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Proclamation for National Public Safety Telecommunicator Week 2019.

Summary:

The second full week in April is designated National Public Safety Telecommunicator Week by Congress to recognize the behind the scenes telecommunicators, otherwise known as dispatchers. Congressional representatives continue to honor the profession today with bipartisan support for grassroots initiative 911 SAVES (Supporting Accurate Views of Emergency Services). This initiative aims to recognize 9-1-1 professionals for the lifesaving work they perform by reclassifying them from administrative personnel to protective services at the federal level.

Telecommunicators are recognized as the, “first, first responders,” by industry professionals. Telecommunicators may positively affect the outcome of an emergency by being the first emergency service provider to manage the incident remotely, if not in person.

Ten Telecommunicators, 2 Telecommunicators in training and 1 Communications Supervisor staff the Deer Park Police Department’s Communications Unit. Training requires each candidate to demonstrate superior multi-tasking abilities, quickly acquire dispatch specific skill sets, problem solve during potential life and death situations and learn enough about law enforcement, firefighting and medical services to efficiently and accurately dispatch each discipline.

Telecommunicators are responsible for many duties including, but not limited to:

- High level, public safety specific, processing of non-emergency and 9-1-1 phone calls
- Using next generation 9-1-1 technology to determine emergency locations when the caller is uncertain of, or unable to, communicate their whereabouts
- Radio dispatching of police, fire, EMS and after hour city services
- Launching emergency alerts via the siren system, school alert system and CodeRED phone

calls for tornados and chemical releases

- Delivering pre-arrival medical and safety instructions to callers
- Providing for the safety of police officers, firefighters and paramedics by assessing scene conditions and providing hazard information in advance of arrival
- Providing alerts, monitoring unit status, checking on welfare, sending back up
- Assisting fire command with recognizing mayday calls and personnel accountability reports, staging units, obtaining and reviewing hazardous material information
- Supporting emergency operation center functions during critical incidents
- Simultaneously performing all above duties as needed for the successful resolution of life threatening emergencies and/or high call volume periods.

Studies have shown that telecommunicators are exposed to the same stressors as other public safety disciplines and experience disorders and ailments at similar rates. Feeling helpless, afraid, fatigued or traumatized by calls involving responder or child injury or suicidal callers is common. Work schedules require a long time assignment to night and evening shifts, overtime, working almost all weekends and most holidays. The position is inherently complex and overtly technical. Communications centers contend with staffing shortages nationwide due to a lack of qualified applicants, intense training programs and challenging workloads. This is compounded in smaller centers who must use less personnel to accomplish more tasks, rather than focusing on being “just” a call taker or “just” a radio dispatcher. Hazards unique to each jurisdiction such as the petrochemical refining district or hurricane threats are also added complications for each center.

When almost every call stems from a negative experience, each telecommunicator has the opportunity to make a difference and improve the quality of life of our citizens every time they answer the phone by being professionals. They take great pride in being the one who watches over the responders and dedicate themselves selflessly during significant incidents. They are able to make a significant impact or save a life by being critical personnel involved in the resolution of an emergency. These actions occur largely, and often literally, in the dark and behind the scenes because they turn the lights down in the center to compensate for the computer monitors and never set foot on scene.

We respectfully request that the Council Members of the City of Deer Park accept this resolution recognizing April 14-20, 2019, as National Public Safety Telecommunicators week, in honor of the services performed by the men and women the Deer Park Police Department’s Communication Unit.

Fiscal/Budgetary Impact: