

## ALLEGAN COUNTY NEWS ARTICLE - COUNTY GOVERNMENT

### ALLEGAN COUNTY 911 DISPATCHERS ARE HEROES ON THE OTHER END OF THE LINE! *By Jan DeWyse, Director of Central Dispatch*

Do you want to know the time of the local 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade .... 911 dispatchers are NOT the people to call! However, if you have an emergency situation where the need for immediate emergency assistance, police, EMS or the fire department may be required .... 911 dispatchers ARE the people to call!

In reality, the importance of 911 dispatchers in Allegan County is “priceless” to the health and safety of Allegan County residents. The job of a dispatcher is so huge and varied that it is hard to easily explain. For example, there are some people who would absolutely not pick up the phone and call us unless it's a life and death. However, then there are other people who call us because they want to know what time the parade starts in their hometown. So you never know what is issue or emergency might be when you answer the incoming call. You have to always be prepared and ready.

At all times, Allegan County Central Dispatch staffs a minimum of three dispatchers on duty. These three dispatchers are responsible for answering emergency and non-emergency calls. The dispatchers are also responsible for dispatching all of the police, EMS and fire departments in Allegan County.

A dispatcher may take a call from a mother with a baby not breathing, and stay calm and controlled as they work with this mother until help can arrive. Then immediately after tasking that call and talking the mother through CPR, the dispatcher will have to hang up and answer the very next call .... a call that can be very different from the first call but still as demanding.

This is a very difficult job because there is nearly no margin for error. What makes the Central Dispatch team successful is teamwork. We are proud to be on the job 24/7, teaming with all of the emergency agencies in the County to care for the enormous and diverse needs of our residents.

While an intricate part of the public safety community, the role the dispatchers play is usually all done behind the scenes, and they are often not recognized or acknowledged. However, you can be proud that Allegan County has some of the finest and most well trained dispatchers in the State of Michigan. As a citizen of Allegan County we are truly blessed for these “heroes on the other end of the line”!