

CAREER GUIDE FOR POLICE, FIRE & AMBULANCE DISPATCHER

SOC Code: 43-5031

Pay Band(s): 3 and 4 ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Description: Receive complaints from public concerning crimes and police emergencies. Broadcast orders to police patrol units in vicinity of complaint to investigate. Operate radio, telephone, or computer equipment to receive reports of fires and medical emergencies and relay information or orders to proper officials.

Dispatcher positions in the Commonwealth are assigned to the following Roles in the [Emergency Services Career Group](#):

[Emergency Coordinator I](#)

[Emergency Coordinator II](#)

While Dispatchers within the Commonwealth are all located within the Emergency Services Career Group, individuals may want to pursue other opportunities within the Commonwealth depending upon individual training, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.

Other Career Group(s) that may be of interest are:

[Law Enforcement](#)

[Public Safety Compliance](#)

[Security Services](#)

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND TASKS

(Technical and Functional Expertise)

Skills

Note: *The technical and functional skills listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Dispatchers commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the skills listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

1. Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
2. Talking to others to convey information effectively.
3. Actively looking for ways to help people.
4. Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
5. Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
6. Controlling operations of equipment or systems.
7. Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
8. Teaching others how to do something.
9. Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
10. Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.

Knowledge

Note: The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Dispatchers commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the knowledge listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

The **Knowledge** of:

1. Transmission, broadcasting, switching, control, and operation of telecommunications systems.
2. Circuit boards, processors, chips, electronic equipment, and computer hardware and software, including applications and programming.
3. Structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
4. Principles and methods for describing the features of land, sea, and air masses, including their physical characteristics, locations, interrelationships, and distribution of plant, animal, and human life.
5. Media production, communication, and dissemination techniques and methods. This includes alternative ways to inform and entertain via written, oral, and visual media.

Abilities

Note: The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Dispatchers commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the abilities listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

The **Ability** to:

1. Listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
2. Speak clearly so others can understand you.
3. Quickly make sense of, combine, and organize information into meaningful patterns.
4. Communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
5. Concentrate on a task over a period of time without being distracted.
6. Focus on a single source of sound in the presence of other distracting sounds.
7. Identify and understand the speech of another person.
8. Tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
9. Arrange things or actions in a certain order or pattern according to a specific rule or set of rules (e.g., patterns of numbers, letters, words, pictures, mathematical operations).
10. Shift back and forth between two or more activities or sources of information (such as speech, sounds, touch, or other sources).

Tasks

Note: The following is a list of sample tasks typically performed by Dispatchers. Employees in this occupation will not necessarily perform all of the tasks listed.

Tasks

1. Answer routine inquiries, and refer calls not requiring dispatches to appropriate departments and agencies.
2. Determine response requirements and relative priorities of situations, and dispatch units in accordance with established procedures.
3. Maintain files of information relating to emergency calls such as personnel rosters, and emergency call-out and pager files.
4. Monitor various radio frequencies such as those used by public works departments, school security, and civil defense in order to keep apprised of developing situations.
5. Observe alarm registers and scan maps in order to determine whether a specific emergency is in the dispatch service area.
6. Question callers to determine their locations and the nature of their problems in order to determine type of response needed.
7. Read and effectively interpret small-scale maps and information from a computer screen in order to determine locations and provide directions.
8. Receive incoming telephone or alarm system calls regarding emergency and non-emergency police and fire service, emergency ambulance service, information and after hours calls for departments within a city.
9. Record details of calls, dispatches, and messages.
10. Relay information and messages to and from emergency sites, to law enforcement agencies, and to all other individuals or groups requiring notification.

INTERESTED?

Like people, occupations have traits or characteristics. These characteristics give important clues about the nature of the work and work environment, and give you an opportunity to match your own personal interests to a specific occupation. When you choose a job in an occupation that matches your own interests you have taken an important step in planning a successful and rewarding career.

The occupation of Police, Fire and Ambulance Dispatcher has **Social** and **Conventional** characteristics as described below:

Social — Social occupations frequently involve working with, communicating with, and teaching people. These occupations often involve helping or providing service to others.

Conventional — Conventional occupations frequently involve following set procedures and routines. These occupations can include working with data and details more than with ideas. Usually there is a clear line of authority to follow.

LICENSURE, REGISTRATION, OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Generally this is not required for Dispatcher positions to be hired in state government. However once employed, continued employment is contingent upon successful completion of CAD training. VA Criminal Investigation Network Operator Certification & Dispatcher Certification are expected.

The Virginia State Police requires an extensive background investigation, polygraph exam, limited physical, and fingerprint-based criminal history check. Other agencies may have similar requirements.

Also, there is a requirement that a dispatcher has either United States citizenship or have been a lawful resident of United States for past 10 consecutive years to apply for VCIN certification.

For further information on requirements and certification, contact the Virginia State Police: <http://www.vsp.state.va.us/>

For additional information on training and certification for police, fire, and emergency dispatchers, contact either of the following organizations:

- National Academies of Emergency Dispatch: <http://www.emergencydispatch.org>
- Association of Public Safety Communications Officials: <http://www.apco911.org>

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Department of Labor provides the following information:

Police, fire, and ambulance dispatchers, also called public safety dispatchers, monitor the location of emergency services personnel from any one or all of the jurisdiction's emergency services departments. These workers dispatch the appropriate type and number of units in response to calls for assistance. Dispatchers, or call takers, often are the first people the public contacts when emergency assistance is required. If certified for emergency medical services, the dispatcher may provide medical instruction to those on the scene of the emergency until the medical staff arrives.

The Virginia Department of State Police requires a dispatcher to maintain radio communication with patrol officers. Relay requests for assistance, complaints of disturbances & other incidents. Coordinate police, rescue & fire departments during an emergency. Provide information & other appropriate assistance to the public. Perform general clerical work as required.

The dispatcher must be able to operate 2-way radio system including VA Criminal Information Network terminal and National Crime Information and Law Enforcement Computer Teletype System. The dispatcher dispatches calls for service, both routine and emergency; Inputs, searches, retrieves information utilizing Teletype equipment and computer terminals; and Completes/maintains documentation of logs, rosters, and files.

The work hours include portions of evening, midnight shifts and weekends. The work is high volume and the environment is high pressure requiring the dispatcher to exercise sound judgment under stress.

High school diploma or equivalent or related experience in telecommunications is preferred.

COMMONWEALTH COMPETENCIES

Competencies are a set of identified behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees and the organization. Competencies can be observed and measured. When consistently demonstrated, competencies make employees particularly effective in their work. Competencies help lay out a road map to career success. You can use the Commonwealth Competencies to help improve your individual performance by adopting behaviors that make high performing employees successful in their jobs. In this way, you can use the Commonwealth Competencies for your further professional development.

The Commonwealth Competencies are:

1. Technical and Functional Expertise
2. Understanding the Business
3. Achieving Results
4. Serving the Customer
5. Teamwork
6. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
7. Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

The above competencies may be applied to employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. They can be rank-ordered by agencies and hiring managers to represent the needs of a specific job. The rank ordering will change depending upon the occupation, an organization's priorities, the actual job requirements, and the supervisor's preferences.

Career success is both about what you do (applying your technical knowledge, skills, and ability) and how you do it (the consistent behaviors you demonstrate and choose to use) while interacting and communicating with others. Hopefully, by studying the Commonwealth competencies, identifying your developmental opportunities, and working to refine your own competence, you can take charge of your career!

For additional information about the **Commonwealth Competencies** go to: http://jobs.state.va.us/cc_planningctr.htm. For the competencies, we first list the competencies and then define each. Finally, we list competency indicators; to describe what successful performance looks like.

COMMONWEALTH CAREER PATH

Career opportunities in the Commonwealth are not limited to moving “up” to the next highest role and pay band, changing positions, or to becoming a supervisor. That’s because most roles describe a broad group of occupationally related positions that perform a range of work that requires increased knowledge and skills. For that reason, Commonwealth roles describe the career paths within the same or higher-level role for the same or different Career Group. The broad salary range and the Commonwealth’s pay practices provide flexibility in recognizing career development and advancement. ([Salary Structure](#))

For example: **Police, Fire and Ambulance Dispatcher**

| PAY BAND | PRACTITIONER ROLES |
|----------|---------------------------|
| 3 | Emergency Coordinator I |
| | |
| 4 | Emergency Coordinator II |
| 5 | Emergency Coordinator III |
| | |
| | |

| PAY BAND | MANAGER ROLES |
|----------|-----------------------------------|
| 5 | Emergency Coordinator Manager I |
| | |
| 6 | Emergency Coordinator Manager II |
| 7 | Emergency Coordinator Manager III |
| | |
| | |

Sample Career Path

Emergency Coordinator I

The Emergency Coordinator I role provides career tracks for dispatchers or communication technician who perform a variety of communications and operational duties in support of public safety, security, and law enforcement operations ranging from entry level to journey level. Employees function in communications or operation centers and in the field at incidents.

Emergency Coordinator II

The Emergency Coordinator II role is provides career tracks for dispatchers and communication technicians whose responsibilities range from advanced level of lead workers to supervisors.

Emergency Coordinator III

The Emergency Coordinator III role provides career tracks for fire fighters who supervise and direct the activities of several fire fighters in fire-fighting and rescue operations.

Emergency Coordinator Manager I

The Emergency Coordinator Manager I role provides career tracks for managers who administer and coordinate emergency management and disaster preparedness programs for response, recovery, and mitigation in accordance with state and federal regulations. Responsibilities may also include supervising major functional areas, such as fire fighting for state level crisis operations during emergencies and disasters.

Emergency Coordinator Manager II

The Emergency Coordinator Manager II role provides career tracks for managers that are operations and planning directors charged with the control of large groups of assets and resources directed toward a particular program area of Emergency Management. Responsibilities include supervising major functional areas for state level crisis operations during major emergencies or disasters.

Emergency Coordinator Manager III

The Emergency Coordinator Manager III role provides career tracks for the executive level managers acting as a deputy or an assistant to the agency head. Policy is defined at this level and interaction with the Governor's Secretaries or Executive Assistants is routine. Interaction with other agency leadership is also the norm. Global planning and operational ability and skilled, diplomatic leadership ability is expected.

ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:

O*NET (Occupational Information Network)

http://online.onetcenter.org/gen_search_page

Virginia Employment Commission

<http://www.alex.vec.state.va.us/>

Career One Stop

<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Virginia Career Resource Network <http://www.vacrn.net/>