
WELCOME TO DISPATCH

**A Guide to Resources, Information, and Helpful
Hints to Help You Develop a Successful
Dispatch Career**

THIS PACKET WAS
CREATED BY
IMPACT DISPATCH



WELCOME TO DISPATCH

THE GOAL OF THIS GUIDE...

We hope you find this guide full of helpful information as you begin your dispatch journey. There is no other job like dispatching, and it can be one of the most rewarding positions out there. We encourage you to take advantage of the resources listed in this packet and any provided to you by your agency. We also encourage you to reach out and connect with other dispatchers as we all navigate this career field together. During your initial training you may feel like this job is not right for you. Although there are sometimes it is not the right fit, we encourage you to keep going. Keep pushing forward and learning. This job has its bad days, but there will also be great days. There will come a day where it will all make sense and you will look back and be amazed at how much you have learned. We, along with so many others, are here cheering you on. You will get the hang of it, you will be able to handle it, and you will make an impact.

Good luck!
The Impact Dispatch Team

"Between the thin Red line & the thin Blue line, lies the thinnest Gold line. The Gold line represents those that are rarely seen, but mostly heard. The calm voice in the dark night. Dispatchers; the golden glue that holds it all together."

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DISPATCH ASSOCIATIONS



ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS OFFICIALS (APCO)

- World's oldest & largest not-for-profit professional organization dedicated to the enhancement of public safety communications.
- Organization is international, with a yearly national conference, but many states have state chapters & conferences
- Provides affordable training, certification, and resources for public safety communications professionals at all levels.
- Offers memberships to get access to additional resources.
- Memberships start out at \$69 for associate members and \$92 for full members.
- Check them out at Apointnl.org

NATIONAL EMERGENCY NUMBER ASSOCIATION (NENA)

- The association serves its members and the greater public safety community as the only professional organization solely focused on 9-1-1 policy, technology, operations, and education issues.
- Helps to set standards for the dispatch industry.
- NENA works with individuals and organizations to develop and carry out critical programs and initiatives, to facilitate the creation of an IP-based Next Generation 9-1-1 system, and to establish industry leading standards, training, and certifications.
- They offer additional benefits through their membership program such as training and ways to connect with other dispatchers.
- Memberships start out at \$55 for front-line telecommunicators.
- Check them out at Nena.org

TRAINING RESOURCES

911.Gov	911.gov
911 Trainer	911trainer.com
911 Training Institute	911training.net
Denise Amber Lee Foundation	DeniseAmberLee.org
DispathU by PowerPhone	PowerPhone.com/dispatchu
The Healthy Dspatcher	TheHealthyDispatcher.com
FEMA	Fema.gov
Impact Dispatch	ImpactDispatch.com
International Academies of Emergency Dispatch	Emergencydispatch.org
Justice Clearinghouse	Justiceclearinghouse.com
Mission Critical Partners	MissionCriticalPartners.com
NG911 Institute	NG911Institute.org
NCMEC	Missingkids.com
Police Legal Sciences	Pls-dispatch-pro.com
PSTC	Pstc911.com
The Public Safety Group	Publicsafetygroup.com
Training 4 9-1-1 Heroes	Training4911Heroes.com

APCO & NENA also offer training resources. Check with your agency as well for other resources to add to this list.

"If you're not willing to learn, no one can help you. If you're determined to learn, no one can stop you."

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Better Help Counseling	Betterhelp.com
Code Green Campaign	Codegreencampaign.org
Crisis Text Line	Text HOME to 741741
First Responders Wellness	Firstresponderwellnesscenter.com or 630.909.9094
Humanizing the Headset	Humanize911.com
Institute for Responder Wellness	Instituteforresponderwellness.com
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	Suicidepreventionlifeline.org or 800.273.8255
Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services	SAMHSA.gov or 800.662.4357

Check with your agency to see if they offer EAP services or any other local resources that you can add to this list.

Working in dispatch can take a toll on your mental, emotional, and physical health due to the nature of the calls you will deal with and the stressors associated with the job. NEVER hesitate to reach out if you need help or consult professional resources. Get help at the first sign of any issues or struggles, instead of waiting until you feel like you're drowning. You can also go to a trusted coworker who has experience in the position for advice on how to handle some situations.

Self-care is one of the most important things you can do for yourself, so always make sure when you are not working you are disconnected from work and around people you care about and doing things you love. It's easy, especially at first, to let this job takeover much of your life and feel like you need to spend your off time studying. Get in the habit of disconnecting on your days off from the beginning.

"Always make time for the things that make you feel alive."

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OTHER RESOURCES

There are many other ways to connect with fellow dispatchers and learn about the industry. Check out some of the following:

- Within the Trenches Podcast
- Dispatch Facebook groups
- Search using dispatch related hashtags on Instagram and Twitter
- Your Oxygen Mask First Podcast
- Dispatch related books:
 - The Resilient 911 Professional by Jim Marhsall & Tracey Laorenza
 - Dispatcher Stress by Adam Timm & Joe Serio
 - Stress is Optional by Adam Timm
 - Answering 911 by Caroline Bureau



NATIONAL CRIME INFORMATION CENTER

- Electronic clearinghouse of crime data; consists of 21 files.
- Criminal Justice records are entered into NCIC that are accessible to law enforcement agencies nationwide.
- Manual provides policies and procedures on to query, enter, clear, and cancel records.

This is where agencies enter stolen vehicles and articles, missing or wanted persons, as well as other information. Each agency decides how they want to handle the different responsibilities of being an NCIC terminal based on their staffing and procedures. Some agencies may have dispatchers who handle all NCIC operations, including record entry, hit confirmations, and validations, while other agencies may have different departments handling these responsibilities. During your training, your agency will explain this system further.

NG911

This is the technology that is currently being implemented that allows the public to not only make voice calls to 911, but to also make text, or video calls from any device via Internet Protocol based networks. This will allow 9-1-1 centers to get better location information, as well as make it possible to transfer calls along with location information to other PSAPs. 911.Gov offers some great additional information on this topic.

MULTI-TASKING

This can be an area some struggle in, especially at first in this field. If you are having trouble in the beginning, you are not alone! It will take some work to develop the skill to handle multiple things at once. You can work to improve by mastering each needed skill individually before pairing it with other things, and finding different activities to help you improve. Check with your trainer and/or supervisor to see if your agency has activities to help you practice.

SIGNALS & CODES

If your agency uses signals or codes it may be helpful to practice off the clock and use repetition to help memorize them. You can also use online quiz or flashcard sites to help test yourself. (This and geography may be the only topics we recommend "taking home" with you.

LOCATIONS

As you will learn, this is the most important piece of information we have to get. Sometimes though it's easier said and done. One piece of recent technology that can sometimes be forgotten is the feature on iPhones to "drop a pin" to gain coordinates, or to use the Compass App that comes standard on most phones to get someone's coordinates.

TYPING

In many agencies this skill is tested before you are even hired as it can be critical to get information entered quickly. If you want to improve your typing, a simple Google search will provide you with many websites that offer typing tests, activities, and games to help improve your skills.

GEOGRAPHY

Knowing the lay of the land can be a huge help in this job. If you're not familiar with the area you dispatch, we strongly encourage you to get out and explore! You may even find some new things to do and places you never knew existed.

COMMON TERMINOLOGY

Depending on whether you dispatch Police, Fire, EMS or a combination of the three, the following terms may be helpful to know.

Abandoned Call - A call placed to 9-1-1 in which the caller disconnects before the call can be answered by the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) attendant.

Advanced Life Support – Medical care provided by paramedics trained to assess a patient’s condition, administer drugs, defibrillate and provide airway management prior to transportation to the hospital.

Affidavit – A written statement, usually made under oath.

A.K.A – Abbreviation for “also known as”; synonym for “alias”.

American Sign Language - A visual/gestural, non-written language with its own unique syntax and grammar based on hand shapes, body movements and facial expressions. ASL has no written form. When communicating in ASL through typing or writing, many of the visual elements crucial to clear communications are based on ASL.

Americans with Disabilities Act - A Federal law that requires all Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) to provide direct and equal access to emergency telephone services to individuals with disabilities who use teletypewriters (TTYs) and other communication devices or services.

ANS – American National Standard

ANSI – American National Standard Institute

Armed Robbery – A person commits armed robbery when he or she takes property from the person or presence of another by the use of force or by threatening the imminent use of force while he or she carries on or about his or her person or is otherwise armed with a dangerous weapon.

Arrest – The taking of a person into custody for the purpose of charging them with a crime or having them answer to a charge already brought.

Assault – An assault is carried out by a threat of bodily harm coupled with an apparent, present ability to cause the harm.

Automatic Location Identification (ALI) - The automatic display at the PSAP of the caller’s telephone number, the address/location of the telephone and supplementary emergency services information of the location from which a call originates.

Automatic Number Identification (ANI) - Telephone number associated with the access line from which a call originates.

Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) - A means for determining the geographic location of a vehicle and transmitting this information to a point where it can be used.

Background – When used in reference to the radio, means there is additional noise from nature or people causing the radio traffic to be unreadable.

Basic 9-1-1 - An emergency telephone system which automatically connects 9-1-1 callers to a designated answering point. Call routing is determined by originating central office only. Basic 9-1-1 may or may not support ANI and/or ALI.

Basic Life Support – A level of care provided to patients. BLS does not include extensive medical supervision or treatment, including the use of drugs and invasive procedures.

Battery - An intentional unpermitted act causing harmful or offensive contact with the "person" of another.

Burglary – A person commits burglary when, without authority, knowingly enters or remains within a building, house-trailer, watercraft, aircraft, or other motor vehicle as defined in the IL Vehicle Code, or any part thereof, with intent to commit therein a felony or theft.

CALEA – Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies

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Call Back Number - A number used by the PSAP to re-contact the location from which the 9-1-1 call was placed. The number may or may not be the number of the station used to originate the 9-1-1 call.

Call Taker - An agent of a PSAP who answers emergency calls. A Telecommunicator who processes incoming calls through the analyzing, prioritizing, and disseminating of information to aid in the safety of the public and responders.

Call Transfer - The capability to redirect a call to another party.

Calls for Service or Request for Service - A call that results in the provision of a public safety service or response.

Civil Law - Individual vs. Individual (Plaintiff vs. Defendant) Civil law seeks to compensate the plaintiff

Common Spelling - Used in place of the phonetic alphabet when providing the spelling of a name. It indicates to the listener to use the most common spelling of that name rather than any unusual spelling.

Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) - A computer-based system, which aids PSAP Telecommunicator's by automating selected dispatching and record keeping activities.

Consolidated PSAP - A facility where one or more Public Safety Agencies choose to operate as a single 9-1-1 entity.

Criminal Damage to Property - Any offense which involved the damage of property without consent of the owner.

Criminal Law - State - (People vs. Individual) Criminal law seems to punish

Criminal Sexual Assault - Rape.

CTO - Communications Training Officer

Custody - The direct or implied removal of a person's freedom of movement.

Dead Spot - Certain areas in a radio coverage area in which it is hard to hear the radio, or not possible to hear at all.

Deaf - Partially or completely lacking in the sense of hearing. When referencing the Deaf community, this refers to people who use American Sign Language as a primary means of communication.

Detention - The period of temporary custody prior to disposition by the court.

Disorderly Conduct - A person commits disorderly conduct when they knowingly do any act in such unreasonable manner as to alarm or disturb another and to provoke a breach of the peace.

Echo - Return of transmitted data.

Emergency Alert Systems (EAS) - Radio or television-based broadcast of emergency event information.

Emergency Call - A telephone request for public safety agency emergency services which requires immediate action to save a life, to report a fire or to stop a crime. May include other situations as determined locally.

Emergency Communications Center (ECC) - A set of call takers operating under common management which receives emergency calls for service and asynchronous event notifications and processes those calls and events according to a specified operational policy.

Enhanced 9-1-1 (E9-1-1) - A telephone system which includes network switching, data base and Public Safety Answering Point premise elements capable of providing automatic location identification data, selective routing, selective transfer, fixed transfer, and a call back number. The term also includes any enhanced 9-1-1 service so designated by the Federal Communications Commission in its Report and Order in WC Docket Nos. 04-36 and 05-196, or any successor proceeding.

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Extradition – is a "surrender" or "handing over" of persons or property, particularly from one jurisdiction to another. For criminal suspects, extradition is the most common type of rendition. Rendition can also be seen as the act of handing over, after the request for extradition has taken place.

Failure to Pay (FTP)– Term commonly used to describe a situation where a customer has obtained services or goods and has not paid for them. (Most commonly when a customer leaves without paying for gas)

Family Abduction - A family abduction occurs when, in violation of a custody order, a decree, or other legitimate custodial rights, a member of the child's family, or someone acting on behalf of a family member, takes or fails to return a child.

Felony – An offense for which a sentence to death or to a term of imprisonment in a prison for one year or more is provided.

FTO – Field Training Officer-new officers are assigned to one for a given period of time after the academy.

Garbled – Unable to understand a message or broadcast (referring to the way it sounds).

General Directives - A set of agency specific policies, procedures, rules, regulations, and guidelines.

Hard of Hearing - The term "hard of hearing" refers to those who have some hearing, are able to use it for communication purposes and who reasonably comfortable doing so. A hard of hearing person, in audio logical terms, may have a mild to moderate hearing loss.

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) - Federal regulation protecting patients from unauthorized disclosure of medical information.

Hotline – A direct phone line connecting two points. No dialing is required; often the phone used in a hotline set up have no dial pads. Picking up this line will automatically activate ringing on the receiving end.

ICS – Incident Command System

Incident Commander - Title that identifies the individual responsible for a specific incident or event.

Instant Recall Recorder (IRR) - A device that allows the user to instantly playback all (or portions of) a call for service to clarify or validate what was heard by the operator to what was said by the caller.

Integrated TTY - Integrated TTY refers to TTY functionality that has been integrated within a computer work station. This may be found within the 9-1-1 telephony system or interfaced in a CAD (computer aided dispatch) system.

Interoperability - The capability for disparate systems to work together.

Juvenile – A person under the age of 17 years old; a minor or youth.

Kidnapping – The crime of unlawfully seizing and carrying away a person by force or fraud or seizing and detaining a person against his or her will with an intent to carry that person away at a later time.

Landline - Colloquial term for the Public Switched Telephone Network access via an actual copper or fiber optic transmission line that travels underground or on telephone poles. Used to differentiate the "wireless" connectivity of a cellular or PCS system.

Manual Transfer - The capability of a PSAP attendant to transfer a 9-1-1 call to another location by manually dialing the destination number or speed dialing code.

MDC – Mobile Data Computer. A mobile computer located in police and fire apparatus utilizing two-way communications to send and receive information from dispatch and vice versa.

Misdemeanor – An offense for which a sentence to a term of imprisonment in a jail for less than one year may be imposed.

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NCIC - National Crime Information Center; This is the system that warrants, missing persons, and stolen vehicles/items are entered in to.

National Incident Management System/Incident Command System

(NIMS/ICS) - An organized method to define roles, responsibilities, and standard operating procedures used to unify multiple disciplines in order to manage emergency operations under one functional organization.

NICE- Digital recording program used to record phone calls and radio transmissions.

Phonetic Alphabet - Words and names used to clarify the letter used.
(Example: A=Adam, B=Boy).

Portable - Radio carried on a person.

Probable Cause - Reasonable cause. Apparent facts discovered through logical inquiry that would lead a reasonably intelligent and prudent person to believe that an accused person has committed a crime, thereby warranting his or her prosecution, or that a Cause of Action has accrued, justifying a civil lawsuit.

Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) - Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP): A set of call takers authorized by a governing body and operating under common management which receives 9-1-1 calls and asynchronous event notifications for a defined geographic area and processes those calls and events according to a specified operational policy.

Public Safety Communications Supervisor - The first-level public safety communications professional who provides leadership to employees through experience and training in order to achieve the agency's mission, standards, and goals.

Public Safety Telecommunicator - The individual employed by a public safety agency as the first of the first responders whose primary responsibility is to receive, process, transmit, and/or dispatch emergency and non-emergency calls for law enforcement, fire, emergency medical, and other public safety services via telephone, radio, and other communication devices.

Public Safety Communications Training Officer (CTO) - The first-line public safety communications professional who demonstrates superior conduct, professionalism, skills and knowledge in the training of a new hire. This is accomplished through the use of adult learning principles using agency-defined training parameters.

Quality Assurance (QA) - All actions taken to ensure that standards and procedures are adhered to and that delivered products or services meet performance requirements.

Quality Assurance and Improvement Program - An on-going program providing at a minimum, the random case review evaluating emergency dispatch performance, feedback of protocol compliance, commendation, retraining and remediation as appropriate, and submission of compliance data to the Agency.

Quality Assurance Process - A formal assessment process by which actual performance, behavior, and outcomes are compared against established standards to ensure compliance, consistency, and accuracy in the delivery of quality service.

Quality Improvement Process - Actions taken to improve or correct areas of concern.

Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) - A company of firefighters whose sole function at a fire is to stand by in case a firefighter becomes injured or trapped and needs assistance.

Reasonable Grounds - Reasonable Suspicion. a legal standard in United States law that a person has been, is, or is about to be, engaged in criminal activity based on specific and articulable facts and inferences. It is the basis for an investigatory or Terry stop by the police and requires less evidence than probable cause, the legal requirement for arrests and warrants. Reasonable suspicion is evaluated using the "reasonable person" or "reasonable Officer" standard, in which said person in the same circumstances could reasonably believe a person has been, is, or is about to be, engaged in criminal activity; such suspicion is not a mere hunch. Police may also, based solely on reasonable suspicion of a threat to safety, frisk a suspect for weapons, but not for contraband like drugs. A combination of particular facts, even if individually innocuous, can form the basis of reasonable suspicion.

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Repossess – To reclaim following financial default.

Robbery – A person commits robbery when they take property from the person or presence of another by the use of force or by threatening the imminent use of force.

Runaways - A runaway is when a child leave home without permission and stays away overnight; or a child 14 years old or younger (or older and mentally incompetent) who is away from home chooses not to return when supposed to and stays away overnight; or a child 15 years old or older who is away from home chooses not to return and stays away two nights.

Salvage – The process of protecting the contents of a building from fire, smoke and water damage.

Scales – Large scale used for measuring the weight of vehicles, particularly trucks.

SEG – Standard Evaluation Guideline

Short-Keying – The act of cutting short the beginning or ending of a conversation; caused by improper keying of the mic/radio also known as “clipping”.

Speech Impairment - Speech Impairment is a communications disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language impairment or a voice impairment, which adversely affects a person’s ability to articulate speech clearly.

Static – Unwanted noise on the radio.

Subpoena – Written order to appear before a court.

Teletypewriter (TTY) - Also known as TDD. A device capable of information interchange between compatible units using a dial up or private-line telephone network connections as the transmission medium. Messages sent through NCIC terminals are sometimes referred to as these.

TERT – Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce

Theft – A person commits theft when they knowingly obtain or exerts unauthorized control over the property of the owner.

Transfer-A feature which allows the PSAP Telecommunicator to redirect a 9-1-1 call to another location.

Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) - A backup system designed to provide continuous power in the event of a commercial power failure or fluctuation.

Ventilation – A technique for opening a burning building to remove heated smoke and gases.

Wireless Phase I - Required by FCC Report and Order 96-264 pursuant to Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) 94-102. The delivery of a wireless 9-1-1 call with callback number and identification of the cell-tower from which the call originated. Call routing is usually determined by cell sector.

Wireless Phase II - Required by FCC Report and Order 96-264 pursuant to Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) 94-102. The delivery of a wireless 9-1-1 call with Phase I requirements plus location of the caller within 125 meters 67% of the time and Selective Routing based upon those coordinates. Subsequent FCC rulings have redefined the accuracy requirements.

FAQS

1. How can I get enough sleep working rotating hours?

One way to help get enough sleep is to make sure you have time carved out of your schedule dedicated to sleeping. Sleep is important so although it may be tempting to schedule things with your shifts changing, it's important to stick to your schedule to give your body the best chance of adjusting to changing shifts and adjusting sleep schedules. The more consistent you can make it, the better, so if your sleep can occur at similar times that may be the most helpful.

2. What are some ways to handle switching shift schedules? (i.e. going from training on days to working on overnights)

One thing to help combat switching from one shift to another is to begin switching your sleep schedule before you actually change shifts, if possible. If you're going from days to nights, and you have days off in between, it may be helpful to stay up late on the nights off and sleep in later, to help your body start to adjust to being up all night. It's also important to see how your body adjusts, as the first few nights the excitement/change of the shift will help to keep you awake, but after a few days or weeks, it loses its "newness" so you begin to feel more tired. It's a good idea to go to sleep after you get off or at the same time, even if you feel pretty awake after your first few shifts.

3. What can I do ahead of time to help better handle working various shifts?

Prepping things like meals and scheduling time with friends and family can help you make sure to get things in even when your schedule is changing. Looking ahead and know when things are coming up is a way to help relieve pressure and knowing ahead of time what you can and can't go to so there is no confusion or unrealistic expectations later.

4. What are some simple, but helpful coping mechanisms?

Exercise/Physical movement can be a huge one, meditation, journaling, finding a hobby you enjoy, being outside, spending time with loved ones if that's something that recharges you, taking time for yourself, reading

5. What are some definite phrases to avoid when speaking with callers?

Calm down, I can't do that, Deal with it yourself

6. How can I maintain a calm and/or professional tone when dealing with hostile callers?

Sometimes their hostility may stem from emotion and/or panic. You can try refocusing them by using their first name or continuing to ask them specific questions. Also, you continuing to be professional is important not to escalate the situation. Check with your agency to see if they have policies or procedures on when or if you can disconnect from a hostile caller if they are no longer giving information or are just arguing.

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7. What are simple ways to get in exercise while at work?

Just getting up and standing can be very beneficial. Aim to stand up and take a few steps, even just walking in place, every 60-90 minutes. You can also do things like squats, lunges, and stretches while at the console.

8. What are some healthy eating tips for dispatch?

Make your food ahead of time and pack your meals as much as possible. This will also help you avoid grabbing snacks or whatever is available. Make sure to drink plenty of water to stay hydrated, but also help curb your appetite. Also, pay attention to how much/what you eat based on stressed and emotions. Try not to fall into the habit of handling stress and emotions with food.

9. As a new dispatcher how can I deal with the stress of the job?

Look for positive outlets for your stress, like hobbies you enjoy. Everyone handles stress differently so never compare how you're handling things to others. Different call types affect people differently. Reach out to coworkers you trust or even to professional resources if you feel like you need extra help. Your agency may also offer a peer support team to help handle the stresses of life and the job.

10. What is Compassion Fatigue?

"Compassion Fatigue is a state experienced by those helping people or animals in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper." -CompassionFatigue.Org

It's the fatigue caused by caring for others over time and handling stressful and life threatening situations day after day. Signs of Compassion Fatigue include, exhaustion, loss of interest in the career, isolation, bottling up emotions, difficulty concentrating, flashbacks to traumatic events, and substance abused and/or compulsive behaviors.

11. Is it okay to discuss calls on social media if I don't give any identifying information?

In today's world it can be risky to post things on social media that may be able to be connected back to you or your agency without approval from those involved. Even though things like names are removed, it doesn't always mean that there are not other pieces of information that people can make connections with. Always remember HIPPA and consult any policies your agency has on social media. Best practice is to avoid posting things from work online and potentially putting yourself in a compromising position. Once something is on the internet, it is there forever.

12. How can I sleep better while working night shift?

Blackout curtains can be very helpful in blocking out light and mimicking the darkness of the overnight hours. It can also be easy to not dedicate enough time to sleep during the day when there are other things going on. It's important to block out enough time to sleep and not get distracted by other things. Create an environment in your bedroom that helps you sleep, i.e. curtains, white noise, a fan blowing, set your alarm, and then hit the hay. Sleeping at the same time every day as mentioned before can also help.