



For Immediate Release

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After slowdown during beginning of pandemic, 911 call volume remains high

During the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, 911 call volume dropped dramatically as more people stayed home, avoided large gatherings, and were hesitant to go to the doctor or hospital. In the past few months, that has drastically changed. From sheriff deputies and investigators to volunteer and career EMS personnel, first responders in Pittsylvania County have been kept busy in recent months.

After averaging just 2,041 911 calls between the months of February and May, an average of 2,441 have come in monthly from June through August, and September has 2,151 as of Monday morning.

"Even as call volume has been high over the past several months, our dispatchers and first responders have consistently provided quality service and arrived on scene quickly," said Pittsylvania County Public Safety Director Chris Slemph. "We will continue to respond to emergencies in a timely manner even during the pandemic."

Due to the many precautions that first responders are taking, it is safe for citizens who are experiencing a medical emergency to call 911.

To protect volunteers and staff, 911 dispatchers ask a series of questions to determine if a person is showing any symptoms of COVID-19, which will determine how the first responders approach the situation and treat the patient. Emergency personnel have been responding to two to three patients with COVID-19 weekly, Slemph said. Virginia Department of Health data shows that out of the total 985 Pittsylvania County residents that have tested positive for COVID-19, 52 have been hospitalized.

From extremely loud outdoor parties with hundreds of people to domestic situations, the Pittsylvania County Sheriff's Department has also been responding to a wide variety of

situations and calls. When possible, the deputies ask questions once on scene to determine if the people involved have been exposed to COVID-19, both to protect the deputies and the citizens.

"We respond according to the CDC guidelines," said Pittsylvania County Sheriff Mike Taylor. "There are a lot of things we've put into play to help safeguard the officers. We just have to be really vigilant to make sure that our officers are not carrying it home with them."

In addition to dealing with an increase in calls for domestic situations and other issues, the department is working on multiple on multiple death investigations. The Pittsylvania County Sheriff's Department is aiding the Raleigh Police Department with the investigation of the murder of Raleigh man William "Andy" Banks, who was found deceased in Chatham. The department is also investigating the death of Chatham resident Zachary Pruitt, who was missing for over a month before investigators located his body.