

Union County to receive emergency communications software upgrade

Amid ongoing upgrades to its emergency communications system, Union County got a boost this week from the new owner of the former Laurelton Center.

Gary E. Murphy, who recently purchased the 337-acre property in Hartley Township, announced his intentions Wednesday to launch a state-of-the-art computer software program designed to further enhance emergency tactical operations in the county.

The software, already in use in California, will be incorporated at the soon-to-be new communications center at the Union County Government Center in Lewisburg and on location at the former Laurelton Center.

The software will further enhance the current 911 upgrade process, according to Tom Hess, director of Union County emergency management.

"The software package will enable us to reach other data sources and give the responders in the field ability to make im-

mediate decisions in response to an emergency," said Mr. Hess, who added that the process is currently done by radio communication. "The dispatcher and responders in the field will have access to the same data at the same time."

The prompt access will also increase the safety for emergency responders and potential victims, Mr. Hess said.

"Say for a chemical spill, one of the things you always need to determine is how hazardous the situation is and what precautions you should take," Mr. Hess said. "The software will allow us to immediately view weather data, the layout of the building (non-residential) and information about the chemical right there on site."

He added, "Instead of listening to someone relay this information over the radio, the incident commander can view this information themselves on the scene. The incident commander is going to have all the necessary information needed to as-

sess the situation right there in front of them."

Mr. Murphy, who is also chief executive officer of Mountain Valley Inc., is donating computers, servers and other hardware to the county to support the SYS Technologies software. A standby operations space in a refurbished portion of the Laurelton hospital will house the equipment, which is linked to the county emergency communications operation.

"The county will have 24/7 access to this building," Mr. Murphy said. "Everything they need is here, positioned and ready to go."

He said that the Laurelton facility will be available if the county emergency communication center in Lewisburg must be evacuated. Mr. Hess confirmed that the Laurelton facility will be used as a backup to the two Lewisburg centers, which will include the vacated center at the courthouse once the 911 upgrades are completed sometime within the next six

months.

In the meantime, the county continues its work on upgrading the current system and setting up the new center. Mr. Hess said that the majority of the communications equipment has been ordered. The initial phase of installation will begin later this month, according to Mr. Hess.

"When we are done, we will have the newest equipment and increased ability to manage emergencies; including the ability to locate wireless 911 calls," Mr. Hess said. "The donated software will certainly improve our ability to handle emergencies."

News of using a location on the former Laurelton Center is the first public announcement coming from Mr. Murphy in relation to the site's redevelopment. Last spring, he spoke of initial plans that included developing the property as a small business development center, a bed and breakfast and dude ranch.

—from daily item reports