



Search



Canandaigua 39° eEdition | subscribe | find and save | newsletter

DAILY MESSENGER

HOME NEWS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT LIFE OPINION OBITUARIES TOWNS

CLASSIFIEDS JOBS CARS HOMES

FEATURED » PHOTOS VIDEOS GAMES TV GUIDE BUSINESS CALENDAR BRANDED CONTENT SUBMIT YOUR NEWS BLOGS

NEWS NOW

, injures 2 others

...

Contractors work Sunday on project at Ontario County landfill

...

What to Watch: 'A Madea Christmas' tr

First response

When it comes to first responders, firefighters and EMTs come to mind. But 911 operators are on the front lines too, answering emergency calls and sending those firefighters and police officers on their way to the scene — and if the emergency is more pressing, they're fully equipped to help over the phone.



Recommend 16



Jack Haley | Messenger Post

Dispatchers work inside the Ontario County 911 Center, which handled over 70,000 calls last year.

By Rachel Repard, staff writer

Updated Sep. 5, 2012 @ 5:10 am

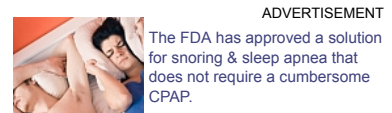
MPNnow.com

Shirley Lafler of Middlesex has delivered a baby. Over the phone. It's all part of her job: She's a 911 dispatcher.

When it comes to first responders, firefighters and EMTs come to mind. But 911 operators are on the front lines too, answering [emergency calls](#) and sending those firefighters and police officers on their way to the scene — and if the emergency is more pressing, they're fully equipped to help over the phone.

The job

Being a [911 dispatcher](#) is anything but just answering calls, said Chief Communications Officer Stephen DeChick.



ADVERTISEMENT

The FDA has approved a solution for snoring & sleep apnea that does not require a cumbersome CPAP.

» STAY INFORMED

Email
NewsLetter

Signup Today

Sign up for our newsletter and have the top headlines from your community delivered right to your inbox.

TOP CLICKS

POPULAR EMAILED COMMENTED

Are cheap pet medications safe to buy?
Oct. 31, 2013

Today's News: Our Take - Omarosa Calls Bethenny "Mediocre," Ridiculous Argument Ensues Oct. 30, 2013

UPDATE: Victor childcare employee accused

TV GUIDE



NCIS: Emily Wickersham Promoted to Series Regular



Report: Drew Barrymore, Will Kopelman Expecting Second Child

"It's a specialized job that's not simply picking up the phone and taking basic information," he said. "It's become its own specialized career," he said.

Whereas once people might have started their careers as police dispatchers in hopes "to get on the road," now, "people who become dispatchers stay dispatchers," said DeChick.

The actual job is separated into two distinct duties, he said. One is a call taker, the other, a radio dispatcher. "In smaller centers like ours," he explains, "we have radio dispatchers who also have to pick up the telephone."

And to be successful, those people need to have a certain personality, said Lafler. She's been a dispatcher for 26 years.

"I think you have to care about people, and want to help people," she said.

She said before she started, she was an EMT with Victor Farmington Ambulance. When the opportunity came up, she decided to try it out – and she hasn't left.

A lot of people have that background, she said. DeChick guessed that "about half of our people have some type of emergency service background," whether it's firefighting or EMT experience.

But Lafler and DeChick agreed that an altruistic sensibility is essential.

DeChick said when he interviews candidates for a dispatcher position, their driving force is "pretty routine across the board."

Once they're hired, there's extensive training, said DeChick. In-house training includes being assigned to a communications training officer. "The first part of the training is just observation," said DeChick.

"Slowly they work up into radio dispatching and call taking," he said. But "you generally don't take calls for service until the training officer is comfortable with your performance," he said. "We're not in the business of saying, 'can you hold on, sir?'" Rather, new hires are exposed to "numerous" calls before they ever take one, said DeChick.

Beyond that, dispatchers receive training in medical and law.

DeChick explains a dispatcher would know the difference between burglary and robbery, for example. They would know the difference between a civil situation versus a criminal situation, and how to advise a caller in each of those.

Comment or view comments

Prev 1 2 3 Next

>> FROM MPNNOW

- Police: Seven dead cats found, Canandaigua woman charged with cruelty **From MPNnow**
- Murder suspect Kevin Welsh dies in police gunfire **From MPNnow**
- Police: cleaning woman allegedly stole jewelry from Farmington residence **From MPNnow**
- Wayne County woman hurt in Phelps car-deer crash **From MPNnow**
- Canandaigua man seriously injured in Route 21 four-wheeler crash **From MPNnow**

>> FROM AROUND THE WEB

- OUTRAGE: Don't Bring a Knife to a Gun Fight **Free Enterprise**
- Older Men Rescued After Years in Houston 'Dungeon' **AARP.org**
- Michelle Obama's DNA Test Show Slave Owner as Ancestor **Ancestry.com**
- 10 Things You Should Never Buy at Garage Sales **Reader's Digest**
- Good Girls Gone Bad **Hollyscoop**

Recommended by

- of sexually abusing 6-year-old girl **Oct. 31, 2013**
- What Breast Cancer Treatment Is Right for You? **Nov. 1, 2013**
- Switched at Birth's Katie LeClerc Is Engaged **Nov. 2, 2013**
- Police: Driver charged with DWI-drugs after car crashes into Palmyra Post Office **Oct. 29, 2013**

Time Warner Cable

Authorized Retailer

Time Warner Cable Deals

Get High Speed Internet Starting at

\$19.99/mo+*

Call To Order Today!

Get Started!

>> EVENTS CALENDAR

Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun

11/4 5:30 PM Bingo

11/4 4 PM Support and Family Education Program

11/4 7 PM Wayne Town Planning Board

11/4 6 PM Bath Historic Preservation Commission

11/4 3:30 PM Photography for Kids

More Events > Add Events >

All Movies Dining Tickets

Events by **eviesays.com**



NCIS: Emily Wickersham Promoted to Series Regular



Report: Drew Barrymore, Will Kopelman Expecting Second Child



Jack Haley | Messenger Pos

Dispatchers work inside the Ontario County 911 Center, which handled over 70,000 calls last year.

Page 2 of 3 - But what DeChick calls “one of the most unique and prestigious” parts of the job is that all Ontario County 911 dispatchers are certified advanced emergency medical dispatchers. That means if someone calls in with a medical emergency, “our folks are trained in how to ask questions and give instructions,” he said.

That includes everything “from a broken finger to an emergency childbirth,” he said.

Zero to 60

Lafler laughed when she remembered what it was like coaching a woman in labor through a childbirth.

"I just talked them through it," she said. "It was exciting," she said. The baby was delivered successfully. "Everybody sent flowers and balloons to me," she remembered. At the time, it was one of the first babies delivered over the phone at the 911 Center. But now, that type of emergency has "become more routine, and people expect that," she said.

Even so, it's hard to pinpoint what a typical day, or even a typical call, might look like.

"Calls for service per day depend on the time of year," DeChick said. "Weather is a huge factor," he said.

DeChick said last year, the center took over 70,000 calls — that's an average of almost 200 per day.

And, it's in addition to the help they provide law enforcement during traffic stops and the like.

No matter what the call, Lafler said the first priority is making sure the caller is calm and safe.

"It all depends on if they're overly excited," she said. "You've got to get them calmed down so you can get the information you need to get help on the way."

After she gets that information out to police or fire, it's time to let the person know what help is on the way.

DeChick said during the whole process, the dispatcher might need to update the ambulance en route of the status of a patient based on what they're being told by the caller.

"Things change a lot," he said.

That goes for police calls, as well. If someone reports they've been threatened by someone who is no longer on the premises, "within minutes or sometimes seconds, that person returns," said DeChick.

"We have to change our gears to try to keep them calm while updating the police officers," he said.

Sometimes, a caller just needs a question answered, Lafler said. When those calls come in, she redirects them to whomever can best answer the question.

"That's one of the first things I learned," she said. "You never tell somebody there's nothing you can do for them. You refer them to someone. You try to help them the best you can," she said.

» FROM MPNNOW

Police: Seven dead cats found, Canandaigua woman charged with cruelty **From MPNnow**

» FROM AROUND THE WEB

Oregon Man Killed While Honoring His Dead Son **First to Know**



NCIS: Emily Wickersham Promoted to Series Regular



Report: Drew Barrymore, Will Kopelman Expecting Second Child



Jack Haley | Messenger Pos

Dispatchers work inside the Ontario County 911 Center, which handled over 70,000 calls last year.

Page 3 of 3 - But no matter the reason for the call, DeChick said a dispatcher has to "be able to go from 0 to 60 in about 2 seconds."

"One minute you're on the phone with somebody who reports criminal mischief. The next phone call, somebody's saying 'my child's not breathing,'" DeChick said. "You just never know what type of call you're going to pick up."

Lafler echoed DeChick's thoughts. "It's like a roller coaster," she said. "All it takes is one little incident to change it all. You never know," she said.

What's definite is that 911 operators are dedicated to helping others, just like their colleagues that

have a more visible presence in the face of an emergency.

"Think about this," said DeChick. "We're here 24/7. We work weekends, holidays; we miss our kids birthdays. So you have to love what you're doing in order to do this job," he said.

» FROM MPNNOW

Police: Seven dead cats found, Canandaigua woman charged with cruelty **From MPNnow**

Police: Canandaigua man sexually assaulted nine-year-old **From MPNnow**

Murder suspect Kevin Welsh dies in police gunfire **From MPNnow**

Canandaigua star athlete left a legacy **From MPNnow**

Steamboat 'soon' to be razed on Canandaigua lakefront **From MPNnow**

» FROM AROUND THE WEB

Oregon Man Killed While Honoring His Dead Son **First to Know**

10 Things You Should Never Buy at Garage Sales **Reader's Digest**

Mother Of Twisted Killer Scott Peterson Dies... WITHOUT Visiting Her Evil Son One Final Time **Radar Online**

Michelle Obama's mixed race heritage proved by DNA. **Ancestry.com**

Older Men Rescued After Years in Houston 'Dungeon' **AARP.org**

Recommended by

>> More Articles and Offers



New Rule in New York:
If you pay for car
insurance you better
read this...



Rumor has it this stock
might explode. Can you
turn \$5,000 into
\$500,000?



Did you know that your
record is public?
Search anyone
instantly! Check
anyone in New York!



Controversy over new
skinny pill -- Is it too
strong for store
shelves?...

ADVERTISEMENT