

What I wish people knew about EMS, Firefighters, Dispatchers and Law Enforcement.

I wish you could know what it is like to search a burning bedroom for trapped children at 3:00AM, flames rolling above your head, your palms and knees burning as you crawl, the floor sagging under your weight as the kitchen below you burns.

I wish you could comprehend a husband's horror at 6 o'clock in the morning when checking his wife of 40 years for a pulse and find she does not have one. I start CPR anyway, hoping to bring her back, knowing intuitively it is too late. But wanting her husband and family to know everything possible was done to try to save her life.

I wish you knew the unique smell of burning insulation, the taste of soot-filled mucus, the feeling of intense heat through your turnout gear, the sound of flames crackling, the eeriness of being able to see absolutely nothing in dense smoke-sensations that I've become too familiar with. I wish you could read my mind as I respond to a building fire. Is this a false alarm or a working fire? How is the building constructed? What hazards await me? Is anyone trapped? What is wrong with the patient? Is it minor or life-threatening? Is the scene safe? Is the caller really in distress or is he waiting for us with a gun or his weapon of choice? I wish you could be in the emergency room as a doctor pronounces the beautiful five-year old girl dead that I have been trying to save during the past 25 minutes, who will never go on her first date or say the words, 'I love you Mommy' again.

I wish you could know the frustration I feel in the cab of the ambulance rig as the driver with his foot pressing down hard on the pedal, my arm tugging again and again at the air horn chain, as you fail to yield the right-of-way at an intersection or in traffic. However, when you need us, your first comment upon our arrival will be, 'it took you forever to get here!'

I wish you could know my thoughts as I help extricate a girl of teenage years from the remains of her automobile. What if this was my daughter, sister, girlfriend or my friend? What is her parents' reaction going to be when they open the door to find a police officer sanding in front of them?

I wish you could know how it feels to walk in the back door and greet my parents and family, not having the heart to tell them that I nearly did not come back from the last call. I wish you could know how it feels dispatching officers, firefighters, and paramedics out on an emergency or to hear a bone chilling 911 call of a child or wife needing assistance.

I wish you could feel the hurt as people verbally, and sometimes physically, abuse us or belittle what we do, or as they express their attitudes of 'It will never happen to me.' I wish you could realize the physical, emotional, and mental drain or missed meals, lost sleep and forgone social activities, in addition to all the tragedy my eyes have seen.

I wish you could know the brotherhood and self-satisfaction of helping save a life or preserving someone's property, or being able to be there in time of crisis, or creating order from total chaos. I wish you could understand what it feels like to have a little boy tugging at your arm and asking, 'Is my Mommy okay?' Not even being able to look in his eyes without tears from your own and not knowing what to say. Or to have to hold back a long time friend who watches his buddy having CPR done on him as you take him away in the Medic Unit, and you know all along he did not have his seat belt on. A sensation that I have become too familiar with.

Unless you have lived with this kind of life, you will never truly understand or appreciate who I am, we are, or what our job really means to us...I wish you could though.

APPRECIATE AND SUPPORT THE LOCAL EMS WORKERS, 911 DISPATCHERS, FIREFIGHTERS, and LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS IN YOUR AREA. ONE DAY THEY'LL PROBABLY BE SAVING YOUR PROPERTY OR YOUR OWN LIFE. WHEN YOU SEE THEM COMING WITH LIGHTS FLASHING, MOVE OUT OF THE WAY QUICKLY, And THEN PRAY FOR THEM!