

Testimony on LD1291, SP0399 An Act To Reduce Fire Response Time by Eliminating Standardized Dispatch Protocols for Fire 9-1-1 Calls

To: Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

From: Michael Thompson, Medical and Fire Protocol Development and Support, Priority Dispatch Corp.

Position: **AGAINST** LD1291

Committee Chairs Senator Lawrence & Representative Berry and members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, I offer testimony AGAINST LD 1291.

My name is Michael Thompson, I am a retired career Fire Service Chief Officer with 30 years of public service.

Let me begin by thanking the Public Safety telecommunicators in the state of Maine and across the country. This week is National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, and I can say firsthand that 911 telecommunicators are a critical part of the public safety net in the United States and are often under appreciated.

In my 30 years of public service with the Rapid City SD Fire Department, the City County Emergency Services Communication Center that provided service for my agency used both the Medical Priority Dispatch System and the Fire Priority Dispatch System. The Medical system was used for in excess of 25 years, The Fire system was used since its inception in the year 2000. As an Operations Battalion Chief, the dispatching process was part of my oversight under Special Operations.

Speaking about the Fire Priority Dispatch System in particular, I found that the system was of significant value and a high level asset to both the Fire Department and the community at large. The system as used in the Communication Center was personally known to me to be able to bring a typical Fire Call to the point it could be dispatched in around one minute 90+% of the time. The Communication Center was required to supply us with monthly reports detailing that compliance. The telecommunicators would stay on the phone longer than that, but that is and was, typically to give a civilian caller instructions to help keep themselves safe and also to prepare for the arrival of the Fire Department.

This protocol driven system allows a Fire Department to pre-plan all its responses to various call types to avoid over-sending or under-sending resources. This conserves budget dollars because fire apparatus is not sent on calls it doesn't need to respond on, this saves on wear and tear, and diesel fuel costs. Those pieces of apparatus are then also available to respond on calls they ARE critically needed on. The system also allows a Fire Department to define which calls will benefit from a red lights and siren response and which do not require such a response. A piece of fire apparatus responding red lights and siren poses a potential threat to not only the motoring public, but the first responders themselves, Motor Vehicle collisions are the second leading cause of line of duty death of firefighters. The red lights and siren response should be reserved for those cases where it is truly needed and will aid in mitigating the situation, whatever it is. The Fire Priority Dispatch System allows the local Fire Department(s) to do that to whatever extent they see fit.

Additionally, in my evaluation of the Fire Priority Dispatch System, it contains instructions for civilians that I know exist nowhere else in the world (trapped in structure fire, trench collapse, HazMat, sinking vehicle, etc.). No single individual regardless of their background, could retain all of the required elements of those critical instructions in their memory, it could not be done, especially under stress. This simple system does it all for you and is updated with the most current industry changes regularly. There is truly nothing else like it anywhere.

Maine has established a Standard of Care and service for both Medical & Fire Emergencies; to eliminate any portion of this level of service would be a significant backwards step for the State of Maine's Citizens & any potential visitors. Maine has been and should continue to be a leader in 9-1-1 services offered to the public.

I thank you for your time in reviewing this testimony,

Michael Thompson  
Battalion Chief RCFD (Ret.)