



By Tracey M. Hilburn

Saluting Our Professionals — The Telecommunicator

As we move into the changing of the season, we anticipate the excitement of warmer weather and the Easter holiday. This is also a time to salute those in the profession of public safety communications and celebrate National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week (NPSTW). This year's designated week of April 12 – 18 will be a time to express gratitude and appreciation of a job well done as ECCs around the country celebrate their public safety telecommunicators. This is also an opportune time to acknowledge the much deserved recognition of our telecommunicators as public safety professionals.

Communications personnel are a highly intricate part of the response to emergency requests. They not only gather and verify information, but are also the first point of contact, exert the voice of calm, and give instruction where needed, while at the same time multi-task by making quick decisions about appropriate response type and by whom. Telecommunicator decision making may also include the level of response, appropriate units to respond, the level of required supervisory notification needed along with the actual dispatching of units, all the while monitoring responding units during the entire event.

In a play-on-words defining a telecommunicator:

Those Employees Locating Emergencies Can Often Move Mountains, Uncover Needs, Instruct with Care And Tenacity, Officiating a Response.

With this in mind, it is prudent for leadership to remember that, as expectations continue to grow and technology capabilities increase, the responsibilities of our telecommunicators are becoming more demanding and stressful. As the old saying goes, “just one more thing to do,” but it remains vital to continue to monitor just how many more things we are adding to the plate. Even though telecommunicators for the most part are very resilient, bouncing back following the majority of incidents, it is important to consider how the addition of multi-media containing pictures and/or video could require a different level of managing emotional reactions after receiving a true visual of an incident. In today's environment, there are those who work well handling critical incidents while receiving vocal descriptions, but visuals can change a person's emotional control. Now is the opportune time to begin giving thought to these types of job performance requirements and responsibilities. We must determine what telecommunicators need to visualize versus just allowing a media gateway to the field responders. Not all calls for service will require visual aid. Vocal information may suffice, but allowing for this new means of information for call processing is vital as policy and standards are developed.

But for now, let us seize the opportunity during this designated week to rally, and show appreciation and recognition for the everyday unsung heroes behind the microphone. On behalf of APCO and the executive committee, we take this opportunity to say *thank you* for all you do every day. Our goal as your representatives is to continue to support and assist the membership in areas of training and standards development, radio spectrum and guidance for technology procurement, just to name a few, as these components are instrumental in advancing ECCs and telecommunicators into the future of NG 9-1-1.

We wish you all a very happy NPSTW and always remember everyone is an intricate part of the future. Achieving success is not a one-person journey but a team adventure. ●

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