THE DANGERS OF DEDICATION

When Commitment to the Job Comes at a Personal Cost

ABOUT ME

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Training and Quality Assurance Manager - Currituck County ECC

- Over 11 years experience in emergency communcations
- APCO CTO
- EMD-Q, EFD-Q
- ETC-I
- Passion for learning and teaching
- Recovering(ish) people pleaser



Have you ever been praised for something that was actually hurting you?

WE REWARD THIS

We reward this

Always available

Answers the last-minute staffing call.

Dependable

The person you trust in a difficult incident.

Takes on more

Another project, another responsibility.

Helps others

Steps in before anyone asks.

Stays late

Misses plans so the console stays covered.

Responsive off duty

The shift ends; the messages do not.

At what point does reliability become expectation?

THE RELIABLE ONE

Until being needed becomes needing to be needed

“I got it.”

The unofficial motto of the reliable one.

“Sure, I’ll stay.”

Another evening becomes another missed dinner.

“Just call me.”

A day off stops being a day off.

“I wasn’t doing anything anyway.”

Except living a life outside the center.

“If I don’t pick up, who will?”

THE DEDICATION CONTINUUM

When dedication shifts

COMMITTED

I care about doing this well.

OVEREXTENDED

They need me.

DEPLETED

I have nothing left.

DETACHED

I don’t care anymore.

From the outside, every stage can still look like dedication.

FROM FEELING TO CAPACITY

The stages describe how it feels. Capacity describes what is left

Dedication does not fail in a single moment. It fails across many small ones.

DEATH BY 1,000 YESES

It isn’t one sacrifice. It’s the accumulation without recovery.

100%



FULL

Rested. Focused. Present.

80%



Steady

A few extra requests feel manageable.

60%



Stretched

You are still answering, but recovery is getting shorter.

40%



Running Low

Every new yes takes something from what is left.

20%



Depleted

The work continues, but the margin for anything else is gone.

You have capacity for the next call.

10%



Critical

You can still respond.

You cannot keep giving at the same rate.

1%



911 STILL RINGS

The next call still comes.

What version of you answers?

“I’m fine”

Functioning is not the same as thriving.

The shift ends. The impact doesn’t always

Who gets the version of you that is left?

Who are you without the headset?

If this career disappeared tomorrow, there should still be enough of you left to recognize yourself.

If it feels personal, it is also structural

No one is asked to be the reliable one in a vacuum.

This is not just an individual problem

Organizations shape what dedication looks like.

When sacrifice becomes the expectation, dedication becomes a staffing strategy

Five protections, one shift at a time

None of these require caring less about the work.

The goal is not to care less

The goal is to care sustainably.

WHAT SUSTAINABLE LOOKS LIKE

Protect the person behind the headset

01

REST

Recovery

02

BOUNDARIES

Availability

03

CONNECTION

Relationships

04

IDENTITY

Outside 911

05

HELP

Ask early

IN PRACTICE

Small, repeatable, and owned by you

Name the cost

Before you say yes, say what it replaces.

Protect the recovery

A day off is not a day of quiet work.

Ask early

Help is easier to accept before the cost is visible.

What will you stop sacrificing to prove you are dedicated?

One private promise. No need to share it.

911 needs dedicated people

It does not need martyrs.

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

Let's Connect!!

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