



EFFINGHAM COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Paul Kuhns

101 N. 4th Street, Effingham, Illinois 62401

EFFINGHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT

Chief Jason McFarland

110 S. 3rd Street, Effingham, Illinois 62401



October 25, 2024

Telecommunications Team of the Year

911 Telecommunicators from the Effingham County Sheriff's Office and Effingham Police Department were recently named the **2024 INENA Public Safety Telecommunications Team of the Year**.

The Illinois Chapter of the National Emergency Number Association (INENA) is comprised of public safety professionals throughout Illinois whose mission is to foster the technological advancement, availability, and implementation of the universal emergency number 9-1-1 in the State of Illinois. The INENA Public Safety Telecommunications Team of the Year award recognizes individuals who demonstrate professionalism and dedication as a team, illustrating the mission and goals of Illinois NENA over the past year.

Telecommunicators from both local agencies demonstrated these exceptional qualities during the tragic anhydrous incident in Teutopolis in late September 2023, earning them the honor of being named the Telecommunications Team of the Year.

During the annual Illinois Public Safety Telecommunications Association Conference held in Springfield on Tuesday, October 22nd, thirteen telecommunicators from both agencies were honored. Those recognized for the achievement are as follows:

Effingham County Sheriff's Office – Gena Blair, Ciara Brockett, Christal Carlen, Alexis Jewell, Alisha Jewell, Rebecca Neu, Alysa Reardon, and Joseph Vogt

Effingham Police Department – Charity Higgs, Lindsey Leitch, Casandra Merrill, Pharabe Norman, and Sheryl Vonderheide

Sheriff Paul Kuhns praised the working relationship between agencies, stating, "The partnership we have with the Effingham City Police, and all other area emergency services in the area, benefits the entire community."

Highlighting the critical role telecommunicators play in every call, Effingham Police Chief Jason McFarland expressed, "Our 911 dispatchers are the unsung heroes of emergency response. In moments of crisis, they are the lifeline, ensuring that help arrives quickly and efficiently."



Pictured, L-R:

Effingham Police Department Communications Manager Billie Bales, Ciara Brockett, Cassie Merrill, Gena Blair, Rebecca Neu, Charity Higgs, Christal Carlen, Lindsey Leitch, Sheryl Vonderheide, Pharabe Norman, Alexis Jewell, Alisha Jewell, Alysa Reardon, Joseph Vogt, Effingham County Sheriff's Office Communications Administrator Tina Daniels