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#100409-NPSTW

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April 11 Begins National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week

The Santa Rosa County Board of Commissioners declared April 11-17, National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week in honor of our local men and women who are dedicated to responding to 9-1-1 calls and ensuring the proper life-saving services are dispatched quickly and correctly to our residents. Last year alone, Santa Rosa County dispatchers answered over 57,000 calls for fire, law enforcement, medical, search and rescue, and after-hours animal control services. A dispatcher is the first link between the caller and the emergency response system and work every day, night, and holiday to ensure our community has that link to safety. However, they are often overlooked because they are typically not in the public eye.

9-1-1 in Santa Rosa County

Santa Rosa County Emergency Communications utilizes Enhanced 911, an enhanced version of a typical caller id system. The difference between Enhanced 911 and regular caller id is the amount of information provided to dispatchers when 9-1-1 is called. Enhanced 911 displays the caller's name, phone number, street address, apartment or space numbers, the type of phone, additional phone numbers at that location, and a recommendation for police, fire, or paramedic response. It also keeps numbers from being blocked, even if they are unlisted, allowing the dispatcher to quickly confirm the location where help is needed.

Santa Rosa County Emergency Communications staff are all certified as national emergency medical and fire dispatchers. Using a software program called Medical and Fire Priority Dispatch Systems developed by EMS and fire service professionals, dispatchers follow a set of written and profession-approved dispatching protocols for the evaluation and response to every type of medical and fire call received through our 9-1-1 center. The software also assists dispatchers in providing the caller with life saving techniques until emergency responders arrive, making the dispatcher the first "first responder." To ensure that protocols are followed properly, the emergency communication center has an extensive quality improvement program where over 200 calls are reviewed monthly.

When calling from a landline or cell phone, here are some helpful hints for calling 9-1-1:

- You will need to know the address or location of the emergency and be prepared to give driving directions if asked.
- You will need to know the phone number you from which you are calling.
- Be prepared to tell the dispatcher the nature of the emergency and what has happened.
- The dispatcher will ask you several questions regarding patient condition or scene safety concerns. The answers are vital in order to prepare responders for the situation before they arrive at the scene, as well as assuring that the correct resources are utilized.
- Remember, patient care is not being delayed by dispatcher questions. Responders are sent as soon as the appropriate information is gathered and the dispatcher will continue to ask questions and provide directions for patient care until responders arrive.
- Stay on the line until the dispatcher tells you it is ok to hang-up the phone.
- Always call back if something has changed before the responders arrive.
- Remember to stay calm and keep a clear head.
- If you dial 9-1-1 by mistake, don't hang up. Please stay on the line and simply tell the dispatcher you misdialed.