

As I sit here typing this I have a lump in my throat recalling some of the most heart wrenching things I have heard. Imagine picking up a 911 phone and hearing a woman screaming at the top of her lungs and only being able to understand two words...."baby" "dead". How can I help this woman when I don't even know where she is? Imagine picking up 911 phone and an elderly man "Rosie please don't leave me". Imagine an officer yelling for more help because he is in the fight for his life with a subject who we later find out is a wanted fugitive for murder and knows that if he is arrested will spend the rest of his life in prison. That subject has nothing to lose. This has all happened to during a "normal" 10 hour shift as a dispatcher. This is a usual day in the life as a dispatcher. It is not just a "regular" job.

The physical, emotional and mental toll this job takes on a dispatcher is immense.

The physical is caused by working nights, weekends, holidays, mandatory overtime, extended shifts. Eating habits, sleep schedules and lack of exercise to name a few, cause high blood pressure, weight gain, depression issues.

The emotional stress is listening to the mother who just found her baby dead and knowing the only thing I can do is reassure her help is on the way. Telling that elderly man that I am so sorry for his loss of his wife of 60 years and that help is on the way. Telling that officer on the radio is back up is on the way but is still 5 mins away but just keep fighting for your life officer!

The mental stress is knowing every day I get older and the physiological changes that are inevitable will affect how well I do my job. It is a known fact the older each of us gets our mental capacity, reflexes, hearing, eye sight, ability to multitask all diminish.

The General Fund does not allow dispatcher to retire until 65 years old to gain full retirement. The choices are to leave the job or stay knowing the chances of a serious mistake are inevitable.

**Signature redacted**

Dakota Communications Center

28 years of service