



What would you do if you called 9-1-1 for an emergency, and no one ever answered the phone? Each year the second full week of April is dedicated as National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week for the men and women who serve their communities as dispatchers.

“For 40 years, 9-1-1 has served as the vital link between the American public and emergency services,” said National Emergency Number Associations CEO, Brian Fontes.

Have you ever given it a second thought? Dispatchers are there 24 hours a day, seven days a week. No holidays, or breaks apply. They are committed to being available to answer calls but it goes further.

Dispatchers then will keep the situation as calm as possible, give helpful advice to the caller when applicable, and send the appropriate personnel with the right equipment, which is always different depending on the emergency, and get crews to the correct location.

If you really think about it, that is a lot to do in a situation where there is so much panic, and a lot of information to take in and relay, with a lot of pressure to get it right.

Here in Perkins County, we are lucky enough to have five of these dedicated individuals answering 9-1-1 calls coming in from our community.

Serving the community alongside Perkins County Sheriff James Brueggeman are: Communications Supervisor Karith Williams who has been with the sheriff’s office for eight years; Karon Harris, with 12.5 years of service under her belt; Tammy Terry who has been dispatching for nine years; Becky Uehling, with the department for four years now; and Brian Pankonin who has served with the Perkins County Sheriff’s Office for one year.

These are familiar faces that we see around, who put the safety and well being of our community as their first priority.

Being able to dial 9-1-1 is one of the community’s services most often taken for granted—a dispatcher to answer and send help. Whether there is a burglar at the back door, a fire in the

kitchen, or grandpa is having chest pains, the assuring voice on the other end of the line proves time after time to be irreplaceable with each tragedy avoided.

So not only now, for Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, but from now on, be sure to appreciate these services we have available to us, and the special individuals who make them work.

You never know when you may be the one in need, and lucky for us, we can rest assured that there will be an answer when we call for help.

Dispatchers may not be the doctor, that saves your life directly, or the EMT or fireman who arrived on scene to actually rescue you from a terrible situation, but their piece of the puzzle is just as important, and deserves the same recognition.