

City of Bellingham
Classification Specification - Civil Service or AFSCME

CLASS TITLE	What-Comm Dispatcher In Training What-Comm Dispatcher I What-Comm Dispatcher II
DEPARTMENT	Police
UNION:	WHAT-COMM DISPATCHERS GUILD
SG:	Plan P
CS:	Entry/Promotional
FLSA:	Y
EE04CODE:	TE

NATURE OF WORK:

A Public Safety Dispatcher receives and processes telephone requests for police, fire and medical emergency response. The person in this position determines the nature, urgency and jurisdiction of a call and either dispatches public safety personnel and equipment to the scene of the emergency or transfers the call to the appropriate jurisdiction. The Dispatcher enters information from the caller and responding units into a computer-aided dispatch software program and continually updates the status of those responding to the incident. The What-Comm Dispatch center serves as the Public Safety Answering Point for Whatcom County. The center also serves as the activation point for the AMBER Alert Plan for North Puget Sound.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS:

WHAT-COMM Dispatcher In Training

This is the entry-level position for new Public Safety Dispatchers during their training period. A new hire will go through a structured training program to learn What-Comm policies and procedures for handling emergent and non-emergent calls as well as other agency, department, and dispatch center protocols.

WHAT-COMM Dispatcher I

A Dispatcher in Training will promote to Dispatcher I when he or she completes the initial training period and can independently handle the call receiving function.

WHAT-COMM Dispatcher II

A Dispatcher II is distinguished from the Dispatcher I position by the ability to handle both dispatch consoles as well as the call receiving function.

SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIPS:

Dispatchers work as a self-directed work group, but receive overall direction from the What-Comm Deputy Director of Operations. Performs work independently under the direction of strict City of Bellingham, Bellingham Police Department, and What-Comm Communications Center policies, procedures and protocols.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:

1. Receives, prioritizes, and routes emergency telephone calls from the public to appropriate jurisdictions. Enters the nature, location and source of the emergency call into a computer terminal using computer-aided dispatch software. Retrieves and evaluates information from the computer-based on knowledge of dispatch and emergency response procedures, status of available emergency responders and familiarity with major roads, local businesses and geographic features. Relays call information and/or dispatches appropriate Police personnel to the scene of the reported incident.
2. Enters and receives information such as wants, stolen vehicles, missing persons and runaways from a computer terminal with a nationwide law enforcement database and transmits requested information to law enforcement personnel in the field.
3. Communicates with a variety of agencies including US Customs, Canadian Customs, WSP, US Border Patrol, USCG, Homeland Security and Whidbey Island Naval Base regarding warrant service and resources that the agencies have available for emergencies.
4. Regularly contacts and updates status of field units according to established procedures and protocols. Contacts various resources as requested by field units.
5. Receives non-emergency telephone complaints and inquiries from the public. Determines the nature of the call based on established procedures and either refers the caller to the appropriate agency or enters the call in the computer and dispatches units according to the priority and urgency of the call.
6. Staffs the NAWAS phone and notifies Whatcom County Department of Emergency Management of changes. Notifies San Juan County of all situations that may affect them.

ADDITIONAL DUTIES REQUIRED:

1. Generates routine reports such as the incident history reports and incident shift summaries.
2. Develops and recommends updates to comprehensive dispatch policies, procedures, and protocols as necessary for the efficient operations of the center. Identifies and recommends new policies and procedures to improve dispatch operations and minimize liability.
3. Performs Lead Worker duties as assigned to include posting overtime, making seating charts, and notifying Deputy Director of equipment/personnel issues and significant events that may impact staffing.
4. Performs training of new employees to include call receiving and radio dispatching.
5. Performs other duties within the scope of the classification.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

- Ability to function calmly and effectively under stress and to assimilate and recall large amounts of detail and demonstrate flexibility with unplanned changes that occur in stressful circumstances.
- Ability to handle several different tasks at the same time.
- Willingness and ability to learn to effectively use a computer-aided dispatch computer program and other software programs.
- Ability to relay information in the context in which it is received.
- Ability to speak clearly and concisely in English.
- Ability and willingness to follow oral and written instructions with strict attention to detail.
- Ability to recognize and respond to certain computer warnings and alarm activations.
- Ability to use the Dedicated Access computer to enter and research information such as warrants, orders, vehicles, boats, property, guns, and criminal histories.
- Ability to use a computer keyboard to quickly enter information into a computer and process information from a video display terminal.
- Ability to increase proficiency with keyboard to a speed appropriate to keep up with the call volume.
- Ability to receive, process and transmit emergent telephone, oral, written and radio communications quickly and accurately.
- Ability to problem solve for the public and co-workers with courtesy and tact and good judgement.
- Good working knowledge of interagency and international call protocols and resources.
- Basic knowledge of laws regarding civil and criminal acts to be able to discern the difference.
- Strong oral communication and interaction skills necessary to work effectively with a diverse group of people including citizens, personnel from other local agencies, and other City employees.
- Willingness to work rotating shifts, weekends and holidays, including responding to callouts and overtime needs.
- Knowledge of or ability to learn the geography of Whatcom County including: cities and towns, locations of highways, main streets, major buildings and businesses and common places such as parks.
- Ability to make urgent, independent decisions as well as to demonstrate teamwork.
- Ability to determine appropriate response priority for complaints and requests.
- Ability and willingness to demonstrate the Public Service Competencies of Service Orientation, Results Orientation, and Teamwork and Cooperation.
- Physical ability to perform the required work including:
 - Visual acuity (correctable) to accurately read information from a computer screen and printed materials.
 - Hearing within (or correctable to) normal limits across the speech frequencies and recognition of speech in the very good to excellent range.
- Perform searches of LongArm , AS400 and WACIC/NCIC for wants, orders and flags such as missing persons or runaways as well as fulfill requests from the field units such as reverses on address and phone numbers to locate persons and places.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT:

The work is performed in an office environment at a computer workstation using different desktop computer systems, a multi-line telephone system and extensive radio communications equipment to receive, input and process urgent information. Frequently take calls from extremely upset citizens requesting an emergency response. Citizens are sometimes hostile or relate very unpleasant situations in graphic detail. Workload intensity varies considerably from one minute to the next and requires frequent swings from urgent independent decision making to cooperative teamwork through a self-directed workgroup, with guidance from the Deputy Director.

The working environment includes:

- Rotating shifts covering 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays.
- Frequent changes in multi-jurisdictional policies and procedures, periodic workstation relocation and changes in equipment availability.

EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:

- A minimum of one year of experience in a position with intensive public contact.
- Keyboard entry skills at a minimum of 40 wpm net.
- Experience or training in the use of computer software such as word processing, spreadsheets, database management, desktop publishing programs or other business/educational software preferred.
- Experience using multi-line phone systems preferred.
- Must acquire within first year of training a working knowledge of the geography of Whatcom County to include: cities and towns, locations and names of highways, main streets, major buildings and businesses and establishments such as names of parks.
- Previous experience in public safety dispatching preferred.

NECESSARY SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Must be able to obtain and maintain ACCESS certification within three months of hire.
- Must obtain and maintain Telecommunicator 1 & 2 certifications within twelve months of hire.
- Must pass a hearing evaluation prior to hire.
- Must pass a Police criminal convictions records check, background investigation, psychological exam, and polygraph exam prior to hire.
- Must pass a pre-employment drug screen.
- Must have a telephone at place of residence or a cell phone..

PROMOTIONAL REQUIREMENTS:

Public Safety Dispatcher I

A Dispatcher in Training will promote to a Dispatcher I upon completion of the skill standards for initial training. These skill standards ensure that an individual can independently handle the call receiving function.

Public Safety Dispatcher II

A Dispatcher I will promote to Dispatcher II upon completion of skill standards demonstrating the ability to independently handle both dispatch consoles as well as the call receiving function.

PREPARED BY: L. Hill
Dispatch Work Group
10/07

REVIEWED BY: _____
Randall Carroll
Chief of Police

COMMISSION ADOPTION: _____ November 14, 2007