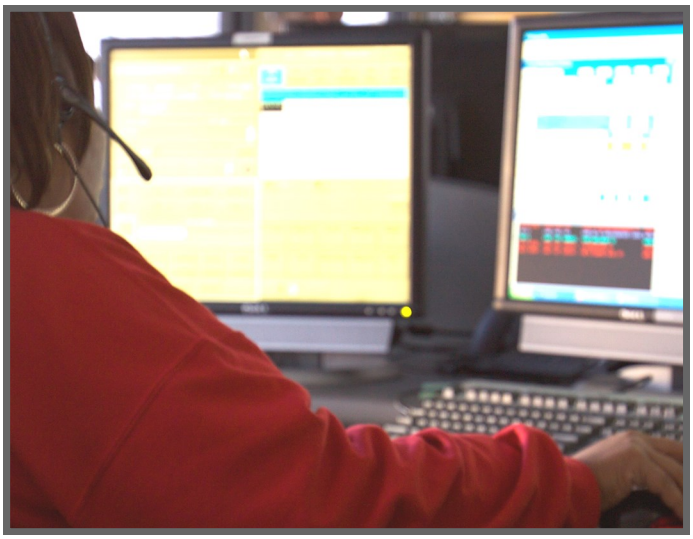
"TURNING THOSE IN CRISIS TOWARD CHRIST"

Emergency Chaplains

MARCH 2025

Honoring Our Unsung Heroes: National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week (April 13-19, 2025)



When an emergency strikes, the first voice you hear isn't that of an officer, firefighter, or medic—it's a 9-1-1 telecommunicator. These professionals are the unseen backbone of public safety, the calm in the storm, and the lifeline between crisis and help.

Every second week of April, we set aside time to honor these dedicated men and women who serve as the first first responders. National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week (NPSTW) recognizes the immense responsibility and emotional burden carried by dispatchers who answer our most urgent calls for help.

The Weight They Carry

Most of us rarely think about what it means to sit in the seat of a 9-1-1 dispatcher. These professionals absorb the panic, pain, and tragedy of others while staying composed, gathering critical information, and coordinating emergency responses. They hear the worst moments of people's lives—without ever seeing the resolution.

They guide terrified callers through CPR instructions. They reassure children hiding from an intruder. They listen to a desperate voice on the line, pleading for help, sometimes until the very last breath. And then, they pick up the next call.

Many telecommunicators suffer from the cumulative stress of this work. Critical Incident Stress Injury (CISI), similar to Post Traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI), is common in this field. The mental and emotional toll of being on the receiving end of constant crisis is significant, yet their sacrifices often go unnoticed.

Encouraging and Praying for Our Communicators

Emergency Chaplains has the privilege of supporting these professionals, not just during NPSTW, but throughout the year. Our chaplains visit 9-1-1 centers, check in with dispatchers after tough calls, and remind them that they are seen, valued, and appreciated. But you don't have to be a chaplain to make a difference.

Here are a Few Ways We Can Encourage our Telecommunicators:

Send a Note of Thanks: *A handwritten note, an email, or a card expressing appreciation can mean the world to a dispatcher.*

Share on Social Media: *Use hashtags like #ThankYou911 and #NPSTW to spread awareness and gratitude.*

Pray for Them: *Lift them up in prayer, asking for strength, resilience, and peace for those who carry the weight of every emergency call.*

A Prayer for Our Telecommunicators

"Heavenly Father, we lift up the men and women who answer the call when emergencies strike. Give them wisdom in moments of crisis, strength to endure the unseen burdens, and peace in the midst of chaos. Remind them that they are not alone, that their work is valuable, and that their sacrifices do not go unnoticed. May they find encouragement in knowing that You see them, You hear them, and You care for them.
In Jesus' name, Amen."

As we approach National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, let's commit to recognizing, encouraging, and praying for the unseen heroes of public safety. Their voices may be invisible, but their impact is undeniable.

Emergency Chaplains | PO Box 14762 | Durham, NC 27709
919.399.9468| Office@EChap.org | EChap.org

CHAPLAIN FIELD REPORTS

Editor's Note: *As the Executive Director of Emergency Chaplains, I typically avoid writing editorial pieces. However, this month, I feel compelled to make an exception—so I am taking over the Chaplain Field Reports section. Please pray for Officer Rose as he continues to recover from the surgery he has undergone for his injuries and remains in physical therapy. Pray also for Chaplain Wilkos as he processes this traumatic event, and for all law enforcement officers who put themselves in harm's way to protect our communities.*

A Failure of Justice: When the System Fails Those Who Protect Us

By: *Ralph Thompson*

On October 20, 2023, Chaplain Scott Wilkos was riding along with Durham Police Officer J.T. Rose when they encountered a vehicle speeding at over 100 mph. Moments later, the driver, Demario Holman—who weighed approximately 280 pounds—crashed his car. Officer Rose, who weighed 180 pounds, attempted to take Holman into custody, but what should have been a routine arrest quickly turned into a brutal struggle. Holman resisted, using his significant size advantage to overpower Rose, driving him into the ground and pinning him beneath his weight. As a result, Rose sustained severe knee injuries.

Chaplain Wilkos intervened, and for approximately three minutes, the injured officer and chaplain fought alone against Holman as he continued to resist, attempting to choke Officer Rose and take his firearm. During the struggle, Holman bit Wilkos on the hand before they were finally able to subdue him just before additional officers arrived. This was not just another arrest—it was a fight for survival, and it serves as a sobering reminder of the dangers law enforcement officers face daily.

After a long legal process, Holman finally had his day in court on March 17, 2025. Some of the original charges—charges that reflected the severity of his actions—were reduced by the district attorney's office to secure a quick plea deal. I was in the courtroom for his sentencing and observed that Holman was respectful, pleaded guilty, and expressed remorse.

However, what happened next was deeply troubling. The judge, who initially stated she would not lecture the defendant, proceeded to do just that—but not in the way one might expect. Rather than emphasizing the seriousness of Holman's actions or the risk he posed to Officer Rose, she instead took on the role of his defense attorney. She introduced mitigating factors that neither Holman nor his attorney had even mentioned, painting him as a victim of circumstance rather than holding him accountable for his choices.

I kept waiting for her to circle back to the reality of the situation—that an officer was overpowered, his knees were severely injured, and he was almost disarmed by the defendant; that a chaplain was injured in the line of duty; and that Holman's actions warranted serious consequences. But instead of reinforcing the weight of his crimes, she chose leniency. Rather than serving the 8 to 10 years in prison that would have been appropriate, Holman will spend just over 200 days in a local jail—a sentence that does not fit the crime.

As I waited in the hallway after court, a man who had been sitting with Holman's family walked by, turned to another man, and laughed as he said, *"He can do those 200 days standing on his head."* That single statement spoke volumes—a casual dismissal of a sentence so light that even those closest to the defendant saw it as insignificant.

This ruling is a miscarriage of justice. It sends a dangerous message, not only to law enforcement officers but to the public: that those who attack police officers can expect minimal consequences. It shifts the burden away from the defendant and onto the system, disregarding the risks that law enforcement officers take every day to protect their communities.

Chaplain Wilkos and Officer Rose risked their lives that day, standing in the gap between chaos and order. Their courage and sacrifice must be honored and upheld—not dismissed by a judicial system that refuses to hold violent offenders accountable.