Following the troublesome year that was 2020, 2021 proved to be just as difficult. Utah’s 9-1-1 community has remained resilient beyond compare. Adapting to new practices in the PSAP, zoom meetings, online-only trainings, a lack of personal networking and interaction, and much more, has made an already hard job even harder.

That is one thing that has not changed this year, is the incredible public service given to the citizens of Utah by all of our state’s amazing 9-1-1 Dispatchers! Countless hours of overtime being covered for COVID-related absences, frequent civil unrest and unnecessary abuse being directed their way; but while nearly 5 million people in the United States workforce have been working from home, Utah’s dispatchers have continued to show up and give their communities 110%. I am so proud, not only to be a part of the 9-1-1 community, but specifically Utah’s 9-1-1 community!

As we continue to face extremely challenging and unprecedented times during the COVID-19 pandemic, I am confident in the resiliency of our industry. While I hope that 2022 will be a turning point in this crisis, we cannot be sure that things will return to normal as quickly as we hope. I will continue to do all that I can, with the help of the rest of the Utah NENA Executive Board, to support Utah’s Public Safety Telecommunicators by working to provide regularly scheduled industry-leading training. Whether this training remains online or can eventually be in-person will be decided as things evolve.

Thank you for all the hard work you continue to do for your communities. Your dedication to serve does not go unnoticed. While additional things may arise, I want to share with you all some projects that my team and I will be working on for the upcoming year, which you can find below. If you ever have any questions, comments, or would like to be involved in the National Emergency Number Association, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or any of the other chapter officers.

Take care of each other and stay safe.

Spencer Harrison, President
Quarterly Utah NENA Newsletter
Utah NENA has decided to continue sharing with everyone, not just NENA members, important news involving the 9-1-1 industry. Aside from national news, we would like to highlight the 9-1-1 community here in our own state. We invite every center to submit the following:

1. Dispatcher Spotlight – much like an award nomination, we would like PSAPs to submit a deserving telecommunicator from their center to be featured in each issue.
2. Incident Spotlight – has your center handled a taxing incident that couldn’t have been handled better if it was planned out ahead of time? Let us know! We love to hear success stories of teamwork!
3. Agency Spotlight – Has your center overcame difficult times like staffing crisis, multiple incidents, cooperating agency difficulties, or big changes? Submit a story about how your center is handling the challenges it is currently facing, or a big win that you’ve recently had!

A reminder for each of these submissions will be sent out each quarter and the forms will be available on www.utahnena.org.

State Conference
Provided that we can overcome this global pandemic, we hope to host a statewide conference in 2023! We know that training opportunities can be limited and would love to host a multi-day opportunity for everyone! In the past, our novelty training has been “Midnight Madness”, focused toward the graveyard shift dispatchers, which often times are not able to attend regular trainings due to the scheduling challenges they present.

Utah State Legislature
A few years ago, the State Legislature welcomed Utah’s dispatchers back into the Public Safety retirement system, rather than just the Public Employees retirement system. Although the gesture was admirable, municipalities have to choose to buy into this system and pay a lump sum of money to migrate current URS accounts from public employee to public safety, which most agencies elected not to participate in. We hope to review all 9-1-1 related issues currently in legislature and work on getting Utah’s 9-1-1 dispatchers classified and recognized as “first responders”. The fact that it is currently optional for agencies to participate in treating their telecommunicators as first responders, but choose not to, is unacceptable. It is time for Utah to follow suit of other states in recognizing 9-1-1 dispatchers for what they are, the FIRST first responders.

Recognition Awards
Whatever 2021 brings us, whether it be virtual communication or finally an in-person conference, we would like to start rewarding deserving dispatchers for the hard work they do. These awards will be given during National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, rather than at an annual conference. As of 2021, there will be an opportunity to nominate the following:

1. Dispatcher of the Year
2. Agency of the Year
3. Incident of the Year
4. Trainer of the Year
5. Supervisor of the Year
6. Director/Manager of the Year

More to come! We look forward to a busy and productive year!