



# Hamilton County 9-1-1 Emergency Communications District

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For Immediate Release

## Stuermer to Retire from the 9-1-1 Center Operations Director Jeff Carney to Serve as Acting Director

Chattanooga, Tenn. (Nov. 28, 2022) – John Stuermer, who has been the executive director of the Hamilton County 9-1-1 Emergency Communications District since 2004, has announced his intention to retire, effective December 13, 2022. The District’s Board of Directors chose the current operations director, Jeff Carney, to serve as acting executive director, starting December 1, 2022, while a search is conducted to select a permanent executive director.

Stuermer has an extensive history in emergency services in Hamilton County. In 1977, he joined the Chattanooga Police Department and moved up the ranks from patrol officer to supervisor of the special investigations unit and internal affairs. He retired with 27 years of service as captain in command of major investigations and the information center.

In 2004, Stuermer was selected to be the executive director of the Hamilton County 9-1-1 Emergency Communications District, which is more commonly referred to as the Hamilton County 9-1-1 Center. “We started off with six employees,” said Stuermer, reflecting on his long career with the 9-1-1 Center. “We managed the routing of 9-1-1 calls to public safety agencies, providing a county-wide computer aided dispatch (CAD) system, but it was only the beginning.”

In 2006, Stuermer was tasked with managing the effort to unify emergency communications services in Hamilton County, which culminated with the establishment of a county-wide unified emergency communications center in 2009, under the management of the emergency communications district. The unified Hamilton County 9-1-1 Center now has 175 budgeted positions and provides all call taking and dispatch services for all public safety agencies in the county, with the exception of Lookout Mountain and Soddy Daisy.

“One of the many advantages of unification is the interoperability and continuity of services it provides to all agencies,” said Stuermer. “We’re all in the same room and can communicate seamlessly across all agencies.” That continuity was really put to the test when big incidents

occurred, such as the tornado touchdowns in 2011 and the terrorist attack in 2015. “As you can imagine, the call load goes through the roof with events like that,” said Stuermer, “but our telecommunicators, working to serve all of Hamilton County, worked together flawlessly in taking the calls and dispatching first responders across multiple agencies. They do an outstanding job and I’m extremely proud of them!”

There was another good reason for unification. “We were asked to look into unification because thousands of 9-1-1 calls were being abandoned or answered late, far beyond the established time standard for answering 9-1-1 calls,” said Stuermer. “The standard for emergency communication centers is to answer 95% of all 9-1-1 calls within 10 seconds. We are greatly exceeding those standards, answering all calls, 9-1-1 and non-emergency, on the average within four seconds.”

During Stuermer’s tenure as executive director, the Hamilton County 9-1-1 Center has led the state in advancements. It was the first in the state to implement ASAP to PSAP, or Automated Secure Alarm Protocol, to Public Safety Answering Point, eliminating 1 ½ to 3 minutes of response time for each alarm incident. It was the first in the state to provide the “Text 9-1-1” service, and the first to provide the “PulsePoint” mobile phone application to improve the possibility a victim for cardiac arrest calls will receive CPR quickly. Another improvement was the implementation of Mobile CAD and Automatic Vehicle Location (AVI) for public safety agencies, which enables the Hamilton County 9-1-1 Center to see the location of emergency responder vehicles. Knowing their locations can help the 9-1-1 telecommunicator know which units are closest to an incident, which reduces response times.

In a few months, the Hamilton County 9-1-1 Center will see the addition of “RapidSOS Premium,” an emergency response data platform that provides additional features to enhance the CAD system, including the location of body cameras worn by police officers. “It’s not just about shaving seconds off of response times,” said Stuermer, “it’s also about safety. If a police officer becomes isolated and unable to communicate, Stuermer said the telecommunicators will be able to locate the active body camera on the officer and get help on the way. That could be a life saver,” said Stuermer.

When asked what his biggest challenge was as executive director, Stuermer pointed to technology. “It’s a constant challenge to make sure we have the best technology for our first responders and our citizens,” said Stuermer. “We started off with two IT people. Now we have seven to manage all the applications we now use and to stay up-to-date with the latest advancements in technology.”

Over the years, Stuermer has contributed to advances in public safety emergency communication service statewide, actively working with the Tennessee Emergency Numbers Association (TENA), the Association of Public-Safety Officials (APCO) and the Tennessee Emergency Communications Board (TECB). He served as president of TN9-1-1, an organization dedicated to working with the Tennessee legislature to pass legislation to enhance public safety emergency communications in Tennessee. He was recognized for his work by TENA as the recipient of the Senator Joe Haynes award for “going beyond the ordinary to protect Tennessee’s citizens and property.”

As Stuermer wraps up his duties as executive director, he leaves the Hamilton County 9-1-1 Center feeling grateful. "It's been great working with such a talented team that shares the same values of providing the highest quality of emergency communications," said Stuermer. "I could always count on them to do what was necessary and right to get the job done. It's been an honor and a privilege to work with all of them."

Board Chairman Dr. Richard Brown offered high praise for the outgoing executive director. "The Hamilton County 911 Board of Directors pause to celebrate the accomplishments of Executive Director John Stuermer and to extend our heartfelt appreciation to John for his many years of dedicated service and leadership of the District," said Dr. Brown. "Because of John's great work and the commitment to excellence of a great team of employees, our emergency operations center is now benchmarked as one of the best in our state, region, and the nation. We wish John all the best life has to offer as he enjoys a well-deserved retirement phase in his life!"

As for the board's decision to name Jeff Carney as acting executive director, Stuermer was very pleased. "Jeff has been a vital part of the team that has made this district so successful," said Stuermer. "I'm confident that with his leadership, the district is in good hands and will be able to provide the continued high level of service that the citizens of Hamilton County enjoy today."

Carney has been employed for more than 30 years in emergency communications, working his way up the ranks to his current position as operations director. In that capacity, Carney has been responsible for the direction and overall performance of the Emergency Communications Center. He oversees the three shift supervisors, training and quality assurance supervisor, and the terminal agency coordinator.

"The Emergency Communications Center has grown and excelled under John's leadership," said Carney. "I've learned a lot from him over the years and I am grateful for the opportunity the board has afforded me."

Carney holds numerous certifications in emergency communications and currently serves as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President of the Tennessee Emergency Number Association (TENA). He is also chair of the Tennessee Valley Regional Communications System's 9-1-1 Committee and deputy state coordinator for the Tennessee Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce (TERT).

For Carney, high standards and constant training are just part of the job. "I strongly believe in the professional role of the telecommunicator," said Carney, "and I will continue our efforts to establish 9-1-1 as an equal partner in public safety, alongside fire, EMS and law enforcement."