

National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week-April 14-20

During my 18 years as Sheriff, leading a group of individuals who are trying to accomplish team goals, I have come to realize that a major factor in accomplishing those goals and being successful, requires a strong supporting cast who perform their tasks or duties at a high level enabling other stakeholders in the organization to accomplish success.

A highly successful play or movie needs a well written script, a pleasing and artistic stage and a director and actors to tell the story. A successful business product requires flawless design, extensive research, effective engineering and finally efficient personnel to produce the product. These are examples of how it takes many individuals doing their job efficiently to ensure a successful final outcome. In law enforcement, a successful outcome requires the work of numerous supporting staff members working efficiently and effectively.

During the week of April 14-20, 2013 we at the Richland County Sheriff's Department will be joining other community members throughout our nation in honoring our support staff, our local telecommunicators or "dispatchers" as many people call them. No matter what name they go by, they are clearly an important and essential supporting cast when it comes to ensuring or determining a "successful outcome" in our law enforcement world.

A dispatcher is often the first contact a victim or witness has with law enforcement in a highly stressful emergency situation. Taking the initial call, a dispatcher has to gather critical information, quickly assess the situation and then make critical decisions in order to get assistance to the location of need. In addition, this has to all be accomplished while remaining "calm and cool" and communicating in a "professional manner".

Accomplishing all this takes a special person. A person who can verbally communicate with a caller while constantly processing new and updated information and typing that information into a computer all at the same time. The ability to perform multiple tasks all at the same time is a necessary job requirement that I have found not too many people can do. In addition to these performance standards a dispatcher has to also possess a clear understanding of the communities they serve. They have to know what local resources are available and how to get in touch with them and then direct them to the scene. It is a very complicated and difficult job requiring a lot of mental discipline.

As we take the time to honor these law enforcement professionals for their outstanding public service, there is something else you should know about these local unsung heroes. They are all EMD trained, (emergency medical dispatching). They are trained to assist callers on the phone with performing certain first aid procedures including CPR (Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation), until help can arrive on scene. Not all Wisconsin dispatching personnel have this training.

Another factor to consider is that each dispatcher in Richland County is also cross-trained as a State of Wisconsin certified jailer in order to staff the Richland County Jail. So on a typical shift a dispatcher may perform their duties as a dispatcher or as a jailer or back and forth between the two duties at various times during their shift. We also ask our dispatchers to serve the public 24/7 at the sheriff's department lobby window when citizens come to the sheriff's department for assistance.

In the next couple of weeks you will begin to hear some public service announcements and see some articles acknowledging the success of these extraordinary dedicated dispatchers. If you should see one of them at the store or moving around town, let them know how much you appreciate the great job they do. They do a fantastic job for us in law enforcement and I am very proud of them!

Sheriff Darrell Berglin