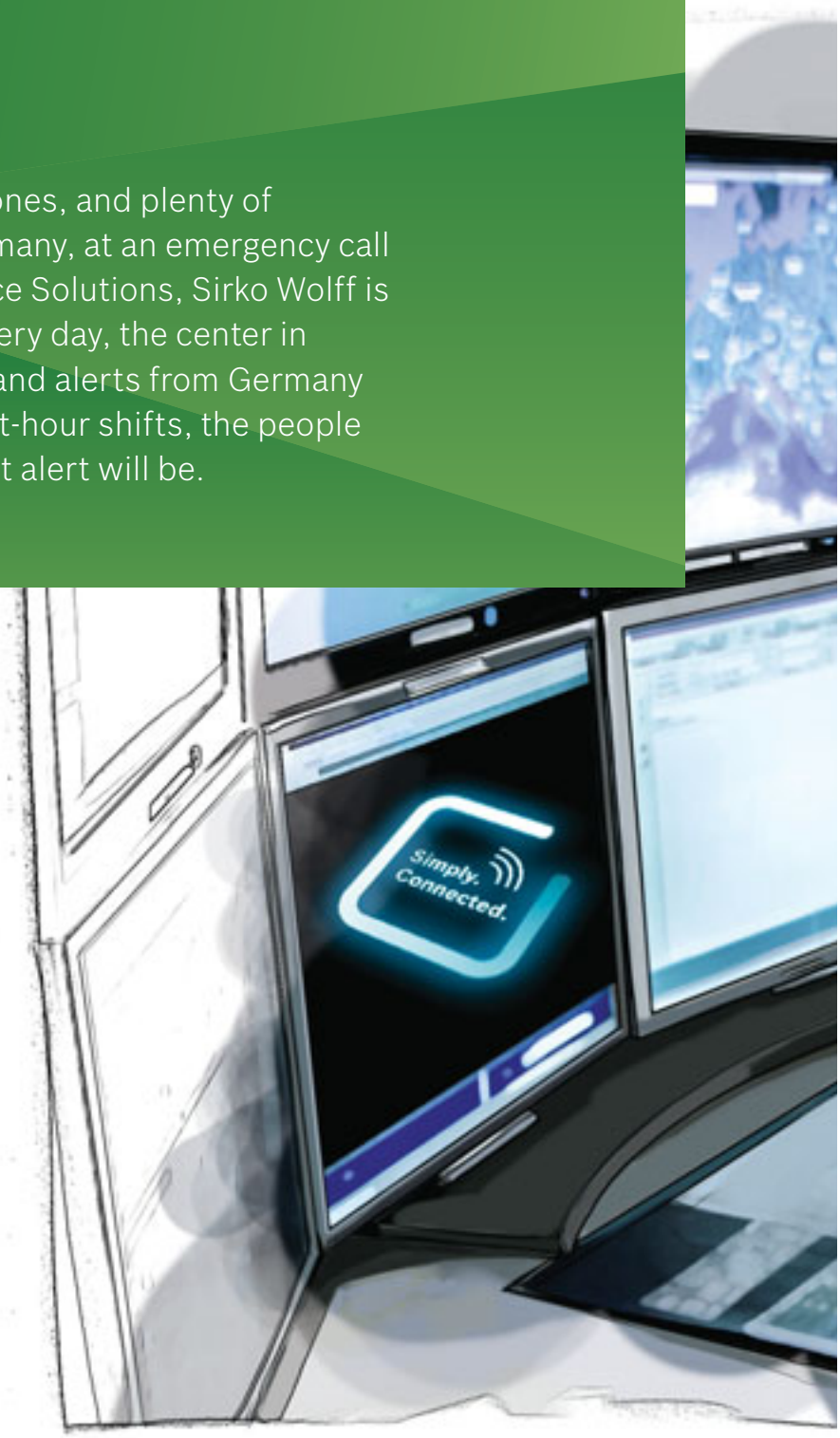
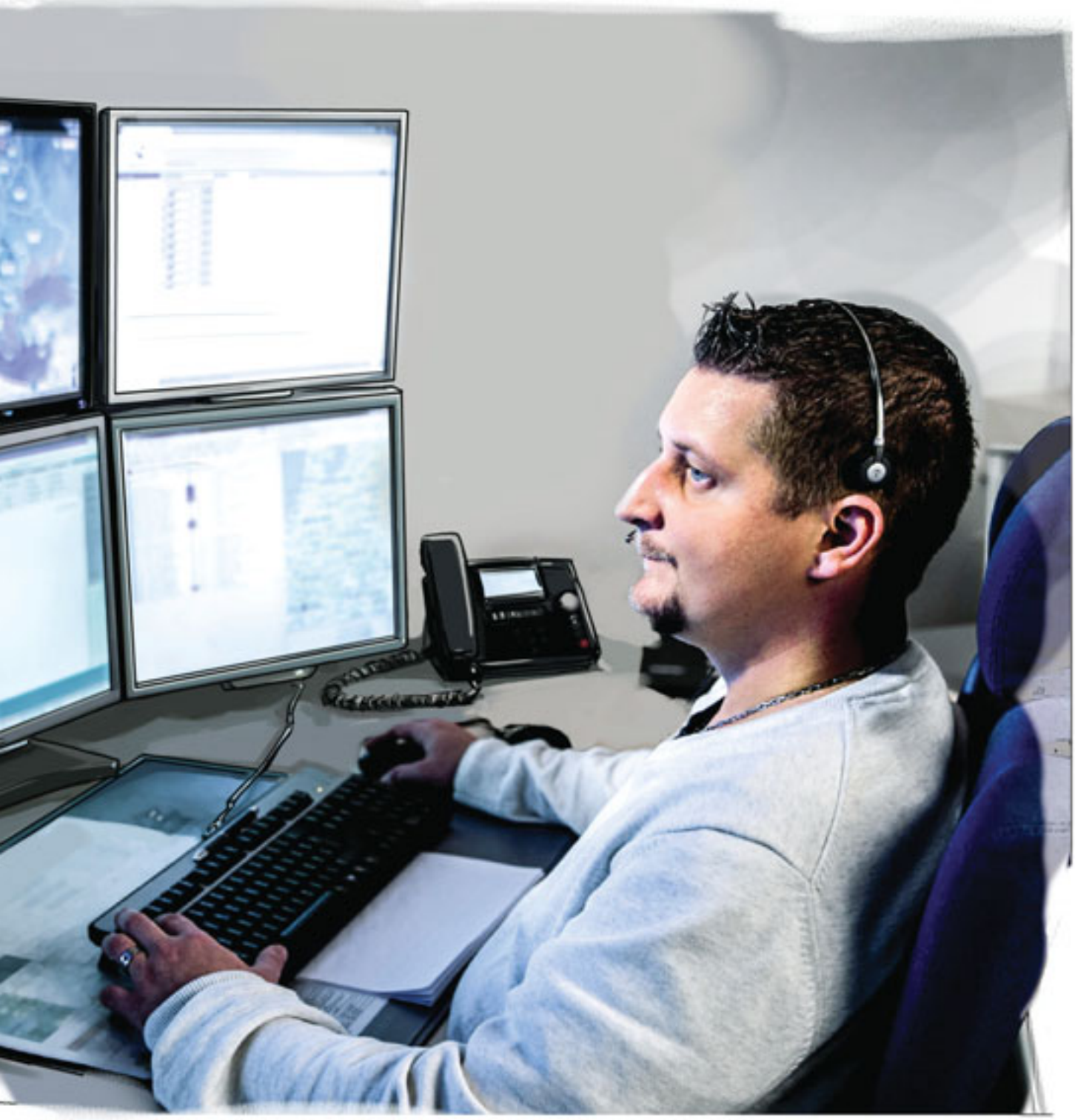
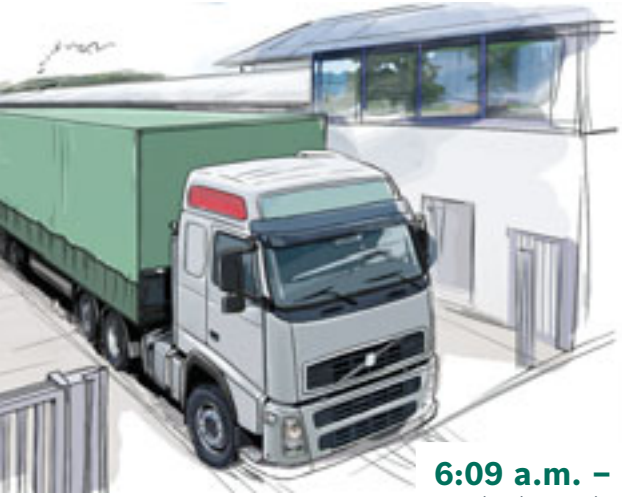
Bosch on alert

Eight monitors, two mice, three telephones, and plenty of responsibility: here in Magdeburg, Germany, at an emergency call center operated by Bosch Global Service Solutions, Sirko Wolff is helping make the world a little safer. Every day, the center in Magdeburg logs some 6,500 incidents and alerts from Germany and abroad. When they begin their eight-hour shifts, the people working here have no idea what the next alert will be.



5:42 a.m. – Time to get to work Wolff works on the fifth floor of a modern office building in Magdeburg. At the start of the early shift, he boots up the computer systems: one for vehicle monitoring, one for documenting and managing all alarm events, and one for e-mail. At 6 a.m. on the dot, he activates the button that means he is now the contact for all alarm notifications. “From now on, I have to be ready for anything,” Wolff says.



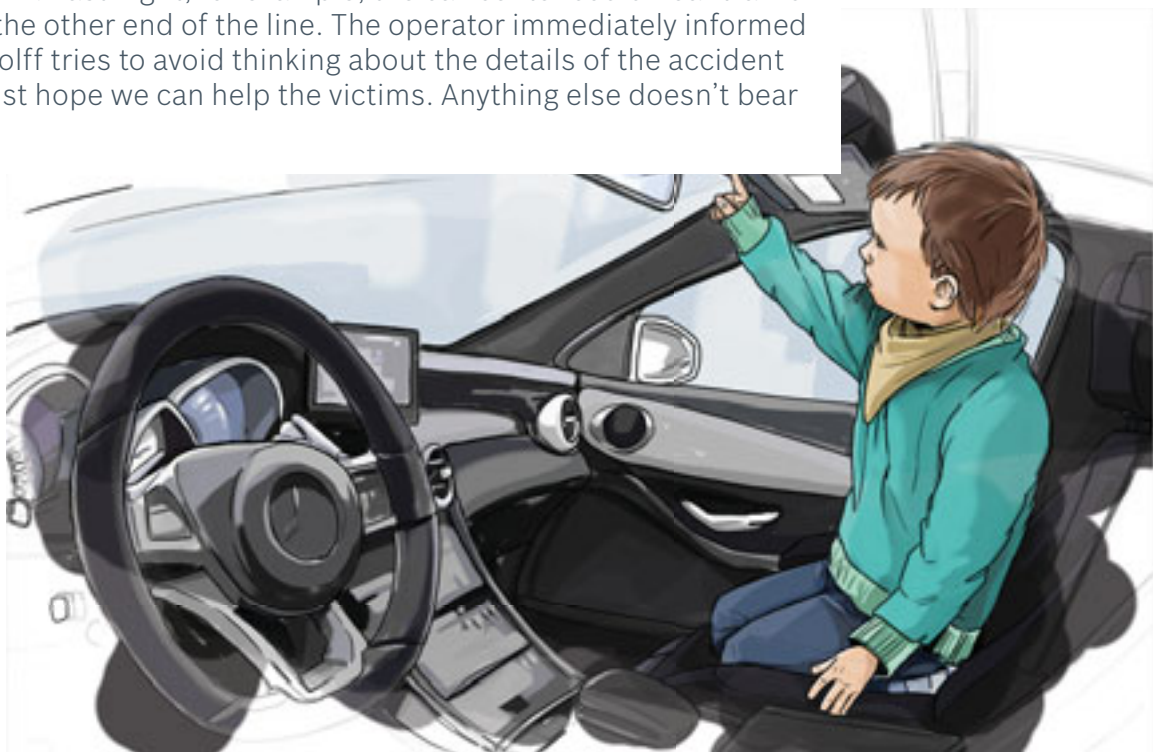


6:09 a.m. – Wagons roll A pop-up window announces the start of a new monitoring assignment. Wolff acknowledges receipt of the message. A truck loaded with tobacco products is setting off from Leipzig. The customer has booked several services: monitoring and documentation of the cargo, location of the vehicle by GPS, reception of emergency calls, and the securing of goods and vehicle in the event of an alarm. These are sensible precautions, since a truckload of these goods can be worth as much as a single-family home. “The customer stipulates precisely what gets monitored and when,” Wolff says.

7:38 a.m. – Standstill alert A truck has stopped. The nine-digit process number appears in a pop-up window. Wolff checks to see what route the vehicle is on. The truck is currently located in a business park in Spain. “Everything’s okay. That’s a defined unloading point. The time checks out, too.” One click and the notification has been documented. If anything had been unclear, Wolff would have called the driver.

9:13 a.m. – eCall alarm An alarm starts beeping, and Wolff’s heart starts beating faster. A car’s eCall has been activated manually. Location and model are displayed on his monitor. “Emergency response center. We have received an accident notification,” says Wolff into the telephone. The alarm button is often pressed by mistake, which, as it turns out, was what happened this time as well. About once or twice a day, however, it’s not a false alarm. Last night, for example, the call center could hear traffic noise from the freeway on the other end of the line. The operator immediately informed the emergency services. Wolff tries to avoid thinking about the details of the accident or the people involved. “I just hope we can help the victims. Anything else doesn’t bear thinking about.”

Video
PatRec me!

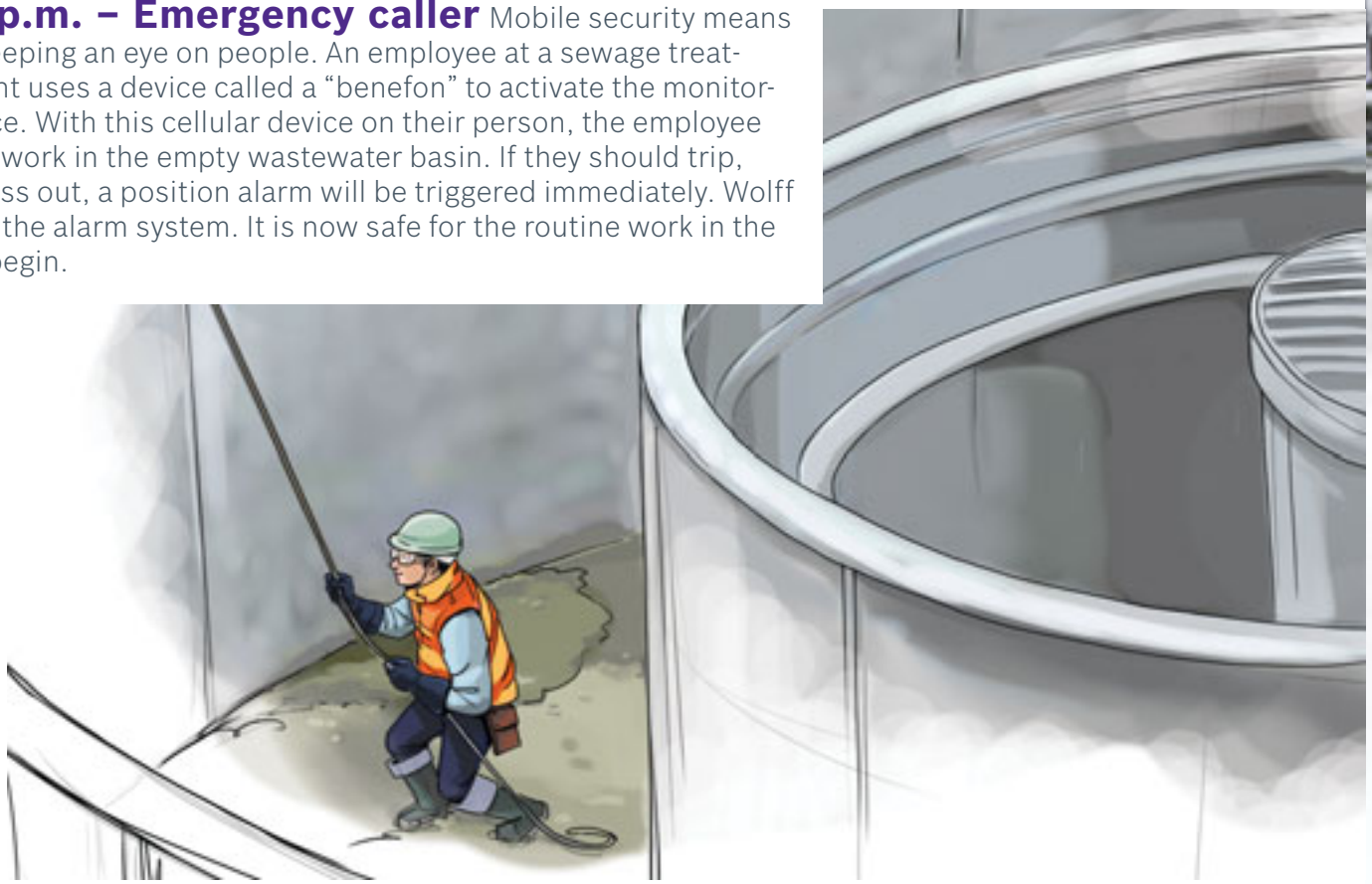


9:58 a.m. – Door-lock alarm A truck trailer is being opened, so Wolff checks the planned route. Just then the driver calls: he had forgotten to turn off the alarm system. Code words are exchanged and the alarm system is deactivated until noon. Everything's fine. Just the opposite of a recent case in Romania. Wolff contacted the driver after a door alarm went off, but the driver assured him that he was driving the truck. A short time later, Wolff notified the driver that a motion alarm in the trailer had been triggered. But the truck was still driving at 80 kph. It was later discovered that the truck had been burgled while it was in motion – just like in the movies. At least the Bosch technology had performed reliably.

10:23 a.m. – Safety check Truck drivers routinely check to make sure the sensors in their trucks are functioning normally. That, too, gets reported to Wolff. The sensors that are activated frequently include gas detectors, as thieves have been known to incapacitate sleeping truck drivers by pumping knockout gas through windows left ajar.

12:15 p.m. – Lunch break Wolff signs off from his computer and his coworkers take over. There are always at least two people in the control room, even during lunch. Wolff heads outside to get some fresh air and have a sandwich.

12:58 p.m. – Emergency caller Mobile security means always keeping an eye on people. An employee at a sewage treatment plant uses a device called a "benefon" to activate the monitoring service. With this cellular device on their person, the employee can start work in the empty wastewater basin. If they should trip, fall, or pass out, a position alarm will be triggered immediately. Wolff activates the alarm system. It is now safe for the routine work in the plant to begin.



1:35 p.m. – Shift change Marco Krug clocks in for the next shift. Wolff briefs him on things to look out for in some of the ongoing monitoring jobs, even though most of these are documented in the system and follow-ups happen automatically. The early shift ends without any incidents to report.

2:02 p.m. – Time to go home Wolff clocks out. Next on his schedule is to pick up his five-year-old daughter from kindergarten. Wolff grins: "Heaven help me if I'm late getting her. Then you'll see a real alarm."