

2024

# EMERGENCY SERVICES QUARTERLY REPORT

JANUARY 1 2024 TO MARCH 31 2024

*Each quarter, the Barron County (WI) Sheriff's Department - Office of Emergency Services publishes a quarterly community report that outlines activities completed over the previous three months, and identifies active initiatives planned over the next three months.*

Barron County Emergency Management, Office of Emergency Services



# GRANTS & FINANCES

## **GRANT FUNDING RECEIVED**

Emergency Management has applied and received the following grants this year:

\$7,234	FY23 Computer & Hazmat Response and Equipment (CHREG) Grant
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**Grant funding received: \$7,234**

## **GRANT FUNDING AWARDED**

Emergency Management has applied and been awarded the following grants this year (pending receipt):

\$44,739	FY23 Emergency Management Performance Grant Closeout (EMPG)
\$12,954	FY23 Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know (EPCRA) Grant

**Grant funding awarded: \$57,693**

## **2023 FUNDING OVERVIEW**

Totals from sections above:

\$7,234	Total Grant Funding Received
\$57,693	Total Grant Funding Awarded (awaiting receipt)
\$0.00	Total Response Reimbursement Received
\$0.00	Total Disaster Reimbursement Received

**Grant funding throughout 2023: \$64,927**

## **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE GRANT (EMPG)**

In early 2024, Congress voted to reduce funding nationwide for the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) by 10%, pursuant to the 2024 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act. This will reduce Barron County's annual amount of \$44,739 to an updated amount of \$40,265. This is a reduction of \$4,473.

## **2023 GRANT FUNDING APPLICATION**

To offset the cost of upgrading our radio network to a Simulcast System, Emergency Management has applied for a Non-State Grant in the amount of \$1,395,985. If awarded, the grant requires a 50% local match in the amount of \$697,992. Meaning that Barron County would pay \$697,992 and the grant would award \$697,992. On March, we received a letter advising application reviews are taking longer than expected so grant award announcements will be delayed. An expected date was not provided.

## **GRANT CLOSE-OUTS**

Emergency management is currently in the process of closing out our Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant, our 2023 Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), and our Emergency Preparedness and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) Grant. These grants were applied, awarded, implemented, and tracked throughout the grants life-cycle. We are in the process of closing them out and preparing to apply for the next round of grants in 2024.

# PREVIOUS INITIATIVES

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROJECTS**

Emergency Management participated in several community outreach projects this quarter, including:

- Attended NW WI HERC Meetings
- Attended multiple Fire Department Business Meetings
- CPR Refresher class for all Sheriff's Department personnel
- Survival Presentation with Pastor Cody Kargus at Cameron High School
  - School Walk-Through and Survival Presentation

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT NOTIFICATION GROUP FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION**

A Critical Incident Notification Group has been created for Barron County School Administrators, Principals, and other staff members designated by the school as critical personnel. The objective of creating this notification group is to promptly inform all schools in Barron County when one of them faces an active threat. This notification allows other facilities to initiate lockdown procedures until the situation is under control and there are no further threats to the community. This notification group has already been created and is fully functional at this time.

## **EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANS**

Each year, emergency management reviews each section of the Barron County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), and confirms accuracy through the signature of various department heads that are identified as having roles and responsibilities within specific sections of the EOP.

## **EXERCISES**

Emergency Management recently conducted a tabletop exercise at the Barron County EOC involving Barron County Department Heads. The simulated scenario involved an EF-3 Tornado hitting the City of Barron and causing substantial damage to critical infrastructure, public facilities, and private residences. Exercise participants (Department Heads) discussed emergency preparedness, response, and recovery tactics and how they can be integrated into this type of incident. Each department head also discussed their continuity of operations plan based upon short-term and long-term needs.

The exercise identified operational gaps which will create additional projects and programs for the group to assess over the next few months. These lessons learned will be identified in future exercises to ensure the operational gaps were successfully covered.

## **HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE**

The draft plan is complete and was approved by the Barron County Board of Supervisors. The plan will now be submitted to Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) for preliminary review to ensure consistency with FEMA mitigation planning requirements. All cities, villages, and participating public educational institutions have received their draft sub-plans with threat and capabilities assessments and mitigation recommendations specific to their community.

Once WEM has completed their review and returned their approval, local adoption will be finalized. The Village of Alma, which is pursuing FEMA BRIC grant funding for a community safe room, may adopt sooner with the caveat that they will accept any technical plan changes in response to WEM's review. The grant amount is \$47,250 with \$36,000 from FEMA, and \$11,250 local match provided through work-hour-match.

# ACTIVE INITIATIVES

## COMMUNICATIONS

The NextGen 911 project is also on-time and on-budget. Networking equipment is currently being installed by vendor technicians. Once the remaining equipment is installed, site testing will begin. Upon verification that all systems are functioning properly, we will begin signing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with service providers such as AT&T, Verizon, etc. These MOUs will allow Text-to-911 calls to be routed into the Barron County 911 Center when initiated from cellular phones within Barron County.

## PROJECT HISTORY

In 2019, the Barron County Sheriff's Department 911 Center operated an Airbus call handling system supported by CenturyLink. At the time, the Airbus phone system, including all workstations and backroom networking equipment had passed its end-of-life status and could no longer be repaired or replaced. Barron County applied for, and was awarded, a grant in the amount of \$127,015 from the Wisconsin Office of Emergency Communications, Department of Military Affairs to begin our upgrade toward NextGen911 compliance. This consisted of upgrading the Airbus Call Handling System to a Vesta Platform, which is NextGen911 compliant.

In October 2022, the 911 Center applied and was awarded a second grant from the WI Office of Emergency Communications, Department of Military Affairs in the amount of \$69,273. This project funding provided the interface, firewalls, and ORT testing that were needed to connect Barron County to the statewide NG911 ESINet/SMS system.

Barron County is currently installing the Phase 2 equipment provided by this grant. We will also be completing an onsite state assessment to ensure we are prepared to begin the final Phase 3. Once signed-off for Phase 3, we will begin signing agreements with our area phone service providers to route NextGen911 information from the field into our 911 Center through text messaging. Which is also called "Text-to-911" service.

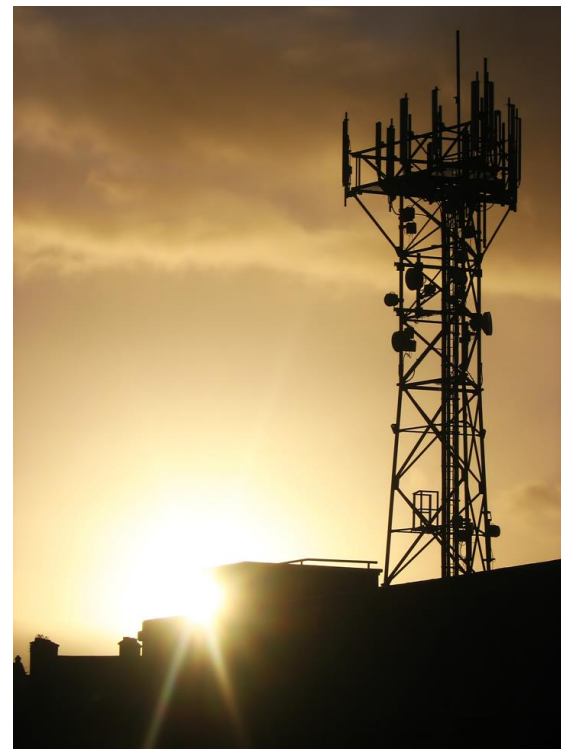
In 2023, Lumen (CenturyLink) announced that it will be pulling all operations out of Wisconsin and will not renew any of its annual agreements with 911 Centers. This left Barron County in a unique position as Lumen had already provided equipment bids that were used to secure future project funding through state grants.

Due to this abrupt change, Barron County has signed-on with AT&T as the new provider of 911 services. This also includes signing agreements with AT&T to replace Lumen as the provider partner of NextGen services. New service and equipment bids have been received and the project timeline has been re-established. Although the change in vendors created a setback, the project completion goal of July 2024 should still be met.

NextGen911 has a component named ESINet, which connects the Barron County 911 Center with the State of Wisconsin through hardware and software. ESINet is managed by AT&T and the current status of the project in the Dispatch Center is outlined below. This project is the equipment backbone that will allow the Barron County 911 Center to transition to Next-Gen 911 and receive text-to-911 calls.

The current project status is as follows:

- AVPN circuits are currently pending completion
- Motorola is waiting for a Project Manager to be assigned on the Motorola side of the initiative
- 1<sup>st</sup> Site Survey was completed on January 10<sup>th</sup> (passed)
- AT&T Router Installation – pending the completion of the AVPN circuits
- The 1<sup>st</sup> GIS training was completed on January 8<sup>th</sup> 2024



## **PUBLIC SAFETY RADIO UPGRADE (SIMULCAST)**

The radio system upgrade to Simulcast is on-time and on-budget. The contract has been signed with GenCom and the Main Project Planning Meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 8<sup>th</sup>. This meeting will outline all aspects of the upgrade and create a project map of what will be completed and in what order. The project is still scheduled to be completed in 2024.

Once completed, all countywide radios will need to be reprogrammed. This will be coordinated to streamline the process as much as possible. More information will be released after the Project Planning Meeting.

## **ORIGINAL INFORMATION**

Barron County is in the process of upgrading its countywide radio network infrastructure by incorporating a Simulcast System, which has several benefits to the various response agencies:

For law enforcement in Barron County, there are 4 towers that use 4 different radio frequencies. A user needs to manually select the closest tower to hear dispatch. The sheriff's dept. overcame this by purchasing new portable radios with a "multicast scan" option. Not all radios have this capability and it is an additional cost for those that have capable radios.

A simulcast system would provide better coverage overall and we would be able to add lower power transmitters at sites such as Prairie Farm or Dallas that would improve coverage in the southwest corner of the county. The Sheriff's department radios have 4 zones that are used depending on the area of the county an officer is in. A simulcast would bring that number to 1.

For Fire/EMS, there are 8 different towers that share a common frequency. Users need to select the closest tower to effectively communicate with dispatch. This requires 8 different channels to be programmed in a user's radio. If there are multiple departments out in different parts of the county, it is common that users are not able to hear others on the channel in different parts of the county and users often talk on top of one another. With a simulcast system, ideally only 3 channels would need to be programmed. An example includes:

Channel 1: Dispatch outbound only. It is not uncommon that dispatch has to wait to page responders to an emergency because the channel is in use by responders that are onscene and coordinating other incidents. This outbound-only frequency would guarantee the dispatch always has a path to immediately page departments.

Channel 2: Normal day-to-day response coordination. This frequency would be used by all departments that are assigned to less-critical calls such as a car accident with minor injuries, a small outside fire, etc. These are the common low-level calls that can be stacked on one frequency.

Channel 3: Major incident coordination or pre-planned events. This frequency would be reserved for disasters and major incidents such as tornadoes, wind storms, multi-agency fires, mass casualty incidents, major hazmat, search & rescue, etc. These are the high-acuity incidents that involve multiple agencies requiring heavy coordination.

Most of our fire repeaters are several years past their end of life status and parts are no longer available for repair. Radio service providers have been keeping parts from equipment that is replaced to repair other equipment. Equipment should be replaced with modern equipment that has parts available and is capable of simulcast.

Barron County also often receives interference from Buffalo and Douglas County. Since the installation of Simulcast would require all radios in the county to be reprogrammed. This would be a good time to program our equipment to eliminate that interference.

## **VIDEO-TO-911**

Once the text-to-911 capability is installed later this year and fully operational, we will be looking ahead at "video-to-911" capability. This service has not been fully built-out in our industry so there's still some time and growth that needs to occur before this capability is available at the agency level.

## **EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS**

A critical incident is an event or situation that poses a significant threat to life, health, property, or the environment, and requires immediate attention and response. Examples include tornadoes, windstorms, chemical leaks/spills, severe weather, active shooter, facility evacuations, etc. Being notified when a critical incident occurs, even if it doesn't directly impact you, can have several benefits:

Information Flow: In times of crisis, accurate information is crucial. Being notified allows you to access reliable information from official sources, reducing the spread of misinformation and ensuring that you make well-informed decisions.

Community Awareness: Critical incidents often have community-wide implications. Being informed allows you to stay aware of events that might affect your local area or the broader community.

Preparedness: Knowledge of critical incidents enables individuals to be better prepared for potential consequences. This could include taking preventive measures, having emergency supplies on hand, or knowing evacuation routes in case the situation escalates.

Psychological Preparedness: Knowing about critical incidents in advance helps individuals mentally prepare for potential disruptions. This psychological preparedness can reduce stress and anxiety during uncertain times.

In order to enhance situational awareness, the emergency management team is actively developing a Critical Incident notification group within the IamResponding platform. This group is envisioned to include designated local government officials and community stakeholders who recognize that incident notification serves the purpose of keeping individuals informed about critical incidents rather than solely indicating the need for evacuation. The aim is to provide situational awareness and facilitate emergency planning. As this initiative progresses, the team will reach out to the specified personnel identified to be included in the contact list.

School Administration: This notification is designed for selected administrative personnel within each school. This alert includes all schools so that wide area notifications can be made quickly. For example; if an active threat is occurring at one school, an alert can be sent to this group, which would notify all schools in Barron County of what is occurring so they can initiate an immediate lockdown. This notification group has already been created.

EOC Activation Alert: This notification will be assigned to personnel specifically responsible for staffing and operating the Barron County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during an emergency incident. This would save time over using a call-down tree and would provide everyone on the team with the same information at the same time.

Major Incident Alert: This notification will be reserved for specific individuals that will benefit from having a heads-up that a disaster or major incident is imminent or actively occurring. Recipients would include administration, transportation, highway, public health, certain department heads, and others. This would be a "heads-up" notification only and would not warrant a physical response unless indicated.

Additional lists may be created in the near future as needs are identified.

## **AUTOMATED HAZMAT RESPONSE PLAN**

Because of the close proximity of Jennie-O to Barron's City Center and the nature and quantity of chemicals present in the facility, Emergency Management collaborated with designated emergency response agencies to develop an automated emergency response strategy.

This preliminary plan aims to enhance the efficiency of response actions and advocate for an automated approach to initial response decision-making. The development of the plan is underway, and once the draft is finalized, it will be shared with stakeholders.

## **COUNTYWIDE FIRST RESPONDERS**

Emergency Services of Barron County (ESBC) currently rosters 8 personnel to provide administrative, planning, and logistical support. The first responder roster currently consist of 35 countywide first responders equipped with a fully-stocked response gear bag with medications such as Albuterol, Narcan, Epinephrine, and Glucose. Responders are also provided with liability insurance and workers compensation coverage. The Rescue Task Force (RTF) Team consists of an additional 24 trained members with separate response gear.

Mutual Aid Agreements have also been signed with Rusk County and agreements are in discussions with Polk County. In 2024, there will be a focus on training, gear & supplies, and increasing the number of team member responses. To continue team growth, 5 more first responders will be added to the countywide roster in February.

The ESBC Facebook page ([www.Facebook.com/ESBarronCounty](http://www.Facebook.com/ESBarronCounty)) has 5,900 followers and the website ([www.EmergencyServicesBC.org](http://www.EmergencyServicesBC.org)) has been viewed by 18,467 visitors.



## **RESCUE TASK FORCE (RTF)**

In May 2019, a Committee was formed to facilitate the creation of a Rescue Task Force (RTF) Team under the Medical Branch of Emergency Services of Barron County (ESBC).

This team is responsible for responding into the warm zone of active shooter incidents (under the protection of law enforcement officers) to extract injured patients and relocate them to an interior Casualty Collection Point (CCP). Firefighters then meet the patients at the CCP entrance and relocate them to an awaiting medical triage area outside of the facility. The nationwide RTF Initiative has proven to be the most effective method of saving the lives of patients with gunshot wounds.



The Rescue Task Force (RTF) team currently consists of approximately 30 volunteers from Barron County Fire Departments that have completed First Aid, CPR, and the Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) Course, which was provided to all members. For physical protection, RTF members are escorted by armed law enforcement officers anytime they are operating in a hazardous environment. Additionally, the team has invested in ballistic gear bags which contain bulletproof vests, ballistic helmets, patient evacuation equipment, and medical supplies. These gear bags are staged throughout Barron County so they can be brought to the incident by various responders instead of relying on a selected few. Additional gear bags will be purchased over the coming years as funds become available.

The next step is training, as the department will be scheduling hands-on training sessions with municipal police departments so team members can become familiar with each other. Additional information will be published as the team is further developed.

### **MISSING PERSON SEARCH TEAM**

To supplement local response efforts in locating missing persons, Emergency Services of Barron County (ESBC) is planning to expand its operational capability to include a Search & Rescue (S&R) Branch. Participation on this team will be open to current Barron County responders only. There will not be a membership capacity, however applicants will be required to pass a background investigation before formally being accepted onto the team.

This type of team will provide many response benefits including a full planning group and highly-trained search members. Once initial training has been completed, specialty teams will be created; such as a snowmobile search group, ATV/UTV search group,



Drone search group, and ground search personnel. These groups will be designed for rapid deployment and will be provided with training such as basic & advanced search techniques, missing person actions & expectations, wilderness rescue, and medical training. Each year, members will also complete 4 hours of continuing education and participate in an annual full scale exercise.

Once established, the team will serve as a regional response resource for surrounding counties upon request. Additional information on this group will also be released as the team is assembled.

### **UPCOMING TRAINING**

**SkyWarn Storm Spotter** - National Weather Service Annual Storm Spotter Training (open to Public) is scheduled to be held on April 30<sup>th</sup> in the Barron County Government Center Auditorium. Two classes will be held on April 30<sup>th</sup> to accommodate varying work schedules. To sign up, attendees must register by clicking here: <https://StormSpotter2024.eventbrite.com>



### **First On The Scene**

(this training is geared toward the general public) Considering the hazards surrounding the farming industry, traumatic injuries occur on a frequent basis. In these types of incidents, critical decisions and actions need to be made and implemented in a logical order. If not, risk of further injury or death to the victim is increased.

“First On The Scene” is a program that teaches farm family members, farm employees and the general community how to make important decisions at the scene of a farm emergency prior to the arrival of emergency responders.

The program is designed to lead participants through various scenarios that will force them to think about typical injury incidents and make proper decisions and reactions. Topics include tractor overturns, machinery entanglements, grain bin emergencies, silo emergencies, chemical emergencies, and electrical emergencies.

The training is intended for all farm groups such as farm managers, employees, spouses, 4-H and FFA groups, etc. Participation as a family or as a farm work group is encouraged. A training flyer will be published when training dates are confirmed.

**END OF REPORT**



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