



Website: **VCFD.org**
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Contact: **Brian McGrath** or **Andy VanSciver**
Public Information Officers
Phone: **(805) 389-9746**
Email: **PIOFire@ventura.org**

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dispatchers Put the First in First Responder

Fire Communications Center Answered 100,348 emergency Calls in 2021

CAMARILLO, Calif. – A 64-year-old man stops breathing while working out at the gym. A pregnant woman's baby won't wait for her to get to the hospital. A 50-year-old man collapses while hiking and his heart stops beating.

In each case, the "first first-responder" was a Ventura County Fire Department dispatcher who answered a phone call for help and guided the reporting person on what to do to save lives or deliver a new one into the world.

"Our dispatchers provide a vital link in countywide public safety services every day," Ventura County Fire Chief Dustin Gardner said. "While few people who need our help know a dispatcher by more than a voice on the phone, their dedication and care for others sets an example we all should appreciate."

April 10 through 16 is National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, recognizing the important role dispatchers fill in responding to emergencies.

In Ventura County, emergency dispatch for all fire and medical calls is provided by the Ventura County Fire Department's dispatchers, including the areas served by the City of Ventura, Oxnard and Fillmore fire departments. This collaborative effort is designed so the closest resource responds to an emergency, regardless of where it happens.

In 2021, the county's 32 dispatchers and supervisors received 100,348 emergency calls in 12 languages. This included eight CPR saves where dispatchers provided CPR instructions, seven baby deliveries where dispatchers provided birthing instructions and support, 67,159 other medical emergencies, 1,403 fires and 156 rescues.



Last June, early in the morning near the end of her 12 ½ -hour shift, Dispatcher Brianna Hyatt got a call from two very soon-to-be parents. They were driving to a midwife for delivery of their child but had to stop because the baby was ready and on his way.

“(The father) was extremely calm, and I would have never known that his wife was about to give birth in a middle school parking lot,” Hyatt said. “I think it helped my nerves because the father was so confident, and it was almost like he had prepared for this moment.”

Hyatt, a mother of two who delivered one of her children without a physician, gave delivery instructions to the father for about 7 minutes until the mom gave birth to a healthy and loud baby boy the couple named Fox. Then she stayed on the line to help them make sure the baby was breathing and did not have the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck.

“I couldn’t help but relax slightly after hearing the mom ask her husband to just get in the car and drive her home, like she had not just delivered a baby,” Hyatt said. “The husband refused his wife’s request and waited for the responders to arrive.”

“I was able to see later, on social media some pictures that were taken at the scene and speak to the fire fighters and paramedics that responded to the call to sum up the whole experience,” she said. “It was one for the books, one that will live in my memory rent free.”

Katie Farber, the Ventura County Fire Department’s dispatcher of the year, guided three moms through childbirth in 2021. A girl in March, and boys in August and September.

“Assisting with a childbirth is an incredible experience and I am very lucky to have been the one to answer these calls,” Farber said.

“During the call it is important to make sure that the caller knows help is on the way and that together we can handle the situation in the meantime,” she said. “Ventura County Fire Dispatch uses emergency medical protocols that allow us to gather information for our responders as well as provide important instructions for our callers. This ensures that appropriate directions are given, which is especially helpful during high pressure moments like a birth that require quick and reliable action.”

Dispatcher Julie Fuchs answered the call when the man stopped breathing at a Simi Valley gym. She guided bystanders to retrieve an automated electronic defibrillation machine and gave instruction on how to use it to resuscitate the man.

Fuchs also was the dispatcher when the hiker collapsed on a trail near the water tower in Simi Valley. She provided instructions on CPR for the good Samaritan who stayed on the phone while



performing CPR for about 12 minutes until firefighters could arrive at the remote location and take over.

"I remember my reporting party being incredible, calm and very willing to help," Fuchs said. "All I could do was tell him to keep going, he was doing a great job. When I saw that they were transporting to the hospital, all I could think was, 'Wow, that person did an incredible job.' It is always an incredible feeling when you learn that a patient survived, especially when they are young. These calls help push you through the bad days when the patient isn't so lucky."

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