

WHAT DOES A 911 DISPATCHER DO?

911 dispatchers, also called public safety telecommunicators, make up the first line of communication between the public and emergency services. Dispatchers work in emergency communication centers called public safety answering points or PSAPs.

JOB DUTIES

When a 911 call comes in, dispatchers take all information, such as the caller's name, location and situation details. They dispatch the appropriate law enforcement or emergency medical teams to the scene. Dispatchers may be required to provide medical assistance, suicide or mental health counseling and other guidance over the phone before emergency personnel arrive at the scene. They monitor the status of emergency units dispatched to a call and coordinate the response of other area communication centers if needed.

HIRING OUTLOOK

Because of the extremely stressful nature of the job and the highly competitive environment, many telecommunicators are constantly leaving the occupation. This means there are frequently open positions as an emergency dispatcher.



SALARY

Public safety telecommunicators can earn a regular salary, medical coverage and a retirement pension.

CAREER	SALARY RANGE
Calltaker/Dispatcher	\$30,110-\$49,941
Senior Dispatcher Communications	\$35,686-\$56,347
Supervisor	\$39,641-\$75,444
Dispatch Manager	\$49,352 to \$79,444

Source: Mid-America Regional Council 2016 Local Government Salary Survey

WHAT IT TAKES

The minimum age to work as a 911 dispatcher is 18 years of age. Candidates must:

- Have a high school diploma or GED certificate.
- Successfully complete pre-employment testing.
- Pass background check, polygraph, psychological and medical exams.
- Must be willing and available to work all shifts, including evening, weekends and holidays.
- Must be able to work rotating shifts and overtime as required.

MORE INFO?

Learn more about emergency dispatch careers at CareerExpo2017.org.



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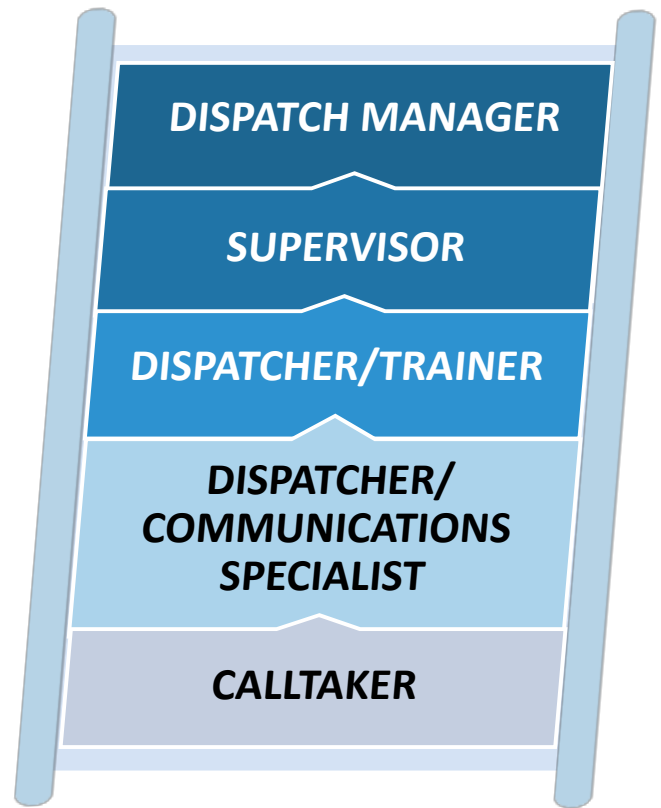
PUBLIC SAFETY

TRAINING AND ADVANCEMENT

Training requirements for dispatchers vary by state. Some states require 40 hours or more of initial training and some require continuing education every two to three years. Some agencies have their own programs for certifying dispatchers; others use training from a professional association.

The Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials, the National Emergency Number Association and the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch have established a number of recommended standards and best practices that agencies often use as a guideline for their own training programs.

911 calltakers can become senior dispatchers and supervisors before advancing to administrative positions, in which they may focus on a specific area, such as training, policy or procedures. Additional education and related work experience may be helpful in advancing to management-level positions, such as PSAP manager.



TOP SKILLS

- Strong written and verbal communication
- Active listening
- Critical thinking
- Strong problem-solving
- Calm demeanor
- Work well under stress
- Ability to multi-task
- Basic computer
- Knowledge of geography

EDUCATION

A high school diploma is typically the only formal education required to become a dispatcher. Experience working in customer service-related industries is also very helpful. Strong communications skills are a must, as well as the ability to speak clearly and coherently.

