

# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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## 9-1-1 in the USA: 50 Years of “*Hearing our calls for help*”, *and a Time to Honor Those, who Answer Those Calls ...*

Did you know that during 2017 residents, visitors, and travelers through Natchitoches Parish called 9-1-1 over 23,000 times? Did you also know that over 50 years ago, in the small town of Haleyville, in the state of Alabama, the nation’s very first 9-1-1 call was made? Well, it’s true. On February 16, 1968, Senator Rankin Fite completed the first 9-1-1 call made in the United States from a small town by the name of Haleyville, Alabama. Decades later and the Haleyville 9-1-1 system is still in operation, and **9-1-1** is one of the most-recognized brand ever created. It is true that this somewhat obscure date in time actually came and went with little fanfare or notice. However, the impact of what occurred on that day over 50 years ago lives on right here in our own parish.

“9-1-1” services in Natchitoches Parish are steered by a local board of Parish Government appointed commissioners, who comprise the Parish 9-1-1 Communications District Board of Commissioners, and the efforts of these dedicated individuals, who volunteer their time and talents to constantly improve 9-1-1 services are to be commended. The day-to-day business of the District is managed by a 9-1-1 Director with the help from of one staff member, who serves as Address Coordinator. While our focus is always on successfully meeting the expectations of our “customers”, it is important to remember that the term “9-1-1” means different things to many people.

For the citizens, who reside outside the City of Natchitoches, our 9-1-1 Addressing Office is your first stop in the process of ensuring that first responders can locate your home or business in times of emergencies. *(Please note, if you reside inside the city limits of Natchitoches, the City Planning and Zoning Department provides this service to you.)* To the public safety call takers/dispatchers, who are the first to answer your call to 9-1-1, and who work for the Natchitoches Parish Sheriff’s Office and the Natchitoches Police department, the 9-1-1 District is the provider of the state-of-the art telephone system that receives your call and provides your location to first responders. 9-1-1 also

provides the emergency power back-up generators that help keep the emergency call center operating even when commercial power is lost. 9-1-1 also provides funding for special training opportunities for call takers/dispatchers to help them prepare for a multitude of emergency situations. For the police, fire, and emergency medical services first responders all across the parish, Natchitoches 9-1-1 is happy to share our geographic information technology, including street, road and address point mapping, which helps them to find you during times of emergency anywhere in the parish. We even go as far as to provide parish road name signs to help them find their way to even the most obscure locations in the parish. The District also maintains a back-up radio system for use in the event of an outage of the primary system. And, the Natchitoches Parish Emergency Warning (Siren) System alerts us all of severe weather or other threats to our safety and well-being.

Our children learn at an early age to call 9-1-1 in an emergency, so it is not surprising that dialing 9-1-1 has become second nature to most of us. Throughout my public safety career, which spans over 46-years, I have personally witnessed the awesome benefits provided by many of the 9-1-1 systems, which are in use all across our nation. The technology, which serves as the backbone of 9-1-1 is amazing, and it continues to evolve every day. However, technology alone does not make our nation's 9-1-1 services great. Critical to 9-1-1's continued success and growth are the efforts of the dedicated individuals mentioned earlier, who volunteer their time and talents in service as 9-1-1 commissioners along with all of the public safety service agencies, who work hand-in-hand with us and provide lifesaving assistance; the many manufacturers and vendors, who produce and sell the products that we use to do our jobs; and the list goes on.

The occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first 9-1-1 call is a great opportunity for all of us to raise awareness of the amazing work by our 9-1-1 systems and the professionals, who operate our 9-1-1 systems not just here in Natchitoches Parish, but from all over the nation. There is another opportunity in a week to not only raise awareness of 9-1-1, but to also say thanks to those, who operate the 9-1-1 systems. President Bill Clinton established National Public Safety Telecommunicator Week by presidential proclamation on April 12, 1994. Each year, the second week in April is set aside to honor and say "thank you" to our nation's public safety telecommunicators, who are the "first.. *first responders*" and who provide us a "Gateway to Public Safety". This year's celebration will take place the week of April 8-14, 2018. Perhaps most critical to the 9-1-1 service, which we all rely upon to keep us safe, are these dedicated individuals, who staff our nation's 9-1-1 call centers, and the ones right here in Natchitoches parish, who answer our calls for help. These folks work tirelessly for long hours and sometimes for low wages, tucked away in the background seldom seen, but always ready, willing and

able to aid and guide you while serving as that lifesaving link between those who need help, and those who provide that help. They are the calm voice on the line that helps us in our most desperate and scary moments. They are the best of the best, and are an essential part of our public safety efforts.

Later this spring the Natchitoches Parish Communications District, along with its public safety partners, will open one of Louisiana's premier Emergency 9-1-1 Communications Centers. The almost 9,000 sq. ft., \$3.2 million facility will provide yet another opportunity for Natchitoches Parish to set the example of how multiple agencies working together, sharing talent and resources can produce spectacular results. Let us not forget, however, that this facility consists simply of "brick and mortar". What will give it a "heart and soul" will be the individuals, who will work within its walls, and within our local public safety community as a whole. We would like to extend many thanks to everyone, who helped make this become a reality for our parish. We will continue to need your help and support as we stay focused on efforts to modernize the Natchitoches Parish 9-1-1 system, and prepare to meet the challenges of tomorrow. The journey from where we are today and where we need to be tomorrow, will not be an easy one, but certainly one worthy of all of our best efforts.

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#### **About the Natchitoches Parish Communications District (Natchitoches 9-1-1)**

*Natchitoches Parish 9-1-1 is committed to providing fast, efficient and effective access to emergency public safety services for all the citizens and visitors to Natchitoches Parish. Since 1988 the "District" has served in a pivotal role ensuring the safety of residents and visitors to Natchitoches Parish by providing the support services, which connects the citizens experiencing emergencies with emergency services via the use of one, easy to remember and simple to use 3-digit number, 9-1-1. The Natchitoches Parish 9-1-1 District provides the equipment and systems necessary to receive 9-1-1 calls from the nearly 40,000 residents of the parish, as well as the ever-increasing numbers of visitors to the area. We are proud to serve as "Natchitoches Parish's Gateway to Public Safety Services". Find out more at:*

[www.natchitoches911.org](http://www.natchitoches911.org).