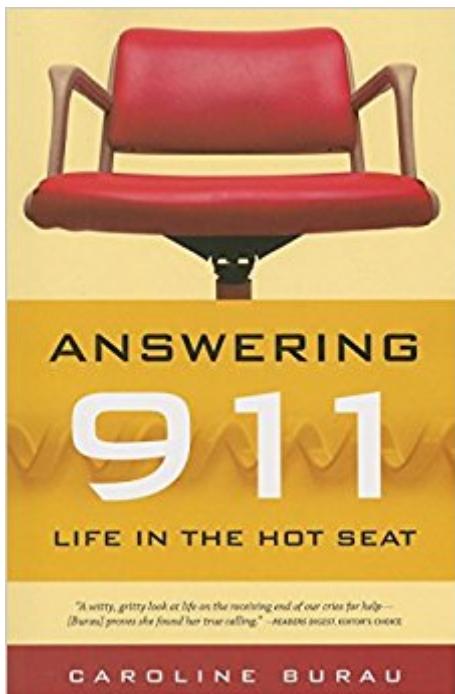


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# Answering 911: Life In The Hot Seat



## Synopsis

You answer a call from a fourteen-year-old boy asking for someone to arrest his mother, who is smoking crack in their bathroom. You talk with him until the cops arrive, making sure there are no weapons around and learning that his favorite subject in school is lunch. Five minutes later, you have to deal with someone complaining about his neighbor's clarinet practice. What is it like to be on the receiving end of desperate calls for help . . . every day? Caroline Burau, a former newspaper reporter and nursing student who couldn't stand the sight of blood, takes a job as an emergency dispatcher because she likes helping people. But on-the-job training at the comm center proves to be more than she bargained for. As she adjusts to a daily life of catastrophe and comedy, domestics and drunks, cops and robbers, junk food and sarcasm, lost cats and suicides, she discovers that crisis can become routine, that coworkers can be meanâ€”that she must continue to care and, at times, learn how to let go. Praise for *Answering 911* "The day may come when I have to dial 911. I hope to God that the person who answers is Caroline Burau or someone like her. Funny, honest, and elegantly simple, this book left me with a sense of grace and hope." *â€”Alison McGhee, author of Shadow Baby, Rainlight, Was It Beautiful? and Falling Boy*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I want to save lives, but I'm willing to settle for just not killing anybody," confides this suburban Minneapolis author about being a rookie 911 dispatch operator. In simple prose that is often crass and amateurish, Burau recounts moments of terror and incompetence among her colleagues: one

dispatcher plays computer games while listening to a suicidal caller ; others send medics to the wrong address while an acid-burn victim suffers. Cynical and bitter after two years on the job, Burau has harsh words for callers who report cell phones stolen from unlocked cars; a "frequent flyer" (someone "always in crisis") who wants the police to baby-sit her kids; and a woman whose grisly trailer-home suicide is relayed by her hysterical 12-year-old daughter. Recalling her abortive attempts as nursing student, reporter for a community paper and locksmith and, in sordid detail, her addiction to crack and an abusive boyfriend, Burau has been in recovery for 11 years and has married and adopted a stepdaughter she adores but worries about failing. Although this clearly isn't her intention, Burau's honest memoir of the 911 trenches will make readers queasy about the quality of emergency service personnel in their own communities. (Aug. 15) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Adult/High School•Burau provides a fascinating glimpse into the lives of the dispatchers whose job alternates between stretches of boredom and episodes of fear, stress, and chaos. Although she doesn't provide many specific stories, she conveys what it is like to answer the phone, become involved in a crisis, and maybe never learn how it was resolved. The author's path to working as a dispatcher was circuitous. In high school, she became involved with drugs and an abusive boyfriend. After a three-day jail stint, she returned home, got sober, graduated college, and found the love of her life. Inspired by a desire to help people, she studied nursing but couldn't stand the sight of blood. After a brief career as a reporter at a local paper, she applied to work as a dispatcher-a difficult, demanding job she is still not sure she is good at, much like (step)motherhood. Burau ably shows what it's like to be responsible for lives when one is miles from the emergency. This is a fast, fascinating read. •Susan Salpini, formerly at TASIS-The American School in England Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I recently applied for a job as a 911 operator, but I, frankly, had no idea what to really expect--until now. Thanks to Mrs. Bruau, I have some more confidence in this opportunity, should I acquire it. Even if I do not, this book has allowed me to put my life (and my current job) all into a better perspective. Mrs. Burau's work is creatively written and engaging with it's light and dark humor and her inner reflections (which easily reflect some of my own). I would sincerely recommend "Answering 911" to anyone, regardless of any interest in civil service or criminal justice--everyone

can enjoy and learn something from this excellent and easy read!

My hubby is a 911 dispatcher in our rural, small, southern town, so I bought this for him. So often, people fail to remember the incredible important role the dispatcher plays in keeping not only the public safe until help arrives, but police and other first responders safe as well.

I have been in emergency communications for over 5 years now and this author couldn't have gotten the story anymore right. It's up it's down it's happy it's sad you're constantly in a state of uncertainty and constantly questioning why you still remain. I recommend reading this book if you are a telecommunicator or family of one. You may wonder why your daughters or sons or husbands or wives carry on in ways you can't understand. If you've ever wondered with anger why they don't handle you in a nurturing way.... read this please.

Well written account of a 911 dispatcher's journey. I was hoping for more in-depth stories of the calls themselves. This is more of her particular career and life path with the 911 piece seeming secondary. Still, a good read.

As a dispatcher for a large agency for over 25 years, Caroline has hit it on the head for the stresses, difficulties and humor in the dispatch realm. Kudos to Caroline!

If you're in the mood for an exhilarating, fly-by-the-seat of your pants book about hilarious, crazy and heart-wrenching 911 calls, this book isn't for you. You certainly won't have any water cooler-type stories to tell your workmates. However, this is a good read to get the human side of emergency responders, especially for this author who has an interesting back story. This is an easy read for anyone, and brings to light many sociological ideas on society, parenting and relationships. Not exactly what you'd expect from a 911 book. Overall, a decent book that explores more than just gory suicides, armed robberies and car chases.

Great read and made me appreciate my dispatchers even more. Their every emotion and annoyance can come through the radio at times, but there is only a few of them running the whole county. At least on the road people don't see the embarrassing little mistakes we make. Simple and honest, well done.

A look at the job of emergency work that is not sugar coated and tells it like it is. The author's struggles and unfortunate history that bring her to 911 work are told straight on. She tells us, and moves on. No apologies, no histrionics. The work itself is told in a way that makes you feel you are there. Heartbreaking one moment, heartwarming the next - this tug of war on the psyche battles it out EVERY SHIFT. This story is told as if guided by an emergency dispatcher manual. "Find what's happening, decide what to do, take appropriate action, move on" - a great read. The love/hate pathos for the work, the coworkers, the lifestyle --- conveyed beautifully.

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