

KMVT News

911 emergency dispatcher says it's a tough but rewarding job

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JEROME, Idaho (KMVT/KSVT) — Calling 911 in an emergency situation is vital to getting the help you need, but many people don't realize the importance of the dispatchers on the other line. KMVT visited SIRCOMM this morning and highlights the hero's on the other end of the phone.

"You don't get taught how to call 911," said Kristy Churchman, the deputy director of SIRCOMM.

Calling 911 in an emergency situation is often scary and stressful. but what about for the emergency dispatchers?

"The vicarious trauma of listening to emergencies as they happen, there is the compassion fatigue of listening to it over months and years, it all compounds," Churchman said. "Mental health is very important when it comes to 911 dispatchers, but then there is other stressors, like 12 hour shifts and missing your friends birthday, your anniversary, and friends weddings."

When a person calls 911, the dispatcher works to figure out the details of the emergency while also communicating with different agencies to help them get to the scene. SIRCOMM manages Twin Falls, Jerome, Lincoln and Gooding counties.

In the year 2020 alone, they fielded 111,844 calls for help.

They recognize that what might not be an emergency to some, is vital to others.

"Anywhere from help finding a lost dog, to a multi-agency emergency, we have personnel that are able to multitask in this new world," said Brett Reid, the Director of SIRCOMM.

While they often are not recognized as first responders, officials at SIRCOMM want the public to recognize the importance of a 911 dispatcher, and just how much they do for people every day.

Of course the big incidents are rewarding in such, I helped save someone's life, I helped someone do CPR and save their baby, but the small things like we helped an elderly lady find her dog, so any kind of incident can be rewarding depending on who you are.," Churchman said