

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CONTROLLER

August 2014



Supplement

Written by one of our dedicated Controllers (ANON)

A Controllers Shift

Wednesday night; and I'm already preparing for the Friday night shift. Checking each of the areas on the spreadsheet to make sure there is a rider to cover each area. A couple of areas have no cover so fire off a quick email to the controller co-ordinator to see if he can make an appeal for more riders.

Thursday night; create my running sheet. Make sure that I have all the riders contact details stored in my phone. Still a few riders short, so make an appeal on Facebook. Print off my riders list ready to take to work with me in the morning.

Friday 11am; take a tea break at work and text all my riders for tonight. The boss doesn't like us using our mobiles at work so phone has to be turned off as soon as the text is sent.

1pm, take lunch. Turn phone back on. 3 replies to my text asking for riders to confirm they are available for duty. Quickly log onto the spreadsheet using the reception computer so that I can confirm which riders have replied and if they have hands free.

Half 5 and I can finally go home. Turn my phone on and have another 2 messages from riders for tonight. Only one to go. Bloody typical of a Friday night. What is normally a 15 minute journey has turned into a 45 minute one with all the extra traffic on the road heading away for the holiday weekend. 6pm and my shift should have started now, yet I'm still stuck in the car on the way home. **6:10pm** and I get a phone call. It's last night's duty controller who has just received a call from Blackpool hospital with the details of tonight's regular run. Had I been home on time, I could have changed the switchboard number over so that the calls were diverted to my phone. Explain to last night's controller that I am about 15 minutes away from home, and she is happy to cover for me until then. She is asking if the Fylde rider is available as I haven't had

chance to update the spreadsheet that they have messaged back.

Finally get home at **6:20pm**. Fly into the house and turn the computer on and first thing I do is switch the calls over to my phone. I contact last night's controller to thank them for their help in passing the run details over to the rider. Manage to update the details for all the rider's availability. Still one to confirm, so fire off another quick text.

6:30pm BLEEP, BLEEP, goes the phone. The screen shows the message "Collected Chorley" Go to the spreadsheet and update the details. Finally I get to put the kettle on.

Quickly jump in the shower to get rid of all the grime from work. From experience I know the next message should be at about 5 to 7.

Jump out of the shower and get some clean clothes on, the next 12 hours are going to be very long. Still no reply from my final rider. Decide to ring him to make contact.

Five past seven and the Fylde rider has collected from the hospital and the Chorley regular run, has been delivered to Preston. Switchboard has asked the rider to take some notes back to Chorley, which even though he's not on duty for he night, he does it.

Apart from the texts from the 2 riders who are out, the next hour seems to have a lull. The back garden is now in shade, so I go outside to water the plants, assisted by the kids who want to spend some time with Dad, before they go to bed.

Come back in and my loving and understanding wife has my tea ready. Lovely spaghetti bolognaises. Just as I put the first fork full in my mouth, the phone rings. Urgent samples run required from Burnley to Speke.

Contact my East rider and ask him to go to Burnley to pick up. As soon as I put the phone down to him, I contact the West rider to inform him that they will be required to go to the relay point just off the M6, time to be advised depending on what time the item is collected. While on the phone, the landline rings, I quickly say goodbye to the rider and answer the incoming call. Blackburn asking for notes to be taken to Burnley. Knowing that the rider who I have asked to attend Burnley will be passing Blackburn, I quickly contact him and ask him if he can collect the notes on his way past. He happily agrees and says it will only add about 10 minutes to him getting to Burnley. Finally get to update the spreadsheet with the last couple of calls, and now I can have my tea. 10 minutes pass and the phone goes again, Samples to go from Kendal to Lancaster. Ring the Kendal rider and dispatch him. Get a text from the East rider, "collected Blackburn", spreadsheet updated. Now to finish my tea, which by now has gone rubbery and cold.

9:03pm, "Collected Kendal", rider on his way to Lancaster.

9:06pm Notes delivered and samples collected in Burnley. ETA to relay point 40 minutes. Contact the West rider to advise of time.

Text second West rider, to remind him of the 10pm regular run.

9:20pm, call from Blackburn switchboard asking for samples to be collected from Burnley to go to Blackburn. With the only East rider on duty tonight on his way to the relay point, I advise them of the delay. They tell me that it is very urgent. Looking at my riders list, I have a Central rider who has the East code in his areas. "He will be my better option", so decide to ask him to attend. Advise him that it is very urgent and if he feels blue lights are required, then to use them and advise me so that the spreadsheet can be updated.

9:23pm, Lancaster delivered. The normal text sent in return asking the rider to let me know when home safely.

9:38pm, samples collected at Burnley

9:43pm relay run handed over.

A quick glance down my list shows me that I have 5 riders out on the road. One rider on the way to Speke, one rider on his way back to East, a rider on a very urgent run to Blackburn, a rider on his way to Ormskirk for the regular run, and another on their way back from Lancaster.

10pm, samples delivered to Blackburn, 2 boxes collected from Ormskirk.

10 minutes later and the Kendal rider hasn't made contact. From experience I know he should have been home about 15 minutes ago. He doesn't have hands free, so don't really want to ring him, but I am concerned for his safety. Make the call, as I know that

he will stop when safe and ring back. He answers straight away, and apologises for not texting, as he was distracted. No problem, at least I know he is safe.

The next hour seems, dare I say it, quiet. A few texts from the riders informing me of delivery and home safely times. Do I risk going to the toilet. "Sods law says that when I go, the phone will ring". Pick up my pen, dispatch sheet and phone and go upstairs. You learn to adapt to the situations and knowing that you can't stand up while using the toilet, answer the phone and write all at the same time, adopt the sitting position. "That seat is cold". At least sitting there I have less chance of dropping the phone.

I can still hear the kids playing in their bedrooms, so I stick my head in as I go past to say goodnight. One of them asks if I'll take him to the park in the morning to play football. "We'll see, now go to sleep", is my answer. Go back downstairs and to earn a few brownie points, make my wife a cup of hot chocolate before she goes to bed. "I'm sure the kettle is linked to the phone line, as soon as I turn it on, the phone goes". Preston ring with an emergency, requiring blood from the Lancaster blood bank to be taken to Preston hospital. After getting all the relevant details and as it's a medical emergency the clinician's name, I contact the Lancaster rider and dispatch him as soon as possible informing him that blue lights should be used if required. As soon as he is on his way, I am on the phone to the police informing them that we have a rider using blue lights and advising them of the route that he will be taking. They tell me that there is an ongoing incident on the M6 near junction 32 and that they advise using the A6. I let the rider know this when he collects at Lancaster and he advises that it will add about 10 minutes to the journey. Preston are informed of the slight delay and ask that we get there as soon as possible.

11:45pm and another call comes in. Notes, from Burnley to Blackburn. Rider dispatched.

Just gone midnight and the blood has been delivered to Preston. The rider is going to have a cup of coffee and then set off back home. His ETA will be about 1:30

12:15am and the notes are on their way to Blackburn. The wife has gone to bed after finally getting her hot chocolate. The house is eerily quiet. Change the switchboard number over so that the wife's mobile rings as she leaves that with me as the second phone when I'm on shift otherwise the phone in the bedroom will ring, and then I will really be in the doghouse.

Just gone half 12 and the Blackburn run is complete. Just wait for the rider to let me know he's home safe.

1:35am and Kendal are on the phone. Contact the Kendal rider and despite being so close to the finish time, turns out. It will be around half 3 when he gets home.

My Lancaster rider has arrived home safely and I bid him goodnight. Only one rider on the road at the moment. There's nothing on the TV, so decide to watch a bit of catch up.

Just gone quarter past 2 and Southport are requesting a rider to go to Ormskirk to collect some samples.

2:30am The samples from Kendal are now safely delivered to Lancaster, and the Ormskirk collection has been done and the rider is on his way to Southport. The phone goes again and Southport are requesting another collection from Ormskirk. Contact the rider and ask him to turn around and go back. He's only 5 minutes away so agrees.

Just gone 3 and both packages delivered to Southport and the rider is on his way home. Time for a brew, and maybe some toast. Kettle has just finished boiling and the Kendal rider texts to say that he's home. I thank him for his help.

3:30am and the Southport rider is now home. Jeremy Kyle is the only thing on TV, makes you glad to be normal after watching some of his guests. Brew and toast finished and begin to doze on the couch. "You can never fully relax while on shift because the phone could go at anytime". Sure enough **another call comes in before 4**. Chorley to Preston. Simple enough run and the rider should be back home in just over an hour. Might get a snooze yet.

5:35am Blackburn have some samples to go to Burnley, and a return run of samples to Blackburn. Just as the phone goes down to them, it goes again. Blackburn health records, notes to go from Burnley back to Blackburn. Rider on his way. He's about half an hour from Blackburn. **Just gone 6am** and the Blackburn packages are collected and are on their way to Burnley. **6:35am** Burnley delivered and the return run's picked up.

At ten to seven, the daytime controller makes contact to say they have swapped the switchboard number over. It's normal practice for the outgoing controller to see their riders home so I tell the day controller I will update the spreadsheet once the notes and samples are delivered. **7:05am** and everything is delivered. Just wait for the rider to get home.

Almost 26 hours since I got up, I can finally go to bed, my last rider is home safely. Just as I'm going upstairs, the kids are getting up. At least I can get a couple of hours sleep and then get up (albeit knackered) and have some family time this weekend.

This is not based on an actual night, but it is an overview of a controller's life. A shift could have calls spaced so the controller doesn't get anytime between calls and texts, or the last call could be at 11pm, but even then the controller is still alert waiting for the phone to ring, which in most cases is answered within 15 seconds. A normal shift starts 48 hours earlier and requires preparation on the day of the shift. The knock on into the day following a shift can have effects on

your family and social lives, which could last a couple of days while your body clock recovers.

***Why do we do it?** Because that sacrifice of a few hours is worth it to know that by the end of the night, all our members actions could have saved at least one persons life.*

From first hand knowledge I know that this is a realistic storyline.

WELL DONE & THANK YOU, to all our Controllers.

Kind regards

Paul

Chairman & Trustee.