

Dispatchers try to protect people's privacy

By Sharon Corcoran

scorcoran@nwkans.com

Sherman County Communications dispatchers handle a lot of sensitive information, and the 911 director says they take precautions to protect people's privacy.

"With 911 calls," said Director Crissy Conger, "we try to treat it as if that incident was at our house. Would we want everyone to know about it?"

Dispatchers use cell phones to pass on sensitive information to the police, fire department and emergency medical services, she said, and in Sherman County, they don't give 911 tapes to the media like they do in cities.

When people call in, Conger said, information passed over the radio can be heard by anyone with a police-band scanner, and anymore, so many people have a scanner that when people call 911 and are having the worst day of their life, everyone in town is listening in.

Keeping some details off the radio helps, she said, and though the 911 calls are recorded in case they are needed to help the

police or sheriff's department solve a case or as evidence in court, they are not handed over to be played publicly.

"We try to keep people's privacy as much as we can," Conger said.

Other sensitive information available to dispatchers, she said, includes the ability to perform a background check on the state computer system.

They use the state system to access all types of information, Conger said, including the Criminal Justice Information System. This allows them to access all criminal and driving histories, license plate and driver's license information, weather and BOLOs (Be on the look out messages).

Only dispatchers who have special training have access to that information, she said; they emphasize in the training that people who access it are not to run background checks for personal reasons nor for anyone who is not authorized.

Those who are trained, she said, have to enter four security codes to gain access, including one that is on an electronic "tag" they carry with them, and that code changes

every 60 seconds. They want to be sure no one who shouldn't access that information, she said.

The information that goes over the state computer is sensitive, Conger said, and the FBI requires that everyone who comes into the communication center sign in and be under direct supervision of the on-duty communication officer.

Dispatchers can send text messages to any other law enforcement agencies in the nation, she said, and most of these agencies have computers on the same system as Sherman County's.

This saves a lot of phone calls, she said, and this system allows all agencies to see wanted and stolen information for all 50 states, the terrorist watch list and many other types of information pertinent to law enforcement.

Dispatchers have to be alert to incoming messages, she said, to be careful of who sees them and to make sure they respond quickly.

"We are ultimately responsible for monitoring the state computer messages

throughout our shift," she said, "as many messages are extremely time-sensitive. Essentially, the state computer is how almost all of our information comes into and goes out of the communication center, with the exception of radio and phone traffic."

For example, she said, if someone is pulled over in another state and the officer sees there is a warrant for them here, that county will contact the dispatcher here. The dispatcher has to respond within minutes whether the warrant is still current, she said, or they have to let the person go.

For the state computer, Conger said, Sherman County Communication serves as the control agency for the Sherman County Sheriff's Office, Goodland Police Department and several other law agencies in the county. It is the only location with a state computer and certified operators in the county, she said.

Dispatchers enter and remove all warrants, protection orders and wanted/stolen information into the state computer, Conger said. This is probably the most time-consuming part of the job, she said — the

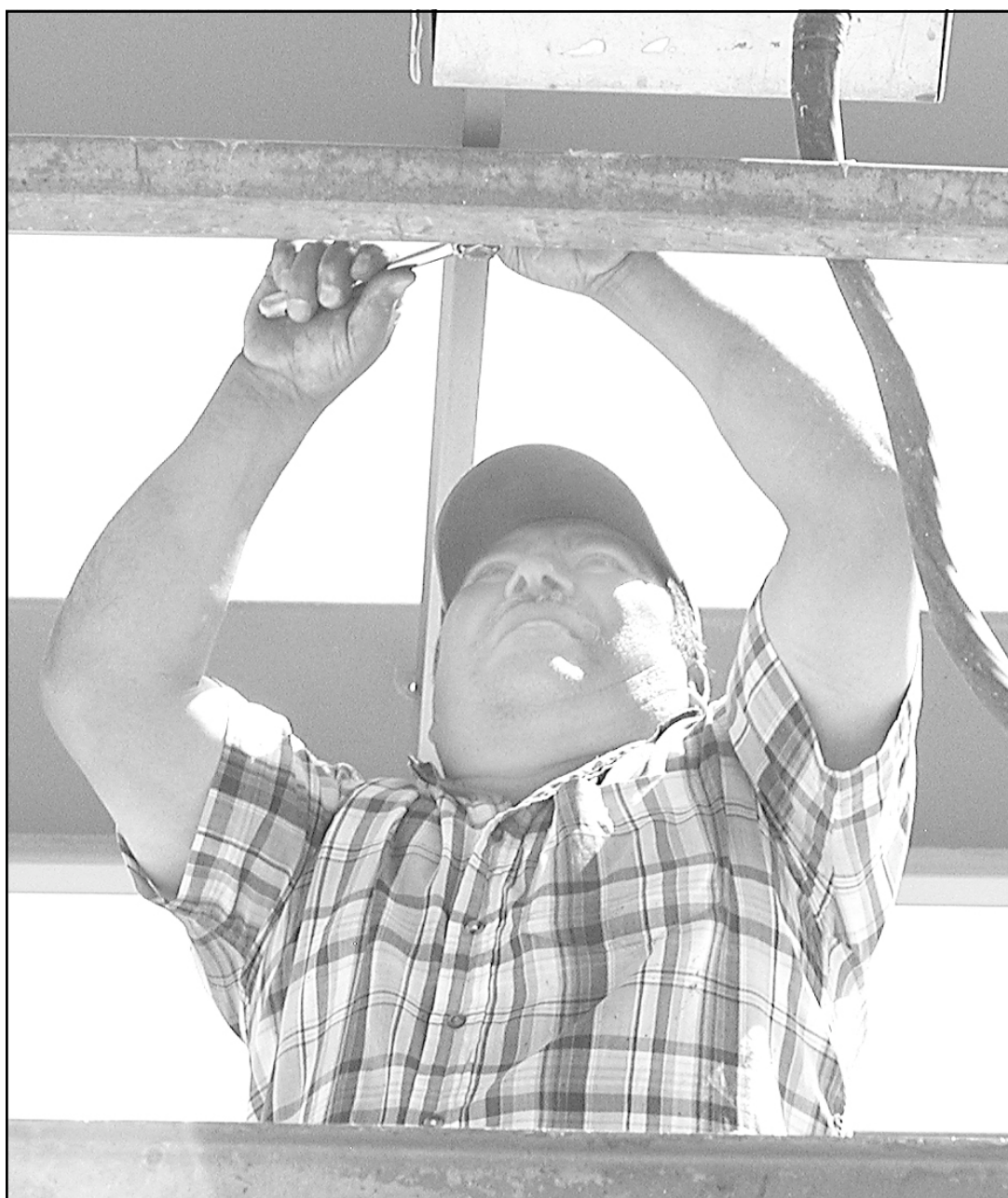
dispatchers have to verify this information is still valid every so often, which means more paperwork. And recently, she said, they also became responsible for Sex Offender Registration information, working with the Sherman County Sheriff's Office.

Sex offenders have to register in the county, she said, if they come here regularly, even if they don't live here. For example, she said, if a truck driver who regularly makes deliveries here is a sex offender, he would have to register. Dispatchers enter that information in the state computer.

New communication officers go through an extensive background search once they have passed initial testing, Conger said. Once hired, they are trained for six to eight weeks, depending on how comfortable they are.

They are required by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation to become certified to work with the National Crime Information Center. This is a four-hour course that teaches how to use the state computer, Conger said; without this certification, you are not allowed to work on the system.

Herl Chevrolet-Buick expanding



David Hernandez worked on the steel structure for a new shop and showroom at Herl Chevrolet-Buick on Friday. He and son Raui and Lowell Lambrecht, employees of Malsom Enterprises, have been working on the structure.

Photos by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

Director wishes replacement well

By Tom Betz

ntbetz@nwkans.com

Tiffani McMinn, Sherman County Economic Development Director since May 2006, said Wednesday she was disappointed that she would not be coming back as director, but wished the new person well.

McMinn, who is in Texas on a 90-day contract helping her mother recover from surgery, said Chairman Don Newell called her last Wednesday to say the council was going to make an offer for the job.

She said Newell called back later to say the man had accepted their offer. McMinn said Newell told her the salary would be \$43,000 a year.

"I was surprised," she said, "because I started out (in Wallace County) at \$34,000 with no experience. He obviously sold you, as he is getting paid more money and has no experience."

McMinn had started as the economic development director in Wallace County at \$34,000 before

being hired in Sherman County at \$38,000 and getting a raise to \$40,000.

She said the council asked her if she was coming back for the Aug. 21 meeting, and she told them she would let them know as soon as she could.

"I said I had told them before I left that it would have to depend on my mother's recovery," she said. They started hounding me for an answer two weeks after I left."

She said she had planned to give them an answer next week.

"I explained that the reason before I left was not by choice," she said. "I cannot make a decision until I know how my mom is doing."

At the August meeting, McMinn asked to come back to help with some things at the office, but that request was tabled.

"I wanted to come back to help a business that is trying to expand," she said, "but now they want me to come back to train this person."

McMinn said she is worried about the projects the office started this year.

McMinn helped start the Shine On Sherman County strategic planning program, the home improvement and business improvement grant programs, a workforce development office and an application for a \$400,000 Community Development Block Grant for housing.

"I asked Newell what they were going to do about the budget," she said. "With paying him that much and having given (office) Helen Dobbs a small raise, that more than wipes out the wages in the budget. I know they were talking about giving me another raise this year and I asked them where they were going to get the money. I am afraid that the grant projects will not continue."

McMinn said she has not decided if she will come back to train the new director, but has been asked to be in Goodland the first week or two of October.

Burlington quilt guild to hold show

See the work of area quilters and photographers, buy quilts, tour the Old Town Museum and take a free carousel ride at Burlington's Carousel Quilters Guild quilt show from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 6, in the museum.

Quilts will be displayed inside across the many wagons and buggies.

Small quilts, table runners, tree skirts and similar items will be sold in a silent auction, said Renee Loutzenhiser of Flagler, Colo., guild president, and small quilts will be for sale at the gift table. All are made by guild members.

The winning bidders of the silent

auction items will be determined at the close of the show and need not be present. Visit the guild's blog site at carouselquilters.blogspot.com for pictures of the auction and gift items.

Three vendors will sell fabric and other products at the show. Witt's Family Store from Flagler will have fabrics, quilt kits and jackets; the Quilt Cabin from Colby will have fabrics (including batiks), patterns and notions; and Colorado Backporch from Parker, Colo., will have batik fabrics and notions.

The guild's namesake, the Kit Carson County Carousel, will be open a few hours that day, and ev-

eryone at the show that morning will get a token for a free ride.

There is no admission fee for the show, and door prizes will be given out all day.

The guild will share the museum with area photographers who will display their work. The group has 40 members and meets at 6 p.m. the second Monday of each month at the Kit Carson County Fairgrounds.

matters of record

Goodland Police

The following crimes have been reported to the Goodland Police Department:

Aug. 22 — 9:34 a.m., 1503 Cherry Ave., Richard Johnson reported a burglary and theft.

12:14 p.m., 204 W. 11, Jacqueline Amanda Bowling reported identity theft.

Aug. 24 — 11:30 p.m., 1529 Main Ave., arrested Bryan D. Lewis and Edward Lewis for furnishing alcohol to a minor and arrested a minor in possession of alcohol. Case referred to city attorney.

Aug. 25 — 12:33 a.m., 1104 E. 13, arrested Daron J. Hovis for criminal threat, battery against a law enforcement officer, fleeing and eluding, driving under the influ-

ence, accident involving damage (four incidents) and failure to report accident (four incidents). Victims were Kansas State Patrol Trooper Eric Hodges, Edward Russ, Dale Harvey, Holly Bailey and Justin Gibson. Case referred to county attorney.

12:55 a.m., 1104 E. 13, arrested

corrections

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

Daron J. Hovis for battery and criminal trespass against Jason E. Sptizer. Case referred to county attorney.

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UPCOMING EVENTS in Kansas

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McPherson Scottish Festival

Sept 22-23. International event. World and National athletic competition, family entertainment, food, dance and pipe competitions. McPherson, KS. (800) 324-8022, www.mcpfestival.org

KC Pumpkin Patch Festival

Sept 29-Oct 31. Pumpkin cannon, gourd gun, zipline, Jacobs ladder and corn maze. 29755 W 191st St, Gardner, KS. (913) 484-6251, www.kcpumpkinpatch.com

GORDON PARKS CELEBRATION

Oct 3-6. Annual arts event honoring Kansas-born photographer Parks. Ft. Scott Comm. College, Ft. Scott, KS. (800) 874-3722, gordonparkscenter.org

Dalton Defenders Days

Oct 5-6. Reenactments of the 1892 raid of the Dalton Gang on Coffeyville, KS. Downtown, Coffeyville, KS. (620) 251-2550, www.coffeyvillechamber.org

Kansas Book Festival*

Oct 5-6. Enlighten your mind about Kansas' heritage in literature, history, art and culture. Koch Arena at WSU, Wichita, KS (800) 432-3919, www.kansasbookfestival.ks.gov

Dodgetoberfest

Oct 6. Family fun, food and music from 11am-5pm. Wright Park, Dodge City, KS. (620) 225-0240

Oktoberfest in Atchison

Oct 6. 26th annual arts & crafts festival with over 100 vendors, live music, German food, plus model train show. Atchison, KS (800) 234-1854, www.atchisonkansas.net

*Corrected Information

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