

I am replying to a message you posted on APCO regarding stories of personal toll a telecommunicator faces.

I worked as a dispatcher and supervisor for a 911 in a busy MABAS center in a suburban area of Chicago. Back in spring of 2004 I was employed as a dispatcher working 7 days on and 7 days off 12 hour shifts. On my off days I worked as a Lieutenant on one of the departments for which was dispatched by the center I dispatched in. On April 27, 2004 I was relieved from my shift at the firehouse by the on duty crew and went to work at the dispatch center. It appeared to be a normal day as always until I received a call for a reported structure fire. I dispatched the call as I always do, a couple of minutes into the response I could hear my chief calling me on our Mutual Aid channel with EMERGENCY traffic. I switched over to that frequency and answered my chief and he advised me that 2 fire engines were involved in a traffic collision both responding to the same structure fire. My chief had requested additional help to the scene for the accident. Unaware how bad the accident was I was trying to imagine how many possible injuries there were and worked on getting as much help as needed prior to him asking for the help, while at the same time continuing dispatching the structure fire and also replacing the fire apparatus for the fire which were now out of service, which later found out turned out to be an arson fire.

As time went on I found out that one of the fireman that had relieved me that morning was killed in the accident.

There is more to the story but, I am writing to let you know not all 911 dispatching is rewarding. The company I worked for was a private Ambulance company who owns the 911 MABAS dispatch center. What I was given for my performance of this call was a day off without pay, nothing else.

If you like to talk about it more please feel free to e-mail me back, this call has been imbedded in my mind forever.

I am currently still working for the fire department, however I was fire from the dispatch center a couple of years ago by new management.