

7/29/03

Kevin:

The waters here are still falling back into their banks. We are just now starting to see the extent of the damage in our small community. It is somewhat devastating to see the amount of damage to some of the structures that were affected. The county population is only 41,000 so practically everyone knows somebody that was affected. We have a medical center at the south edge of town that had numerous doctors offices in it that has well over one million dollars in damage. The word now is that it will be closed for up to six months for repair. We have a deputy who works here that has extensive damage to his residence. Everyone is pitching in to help him as much as possible. There are numerous, numerous structures with damage of varying amounts. We have been declared a national disaster area by the president.

I also wanted to give you a little insight into what our dispatchers went through from July 4th to July 9th. Being somewhat a small communication center, we are busy for our size. We dispatch for ten fire departments, 4 EMS stations (10 units), 4 village police departments and the sheriff's office. It keeps us busy. Our daily average for phone calls runs about 302-317 per day. During the time frame above our daily average was just under 1,000 calls per day due to the flooding. Our TEAM answered over 5,000 phone calls regarding the flooding. That number does not include the almost 200 9-1-1 calls during the same time. The five dispatchers put in over 90 hours of OT in 6 days. The dispatchers worked their days off and one of them (our newest) voluntarily gave up vacation to stay on the job so that we could keep two people on duty around the clock. The county was placed under a state of emergency which generated hundreds of calls about closed roads and "How do I get there" calls. Our staff kept their cool even under extreme stress. During the same time frame our dispatch center handled three major structure fires as well. It was a true test of the wills of our dispatchers. I think they passed with the greatest of colors. This community can be proud of the people who set at our console. I am proud to be a part of this TEAM!

It is hard to tell at this point at how much this disaster has affected the dispatch staff. They have kept up with their schedules and they don't complain. I hope to be able to set down with them one on one soon and talk about all of this. I am trying to keep them in chocolate for now. It keeps them happy!

Kevin, I want to sincerely THANK YOU again for the goodies you sent. It has been amazing at the reaction from the crew. It has brought smiles and reduced stress. It is the little things that mean so much and just knowing that there are people like you who care is cool. You are the best

Take care and I will be in touch soon.

Monte Diegel

Mercer County, OH 9-1-1 Dispatch Center