

# Mebane City Beat: The town's first responders

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SPECIAL TO THE NEWS OF ORANGE

In times of crisis or uncertainty, those labeled First Responders are always the first to answer the call and arrive on the scene. But who is considered a first responder? According to the Cornell University Legal Information Institute, the term first responder includes a firefighter, law enforcement officer, paramedic, emergency medical technician, or other individual who, in the course of their professional duties, responds to fire, medical, hazardous material, or other similar emergencies. The City of Mebane is comprised of a few departments classified as first responders who collaborate with local county agencies, organizations, and resources to provide immediate support and assistance.

The two most common departments in Mebane people associate with the term first responder are the fire and police departments. The Mebane Fire Department is classified as first responders because they are trained and equipped to handle a broad scope of emergencies beyond fires. Firefighters undergo extensive training, including EMT-B certification, enabling them to provide immediate basic life support. Firefighters work closely with other first responders and have staff available 24/7. The Mebane Police Department is categorized as first responders because they are trained and equipped to respond immediately to emergencies, crises, and public safety situations. Mebane officers are among the first on the scene, whether it is a critical incident such as an active threat, a traffic accident, or a community disturbance. They aim to secure the area, assess risks, provide immediate assistance, and coordinate with other first responder agencies, such as fire and EMS, to ensure public safety. Unlike other departments that may arrive post-event, their presence at the scene is critical in the initial moments to protect citizens, mitigate threats, and make the location safe for peers in other public safety disciplines to perform their work.

Did you know that in 2003, President George W. Bush designated public works and public utilities as first responders when he issued Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8 (HSPD-8)? This directive officially made these personnel critical players in emergency response due to their role in maintaining essential infrastructure during disasters. The Mebane Public Utilities Department is vital for emergencies regarding water and sewer. Public utilities are classified as first responders as they are the first to mobilize and secure an area with barricades, ensuring public safety during an emergency such as a water main break. They work diligently to isolate the water main break or slow it down to prevent further damage before performing the repair. Public works employees are typically on the scene with fire and police staff, working silently in the background, providing vital support to emergency response partners, helping protect critical services, and restoring those services following an emergency. In the event of adverse weather or a natural disaster, the City of Mebane



Public Works Department is considered essential personnel and, as such, reports to work to follow a Storm Event Plan. The Storm Event Plan contains the following objectives: a.) Attempt to keep traffic and commerce moving; b.) Reduce the possibility of accidents; and c.) Provide movement for emergency vehicles. Public works staff ensure city streets remain safe while maintaining Mebane's facilities. During storm events, they ensure city buildings such as Mebane City Hall, the Mebane Planning and Inspections building, the Mebane Police and Fire Departments, the Mebane Public Library, and other city buildings are safely accessible by citizens and city staff.

So, what do you do, or who do you call in an emergency or peculiar situation? The answer is always 911. Whether you see suspicious activity, such as someone loitering in a restricted area, or you notice debris in the road impeding vehicle traffic, such as downed trees, your first instinct should be to call 911. Placing a 911 call gets the ball rolling and will get you help or assistance the fastest way possible. Emergency operators, those answering your 911 call, are trained to assess a situation quickly over the phone. Upon receiving a call, the operator's first step is triage or the preliminary assessment of patients or casualties. Triage involves asking a series of questions to determine the nature and severity of the emergency. Based on the information provided, the telecommunicator assesses what the call requires and then directs your call to the appropriate outlet. For situations like cardiac arrest, severe injuries, or active threats, response units like police, fire, and EMS are dispatched immediately.

The 911 Communication Center's effectiveness relies heavily on the initial interaction with the caller. While they might ask questions you feel are unnecessary, your response and providing as much detail as possible when answering the questions is crucial for first responders. The 911 Communication Center operators use a blend of technology and training to ensure that every call received is appropriately assessed and dispatched without delay

to the appropriate responders, be it medical, fire, or police related. These trained telecommunicators might give pre-arrival instructions like first aid advice, safely evacuating an area, performing CPR, or other life-saving guidance until the correct resource or agency responds on the scene. For items related to city street rights-of-way, telecommunicators will contact public works staff alongside police, and depending on the situation, they will also contact fire. Due to the plethora of resources available at telecommunicators' hands, you should always call 911. Don't waste time stressing over which department or agency you should contact, even if it is something you deem a minor situation; when in doubt, call 911.

While Mebane's First Responders are quick to jump into action when needed, a substantial scope of work is conducted behind the scenes to address concerns or mitigate situations before they arise. The Mebane Fire Department conducts community outreach programs to provide information on fire safety, emergency preparedness, and disaster prevention through workshops, school visits, and public demonstrations. They have regular training sessions and drills within the department to ensure firefighters maintain readiness, and these exercises often simulate real-world scenarios, ensuring that everyone knows their role, from the newest firefighter to high-ranking officers. The firefighters work hand-in-hand with the police, public works staff, and public utilities staff, maintaining open lines of communication within the Mebane organization and with external stakeholders such as Alamance County Emergency Management or Orange County Emergency Services.

During an emergency or situation, Mebane Police officers often serve as the first point of contact on the scene, communicating directly with fire and EMS to ensure safe access to the site. Coordination is critical to managing incidents effectively, so police work with all first-responding departments and external stakeholders. In an event involving infrastructure, such as downed power lines or road closures, the police work with the Mebane Public Works and Public

Utilities staff to clear the area and allow for a comprehensive and organized response that ensures the safety and well-being of the Mebane community. Public works staff are the initial responders to matters about city streets, like flooding or downed trees. Should a North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) street need attention, such as South Third Street or South Fifth Street, public works will work with NCDOT crews to help clear and re-open the road. When it comes to large-scale work activities or incidents, Mebane Police and Mebane Public Utilities often engage with local businesses and community groups to keep the public informed and to assist in recovery efforts.

Mebane First Responders are equipped and ready to respond no matter the incident or emergency. However, the public also has a role to play when it comes to emergencies, and that role starts with being prepared and taking proactive steps to stay informed about what is happening within their community. One way to do so is to follow the Facebook pages of the Mebane Fire Department and Mebane Police Department. Here, they will post real-time updates to local news sources about events in the area. The City of Mebane has social media pages separate from fire and police on platforms Facebook, X, and Instagram, where they will repost important alerts from the police and fire and provide updates on current situations. The City's social media pages provide real-time information on road closures in Mebane and information about water main breaks or other infrastructure work occurring, such as street repairs requiring milling and patching. Mebane Public Utilities recommends citizens subscribe or constantly check NC Water Watch and the City of Mebane's website ([cityofmebanenc.gov](http://cityofmebanenc.gov)) for water alerts and other valuable information. For localized alerts and public safety announcements, Mebane residents can subscribe to CodeRED, an emergency notification system that enables local public safety agencies to notify their communities about emergencies by telephone, mobile, SMS, email, social media, and more. To subscribe to CodeRED, visit <https://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/BFB7CC4C6C0A>. Other critical outlets one should consider frequently checking for important news or county-wide updates include Alamance County Emergency Management and Orange County Emergency Services social media pages, subscribing to the Orange County Emergency Management Alert Center, signing up for Nextdoor, and checking the North Carolina Department of Public Safety website and social media pages.

Working together, Mebane's First Responders are here to protect and serve the community. From the police department to the fire department to public works and public utilities, each department is vital to ensuring Mebane's safety and keeping operations running smoothly and efficiently. If you are ever in a situation, need to report an incident, see a down tree in the road, or need help, call 911. Even if you are unsure about calling, remember, when in doubt, call 911!

## Stallions, Panthers, Eagles earn wins in women's hoops

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Although Southeast Alamance's women's basketball team came up short in a tough 51-48 loss to Mid-Carolina Conference rival Seaforth back on January 7, which temporarily gave first place in the league standings to the Hawks, Amy Surratt's Stallions have been on a roll ever since, picking up four straight wins over a range of league foes.

This past Thursday, the Stallions traveled to Burlington and crushed Cummings by a remarkable final score of 73-4. They then came home

the following night and dominated Chatham Central, 49-19.

The first half was a stunning example of two mismatched teams, as Southeast used its defense and transition game to score a whopping 36 points in the first quarter, while holding Cummings scoreless. Things remained that way in the second quarter, as the Stallions put together a stunning 25-0 run over eight minutes to take a commanding 51-0 lead into halftime.

For those who may have thought they were misreading the scoreboard at halftime, they didn't have to worry about Southeast Alamance trying to

run up the score in the second half. Surratt and the Stallions deliberately held back, scoring just 12 points in the second half. The Stallions gave up two points each in the third and fourth quarters, and came away with a 69-point margin of victory over the overwhelmed Cavaliers.

Junior Inysia McIver led four Stallions in double figures with 15 points in the victory over Cummings, while junior Shaniya Paylor and freshman Rreanna Johnson each had 12 points. Clara LaChappelle added 10 points in the Southeast Alamance win. Paylor led Southeast on the boards with seven rebounds.

Things went much the same way for Southeast Alamance in their Friday night matchup with Chatham Central, as the Stallions built a 22-3 first quarter lead that expanded out to 45-6 at halftime. This time around the Stallions were even more conservative in the second half, as they scored just two points each in the third and fourth quarters to show some humility to the beaten Bears.

Johnson had another solid game for the Panthers, scoring 14 points despite playing sparingly in the second half once again. Paylor managed 12 points and a team-high seven