

MADISON COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

May June July August Sept. 2010

by Steve DiGiovanna Communications / DES2

Serving the public and the five primary service branches in Madison County

Law Enforcement, Fire Services, Emergency Medical Service, Public Works, County Administration / Communications

1. Nothing improves memory better than trying to forget something 2. Vision is the art of seeing something invisible



The rebuilt Virginia City Pass tower (above) and the newly constructed Sierra Peak tower (left) are nearing completion. The two towers are part of the larger Interoperability Montana plan and a series of towers looping the entire State of Montana

Sierra Repeater Tower is Operational - VC Pass Next

After numerous delays and considerable challenges, the Sierra Repeater Site deep in the Ruby Mountains has become operational. The state has not placed the microwave antennas on the tower yet, but Madison County installed a new repeater at the site. The new repeater is known as the "Sierra Repeater" but is toned the same as the South Madison repeater.

The site will serve most parts of the Ruby Valley, the Jefferson Valley and some large areas of the Madison Valley. The strong point of the new site will be the Ruby Reservoir area, the upper Ruby River drainage, the Sweetwater area of Madison County and the area from south of Dillon through the north end of the Silver Star area and beyond.

The Virginia City Pass site was rebuilt this summer after a

series of mishaps last fall during the initial construction attempt. The foundation developed several voids in it's makeup after a surprise local storm developed during the initial concrete pour.

The tower was disassembled and the original footing was removed. The entire site was rebuilt earlier this summer and the tower was re-erected in July.

This site will become the backbone of our radio services and should be a huge benefit to the communication capabilities of the county.

We are hoping to have both sites at least partially operational before winter sets in. Eventually these sites may hold up to 6 Madison County Repeaters.

Communications Center To Be Moved

The Madison County Communications Center (aka Dispatch) will soon be moving to a new location. The new building will increase the square footage of the current location from 190 square feet to almost 1000 square feet. More than five times it's current size.

On September 14th, County Commissioners discussed and voted on an additional lease agreement for the new facility located at 7 Placer Loop Rd. The new facility would be in the downstairs portion of the Public Health / DES building.

The County Sheriff, Commissioners and the 911 Communication Coordinator have long been concerned about the survivability and personnel security of the Communication Center.

“Being located in the basement of a 140 year old, unreinforced masonry building causes us a fair amount of concern” said Sheriff Dave Schenk. “We’ve been working on finding a safer and more permanent solution for some time” he said.

The courthouse is very susceptible to seismic damage should an “earthquake of consequence” occur in the vicinity. Unreinforced masonry buildings are the structures most often damaged when a substantial earthquake occurs. Montana is ranked fifth in the nation behind Alaska, California, Hawaii and Nevada for seismic activity. Southwest Montana (all of Madison County) is the hotbed of seismic activity for the state.

Additionally, there are other concerns regarding the current location, including the following: the proximity of the prisoner booking area to the 911 Center. Space needs for operations, equipment and personnel. Access security of the Center itself, the location relating to the volume of unrestricted vehicular traffic near Dispatch and the need for an adequate EOC facility adjacent to the 911 Center.

County officials will be looking into the needs of the new center, the manner in which to dovetail the county's new repeater tower and radio frequency needs - and how to best go about remodeling, equipping and becoming operational in the new location.



The new Public Health Building is also the home of the EOC / DES / Communication Administrative Offices. The physical location is halfway between Virginia City and Nevada City on the south side of the road. The new 911 Communication Center will be relocated to the 1000 square foot downstairs portion of this building.

The mailing address for any of the offices in this building is
PO BOX 278 Virginia City , MT 59755

Staffing Increase in Dispatch

The Sheriff's Office and the Communication Department have worked out a new staffing deal with County officials. The plan is to allow 2 dispatchers to be in the County Dispatch Center Monday through Friday during a portion of the busiest hours of the day.

Though the exact details of the plan are still being developed, the idea is to reduce the workload of the single dispatcher during business hours. “Our Dispatchers work as telephone operators, receptionists, secretaries, camera monitors, radio operators and 911 dispatchers” said Sheriff Dave Schenk. “At times, it can be one of the busiest and most demanding duties in the whole county. Our new plan is to target some of the busiest hours of the day to reduce some of the multi-tasking needs of the dispatcher” Schenk said.