

# Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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## “Calling 911”



One of them will be the voice at the other end of the line when you dial “911”. The dispatchers at the Norfolk Police Department know how to calm down a hysterical caller or talk someone through a medical emergency and are available to do so 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Trish Hanis is the communications supervisor for the City of Norfolk Police Department and is one of twelve people who man the 911 switchboard for Norfolk, Stanton County, Hoskins, Woodland Park, Pilger and Hadar.

She has gotten calls about all kinds of emergency situations and is trained on how to get information quickly and accurately from the caller. “First of all, we want to know what’s going on- if it’s a fire, a crime in progress, or a medical emergency. Then we need to know the location,” Hanis said.

Once the dispatchers get that information, they are able to send the appropriate emergency personnel to the scene.

“When people call in, we need their name, address and phone number. We keep them on the line because a lot can happen between when an event occurs to when an officer arrives. We also need to make sure we have the emergency personnel going to the right location,” Hanis said.

She emphasized that people call during an event and not hours after it has occurred. For instance, if a neighbor’s dog is barking incessantly during the night, it’s best to call for a police officer right then and not a day later when the barking is no longer a problem.

“It’s hard for officers to assess certain types of calls when the issue is not occurring. We need officers on the scene during the event,” Hanis said.

The dispatchers at the Norfolk police department have all taken training at the Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center in Grand Island. They are given a series of tests and then undergo several months of in-house training. They also have certification in CPR and other medical emergencies so that they can coach someone on the other end of the phone in using life saving procedures.

They do get calls about non-emergency situations which they take in stride knowing that people will call 911 when they don't know who else to call for information. Hanis does recommend that people take the batteries out of their old cell phones before giving them to their kids to play with.

"Even if a phone doesn't have service, if it has battery power, you are still able to use it to call 911 so we will get calls from kids who have learned to dial 911 at school and will call just to chat," Hanis said.

Between taking emergency calls, handling the non-emergency calls and sending emergency personnel to locations, the dispatchers need to be multi-taskers. There are six screens in front of each dispatcher that show information about police radio activity, officer locations, the 911 screen and maps of the area.

"No day's ever the same. You have to like to work with people to do this job. All in all, there's the satisfaction that you have done something for some one. It's a rewarding job." Hanis said.