



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Brookhaven announces switch to private 9-1-1 emergency dispatch service**

**Brookhaven, GA Mar. 25, 2014** – Brookhaven City Council voted in favor today to enter into an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with 9-1-1 police dispatch service, Chattahoochee River 9-1-1 Authority (ChatComm).

Beginning in the fall, all 9-1-1 calls made by cell or landline in the City of Brookhaven will be answered by a ChatComm emergency operator instead of a DeKalb County dispatcher.

For every emergency call, ChatComm emergency operators will determine the nature and location of the caller's emergency. The operator will dispatch Brookhaven Police or, since DeKalb County still provides fire and emergency medical services (EMS) to the city, the operator will immediately forward the call to DeKalb County Fire/ EMS dispatch using a one-button transfer system.

Brookhaven police will also be dispatched on DeKalb County Fire and/ or EMS calls automatically, depending on the nature of the emergency.

At a council work session meeting held on Feb. 24, Brookhaven Mayor J. Max Davis, City Council and city staff discussed all aspects of the service switch. ChatComm President Joe Estey and former Dunwoody Council Member Danny Ross attended to provide additional insights and answer questions.

The IGA was presented to council at the Mar. 11 meeting, but was deferred to allow additional time for contract negotiations.

"Brookhaven's partnership with ChatComm will allow the city to provide the best possible emergency response services to our residents." Brookhaven Mayor J. Max Davis said.

Per the agreement, at least 90 percent of all 9-1-1 calls will be answered by ChatComm within 10 seconds and processed for dispatch within 60 seconds. ChatComm dispatchers will also remain on the line when connecting callers to DeKalb County Fire and EMS dispatch, providing reassurance that emergency needs are being handled and dictating emergency pre-arrival instructions specific to the emergency.

ChatComm expects that approximately 90 percent of all Brookhaven emergency calls will be for police services, placing a spotlight on the Brookhaven Police Department's goal for three minute response times from the moment that they receive a dispatch call.

"This is where we will see the biggest impact of the switch to ChatComm. Their promised deliverable of a quick dispatch will help Brookhaven Officers consistently respond to incidents as fast as possible, with respect to both officer and resident safety." Brookhaven Police Chief Gary Yandura said.

ChatComm will begin dispatching services for the city of Brookhaven by fall 2014.

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**Q&A: Brookhaven switches to ChatComm**

The following Q&A provides additional information about ChatComm and how it will benefit Brookhaven residents and businesses.

**Q: What is ChatComm?**

The Chattahoochee River 9-1-1 Authority (ChatComm) is a Georgia-based inter-governmental agreement (IGA) that provides 9-1-1 call processing and dispatch services for police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS). The IGA was originally created by Johns Creek and Sandy Springs in 2008 and expanded to provide services to Dunwoody in 2011.

In January of 2009, the design, implementation, management, and staffing was outsourced to a public safety communications consulting firm. IXP is now managing ChatComm under a performance-based contract overseen by representatives from founding cities.

**Q: How will this be different from the city's current dispatch services?**

When a 9-1-1 call is placed in Brookhaven, by cell or landline, the call will be answered by a ChatComm dispatcher instead of a DeKalb County dispatcher. The ChatComm dispatcher will determine the nature and location of the caller's emergency and dispatch Brookhaven Police or immediately forward the call to DeKalb County dispatch for fire or EMS by using the one-button transfer system.

Brookhaven police will be dispatched on DeKalb Fire and/ or EMS calls automatically, depending on the nature of the emergency.

ChatComm will remain on the line with all callers when forwarding Fire/ EMS calls to DeKalb County Dispatch.

Q: Will ChatComm also dispatch DeKalb emergency services like fire and EMS?

ChatComm uses a one button transfer to DeKalb County for any Brookhaven 9-1-1 calls that require DeKalb Fire or EMS. The Brookhaven ChatComm dispatcher will remain on the line with the caller to ensure that DeKalb has received the call and all appropriate information.

In the rare occasion that the DeKalb dispatch line is busy or does not answer the forwarded call within 10 seconds, the ChatComm dispatcher will begin to walk through emergency instructions for the caller until the transfer is complete.

**Q: If I have an emergency, how long will it take for help to be dispatched and arrive?**

At least 90 percent of all calls will be answered by ChatComm within 10 seconds and processed for dispatch within 60 seconds.

Brookhaven Police aim for three minute emergency response times from the moment that they receive a dispatch call. A person calling 9-1-1 for police services in Brookhaven can normally expect to receive help within about five minutes.

ChatComm promises the same dispatch timing when a call is forwarded to DeKalb County for fire/ EMS needs. Arrival times for DeKalb County emergency services vary. These numbers are tracked by the county and not by ChatComm.

**Q: What are the benefits of switching to ChatComm?**

DeKalb County receives a high volume of emergency calls each day. By having ChatComm serve as the primary dispatch service, the city is able to provide the most efficient and best possible service to residents and businesses.

**Q: Is there a cost associated with this switch?**

Costs for 9-1-1 emergency dispatch service are included as a line item on every phone bill. This money is currently sent to DeKalb County, but will go to ChatComm once Brookhaven emergency dispatch services go live.

**Q: If the call for fire or EMS is transferred to DeKalb, will dispatch take longer?**

Dispatch times for DeKalb Emergency Services should remain within the national standard for emergency dispatch and response. However, this information is tracked by DeKalb County and not by ChatComm.

**Q: Where will my 9-1-1 call be dispatched from?**

The dispatch center is located on Mount Vernon Highway in Sandy Springs.

**Q: What if I place a 9-1-1 call from a cell phone?**

The first thing that any emergency service dispatcher will ask you is “what is your location?” When calling 9-1-1, a landline is always best, but ChatComm does have the ability to locate callers who call from a cell phone by using cell towers. The dispatcher may ask for additional location information such as landmarks or street signs that will aid responders in locating the emergency.

**Q: What if I dial 9-1-1 and cannot speak?**

If a dispatcher receives a 911 call and no one is speaking, the call taker will utilize measures to locate where the call is coming from and direct police, fire or EMS to that location. If the call is terminated before the caller can speak to the call taker, the dispatcher will redial the number to reestablish contact and may dispatch police if there is no answer.

**Q: Are ChatComm dispatchers trained to handle 9-1-1 emergencies?**

All dispatchers must complete several months of training and earn certification in Georgia as Emergency Dispatching Operators. ChatComm dispatchers are also certified in emergency medical dispatching, which allows them to give 9-1-1 callers medical emergency, pre-arrival instructions.

**Q: Brookhaven has a diverse population. Are there language services for non-English speakers when they dial 9-1-1?**

ChatComm utilizes the AT&T Language Line in order to provide services to all members of the city's population, including non-English speaking citizens.

**Q: Dunwoody is in the process of developing an interface system to go along with their ChatComm agreement. Is this something that Brookhaven will also be doing?**

The City of Dunwoody is developing a system that links the ChatComm computer aided dispatch (CAD) system to DeKalb County's CAD. Computer aided dispatch is a software program that helps dispatchers provide first responders with information about a 9-1-1 call electronically. Every police department uses CAD software, but not all are coded the same way making the sharing of caller information difficult among separate agencies – such as in the case with local municipalities like Dunwoody and DeKalb County.

To solve this problem, Dunwoody is creating an interface program that translates 9-1-1 call information into a computer language that DeKalb County's program can read.

Dunwoody officials hope that this interface program will shorten dispatch times by eliminating the need for a ChatComm dispatcher to transfer a call to DeKalb for fire or EMS service. Final procedures on how calls will be handled, testing and training are not yet complete.

Due to the cost of developing an interface program and its newness, Brookhaven will not be implementing a CAD interface at this time. The city will follow the national standard, which is the one button transfer system.