



**TOMPKINS COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

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*Coordination of Fire, Disaster, and Emergency Medical Services  
Enhanced 911 and Public Safety Communications*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**New Law Grants ‘First Responder’ Status to 911 Operators and Dispatchers**  
*NY Governor Signs Bill Defining ‘First Responder in Communications’*

(Ithaca, NY) – The Tompkins County Department of Emergency Response is applauding a new law in New York State that broadens the definition of state-recognized first responders to include emergency dispatchers and communications personnel.

Governor Kathy Hochul signed the legislation on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. It had passed with unanimous support in both chambers of the state legislature. New York becomes the seventh state to formalize the designation.

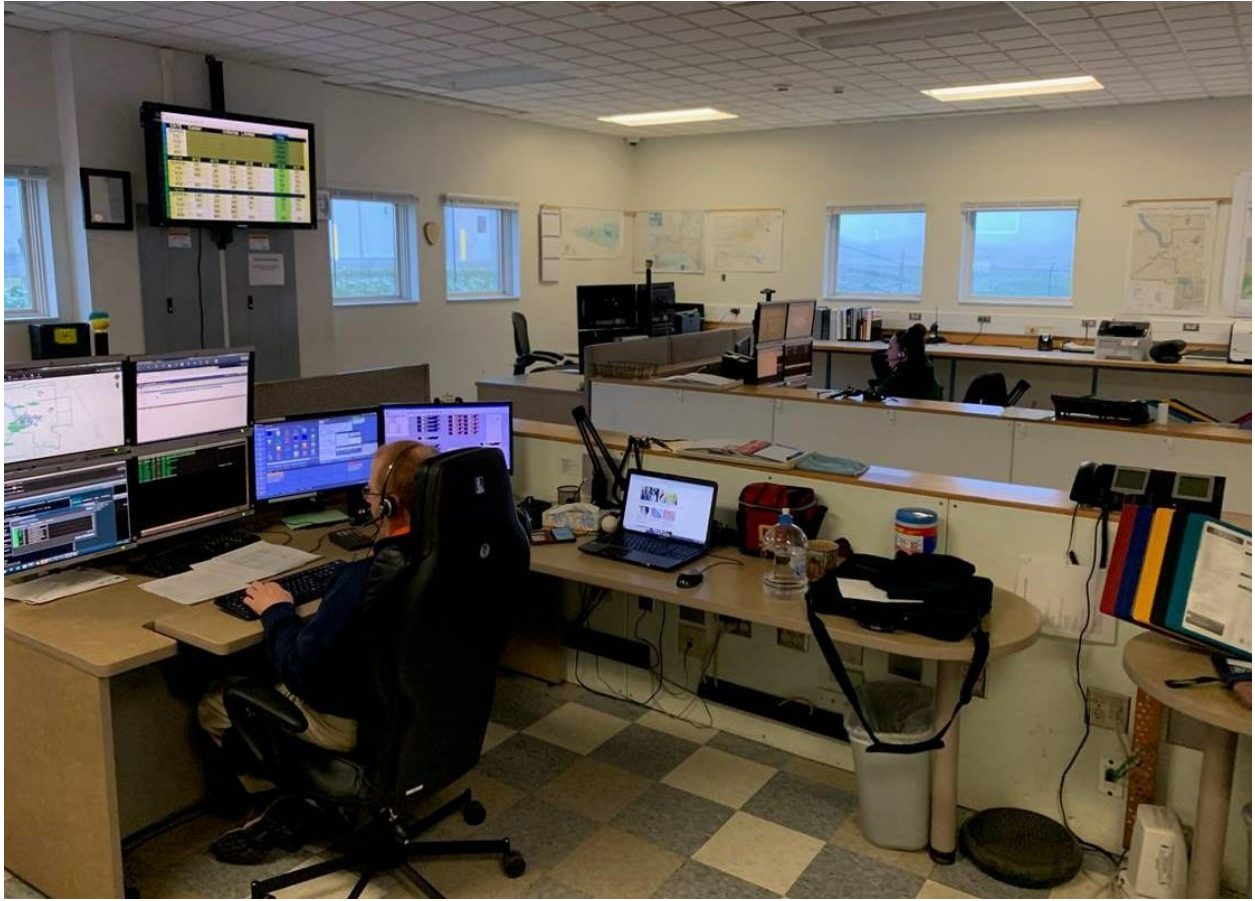
“This recognition is long overdue for these frontline heroes,” said Michael Stitley, Emergency Response Director for Tompkins County. “Public safety telecommunicators are the first point of contact for the public in their time of crisis or need.” He added 911 operators and dispatchers are “crucial to the safety and welfare of our community and are fully deserving of this designation.”

“The public safety professionals in our dispatch center are the first voices you hear when calling 911,” added John Halaychik, Emergency Communications Center Manager. “They are key to relaying necessary information to police, fire and EMS personnel. Without question, they are first responders.”

The new law will open additional training opportunities and access to benefits intended to boost morale and give emergency dispatchers and communications personnel the tools to be more effective at their work.

*Contact: Michael Stitley, Director, Department of Emergency Response, or John Halaychik, Communications Center Manager, 607-257-3888.*

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Dispatchers at work at the Tompkins County 911 Center. *(photo provided)*