

## **COMMISSIONER'S CORRESPONDENCE – Highlighting progress in the SLMPD Communication Division**

The month of February is always a busy time – with days and weeks filled with community events, Mardi Gras, and other gatherings. But most importantly February is also Black History Month, and the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department is taking time this month to pay tribute to Black leaders in our agency – both past and present. These leaders have paved – and continue to pave – the way for those who will follow in their footsteps, and we appreciate them answering the call to serve St. Louis.

This month, I am happy to take the opportunity to highlight progress we have made in the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department's Communication Division.

While our police officers conducting patrols and responding to calls for service are likely the most visible component of our department, the dedicated civilian employees who answer 9-1-1 calls and dispatch those officers provide critical support to our commissioned officers, and our community. They are the lifeline for members of the public in times of crisis. They collect important information and relay it to police officers, making that connection between first responders and those in need. They also play a significant role in keeping our police officers safe – coordinating for backup when they need it, sharing safety information while they are responding to a call, and keeping track of where they are.

Simply put, we would not be able to do our job without them.

At the start of this year, our department had 72 dispatchers on staff, with an additional 12 positions that were vacant. Several dozen dispatchers were hired in the past year, as part of our efforts to keep our Communication Division sufficiently staffed to handle the significant number of calls we receive – with more than 668,000 incoming calls in 2023 alone.

Over the course of the past year, we have seen improvements in the time it takes our Communication Division to answer incoming calls. In January 2023, 59% of calls were answered within 10 seconds. By December, that number reached 80%.

Call response times will naturally fluctuate, particularly during times when major incidents are occurring or during times of the day when we see increases in call activity. As we move into 2024, we will continue our efforts to fully staff these critical positions and make further progress.

I am proud of the work of our Communication Division – and appreciate their commitment to serving our department and community.

Finally, I recently had the pleasure of joining Mayor Tishaura O. Jones and North Patrol Major Donnell Moore as we attended a public safety meeting hosted by the Urban League Federation of Block Units. We answered some great community questions from residents and had the chance to share our optimism for the improvements to public safety we have seen in St. Louis, and the continued progress we are working towards!