

Beepers fail three times since June

Dispatch fiddles while stove burns

By David Greenberg
staff writer

Technical problems or human error?

Fire department officials say the town's new dispatch system emanating from the Stratford firehall has failed to alert fireman on at least three occasions since the switch-over took place last month.

In the latest incident, a stove fire at 614 Jones St. East led to extensive smoke damage and had to be extinguished by two volunteer firemen who happen to live near by.

"They had the fire out with extinguishers before the truck even arrived," homeowner Liz Hedberg said in an interview.

"The firemen were just livid. Next time it's going to be too late for somebody," she said.

Deputy Chief Dennis Brownlee says "the pagers never did go off.

"I could hear the chief [on radio transmission] confirm a fire call. He set the alarm and I told him 'Stratford didn't work' so he set the pagers off from here [St. Marys].

"It could be disastrous if that happened in the middle of the night and there was no one here [at the station]" Brownlee warned.

Brownlee confirmed that there have been a number of incidents since the new system was installed.

There was a delay in attending a vehicle fire because of garbled radio transmissions that have since been corrected; pagers failed to go off during a call to a Queen St. apartment complex after a smoke detector set

off a commercial alarm system; and on another occasion St. Marys fire fighters were dispatched into Fullarton Township even though that area is covered by the Mitchell fire department.

"It could be classified as bugs of a new system - I hope to hell it is," Brownlee said.

Chief Don Swan says the incidents should not be blown out of proportion and the public is not in danger.

"We had worse than this happen when we had our own men here.

"I have confidence in the system; there's no doubt in my mind that this will be worked out," he said.

Swan said beeper failure in the case of the residence at 614 Jones St. East was the result of human error, not technical problems.

Coun. Kerry Campbell, one of six town representatives who voted to move the dispatch in a controversial debate this spring, says the incidents have not shaken his confidence in the system.

"I think it's a better system - this was human error in this case [614 Jones St. East) not a technical problem," he said in an interview.

"I have faith in the system."

Coun. Jamie Hahn, the only elected official to vote against moving the dispatch, said "I hope they get this thing straightened out."

Coun. Lou Cundari, council representative on the fire department, says the problem at Jones Street was "definitely a human error.

"The dispatcher in Stratford touched the wrong button and activated beepers somewhere else."



LIZ HEDBERG AND HOMER BROWN stand in front of their 614 Jones St. East home where they had a stove fire last week.

New student council at DCVI



1991-92 DCVI STUDENT COUNCIL EXECUTIVE. From left, front row: Candy Spearin, Grade 12 rep.; Kevin Tate and Nicole Anderson, co-presidents; and Cecily Nicholson, social convener. Back row: Rob Greason, Grade 11 rep.; Julia Brand, Grade 10 rep.; Deanna Adams, secretary; Tammie Burley, treasurer; and Laura Taylor, Grade 13 rep.