



Special Newsletter

Town Manager

John Curran

Tewksbury MA

NM Regional Emergency Communications Center



At 987 Whipple Road, next to the old Tewksbury Department of Public Works building, one can find the home of the Northern Middlesex Regional Emergency Communications Center (NMRECC). This state-of-the-art facility utilizes technology from 9-1-1 communications, radio, and fire station alerting equipment to dispatch first responders from communities of Dracut and Tewksbury.

This building was completed in 2020, creating one location for shared resources, information, and personnel with Dracut Fire and Police Departments. Dispatchers work shifts of 8AM-4PM, 4PM-12AM, and 12AM-8AM. Each eight-hour shift consists of at least four dispatchers, with some midnight shifts having a minimum of three. Additionally, there may be personnel working who are

training to become dispatchers. Currently, there are 17 dispatchers shared between the two Towns.

Dispatch Work

Dispatchers sit at one of six available stations where they each have access to eight different monitors, each with a different program displayed.

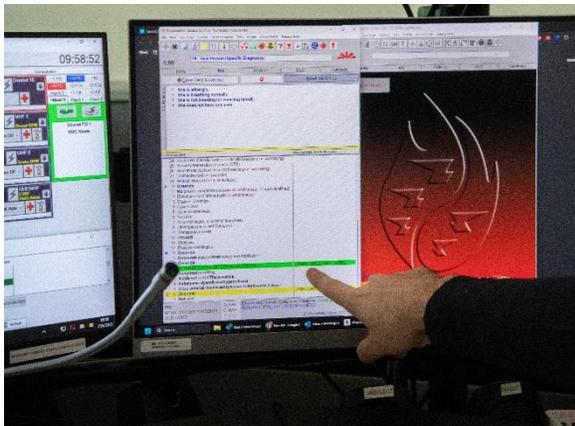


Dispatchers work in coordination to respond to emergency calls by locating the caller, gathering necessary

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information about the emergency, and notifying the proper first responders.

They have access to several software programs to assist in their response. On one of their monitors, they have a satellite map that pinpoints the location of the call. An Artificial Intelligence tool on another screen helps transcribe the calls as they occur in real time. On another monitor, they are presented with increasingly specific questions that determine what level of medical care is needed. These are just a few of the state-of-the-art programs that dispatchers utilize.



Dispatchers also have access to useful pre-entered information through the RapidSOS website. Pre-entered information can help streamline the emergency response, so all are encouraged to sign up! For more information, head to their website: <https://nmrecc-ma.gov/rapidsos>.

After determining what emergency response is required, dispatchers can remotely call for police, fire, or ambulance responses for safety, fire, or medical concerns. By just clicking a button, dispatchers can trigger the alarm

in the fire station or call into the police radio. With live camera feeds from around these stations displayed on televisions and through live location-tracking, dispatchers can monitor the response time to ensure that first-responders arrive to the scene quickly.



Dispatch work is not easy. They can work up to sixteen hours at a time. Dispatchers work tirelessly, ensuring that the Tewksbury and Dracut communities are safeguarded every night, on weekends, and even holidays.

While dispatch work has long been an opportunity for people to get experience for other first-responder roles, such as policing and firefighting, NMRECC hopes to change this perception. The work of dispatchers is equally important to the community and through changes in employment environment, the center hopes to attract the dispatchers to career-long service.

Kitchen

Due to the dispatchers' long hours without breaks, they have access to a kitchen where the team regularly makes

food for one another to eat at their desks. On holidays, the dispatchers also have a tradition of cooking breakfast for the other Departments' first responders on duty.



The dispatchers also have a grill behind the building that is frequently used for barbecue meals. The tightly knit team of dispatchers spend long hours with each other, serving as a second family that takes care of one another.



Stress Relief

Dispatchers are exposed to trauma, though indirectly, through their work answering emergency calls. Like other first-responders, this can take a mental toll. To help mitigate these effects, the

dispatchers also have access to a lounge where they can relax during or after a stressful shift.

The Tree of Life

In the interior halls of the facility, one can see a piece of artwork dubbed the "Tree of Life." This art is a new addition to the building, added by a graduating class of 2025 TMHS student as a part of their senior project.



Though the tree is bare for now, the team will fill out the branches with leaves over time, each representing a life saved or birthed with a dispatcher's on-call medical assistance.

Meeting / Training Room

The building also has a large conference room where cross-departmental meetings can occur to streamline coordination between first-responding units.

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This room also has three sets of monitors for training dispatchers before handling real-world emergencies. NMRECC is frequently looking to hire and train dispatchers to expand the available staff.



Working at NMRECC is difficult but rewarding. The staff have a familial bond with one another as they have spent countless hours working with each other and alongside other first responders to safeguard the Tewksbury and Dracut communities.