

When I first started dispatching in the late 70's, things were rudimentary at best. We used a lot of manual equipment. For example, dispatch cards, note logs, time stamps were the equipment of the day. This was even before a very crude imitation of current CAD which we called "Records Management". All information was input manually by any given number of operators. All dispatch cards had to be stacked in chronological order to be entered into the RMS. We used an antiquated "electro-writer" to send calls to different dispatch stations. That particular piece of equipment was formerly used in hospitals to send Dr's prescriptions to the pharmacy, but was adapted for dispatch use.

Radio frequencies were UHF, not the 800/900 Mhz we see now. Radio transmissions and coverage was spotty and were often interrupted by something as simple as weather patterns.

We used a lot of pens and pencils on our radio logs and had to keep up with the quickest of speaking officers, deciding what was important enough to write on the log, yet maintain some semblance of legibility so it could be read and understood by others.

Flash forward 30+ years. We are now more fully automated than ever, yet the work load demands are higher than ever. We manage more officers per shift than ever before. Today for example, my station alone handles 38 officers, from patrol to traffic to SRO's to admin units. Radio logs have gone by the wayside, but the ability to type faster is a constant demand. Comments are put into incidents as needed and necessary. Dispatch cards have been replaced by a more modern CAD system that allows us .

We have become "Customer Service" oriented, balancing the needs of the console, as well as air and phone traffic. We have also become multi-taskers to the extreme. Knowledge of ever changing policies, constant geography annexations and technologies are a must for us. We can no longer sit back and enjoy "down time" anymore.

Even the types of calls have undergone dramatic change. There is an increase in all types of calls, from domestic related to drugs to hazardous materials , so forth and so on. The increasing amount of calls per shift continues to rise rapidly. There are more trauma/assault calls, more weapons calls and as information retrieval specialists, it is our job to keep on top of all this in order to better serve our Customers. Our primary goal is officer/fire fighter safety, one that has and always will be paramount to the job.