Station X police broadcasting station's facilities at the disposal of all of the communities in the regional area and is acting as a clearing house for police information." ([Cincinnati Post - February 24, 1932](#))



From the Cincinnati Post, March 11, 1932:

A Cincinnati man was arrested after making false calls to Station X, summoning firemen. ([Cincinnati Post - March 11, 1932](#))

Wyoming urged to join Station X ([Cincinnati Post - April 6, 1932](#))

In April 1932, Mayor Russell Wilson and Chief Copelan led a police parade through downtown streets, with Station X making broadcasts during the parade to demonstration receptions on the police radio sets. ([Cincinnati Post - April 22, 1932](#))

Station X helped to save a fleet of pleasure boats on the Ohio River. ([Cincinnati Post - July 8, 1932](#))

Station X alerts a Newport police officer when his daughter is injured. ([Cincinnati Post - August 22, 1932](#))

An advertisement published in the Cincinnati Post by I.L. Greenwald Inc., a store at 901 Race Street, implored readers to check out their prices on radios. "Radio Bargain!" "Get Phone Calls from Station X!" ([Cincinnati Post - September 16, 1932](#))

Hamilton County Sheriff Asa Butterfield procured 25 autos for his county road patrol, all of which were radio-equipped to receive Station X calls. ([Cincinnati Post - October 6, 1932](#))

1933

Radio-Equipped Motorcycle Patrol

The Cincinnati Police Department equipped all six of its motorcycles with radio sets to receive broadcasts from Station X. "Who would have ever dreamed a decade ago that man astride a motorcycle going 50 miles an hour could have received word-of-mouth instructions from head-quarters in City Hall several miles away?" ([Cincinnati Post - January 19, 1933](#))

John "Pop" Ringer, lieutenant of Station X, celebrated his 42nd year as a policeman. ([Cincinnati Post - February 2, 1933](#))

The idea of Station X and regional police cooperation was spreading, according to the Cincinnati Post. Counties to the north, in an area surrounding Dayton, are planning similar regional cooperation with the Dayton police radio station. ([Cincinnati Post - March 9, 1933](#))

On March 27, 1933, the Cincinnati Post published a photo with the following caption:

"Station X as it looks today. It broadcasts 11,000 messages a month ... receives 30,000 phone calls ... and 10 per cent of its broadcasts are of the benefit of Police Departments in the region outside of Cincinnati. John Hearn, radiotrician of Station WKDU, or Station X, is shown at the mike. Sergt. Charles Nelcamp, radio dispatcher, is his companion. The map above them shows thru electric bulbs which cars are out on calls."



Carl W. Luhn, chief radiotrician of Station X, was elected as president of a new organization known as the Queen City Radio Amateur Association. ([Cincinnati Post - April 1, 1933](#))

The Cincinnati Post profiled Station X on July 13, 1933, calling it the "nerve center" of the community and "Cincinnati's watchdog" that supported 25 cities and villages in six counties. ([Cincinnati Post - July 13, 1933](#))

The Indian Hill Rangers were noted by the Cincinnati Post to have equipped their headquarters and three automobiles used for patrolling the village with Station X radios. ([Cincinnati Post - September 4, 1933](#))

Safety Director John B. Blandford Jr, credited with establishing Station X, retires from city service. ([Cincinnati Post - October 3, 1933](#))

The Cincinnati Post reported an "unfortunate misunderstanding" between Newport and Cincinnati, with the former assuring the public that they intend to remain partnered with Station X. Newport police had reportedly been upset that citizens called Station X directly. ([Cincinnati Post - November 30, 1933](#))

Citizens in Neighboring Communities Urged to Call Local Police Direct

"Hereafter all reports to Station X from surrounding communities must be received from community officers and not from citizens," ruled Cincinnati's Safety Director, Fred K. Hoehler, "after complaints from the Newport city manager "that time was lost in broadcasting a holdup report there because a citizen called Station X instead of Newport authorities." ([Cincinnati Post - December 1, 1933](#))

"Call Station X In Emergency: Dykstra Issues Instructions to Citizens Confused by Recent Advice"

City Manager Clarence Dykstra instructed Cincinnati citizens to call Station X in an emergency, hoping to dispel confusion created by recent advice intended for those outside of Cincinnati. He also explained the coming addition of light ambulances to provide emergency assistance, and that they can be summoned through Station X. ([Cincinnati Post - December 6, 1933](#))

A radio set in a General Hospital ambulance, tuned to Station X, was put to good use. The ambulance driver, already on his way to pick up a pregnant woman in the West End, was notified of a second obstetrical case and was able to transport both mothers to the hospital. ([Cincinnati Post - December 26, 1933](#))



A graphic from the February 20, 1933 edition of the Cincinnati Enquirer:

1934

Heat Wave

According to ohiohistorycentral.org, the summer of 1934 ranks as the hottest in Ohio since temperature records began in 1883. According to the Cincinnati Post on July 26th, forty-five people had died on account of the heat, and two life-saving squads dashed continuously across the city at the direction of Station X. ([Cincinnati Post - July 26, 1934](#))

1935

Station X Moving Upstairs

In February 1935, the Cincinnati Post reported that the City of Cincinnati was contemplating several changes to the Cincinnati Police Department, including an increase in police officers, a merger of several police districts, and the relocation of Station X from the basement of City Hall to the third floor. A plan was also developing to add a task to be handled around the clock by Station X - the registration of those arrested. ([Cincinnati Post - February 11, 1935](#))

A report in June 1935 confirmed that the Station X police broadcasting station was moving to the third floor of Cincinnati City Hall. ([Cincinnati Post - June 4, 1935](#))

1936

Carl W. Luhn, Chief Radiotrician of Station X, was reportedly planning to step down to Radiotrician due to a belief that his pay did not compensate him for his responsibilities in that capacity. The Chief Radiotrician was paid between \$2,160 to \$2,520 per year, while Radiotricians were paid \$1,860 to \$2,200 per year. ([Cincinnati Post - April 30, 1936](#))

Crash! And It's Not Long Before Police Accident Squad Is on Scene



"Attention Car No. 1, go to an auto accident at Seventh and Vine." It's J. L. Hiron broadcasting from Station X.

Patrolman Ray May (with the microphone) and Ray May (at the wheel) of the Traffic Accident Squad pick up the message.

Patrolmen Rex Burdall (left) and May arrive and begin taking measurements.

From the Cincinnati Post on August 15th, 1936: "Crash! And It's Not Long Before Police Accident Squad Is on Scene."

The Federal Communications Commission gave Cincinnati permission to install an auxiliary police radio station in the city. The purpose of this installation would be to guard against a failure of the main broadcast equipment used by Station X. ([Cincinnati Post - October 9, 1936](#))

"The safest and surest method of caring for auto accident victims is to call Station X," urged the local Traffic Safety Council. A recent auto accident victim with significant injuries was taken to the hospital by a bystander, when a stretcher-equipped police car was only blocks away. ([Cincinnati Post - October 20, 1936](#))

Patrolman Thiele and Holtman are seen using a Police Call Box to telephone their report in to Station X. From the Cincinnati Post on December 26, 1936

Candid Cameraman Looks in on "Cincinnati's Finest" in Midst of Their Duties



Civil Bureau, press and photographers, named Cincinnati's finest officers with his candid camera and snapped them in various poses at duty at Cincinnati's finest. At center left, Patrolman Henry Harrison (in uniform) with Patrolman Albert Thiele, seated on the motorcycle. In the next picture, Patrolman Herbert Weller (in uniform) is seen with Patrolman Albert Thiele. The last figure in the center is Patrolman John Hiron. In the next picture, Patrolman Thiele and Holtman are seen using a Police Call Box to telephone their report to Station X. At right is Patrolman George Kinch.

1937

Station X was briefly disrupted on July 7th, when a work crew smashed a cable on Third Street that linked Station X in City Hall to the transmitter in Eden Park. With Station X's remote control of the transmitter lost, messages were telephoned to someone at Eden Park to broadcast directly at the transmitter. ([Cincinnati Post - July 7, 1937](#))

1937 Statistics

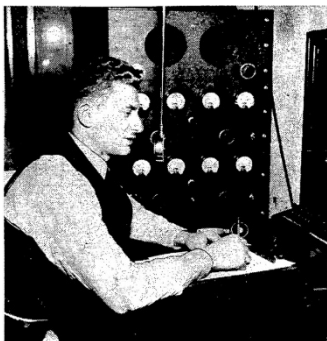
According to an article published the following January, 1938: "The police radio, Station X, serves not only the city but the metropolitan area of Cincinnati where messages are sent to police of other communities and counties which have radio equipment. During 1937 Station X broadcast 167,138 radio calls, an average of one almost every three minutes, in addition to handling thousands of other telephone calls. Julian W. Bronson is the chief police radiotrician." ([Cincinnati Post - January 25, 1938](#))

1938

Burglars were found to have set up a Station X radio while they looted a safe, so they could monitor police activity during the crime. ([Cincinnati Post - January 18, 1938](#))

Civilian Teletype Operators

"Women soon will replace police officers as operators of teletype machines in Station X, Police Chief Weatherly said Friday. Arrangements are being made for the Cincinnati Telephone Co. to handle the operation and servicing of the machines. When this is done, the three officers now sending the teletype messages will be assigned to other police duties." ([Cincinnati Post - January 21, 1938](#))



Carl Luhn in Station XThe Cincinnati Post featured the story of a police response to a burglary, as part of a series profiling the Cincinnati Police Department. "The noise the burglar made in the pantry awoke the housewife on the second floor of a Cincinnati suburban home," the Post reported. "Quietly she slipped to the telephone and told the operator, 'Station X, please, quickly.'" The Post described the actions of Carl Luhn, who was manning the radio at Station X. ([Cincinnati Post - January 21, 1938](#))

In March 1938, the new teletype machines and civilian teletype operators were at work in Station X. This [photo appeared in the Cincinnati Post](#) on March 1st, captioned: "Mrs. Clara Bueschert, veteran police telephone operator, sends out a

message over a new teletype machine in the police phone room as Miss Ethel Dresselhouse, phone company instructor, looks on. The machines have just been installed and will be handled by women operators, instead of policemen. The teletype relays general orders to districts and 'follows up' broadcast from Station X."

Countywide Road-Block

In May 1938, Cincinnati and the Hamilton County Police Association devised a plan to block all major Hamilton County roads in the event of a major crime, such as a kidnapping, bank robbery or murder. A signal to activate, relayed to and broadcast by Station X, would send police cars all over the county to designated control points to watch for the persons or autos described in the broadcast. ([Cincinnati Post - May 13, 1938](#))

Chief Radiotrician Carl W. Luhn, photographed in 1938, working in Station X's second location on the third floor of City Hall:



1940

Col. Clarence O. Sherrill, Cincinnati City Manager, asked Council to appropriate funds for a survey that would consider two-way radio capability for Station X. He also asked Council to earmark \$16,000 for the rehabilitation of Station X radio equipment and antennae in Eden Park. ([Cincinnati Post - Feb 7, 1940](#))

The Village of Deer Park announced that it had equipped its two police cruisers with radios to cooperate with Station X. ([Cincinnati Post - July 27, 1940](#))

1941

A power tube broke in radio equipment at Eden Park, taking Station X off the air for nearly an hour. Police were dispatched by telephone during the outage. ([Cincinnati Post - January 15, 1941](#))

Nearly 10 years since the creation of Station X, a citizen was for the first time fined under a city ordinance that prohibited private citizens from receiving police

radio calls. He was found listening to Station X on a radio in his vehicle. ([Cincinnati Post - May 15, 1941](#))

"Police Switchboard Operators Keep Tuned to Heartbeat of City"

On June 24th, the Cincinnati Post profiled the police telephone switchboard operators who fielded calls for Station X. The operators, who answered the public's telephone calls and operated the teletype machine in Station X, were employees of the Cincinnati and Suburban Bell Telephone Company, but worked on behalf of the city in Station X. ([Cincinnati Post - June 24, 1941](#))

Norwood Breaking Away from Station X

On June 26th, the Cincinnati Post reported that the City of Norwood was making plans to establish its own police radio system. The system, planned to include two-way communication with Norwood's police vehicles, would result in Norwood's officers no longer in direct contact with Station X. The Norwood police headquarters would, however, maintain a Station X receiver. ([Cincinnati Post - June 26, 1941](#))

Discussions began between Cincinnati and neighboring communities regarding the need to share the costs of Station X, should those communities use the services of Station X to broadcast to their local police. Newport objected to a proposal to pay per radio broadcast, at a suggested cost of 35 cents. Newport, which was estimated to account for 12,000 broadcasts the previous year, believed this cost to be too high. Cincinnati's City Manager reported that the cost to operate Station X in 1940 was \$57,700. "Salaries of radiotricians alone are expected to amount to \$17,700 in 1942 and this does not include the salaries of police operators at Station X," the Post reported. ([Cincinnati Post - July 12, 1941](#))

James Hearn Becomes Chief Radiotrician

Station X Chief Radiotrician Julian W. Bronson, a member of the Naval Reserve and a World War veteran, was called to active duty. James Hearn became acting chief radiotrician. Chester Spearing, a former radio operator for the State Highway Patrol, was hired to fill the vacancy. ([Cincinnati Post - September 17, 1941](#))

Fees for Station X Service

Cincinnati announced to the thirty-four other municipalities and subdivisions receiving service from Station X that, under a new city ordinance, that previously free service would cost 20 cents per broadcast. Norwood, Wyoming and Covington began taking steps to establish their own police radio systems. ([Cincinnati Post - September 17, 1941](#))

With the Station X fee now enacted, Newport took steps to limit broadcasts for their police department. Newport's chief directed his officers to begin checking in via police call box every half hour, and only calls of major importance would be

made through Cincinnati's police radio. This was anticipated to reduce Newport's usage of Station X by fifty percent. ([Cincinnati Post - November 1, 1941](#))

In the first month of fee-based Station X service, northern Kentucky communities spent a combined \$47 dollars for broadcasts to their police agencies. Covington reported that it would continue plans to construct its own radio system, but Newport and Campbell County indicated they may reconsider severing ties with Station X. ([Kentucky Post - November 8, 1941](#))

1942

A two-way radio system for Station X was reported to be put in operation within days, City Manager Sherill reported on February 13th. The system would allow patrolman in autos to talk back to Station X instead of using a police call box to do so, but it would not allow them to converse with one another. ([Cincinnati Post - February 13, 1942](#))

Cincinnati Puts Two-Way Police Radio in Operation

On Monday, February 16th, the two-way radio system was put into operation at 7am. Soon after, Patrolman Edward Rapp and William Klosterman acknowledged a broadcast from Station X by radio. The system, which cost \$46,000, enabled vehicles equipped with new two-way radios to talk back to Station X rather than find a call box to do so. Thirty-two police autos and ten fire department cars were equipped with the new radios. Charles S. Jones, Superintendent of Communications, was assisted in the project by a radio consultant, Paul J. Riemer. ([Cincinnati Post - February 16, 1942](#))

Station X Moved Under Unified Management

The Cincinnati Post reported on May 16th that, according to City Manager Sherill, police and fire communications had been moved under the control of Superintendent of Communications Charles S. Jones. He said "this was done in the interest of efficiency and economy and did not mean the police and fire chiefs had no official association with the system." ([Cincinnati Post - May 16, 1942](#))

A Political Disagreement

A clash unfolded between members of city council at City Manager Sherill regarding centralized communications. Members of the council finance committee argued that the city's fire marshals should be able to radio to one another directly rather than through a Station X radio operator, but the city manager and communications superintendent argued in favor of the present system ([Cincinnati Post - May 19, 1942](#)). Experts from the centralized communications operation said that "for all cars to be able to communicate with each other without going through the central station would lead to confusion." The city manager "cited successful operation of the system on thousands of calls

as proof of its efficiency" ([Cincinnati Post - May 26, 1942](#)). The city hall reporter at the Cincinnati Post wrote that the controversy was all likely politics at play; "Anti-Sherrill Group Welcomes Quarrel Over Radio System - Political Motives Seen as Cause of Disagreement" ([Cincinnati Post - May 30, 1942](#)).



Cincinnati police officers use their cruiser's two-way radio to contact Station X:

1946

The Federal Communications Commission ordered that all police and fire emergency radio channels be moved to a different frequency band, according to C.S. Jones, superintendent of communications. The change from the 30-40 megacycle band to the 152-162 megacycle band must be complete by 1951 and was expected to cost the city \$200,000 to complete. ([Cincinnati Post - October 31, 1946](#))

1948

Need help? Dial CH 1212.

"These pictures show the steps by which a citizen's telephone call for help quickly is translated into police action in Cincinnati. By dialing or calling CHerry 1212, a distressed citizen speedily can set the entire process into motion. That magic number is linked to Station X, the radio nerve center of the Police Department." (Read more: [Cincinnati Enquirer - March 15, 1948](#)) Before seven-

digit dialing, a "telephone exchange name" typically was used as a two-letter code before four or five numbers. CH was pronounced as Cherry so that it was easily understood. (Wikipedia: [Telephone exchange names](#))



Station X Staff Join Union

Operators and technicians of Station X (WKDU) joined Local 1224, Radio Broadcast Technicians (AFL). The WKDU employees, presently receiving a wage of \$66.35 per week, asked that their pay be boosted to \$90 a week considering that persons holding similar jobs at commercial radio systems get \$101.50. ([Cincinnati Post - July 17, 1948](#))

1949

Transition from WKDU to KQA387

"For 19 years Cincinnati police radio broadcasters have been identifying their station by the call letters WKDU," the Cincinnati Enquirer reported. "For 19 years they automatically ended each transmission by saying 'WKDU,' signifying 'end of message, there is nothing more to say.' And for as long as two-way radio has been in operation the officers in the cruisers, scout cars and patrols have done likewise. Since habits of long standing are not easily broken, it was expected that confusion would arise when the station's call letters were changed to KQA 387 the first of this month." Read more: ([Cincinnati Enquirer - May 16, 1949](#))

A Station X dispatcher, Patrolman Herman Meyer, told the Cincinnati Post about a chilling call he answered in which he heard a gunshot that turned out to be a double murder at 717 W. Seventh Street. ([Cincinnati Post - December 13, 1949](#))

1950

"An amateur-police radio network reached halfway around the world Wednesday to tell Mrs. Anna K. Bill, of 4307 W. Eighth street, that her son, Marine Pfc. Gordon Leahy, 20, is safe but wounded in a Navy hospital in Japan." Read the full story: ([Cincinnati Post - December 14, 1950](#))

The Cincinnati Post reported that the "city's tallest policeman" Patrolman Harry Koester, who had been working as a broadcaster for several years at Station X was being transferred "back on his feet downtown" where the public could soon get a look at him again. ([Cincinnati Post - December 28, 1950](#))

1951

Tow Rotation System

Cincinnati Police announced a plan in partnership with the Auto Club which would funnel all requests for a wrecker through Station X. The plan was expected to end complaints of favoritism based on the past practice of officers summoning wreckers directly from accident scenes, and it was also expected to lower costs for the public due to negotiated towing rates. ([Cincinnati Post - May 4, 1951](#))

1952

In the first year of a rotational system for summoning wreckers through Station X, 847 such requests were handled. ([Cincinnati Police - December 30, 1952](#))

1953

A fire department capital improvement project will add 800 fire alarm boxes around the city, bringing the total up to 1,850 boxes, and add new fire dispatch equipment at Station X. ([Cincinnati Post - December 9, 1953](#))

1954

Station X in Advertising

The Cincinnati and Suburban Bell Telephone Company published an

advertisement in the Cincinnati Post that highlighted the ability to reach Station X as a selling point for telephone service. ([Cincinnati Post - January 19, 1954](#))

The Cincinnati Post told of a visit to Station X: "We all went to Eden Park where the Police and firemen kept watch over us through the day and the night. In what once was known as Eden Park water tower are Station X of the police and the alarm system of the firemen." Read more: ([Cincinnati Post - May 5, 1954](#))

1955

Comfort in Station X

The city awarded a \$5,366 contract to install air conditioning in the Communications Building at Eden Park. ([Cincinnati Post - June 10, 1955](#))

1956

Making Station X "Holdup-Proof"

"City Manager C. A. Harrell yesterday asked City Council for authority to spend \$5000 for 'holdup-proofing' police radio Station X in Eden Park. The security measures are necessary, he said, because Station X is manned by unarmed police personnel and 'is exceedingly vulnerable to any intruder who might decide to dictate dispatching of police equipment to his own advantage.' The plan provides for installation of an alarm system, bullet-proof glass and wire mesh enclosures for personnel, and two wire mesh doors with automatic time switches operated from within Station X." ([Cincinnati Enquirer - March 7, 1956](#))

"The foot officer is disappearing," wrote the Cincinnati Post in a profile of a day in the life of Cincinnati police officers. The city still reportedly had 22 foot beats, on which officers (who did not yet have portable two-way radio technology) used police call-boxes to check in with Station X each hour. However, those beats were not often manned, in favor of officers patrolling in scout cars. ([Cincinnati Post - April 2, 1956](#))



1958

Testing Portable Radios for Foot Beat Officers

Cincinnati has begun testing portable radio receivers to be carried by police officers assigned to a foot beat. Up until this point, unlike radio-equipped motorized patrols, foot officers have continued to check in once per hour by police call box and were otherwise out of communication. ([Cincinnati Post - January 29, 1958](#))

Station X Averages 2,400 Calls a Day

The Cincinnati Post profiled the work of Station X, reporting that at least 2,400 calls are received each day, and as much as 2,700 on busy days. Experienced patrolmen acted as the dispatcher, aided by civilian radio operators who handled inter-city and inter-state radiograms and tended the radio electronics. The profile describes the system of lights used to track the status of police cars and the process of dispatching. Read more: ([Cincinnati Post - February 3, 1958](#))



Campbell County KY police began using their own two-way police radio station, broadcasting from Alexandria. ([Cincinnati Post - June 19, 1958](#))

1959

City Proceeds with Portable Radio Purchase After 1-Year Test

"About 70 small pocket radio receivers, costing about \$25 each, will be purchased, mainly for use by officers in the Basin area and the suburban sections of Districts 3, 4, 5 and 6," reported the Cincinnati Post. The radios will be used by foot patrol officers to receive orders from Station X, and at least one officer in each two-officer patrol cruiser will carry the radio any time he is away from the car. The radios are receive-only. ([Cincinnati Post - January 9, 1959](#))

Station X Emergency Phones on Columbia Parkway

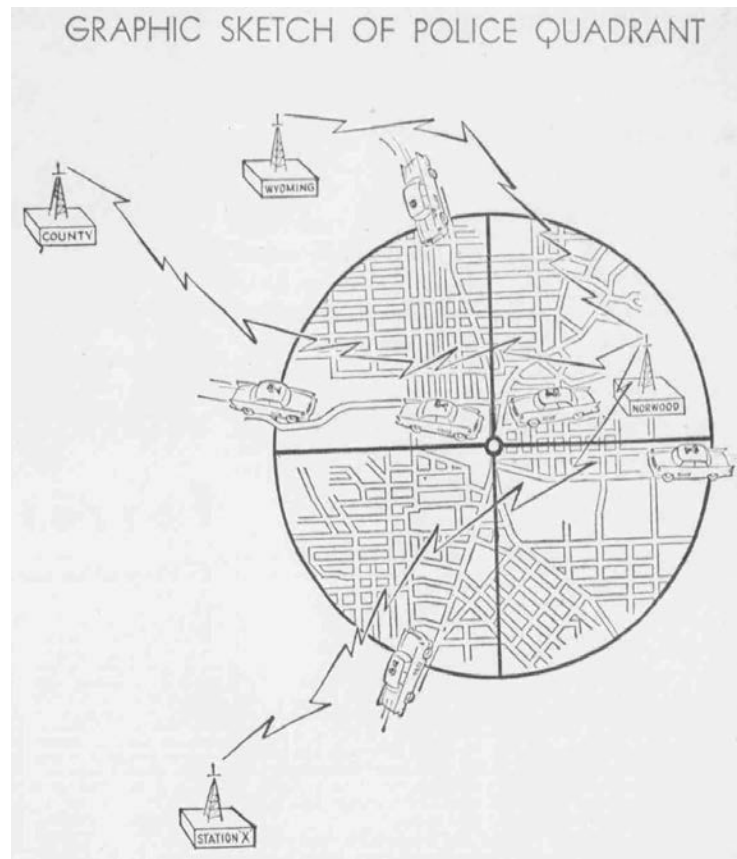
Six public telephones are installed along Columbia Parkway that ring directly to Station X, allowing motorists to report traffic emergencies. ([Cincinnati Post - April 6, 1959](#))

1960

Police Quadrant System - Birth of the All-County Broadcast

"Establishment of the electronic network for the quadrant system fell to James L. Hearn, a supervisor for 18 years in Cincinnati's Communications Division. Hearn, a native Cincinnati who began in city communications as a radio operator 28 years ago, had the answer when quadrant committee members waited on him.

There was a device, he said, [...] that could give the county's communications systems one voice." (Read more: [Cincinnati Enquirer - February 28, 1960](#))



Regional Radio Tie-In Proposed

A regional tie-in of police radio systems was proposed by James L. Hearn, Assistant Superintendent of Cincinnati's Bureau of Police and Fire Communications. In this proposed system, a silent monitor device would be connected to the police radio systems of Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Covington, Newport, Ft. Thomas, Bellevue, Dayton, Campbell County and Erlanger. Any dispatcher in the network would be able to activate the proposed system, which would alert Station X to rebroadcast the message. (Cincinnati Post - [March 11, 1960](#) and [March 22, 1960](#))

Air Defense Warning System

Public concern over new international tension prompted many calls of concern to local Civil Defense (CD) officials. The Cincinnati Post reported that the air defense warning system, which consisted of an alert sent by Wright Patterson Air Force Base, was monitored by CD officials during the day time, and monitored by Station X after hours. Due to increasing public concern, CD officials planned to resume 24-hour monitoring, which had been discontinued two years earlier. ([Cincinnati Post - May 20, 1960](#))

1961

World Series - New York Yankees v. Cincinnati Reds

Three games of the [1961 World Series](#) were played in Cincinnati's Crosley Field. To assist with traffic, the "Copter Cop" (Lt. Arthur Mehring) flew before and after each game, radioing reports of traffic tie-ups to Station X so that instructions could be given to traffic officers on the ground. ([Cincinnati Post - October 6, 1961](#))

1962

Dispatcher Diction

"The 14 dispatchers at Station X will be given voice training, probably under a nationally-recognized speech therapist," reported the Cincinnati Post. "The dispatchers, who have no formal speech training, all are police officers who have been removed from active duty due to disabilities of one kind or another." ([Cincinnati Post - September 5, 1962](#))

1963

With a price increase to 50 cents for Station X dispatching expected, the Village of Elmwood Place contracted with St. Bernard for dispatch services at a rate of 20 cents per dispatch. ([Cincinnati Post - February 11, 1963](#))

Eli Laakko, a radio-operator technician at Station X since 1931, retired after 33 years of city service. He started his career as a "radiotrician" and was one of the original seven men assigned to operate Station X when it began round-the-clock operation. Besides Laakko, there were three others of the original seven on active duty. ([Cincinnati Post - May 1, 1963](#))

Station X began a trial of being looped in to the Hamilton County Police Teletype Network. The network connected the Hamilton County Communications Center, Sheriff's Office, and 21 suburban police departments. ([Cincinnati Post - August 17, 1963](#))

1964

The Hamilton County Police Teletype Network was reported to be expanding to connect with both Cincinnati and with the State Highway Patrol in Columbus. By

connecting to Columbus, the participating departments in Hamilton County would be able to communicate with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and the Bureau of Criminal Identification. ([Cincinnati Post - March 2, 1964](#))

The Cincinnati Post profiled a 24-hour period of Station X dispatches: "Station X - 24-Hour Radio Saga of City" ([Cincinnati Post - October 13, 1964](#))

Station X Converts from AM to FM Radio Frequency

Radio and electronics stores received quite the demand for radios that were capable of picking up Station X on its new FM frequency. ([Cincinnati Post - November 20, 1964](#))



A message is transmitted from Station X in 1964:

1965

Electronic Police Timer

Safety Director Robert Lockridge reportedly asked City Council for \$11,000 to purchase an electrical timer to be used at Station X to improve officer safety. The timer would begin counting when a policeman reports they are leaving their cruiser for an investigation, and if the officer has not called back in and the timer elapses, a red warning signal would flash at Station X. Presently, five police

cadets are tasked with manually tracking the time officers are spending away from their cars, and the electronic system would replace that manual effort. Station X dispatchers would have buttons to begin a timer for each of the 115 police cars in use at any one time. (Cincinnati Post - [February 2, 1965](#) and [June 8, 1965](#))

Greatest Hits of Station X

A 1965 story in the Cincinnati Post made this claim regarding Station X in the 1930s: "In those days, Station X had a guy named Smittie who played a guitar and harmonica. He also sang. Nights when nothing was happening, officers could phone Smittie and make musical requests, which were sung and played over the radio." ([Cincinnati Post - October 25, 1965](#))

1967

- According to statistics published the following year: "Station X was 'on the air' 1,325,901 times in 1967. This included 730 calls handled for city departments other than police, and 404 messages relayed for other cities (at 50 cents a message). ([Cincinnati Post - August 30, 1968](#))

•

1968

Telephone Company Strike

A strike of workers at the Cincinnati and Suburban Bell Telephone Company prompted [this message to the public in the Cincinnati Post on April 20, 1968](#). Telephone company operators were on strike, and supervisors were filling in. Although the company had introduced seven-digit dialing in 1962 (and Station X had an emergency number, then 241-1212), many people called the operator and asked for the police, or for Station X. The message in the newspaper urged the public to make note of the emergency numbers for their area, so they could call directly.

The Cincinnati Post reported that Cincinnati police considered installing scramblers on their radios to prevent criminals from eavesdropping on police messages, but found the technology too costly for a large city with hundreds of police cruisers. ([Cincinnati Post - June 28, 1968](#))

Two-Way Radios Coming to Cincinnati Police

On [July 26, 1968, the Cincinnati Post reported](#): "Within two years, Cincinnati Police cars will be stripped of their two-way radios. It won't leave police in-communicado. The car radios will all be replaced with pocket-sized transistorized walkie-talkies. Each man will be issued one as regular equipment, just like a

badge, nightstick, and gun. He'll be in constant touch with Station X wherever he goes, in or out of his car."

Station X photographed in 1968. From rear to front: Ernie Harper, Kyle McAninch, Russ Boehm, Bernie Hester



1969

Budget Request for New Communications Center

As part of the 1969 capital budget, the city administration asked for \$815,000 to add a third floor to the police administration building at 310 Lincoln Park Drive (now Ezzard Charles) and \$900,000 for new communications equipment. The third floor was planned to replace the facility used by Station X in Eden Park. ([Cincinnati Post - February 17, 1969](#))

Funds Approved for Individual Radios and New Center

The Cincinnati Post shared additional details about the plan for a new facility and new radio equipment, following council approval of the capital budget request. "Cincinnati police are going to get a new communications center and individual radios within a year," the Post reported. "The center will include a six-channel radio system linking every policeman in the city to the base station." The city's safety director said that "the individual radios will be a big step toward getting policemen out of their cruisers and onto the streets." The planned six-channel radio system was explained as a benefit over the current single channel, which caused policemen to "stand in line" to contact Station X, according to Vincent Grote, head of the city's communications department. "Two of the six channels would be for an east-west operation with separate dispatchers handling the calls. Another channel would be city-wide, one would be for inquiries, one for investigative personnel, and one for command officers." ([Cincinnati Post - February 18, 1969](#))

Obstacles Seen to Single Emergency Phone Number

The Hamilton County Police Association (HCPA) convened a committee to discuss the proposed 9-1-1 universal emergency number with the Cincinnati and Suburban Bell Telephone Company. Telephone company officials indicated that they could implement the new number within six months, but only if there were one or two communications centers handling the emergency calls. At the time, thirty-eight communities in Hamilton County were serviced by nineteen communications control points. ([April 3, 1969](#))

Construction of New Radio System

The Cincinnati Post reported that work was about to begin on the city's multi-site radio system: "Communications Division will soon start erecting antennas for new, very high frequency police and fire radio system. There will be 16 of them, replacing one lone tower now (at Station X in Eden Park). Three are to be on park property, two on city playgrounds, seven on firehouses, and four on Waterworks towers. Multiple antennas will eliminate "dead spots" in present system (worst dead spot: Along River Road in Riverside, Sayler Park). Eight of the new antennas will be on 150-foot towers, two on 100-foot towers, and the rest on top of existing buildings." ([Cincinnati Post - June 27, 1969](#))

Future Portable Police Radios Demonstrated

"Lt. Col. William Bracke, commander, Inspection Services Bureau, and Vincent Grote, superintendent, Division of Communications, modeled the combination portable radio transmitters and receivers and explained how they'll work to the policemen of Division One and Traffic Bureau." ([Cincinnati Enquirer - July 8, 1969](#))



—Enquirer (Herb Heise) Photo

New Crime Fighting Weapon

... Grote, left, holds detective model while Bracke holds uniformed police unit

1970

Station X Alarm Service Proposed

Several banks in the city had alarms terminating at Station X through service provided by private alarm companies. With Station X moving soon to a new communications center, City Manager Krabach asked council to consider allowing the center to directly provide an alarm service to businesses and institutions that handle a large volume of cash. The proposed system would

include a panel at the new Station X facility capable of interfacing up to 96 alarms, with the option to expand with addition panels of 24 alarms. ([Cincinnati Post - March 10, 1970](#))

Protection Against Bombs

City Manager Richard Krabach informed council regarding security measures being taken to secure city facilities "from would-be revolutionary bombings." The Post reported: "The Communications Building (Station X) has been physically secured by reinforcement of exposed areas, fencing and a closed circuit television system which monitors and controls the main gate." ([Cincinnati Post - November 17, 1970](#))



Image from the [Cincinnati Enquirer on October 5, 1970](#).

Bomb is Found at Station X

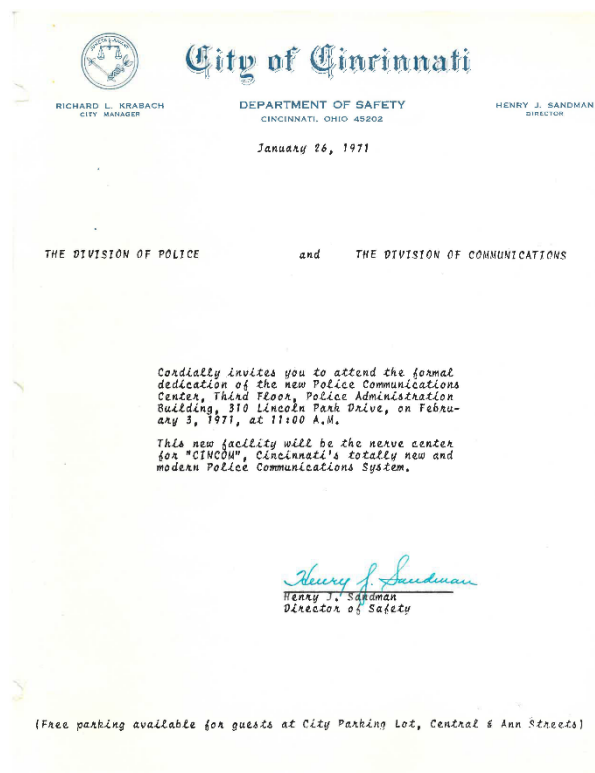
According to a report in the Cincinnati Post, a homemade bomb made out of a plumbing pipe, explosive powder, and a cigarette used as a wick was found on the side steps of Station X by a custodian. The cigarette wick was found only partially burned. ([Cincinnati Post - December 10, 1970](#))

1971

Station X Moves Into New Center at Police Headquarters

On February 3 at 11am, Station X moved from the Eden Park building to the new \$1.4 million communications center facility on the third floor of police headquarters, at what was then 310 Lincoln Park Drive. With this change, police officers began communicating with their battery-powered portable radios, and the six-channel police radio system was put into use. Dispatching was split into east and west zones. ([Cincinnati Post - February 3, 1971](#))

An invitation from Henry J. Sandman, Director of Safety, wrote: "The Division of Police and The Division of Communications cordially invites you to attend the formal dedication of the new Police Communications Center, Third Floor, Police Administration Building, 310 Lincoln Park Drive, on February 3, 1971, at 11:00 A.M. This new facility will be the nerve center for "CINCOM", Cincinnati's totally new and modern Police Communications System."



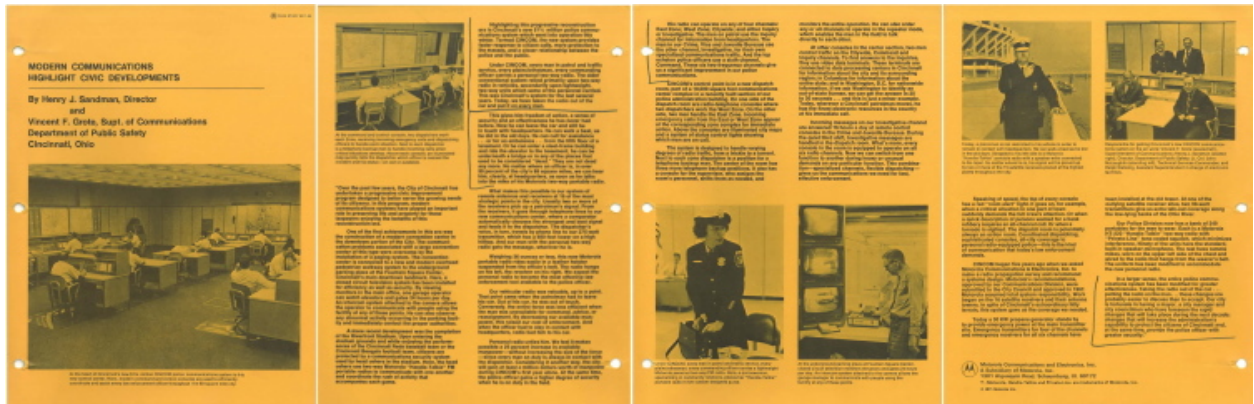
The Cincinnati Enquirer published a lengthy magazine article regarding Station X history and the move to new communication center above police headquarters. ([Cincinnati Enquirer - February 7, 1971](#))

Change to Emergency Number

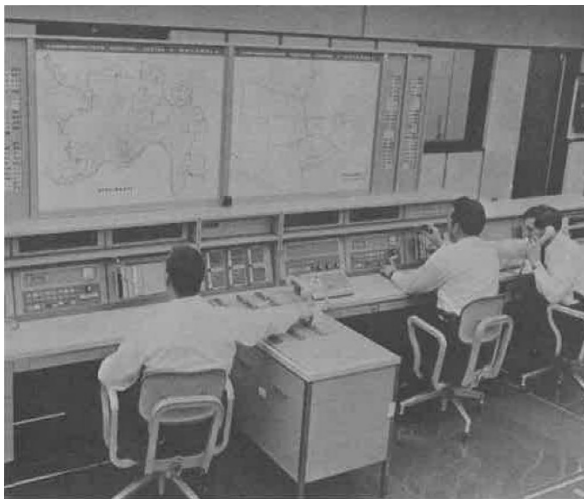
The police emergency number in Cincinnati was changed to 765-1212, according to an announcement in the Post. ([Cincinnati Post - June 1, 1971](#))

Case Study: "Modern Communications Highlight Civic Developments"

A "case study" written by the city's safety director and communication division superintendent was published by Motorola in 1971, and it highlighted the technology and thinking behind the new communications center. Click the image below to open the full document.



From the study: "At the heart of Cincinnati's new \$1.25 million CINCOM police communications system is the new control center. Here, modern command and control consoles are used to efficiently coordinate and assist every law enforcement officer through



From the study: "At the command and control console, two dispatchers work each Zone, receiving incoming emergency calls and dispatching officers to handle each situation. Next to each dispatcher is a telephone backup man to handle incoming calls when cri



From the study: "Under CINCOM, every man in patrol and traffic service, every plainclothesman, every commanding officers carries a lightweight Motorola personal two-way FM radio. Here, a policewoman, specializing in community relations, places her "Han



From the study: "Today, a patrolman is not restricted to his vehicle in order to remain in contact with headquarters. He can walk a beat as he did in the old days. Strapped to his side is a Motorola "Handie-Talkie" portable radio with a speaker-mike conn



From the study: "Responsible for getting Cincinnati's new CINCOM communications system on the air were: Vincent F. Grote (seated left), Superintendent of Communications; Henry J. Sandman (seated right), Director, Department of Public Safety; Lt. Col. Joh

1973

According to the Cincinnati Post, the Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration awarded a grant: "Cincinnati received \$75,000 to help the police communications center maintain and improve services. The funds will be used to hire personnel to screen calls to the police." ([Cincinnati Post - May 11, 1973](#))

Operational Changes

According to a [Cincinnati Enquirer article on June 3, 1973](#), the following operational changes were in the works:

The city's police districts had been divided in half, dispatched by an east and west dispatcher, since 1971. In 1973, a 'Community Sector Policing' initiative put more officers in District 1, and that significantly increased radio traffic to the point that the districts sharing the channel had little chance to transmit. Therefore, a channel was dedicated to 'ComSec' operations.

Three men had been dedicated to answering the 96 incoming telephone lines, and that number was expanded to six. When a call was

received, a color-coded card was completed and hand-delivered to the appropriate dispatcher. To streamline this process, a conveyor was added to carry the card from the telephone operator to the dispatcher.

A single computer used to perform inquiries with the Regional Criminal Information Center (RCIC) was proving to be a bottleneck. To speed the process, a second man and computer was to be positioned beside each of the three dispatchers.

Planning was in progress for a staff of twelve "Secondary Complaint Operators" to handle calls that do not require a police presence.

Planning was in progress for a "call stacking" system that was to categorize calls based on their seriousness into "Urgent" "Expedite" and "Routine" with a color coding.

Future plans under consideration included what we know today as a Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, used to electronically enter incident details received by a call-taker and route the incident to a dispatcher for assignment. Also under consideration was police vehicle locator technology, so that dispatchers could instantly see which officer was the closest to send.

Enquirer Profile of the Fire Tower

The "Fire Tower" (fire department dispatchers) remained in the Eden Park facility following the move of police communications staff to the center at police headquarters. An Enquirer reporter profiled a day in the lives of the fire dispatchers. (Read more: [Cincinnati Enquirer - September 4, 1973](#))



Surrounded By Electronic Gear, Operators Man Radios

... Jack Madden, right, takes call while John Lindemann stands by to broadcast; tape recorder, center, files calls

Pilot of Civilian Police Dispatchers

"Three civilians are being hired to see if Cincinnati policemen can be freed from police dispatching duty to do more police-like work," reported the Cincinnati Post. The center, at this point, was staffed with a lieutenant, five sergeants, 47 patrolmen, 23 police cadets, and four civilian clerks who operated computer terminals. The first two civilian dispatchers were named as Ms. Deborah Neudigate and Mr. Arthur Elkins, and the third was yet to be hired. ([Cincinnati Post - December 7, 1973](#) and [a correction](#))

Police Radio Experiment - Matching People to the Job

The Cincinnati Enquirer profiled the pilot project of civilian police dispatchers in more detail. "The idea behind the experiment is not only to free more police to street duty, but to more effectively match Station X dispatchers and complaint operators with the job, said Lt. Col. William R. Bracke. For years, we really haven't assigned people to the Communications Section with the feeling of matching the employee to the job, Col. Bracke explained." For the first time, with the help of researchers at the University of Dayton, they will use a test devised to measure a candidate's ability to communicate with the types of systems and techniques required in a police communications center. The first three in the pilot program started the week of the article's publication. "Miss Neudigate and two male fellow civilians who will start work with her - Dick Young and Arthur Elkins - are part of a \$34,268 experiment which may culminate a year from now - when results are evaluated - in the replacement of 47 policemen and 23 police cadets at Station X with civilians."

(Read more: [Cincinnati Enquirer - December 19, 1973](#))

1980

Police and Civilians Work at Communications

An Enquirer profile of the mix of staff in Communications reported that, in May 1980, there were 43 civilians and 34 police officers working in the center. They worked three rotating shifts, and two overlapping shifts. ([Cincinnati Enquirer - May 30, 1980](#))

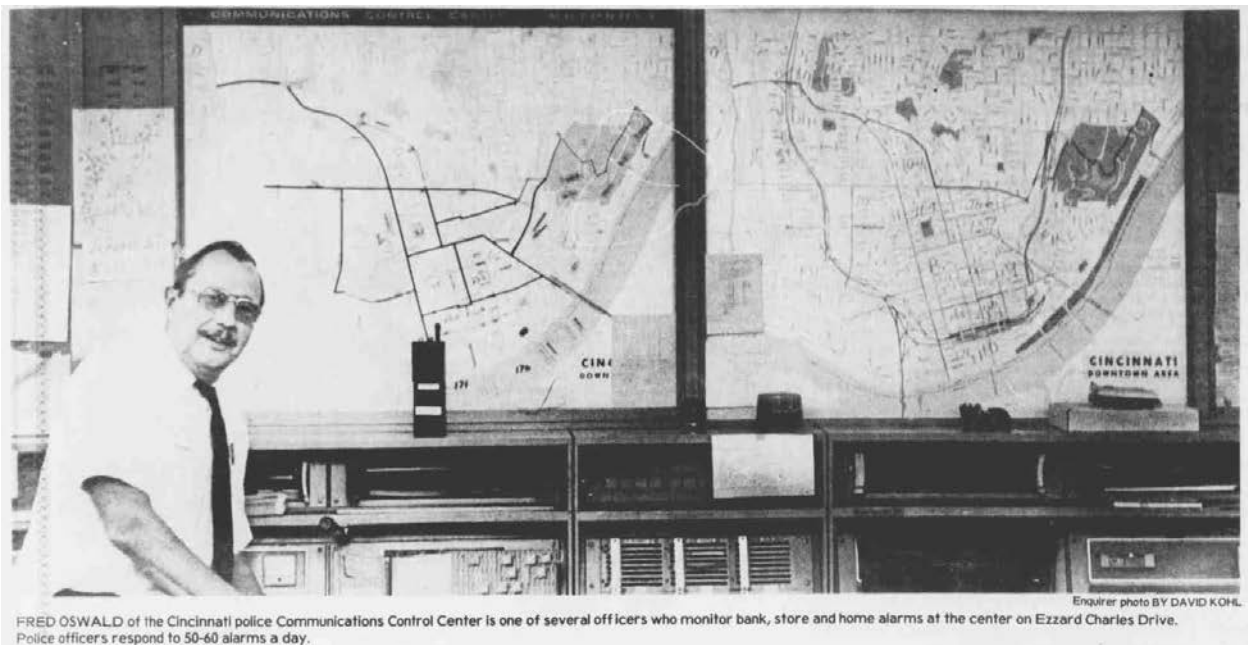


1981

Letter of Intent for 9-1-1 Service

Local governments and Cincinnati Bell moved one step closer to establishing an Enhanced 911 phone system. Cincinnati and Clermont County signed letters of intent with Cincinnati Bell, asking the company to study and plan for the implementation of E911 in their communities. Similar negotiations were in progress with Hamilton and Butler counties. ([Cincinnati Post - April 17, 1981](#))

"Police May Act Against Alarms that Cry Wolf"



"Fred Oswald of the Cincinnati police Communications Control Center is one of several officers who monitor bank, store and home alarms at the center on Ezzard Charles Drive. Police officers respond to 50-60 alarms a day."

(Read more: [Cincinnati Enquirer - November 30, 1981](#))

1982

Task Force Reviews Emergency Medical Services

Dr. Williams Gates, president-elect of the Cincinnati Academy of Medicine, was asked to chair a taskforce that examined Cincinnati's emergency medical

services. A lack of paramedic units in the city, coupled with the difficulty classifying the urgency of medical calls over the telephone by a dispatcher, led to a number of recommendations to the EMS and dispatching system, including a recommendation to implement the 911 emergency number. "Who's to decide if it's an emergency? In Cincinnati, it is the dispatchers, civil servants in the Telecommunications Division. That is totally unfair to them, said Gates. I don't know any doctor alive who would sit in their chairs and make decisions without examining the patient." [Today, a medical call-taking protocol system rooted in science and research enables 9-1-1 to prioritize incidents, gather the right information, and provide life-saving instruction to callers. This did not exist in Cincinnati in 1982.]

Read more: ([Cincinnati Post - October 18, 1982](#))

Cost of Proposed 9-1-1 System

Cincinnati Bell met with community representatives and presented the cost of implementing a 9-1-1 service. To equip all of greater Cincinnati with a universal emergency number, the cost was estimated at \$4.1 million to install and \$117,712 to operate. These costs were based on the existing 24 answering points in the region, and Cincinnati Bell suggested that money could be saved by reducing to 8 answering points. ([Cincinnati Post - November 17, 1982](#))

1983

"Voters should decide whether an emergency 911 telephone system is put into operation in the Greater Cincinnati area, say members of a committee advocating the system here." ([Cincinnati Post - April 20, 1983](#))

"Efforts are being made to get the state legislature to approve a surcharge in Ohio so costs of the system could be added to phone bills of customers," a Cincinnati Bell representative told the Cincinnati Post. ([Cincinnati Post - June 6, 1983](#))

A delegation from the Cincinnati area traveled to Columbus to meet with the executive board of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO) to discuss the Enhanced 911 system proposed for greater Cincinnati. The CCAO agreed to assist in the preparation of enabling legislation that is necessary at the state level. ([Cincinnati Post - June 10, 1983](#))

1985

An editorial in the Cincinnati Post advocated for passage of a 911-related bill that was before the Ohio legislature. "The 911 system would provide an easily

remembered way to get instant help in an emergency, and the price is right. The General Assembly should adopt the Finan-Aronoff bill, and it should be implemented in Hamilton County as soon as possible. ([Cincinnati Post - April 27, 1985](#))

"The Ohio legislature last week passed a bill which its sponsors say will encourage communities and local phone systems to invest in the equipment to make 911 possible. The bill awaits the signature of Gov. Richard Celeste." ([Cincinnati Post - June 10, 1985](#))

911 Emergency Phone Bill Becomes Law

"Today Gov. Richard Celeste signed a bill that paves the way for the enhanced 911 emergency phone system statewide," the Cincinnati Post reported.

"Cincinnati and Hamilton County emergency service officials have long advocated an enhanced 911 system as a potentially life-saving improvement. More than 40 major U.S. cities already have the service." This legislation finally resolved the issue of cost; telephone companies would cover the cost of installation and receive a tax credit in return, and telephone customers would fund operating costs with a 15-cent per month charge. The next step identified for each Ohio county was to convene a 911 planning committee and develop that county's plan. ([Cincinnati Post - June 18, 1985](#))

"The six-county Greater Cincinnati area will have a 911 system within two years. That's how long Cincinnati Bell estimates it will take to install the equipment." ([Cincinnati Post - November 21, 1985](#))

1988

"As many as 20 percent of the 2,500 daily callers to the city's emergency communications office get the recording [asking them to hold]," the Cincinnati Post reported. "The total includes officers trying to reach wreckers and other ancillary services. Except in large crises, [a police sergeant said], they are not on hold long. But to the caller, a few seconds can seem like forever." A machine installed in January 1988 kept daily counts of how often the "hold" recording was used, and a panel on the wall of the ECC showed operators how long the calls have been holding. In addition, later that week, 12 new E-911 operators were expected to help reduce the number of times callers get the recording. "The E-911 dispatchers are being added to prepare the city for a new emergency dispatch system to start in August." ([Cincinnati Post - June 29, 1988](#))

Call-Takers and Dispatchers; Police and Fire Dispatchers Together Again

Police and fire dispatching were again under one roof, with fire dispatchers moving to the communications center above police headquarters in preparation for the implementation of 9-1-1 service. A split operation of call-taking and

dispatching began, and the city hired a large quantity of new staff in a new E-911 Operator job classification to handle the expected increase in call volume.

"Cincinnati has hired 82 operators and dispatchers during the past two months. They receive six weeks of training - including two weeks in a classroom studying criminal law, psychology and computer operation - and four weeks at the dispatch center." ([Cincinnati Post - July 6, 1988](#))

Bumpy Adjustments to Computer Dispatching

Although police dispatchers made the switch from manual to computer-aided dispatching two years earlier, the fire dispatchers were forced to make that switch upon moving into the combined center. That transition was difficult, not necessarily to learn to use the computer, but to become fast at it. An expert review recommended more staffing (the center planned to raise the minimum number of call-takers from four to six) and some procedural changes that helped at other communications centers. ([Cincinnati Post - July 15, 1988](#))

Staffing Increase

The city announced that, in addition to the twelve E911 operators being trained to be ready for the August 17th launch of 911 service, they would hire 13 more to be ready by the end of the year. "The 13 operators will be used to reduce the number of callers being put on hold when they require emergency police or fire assistance." The classes of 12 and 13 operators are in addition to the existing 53 operator/dispatchers who worked under the previous dispatching system, and supervisors. ([Cincinnati Post - August 4, 1988](#))

911 System Stands Test of First Day

At noon on August 17, the 911 telephone system officially went live. "The calls that came in ranged from reporting a fire in Over-the-Rhine and a car accident in Sharonville to scores of people who just wanted to see if 911 really worked and children playing with the phone." Read more: ([Cincinnati Post - August 18, 1988](#))

"It's strangely quiet on the third floor of the offices of Cincinnati Police District One on Ezzard Charles Drive. The phones don't ring; they whisper. The main sounds are little computer beeps and keyboard tapping. The cool blue lettering on the computer terminals glows in the dimly lit room. In its first three weeks of operation, Cincinnati's 911 system is taking an average of 500 calls a day and the mechanics are working smoothly." Read more: ([Cincinnati Post - September 10, 1988](#))

1990

"Call 911 - but just for help, officials say"

"Sometimes they call to find out where the Reds are playing. Sometimes they call to find out where to park for an event." City of Cincinnati officials and the

University of Cincinnati launched a \$25,000 public awareness campaign to encourage the proper use of the two-year old 911 system. ([Cincinnati Post - July 4, 1990](#))



E911 Operator Wilkins "An answer to calls for help; City's 911 system marks second year"

The Cincinnati Enquirer featured the communications center in its second year of 9-1-1 service to Cincinnati. "With the 911 emergency phone system, the source of hang-ups and calls with no responses is immediately known. 'We have to call back,' said Mark Wilkins, a 911 operator. 'Someone has to answer the phone and let us know everything is all right. If not, we have to send someone.' Last Thursday, 25 disconnect and eight silent calls had been received during a 24-hour period." (Read more: [Cincinnati Enquirer - July 16, 1990](#))

Note: Mary Wilkins was then in her second year of employment as an Emergency 911 Operator. She went on to retire in 2020 as our highest-seniority call-taker

with just over 32 years of service with the ECC. She started on December 25th, 1988, just shortly after the 9-1-1 telephone number became available in the Cincinnati region. The city brought on staff to handle the call volume associated with the new emergency number, and Mary was part of that new team. She likely handled hundreds of thousands of calls for help in her career.

Communications Study

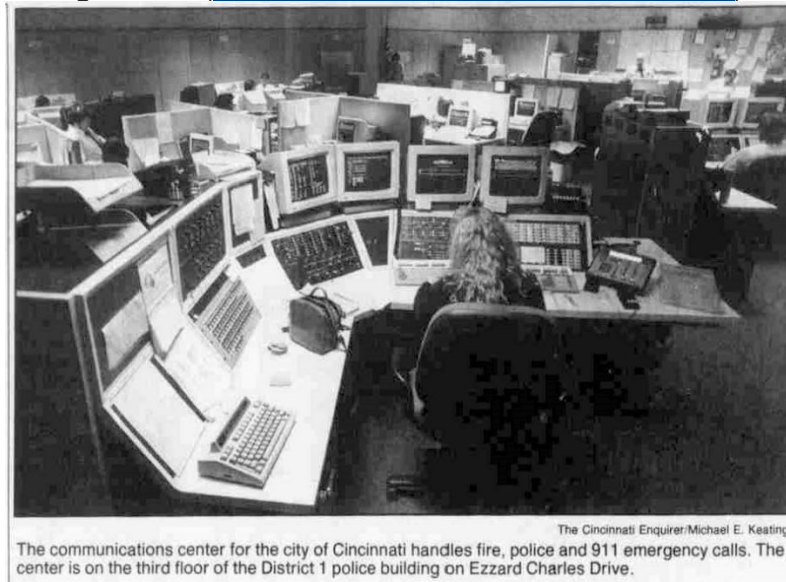
A 'Regional Communications Task Force' wanted the Hamilton County / Cincinnati communications system modernized and recommended a study be conducted. Hamilton County, Cincinnati, and Norwood are reported to be funding the study. "Firefighters throughout the county say the radio communication system is inadequate. The airwaves are cluttered on their low-band frequencies. They want a stronger frequency radio band, such as an 800-megahertz frequency system. Police want to improve their access to the crime-information system kept by the Regional Computer Center." ([Cincinnati Post - October 25, 1990](#))

1994

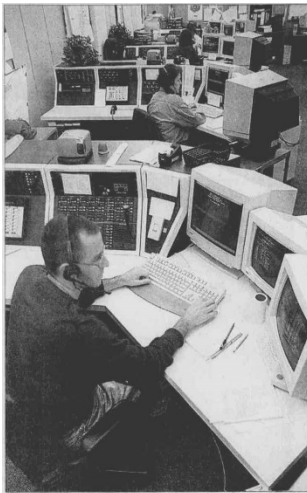
"Officials communicate need for new dispatching system"

The Cincinnati Enquirer reported that city and county officials launched a campaign seeking voter approval for a \$70 million countywide communications system. The goal of the proposal was to create one radio system, using 800-megahertz frequencies, that would be shared by all city and county public safety

agencies. ([Cincinnati Enquirer - March 22, 1994](#))



2000



Cincinnati 911 operator/dispatcher Mark Henriques, here talking to a District 5 police officer, said he has worked a whole shift with only 15 seconds between calls.

"911 operators in their own crisis"

The Cincinnati Enquirer profiled Cincinnati's 911 operators in March 2000, bringing attention to the stressful nature of their work and the fact that their pay was lower than some other, far less stressful city positions. Salaries, at the time, were \$29,169.13 to \$30,601.46 for an Emergency 911 Operator. Operator/Dispatchers, who also were trained to dispatch police, earned \$36,526.47 to \$39,313.70 per year. The article noted that the union representing the 911 workers, AFSCME, recognized that they were underpaid and was in the process of negotiating an increase with the city. "When the 911 operator jobs were created, the city already had assistant operator/dispatchers and operator/dispatchers, and officials wanted to set a pay range that was in line with those other salaries," a city official told the Enquirer. "Mark

Henriques, an operator/dispatcher, filled in one recent night as a 911 operator. He checked after the shift, and for the first two hours, he never had more than 15 seconds between calls, he said. And some operators take even more than the 100 calls a shift that many operators average." Henriques said you have to love the job to say, the Enquirer reported. (Read more: [Cincinnati Enquirer - March 19, 2000](#))

2003

Cincinnati officials asked Congress for \$11.2 million in homeland security dollars to fund a number of preparedness initiatives, including a new 9-1-1 center. The city needs "a new 911 center in a less publicly accessible location than the current one at Central Parkway and Ezzard Charles Drive," according to an article in the Enquirer. "The city is also switching to an 800-megahertz radio system that allows dispatchers to communicate with Hamilton County responders." ([Cincinnati Enquirer - May 2, 2003](#))

2004

City plans new heart for safety

"A computerized command center that will bring Cincinnati's fire, police, and public health officials together with 911 operations is taking shape high atop Knob Hill on the city's west side. The 40,000 square foot building - former Slush Puppie Corp. - is mostly empty now, but plans call for it to be converted into an emergency operations center by the end of the year. ([Cincinnati Enquirer - February 17, 2004](#))

2005

Enquirer: "Our doomsday center: just in case"

Cincinnati was close to moving its 911 operations in to the new Regional Operations Center facility, the Enquirer reported. The Emergency Operations Center portion of the facility, intended to be a place for public safety and public health officials to assemble and coordinate during a significant event, was under construction. "There will be room to bring all of the emergency firefighters, cops, and security officials in Southwest Ohio together. Overlooking the room like a press box is a new Cincinnati dispatching center, where 911 operators will move in soon." ([Cincinnati Enquirer - March 8, 2005](#))

First 9-1-1 Call at New Center

Emergency 911 Operator Kerrie Chaney pictured answering the first 9-1-1 call at the new center:

The first 9-1-1 Call at Radcliff on April 7th, 2005



911-operator Kerrie Chaney

2007

New Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) System

City Manager Milton Dohoney, Jr., informed the Mayor and City Council that a new CAD system had been implemented at the Emergency Communications Center: "The Police Department activated the new Computer Aided Dispatch System on November 27, 2007. The new system replaces the antiquated system implemented in the early 1990's. The system is Microsoft Windows based and provides enhanced functionality and mapping capabilities to assist with the identification of calls from emergency and non-emergency services. In addition, Police Communications Section personnel have developed and implemented a new and accurate Geo-file that contains all new roadways, subdivisions and re-routed roadway in the City as part of the Computer Aided Dispatch Project." ([FYI Memo 2215](#) - January 24, 2008)

Location of Wireless 9-1-1 Callers ("Phase 2")

City Manager Milton Dohoney, Jr., informed the Mayor and City Council that the Emergency Communications Center was now receiving location information on wireless 9-1-1 calls: "Police Communications Section (PCS), relative to 9-1-1 calls for service made from wireless telephones, is now receiving Phase Two information (GPS coordinates of the call). Should a caller be unable to provide their location, the coordinates will be converted to an approximate street address for emergency service response. All wireless carriers in Hamilton County have completed the necessary testing to ensure the accuracy of their respective towers. now that the interface has been activated and testing is completed, all Hamilton County wireless carriers are compliant with FCC regulations, which

require accuracy within 300 meters of the global positioning coordinates received from the wireless carriers' towers." ([FYI Memo 2215](#) - January 24, 2008)

2010

"Manager wants faster, less costly service"

"The Cincinnati Emergency Communications Section handled roughly 1.6 million calls this year and last, sending ambulances to the injured and sick, fire trucks to burning buildings and squad cars to crime victims," the Enquirer reported. "Joel Estes, Cincinnati's new emergency communications manager, hopes to see drops in response time and costs." ([Cincinnati Enquirer - December 25, 2010](#))

2018

Launch of Smart911 Service ([learn more](#))

The City of Cincinnati adopted a service known as Smart911 used by many 9-1-1 centers around the country to provide better information about 9-1-1 callers during an emergency. The system allowed the public to create a secure "safety profile" that could include information such as home and work addresses, vehicle descriptions, medical conditions, allergies, or emergency contacts. If that person or a member of their household were to call 9-1-1 in the future, in Cincinnati or anywhere else that has adopted Smart911 technology, the person answering the phone would have access to the safety profile information, which could potentially be the key needed to save a life. Implementation of Smart911 was an action item on an ECC improvement action plan that was developed in response to the tragic death of Kyle Plush, in the hopes that a Smart911 safety profile would provide crucial information in a similar, future emergency. (Cincinnati Enquirer - [July 13](#) and [July 22, 2018](#))

2019

Launch of Text-to-911 Service ([learn more](#))



The City of Cincinnati began accepting emergency calls by SMS text message in January 2019 with the launch of "Text-to-911" service. This advancement provided a new and more accessible way for citizens to reach emergency services - in particular, the speech and hearing impaired community. It also gave an avenue for someone to reach help if it might be otherwise unsafe to make a voice call, such as a domestic violence situation, or

when hiding from an intruder. "Councilwoman Murray expressed appreciation for the leadership of City Manager Patrick Duhaney and ECC Director Jayson Dunn for their work to provide local first responders with the tools they need to help residents in need as quickly as possible."