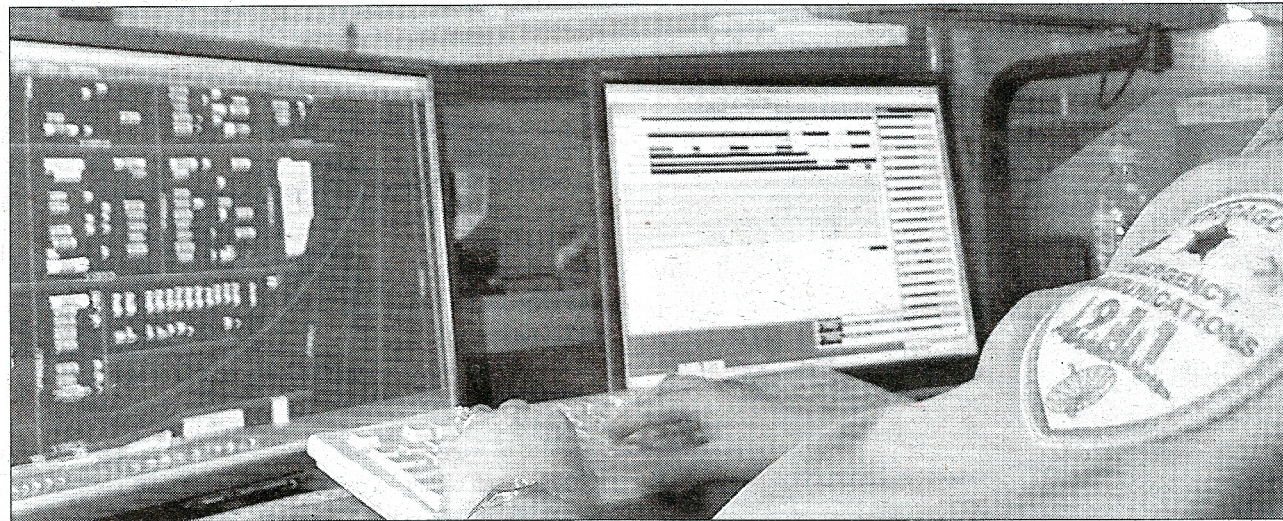


PUNISHMENT FOR 911 SCREW-UP



A dispatcher works at Chicago's 911 emergency center. | KEITH HALE~SUN-TIMES

'THIS JUST CAN'T HAPPEN' | Lengthy suspensions after cop shot at by alleged gang members left to fend for himself

BY FRAN SPIELMAN

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Two employees at Chicago's 911 emergency center have been slapped with lengthy suspensions without pay for their roles in an Aug. 28 dispatch delay that left an off-duty police officer to fend for himself while being shot at by a car filled with alleged gang members.

Ray Orozco, executive director of the city's Office of Emergency Management and Communications, identified the suspended employees as a dispatcher and his supervisor, but he refused to name them.



Ray Orozco

Nor would he reveal the duration of the suspensions now being served, citing privacy restrictions in the personnel code and union contract. Other sources said the dispatcher's punishment could last as long as 45 days.

"This involves public safety. Whether it's a citizen calling for help or a police officer or firefighter, our job is to send the proper resources," he said.

Orozco acknowledged that six minutes and 10 seconds went by before police were dispatched and that, by that time, the officer under fire "was inside a police district," where he had driven for refuge.

"It shouldn't have happened, and it won't happen in the future," Orozco said.

A 10-1 — the term used to describe a call from an officer who needs assistance — is the most serious of emergency calls. It requires immediate dispatch.

The Chicago Sun-Times reported last month that Orozco had launched an internal investigation to find out why that protocol was not followed on Aug. 28.

Four men are facing first-degree attempted murder charges after allegedly following the unidentified Marquette District officer and firing shots into his vehicle shortly after 3 a.m. The officer reportedly kept driving while returning fire until he reached the Harrison District station, where he sought

help while the alleged gang members drove off.

When the harrowing chase was over, sources said, the officer had at least three bullet holes in his car, one of them between the front and back-seat doors on the driver's side. That likely means one of the shots narrowly missed hitting the back of the officer's head.

A spokesman for Police Supt. Jody Weis refused to say whether the superintendent is satisfied with the suspensions. Last month, Weis sounded as if nothing short of firing would be enough.

"This incident is just reprehensible," Weis said then. "We had an officer [who] needed assistance and he didn't get it. This just can't happen."