



911 EDUCATION BEAT

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Fort Smith Police Department rhonda.harper@fortsmithpd.org

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Non-Emergency Numbers:

Fort Smith Police Department 709-5000
 Van Buren Police Department 474-1234
 AR State Police Troop H 783-5195
 Sebastian County Sheriff 783-1051
 Sebastian County Jail 783-4988
 District Court Office 784-2420
 Sebastian County EMS 783-4151
 SEBS County Humane Society 783-4395
 Street Department 784-2360
 Water Department 784-2342
 Code Enforcement 784-1025
 City Transit 783-6464
 Sparks Regional Medical Center 441-4000
 St. Edward Mercy Medical Center 314-6000

This publication has been created to educate our citizens on 911. Follow along monthly for valuable safety tips and ideas to keep your family and home safe. You will also find information on how 911 works and how you can better assist officers when you call 911.

MAKING THE CALL TO 911

Remain Calm - Tell the Dispatcher the Nature of Your Call

In Fort Smith 911 calls for Police and Fire assistance are handled on site. EMS calls are transferred by direct line to Fort Smith EMS.

- Try to remain as calm as possible. Take a deep breath and speak clearly.
- Tell the dispatcher the nature of the emergency.
- If your house is on fire, get to safety and then call for help.
- Know where you are. If help is needed at another location know the address.
- Answer questions the operator asks. It's necessary to help responding units.
- Be aware of your surroundings to better give descriptions to dispatchers.

C A R E H C T A P S I D
 E W E B P A F R A I D F
 N G L M L A C A L L O Y
 O F I R E F I G H T E R
 H A S J H R K L M P K U
 P L T Q V T G S R O O J
 E U E P H W N E E L M N
 L B N C R I M E N I S I
 E M A M B U L A N C E D
 T A D E C N A H N E Y P

AFRAID
 CALM
 LISTEN
 SMOKE
 INJURY
 EM

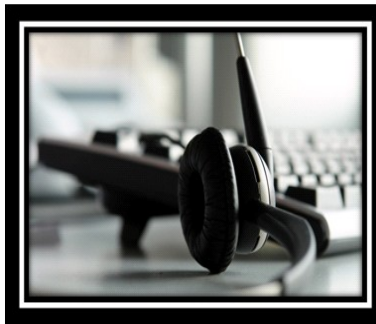
9-1-1 to the Rescue

AMBULANCE
 CRIME
 DISPATCHER
 EMERGENCY
 FIREFIGHTER
 TELEPHONE
 CALL
 HELP
 POLICE
 ENHANCED
 CARE

Look through the puzzle to find the words in the list below. Each word is related to making a 9-1-1 call.

NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATORS WEEK

APRIL 10-16, 2011



A TRIBUTE TO DISPATCHERS

Someone once asked me if I thought that answering telephones for a living was a profession. I said, "I thought it was a calling." And so is dispatching. I have found in my law enforcement career that dispatchers are the unsung heroes of public safety. They miss the excitement of riding in a speeding car with lights flashing and sirens wailing. They can only hear of the bright orange flames leaping from a burning building. They do not get to see the joy on the face of worried parents as they see their child begin breathing on its own, after it has been given CPR.

Dispatchers sit in rooms looking at computer screens and talking to voices from faces they never see. It's like reading a lot of books, but only half of each one. Dispatchers connect the anxious conversations of terrified victims, angry informants, suicidal citizens and grouchy officers. They are the calming influence of all of them—the quiet, competent voices in the night that provide the pillars for the bridges of sanity and safety. They are expected to gather information from highly agitated people who can't remember where they live, what their name is, or what they just saw. And then, they are to calmly provide all that information to the officers, or firefighters without error the first time and every time.

Dispatchers are expected to be able to do five things at once and do them well. While questioning a frantic caller, they must type the information into a computer, tip off another dispatcher, put another caller on hold, and listen to an officer run a plate for a parking problem. To miss the caller's information may be to endanger the officer's life.

Dispatchers have two constant companions, other dispatchers and stress. They depend on one, and try to ignore the other. They are chastened by upset callers, taken for granted by the public, and criticized. The rewards they get are inexpensive and infrequent, except for the satisfaction they feel at the end of a shift, having done what they were expected to do.

Dispatchers were selected in a difficult hiring process to do an impossible job. They are as different as snowflakes, but they have one thing in common. They care about people and they enjoy being the lifeline of society—that steady voice in a storm—the one who knows how to handle every emergency and does it with style and grace; and, uncompromised competence.

Dispatchers play many roles, and few people must jump through the emotional hoops on the trip through the joy of one caller's birthday party, to the fear of another caller's burglary in progress, to the anger of a neighbor blocked in their drive, and back to the birthday caller all in a two-minute time frame. The emotional rollercoaster rolls to a stop after an 8 hour shift, and they are expected to walk down to their car with steady feet and no queasiness in their stomach—because they are dispatchers. If they hold it in, they are too closed. If they talk about it, they are a whiner. If it bothers them, it adds more stress. If it doesn't, they question themselves, wondering why.

Dispatchers are expected to have: the compassion of Mother Theresa, the wisdom of Solomon, the interviewing skills of Oprah Winfrey, the gentleness of Florence Nightingale, the patience of Job, the voice of Barbara Streisand, the knowledge of Einstein, the answers of Ann Landers, the humor of David Letterman, the investigative skills of Sgt. Joe Friday, the faith of Billy Graham, the energy of Charo, and the endurance of the Energizer Bunny.

Is it any wonder that many drop out, or don't make it during training? It is a unique and talented person who can do this job and do it well. And, it is fitting and proper that we take a few minutes or hours this week to honor you for the job that each of you do. That recognition is overdue and it is insufficient. But, it is sincere.

I have tried to do your job, and I have failed. It takes a special person with unique skills. I admire you and thank you for the thankless job you do. You are heroes, and I am proud to work with you.

By Chief Thomas Wagoner
 Loveland, Colorado Police Department