

### News

#### 9-1-1 operators Communications technicians conduit between frantic callers and emergency responders

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"911, what is your emergency?" A simple question can be a lifesaver, as Dublin's Division of Police dispatchers respond to the call, 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

April is National 9-1-1 Education Month and the city celebrated Public Safety Telecommunicators Week April 13-19, Dublin Public Information Officer Michael Racey said.

A dispatcher in Dublin is formally known as a communications technician, Racey said.

"This is where it all begins," Dublin Communications Technician Lauren Yankanin said April 15, from the radio room at the Dublin Justice Center, 6565 Commerce Parkway. She was on the job with her colleagues Carolyn Fergus and Perri Lowe.



SNP photos by Jeffrey Konczal (2)

Lauren Yankanin, works in the Dublin Division of Police radio room where 9-1-1 emergency calls for both the Dublin police department and the Washington Township Fire Department are answered.

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Yankanin said she has worked for the city as a communications technician for three years. There are five, full-time technicians on her second shift, from 2:45 to 10:45 p.m.

"I graduated from (Ohio State University) with a degree in criminology and sociology, and was looking for a job," she said. One year later, she was hired by the city.

The job of communications technician is a busy one, and a challenging role to play, she said.

"We monitor three different channels -- fire, traffic and police," she said.

"We rotate every day so that everyone keeps up their skills."

In 2007, Dublin's communications technicians answered 11,433, emergency 9-1-1 calls and 60,756 non-emergency phone calls, Dublin Technical Services Bureau Director Jay Somerville said.

He said the 11,433 emergency calls include wireless calls made after Sept. 11, 2007, when the city first became a wireless answering point.

For 2008, through March 31, 5,525, 9-1-1 calls were answered by Dublin's communications technicians, Somerville said.

Of those, 1,371 were from land lines and 4,154 were wireless. There were 13,719 non-emergency phone calls answered.

"Our busiest day of the week is Friday," Somerville said.

"Our busiest hour of the day is 3 to 4 p.m., and our busiest shift is first shift, from 6:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m., Monday through Friday."

Dublin's standard for answering a 9-1-1 call is two rings, Yankanin said.

The technicians are also responsible for setting off sirens in the event of inclement weather.

"Things change every day," Yankanin said. "It's busy and challenging, and I love the people I work with."

For 25-year veteran technician Fergus -- six of those 25 years with Dublin -- success as a technician is a matter of experience and practice.

Whereas the city has a five- to six-month training program for its technicians, "A lot of it is on-the-job training," Fergus said.

"It took me a little while, one and a half, maybe two years to get comfortable," Yankanin said, adding a good communications technician needs to be prepared to multi-task.

"If you're comfortable doing a lot of things at once, you'll be fine," Yankanin said.

"If you're not, you won't be comfortable," she said.

"We encourage applicants to come in and sit with our technicians, so they can see how involved the job actually is," Communications Supervisor Nancy Readnour said.

One added benefit that has been universally appreciated is a link on the city's Web site for job applicants, as well as for residents requesting a vacation house watch.

"For house monitoring, they can either call in or go online," Readnour said. "Those options are a benefit to residents as well as an added convenience."

Yankanin said the most unusual 9-1-1 call she has taken during her tenure was one where a car ran into a building.

"That was the first time I took a call like that, and I had to say, 'What?' 'Excuse me?' " she said.

"The hard calls are those in situations where there is a negative outcome," she said, such as when firefighters and medics respond, and someone can't be saved.

"Fatal crashes are hard," she said. "I dealt with my first one a couple of months ago."

Yankanin said technicians can followup on a situation with police. "It's hard to get the initial call, then have to wait to see what happens."

While they hope you never need to call for help, there is one thing callers can do to make it easier to get help when they need it, and it's a lot like the mantra real estate agents preach to their clients.

"Location, location, location," Fergus said. "People will call us and give us their name, what is going on, and rattle off a whole lot of information."

"Our theory is, if you can tell us where you are, we can send you help," she said.

For more information about Dublin police, visit the Web site [dublin.oh.us](http://dublin.oh.us), go to the public safety link and click on "police."

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*--Lauren Yankanin*

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