

City of Prescott
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS
CENTER

PRESCOTT REGIONAL



COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

INFORMATIONAL BOOKLET and
SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT
February 2024



The Prescott Regional Public Safety Communications Center (PRCC) provides routine and Emergency Medical dispatch services for 4 police agencies, 4 fire agencies serving a population of approximately 220,000 covering 1,176 square miles.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine a regular day as a dispatcher with the Prescott Regional Communications Center. Your shift begins at 1730 hours (5:30 p.m.). An armed robbery occurred earlier in the day, and you are given a description of the suspect and the suspect's vehicle. You are currently working five active calls; a domestic dispute with possible injuries, two traffic stops where officers are on scene, a brush fire and a suspicious person call where one officer is on scene and his backup is en-route. You have three calls that have not yet been dispatched due to lack of available units.

During your shift, an officer asks you for the description of the vehicle used in the armed robbery. As it turns out, the officer is behind a vehicle matching that description; a vehicle pursuit ensues. Your training kicks in and you make sure the officer relays all necessary information over the radio, while at the same time ensuring appropriate backup is en-route. The driver exits the vehicle and runs off on foot. You refer to your map to help the officer set perimeter up and eventually the person is captured. Meanwhile other calls for service are coming in from 911; you are prioritizing them and advising the dispatcher for the other tactical channel, which calls need to be dispatched from, while your channel is restricted for the chase.

Later, you take a transferred, 911 telephone call and begin talking to a man who wants to commit suicide. You are counseling him while providing information that will allow the officers to safely contact him and get him the help he needs.

While all this is going on the phones continue ringing. The calls for service keep coming in and officers are making self-initiated contacts of suspicious persons. You are dispatching backup for the officers as well as running license plates and warrant checks; you are also requesting paramedics, tow trucks and making other telephone calls to assist the officers. During some down time nearing the end of your shift you have a stack of warrants to enter, court 28's to run and training manuals to review.

At the end of your 12-hour shift, at 0530 in the morning, you answer a 911 call from a very distraught elderly lady screaming that her husband has stopped breathing. You enter the call in CAD and use your EMD training to talk her through a quick medical

diagnosis then provide CPR instructions staying on the phone until the medical first responders, dispatched by your partner, arrive on the scene, and provide emergency care to her husband. Your relief has arrived; you brief them and then you log off and leave for home not knowing the outcome of the last EMD call.

Do you consider yourself an adrenaline or stress junkie or perhaps a type-A personality? Does the idea of working in a dispatch center appeal to you? It takes a special person to meet the demands of public safety communications. They often must do several things at once, sometimes during life-threatening situations. A slow or improper response to a call could result in serious injury or further harm. This job requires maintaining composure and keeping emotions in check, even in very difficult and emotionally charged situations. Being involved in these kinds of scenarios can affect a dispatcher both physically and emotionally.

Dispatcher Traits and Skills

The most critical trait for a successful dispatcher is to have resiliency to stress. This trait was identified by a dispatcher job analysis conducted by the California Commission of Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). They defined this trait as being able to:

- Perform effectively under adverse conditions, i.e., working under time pressure with high visibility and serious consequence of error in crisis situations, tragedies, and emergencies, handling simultaneous incidents and working with frequent interruption.
- 'Bounce back' from negative situations.
- Perform duties under extreme pressure without delay.

A total of 14 traits were rated by dispatch supervisors as deemed necessary to possess before being hired. Resiliency to stress was first followed by integrity.

Dispatchers must conduct themselves ethically and morally on and off the job. All a dispatcher's computer, radio and telephone activities are recorded and are subject to subpoena. It is imperative for Communications personnel to maintain confidentiality of data and sensitive situations they encounter during their workday.

Dependability and Emotional Control was also rated high in importance. It was followed by *Tolerance of Unpleasant Work Environment, Adaptability, Teamwork, Maturity, Productivity, Positive Attitude, Assertiveness, Social Concern, Motivation, and Interpersonal Sensitivity.*

The CA POST study also listed the five most important skills to possess because they applied most frequently to different aspects of dispatching. Two of them are:

- Listening while simultaneously performing various tasks
- Talking while simultaneously operating dispatching equipment.



A typical Dispatch Console includes 8 computer screens, 2 computer keyboards, 3 computer mice, a multi-line phone system, 2 radio speakers, 2 digital playback recorders, 2 headset jacks and a foot pedal to transmit on the radio. The consoles raise and lower to accommodate a sitting or standing work preference.

Our training program refers to these two skills as multitasking. For example, when an officer requests a person's name be checked for wants and warrants, a dispatcher depresses a radio transmit foot pedal, retrieves a computer screen to initiate a name check, enters the officer's unit number in a specific field on the screen and moves the cursor to the 'last name' field of the screen while replying "go ahead" then releasing the pedal. If you are one of those people who can seamlessly talk on the cell phone while surfing the Internet and doing homework, you may be a good fit for our team.

The remaining skills that are important to possess are:

- Maintaining vocal composure under adverse or stressful conditions.
- Reading and understanding policy and procedure manuals and memoranda.
- Projecting the voice clearly and audibly with appropriate tone, phrasing, diction and rate of speed.

Dispatcher Workload

The previous paragraphs give you an idea of what we expect you to be able to do. How often do we expect you to do it?

In fiscal year 2022, the Prescott Regional Communications Center answered 85,926 emergency and 911 calls and dispatched emergency responders. Combined emergency and non-emergency inbound and outbound calls answered totaled 192,477. As you can see, the workload at this Center is astounding so you can probably start to understand why our work requires multitasking skills and an ability to tolerate stress.

Staffing and Shift Work

Currently, our personnel work three, 12-hour shifts and 6 hours each Wednesday. We have four squads. Squad one works Sunday through Tuesday from 5:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Squad two works Sunday through Tuesday from 5:30 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. Squad three and Squad four work from 5:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. respectively on Thursday through Saturday. Each squad has a working Supervisor and minimum staffing consists of 5 employees.

Shifts are rotated twice a year (subject to change) and all employees bid for their preference. Employees are slotted based on the needs of the Center and then seniority. Dispatchers must be willing to work any shift assigned. Personnel are expected to work all holidays unless they fall on their regular days off.

Pay

The beginning rate for a Public Safety Dispatcher Trainee is \$23.77 per hour plus overtime. Upon completion of Dispatch training, the Trainee is promoted to a Public Safety Dispatcher. Once off probation, his or her rate of pay may increase up to 2% based on merit and if the City is financially stable. Employees will be compensated according to a biweekly schedule. The schedule of pay periods and pay dates are prepared and distributed to all departments by the Budget and Finance Department annually.

Regular employees will receive a Career Conversation each year effective on the anniversary of their hire date or position change due to a promotion, lateral and/or demotion. An employee whose performance qualifies for a pay-for-performance/merit increase, will be eligible for a specific percentage rate determined by City Management. Pay-for-performance/merit increases are budgeted annually and approved by City Council; merits are typically presented at your yearly evaluation. No merit will be allowed that brings an employee over the maximum of their rate range. Pay-for-performance/merit increases are contingent on budget availability.

Benefits

The City of Prescott offers an excellent benefits package which includes but not inclusive of:

- ▶ Personal Time Off (PTO) Days
- ▶ Medical Insurance
- ▶ Vision Insurance
- ▶ Life Insurance
- ▶ 10 Paid Holidays
- ▶ Overtime Pay
- ▶ Dental Insurance
- ▶ AZ State Retirement System
- ▶ Employee Assistance Program
- ▶ 1 Floating Holiday
- ▶ Wellness Program

The Prescott Regional Public Safety Communications Center provides dispatch services for four Police Agencies, four Fire Departments/Districts and one EMS Ambulance Company. They include the Prescott Police Department, Prescott Valley Police Department, Prescott-Yavapai Tribal Police, Yavapai College Police, Prescott Fire Department, Walker Fire Association, Central Arizona Fire & Medical Authority (CAFMA), Groom Creek Fire District and Priority Ambulance.

Qualifications

Education and/or Experience

- ✓ Eligible to work in the United States.
- ✓ Must be 18 years of age or older.
- ✓ Must have a high school G.E.D. or equivalent.
- ✓ Must be able to type 40 words per minute without looking at the keyboard.
- ✓ Any equivalent combination of education, experience and training which provides the knowledge and abilities necessary to perform the essential functions of the position.

Licensing, Certifications and other requirements

- ✓ Extensive background investigation.
- ✓ Must pass drug, hearing, truth verification and psychological test.
- ✓ Have not been convicted of a felony or any other offense that would result in a felony if committed in Arizona.
- ✓ Must successfully complete all required on-the-job training.
- ✓ Failure to complete the training requirements to become a police or fire dispatcher within the twelve-month probationary period may result in termination.

**PRESCOTT REGIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER
SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT**

Name _____ Date _____

As a prospective Dispatcher for the City of Prescott, you need to be aware of the aspects of the job. Experience has shown that many applicants consider only the positive aspects of the job while ignoring some of its less attractive features. As a result, when new employees encounter negative job features, they sometimes react by leaving the job before training is completed or after only a few months on the job.

Please review the following list of requirements for the position carefully, both the items you might consider to be positive, as well as those that are possibly negative. Be absolutely certain that you are willing and able to comply with the requirements of the job as it costs the City of Prescott approximately \$65,000 to train a new hire. Please bring this completed form with you to your interview. You will be asked to sign this form to verify you have read and understand all statements and that you acknowledge you can meet and/or accept these conditions of employment.

PLEASE PLACE A CHECKMARK IN THE BOX IF YOU ARE WILLING TO PERFORM THIS DUTY OR WORK IN THIS TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT.

- You must be able to accurately touch-type and input data into the computer system while speaking with callers who are under stress. Suggested keyboarding speed is 40 wpm.
- You must be able to speak and write English clearly.
- You must be able to think clearly and act quickly in emergencies, organizing incoming information from many sources.
- You must be able to work in a dimly lit environment where you are required to read and discern visual images on a variety of media such as small liquid crystal displays offering very little brightness/darkness contrast and multi-colored indicator lights with different flash rates/colors.
- You must be able to work for hours at a time continually wearing a communications headset that will cover one ear, or fit within the ear canal of one ear, and be able to still hear and understand other outside sound sources.
- You must be able to work where all conversation and work is continuously recorded and is subject to ongoing reviews and critiques. It is also subject to subpoena.
- You will be required to work weekends and holidays. You will be required to work changing schedules rotating shifts and have rotating days off.

- [] Because of the nature of the work and the Center's requirement to have minimum staffing at all times, you may not be able to take short-notice personal time off.
- [] You must be able to remain seated for hours at a time during a 10 or more-hour shift.
- [] You will be interrupted from your meals or breaks or be unable to take them at times.
- [] On occasion, you will have to work on your day off, work extended or adjusted shifts, be expected to sign up for overtime or be mandated in to work in emergency staffing situations.
- [] Your normal social activities and educational opportunities may be limited because of shift schedules used in a 24 hour per day operation.
- [] You will spend some of your on-duty time waiting for emergency calls. You may be required to use that 'down time' to review training material or participate in Center projects.
- [] You will be under the critical eye of the public who does not always understand or appreciate what you do and may have to deal with abusive individuals by telephone without letting that affect your judgment or attitude.
- [] During the time you are on the dispatch floor, you will be unable to work on personal projects or handle personal problems or phone calls not associated with your job assignment. Items of a personal nature must be accomplished during your break periods.
- [] You will have to report to work on time, in any kind of weather condition; therefore, you must have reliable transportation to work.
- [] You may be exposed to profanity or lifestyles which are not acceptable in your judgment, yet you must remain calm and professional, obtaining necessary information and sending appropriate assistance.
- [] You could experience a feeling of 'helplessness' in some emergency situations since you cannot physically help the caller. The caller may indicate he or she is in distress and the call may be disconnected. You may never know the final outcome of a call you helped with.
- [] You will not be able to leave the Center to help your family or friends during disasters such as floods, earthquakes, windstorms, snowstorms, etc.
- [] You will be working in a restricted, secured law enforcement environment where visits from family members and friends will not be possible without special arrangements.
- [] You will not be able to connect with the caller 'face to face' to get additional information and read 'body language'. All information will be from telephone calls.

- [] You will be required to work as a part of a team and play a small but vital part in the outcome of the response. Ordinarily you will not be involved in on-going projects or long-term planning except during slow times. Your primary job duties will be quick responses to the incident at hand which are then delegated to a law/fire/aid responder to complete.
- [] You will be expected to adhere to stringent rules and regulations and follow established protocols and procedures.
- [] You must be willing to agree that the integrity of the information in the Communications Center is vital and that any breach of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.

Please take a moment to review these requirements. Think about the past jobs you have had and the part you played in the team. Think about what you liked and did not like in all your previous jobs and/or volunteer positions. If you feel you can comply with the requirements listed above, a dispatch position may be a suitable occupation for you.

If some of the requirements do not suit you, or you question your ability to comply with the requirements listed, this means that dispatch work might not be suitable for you. Any negative concerns will be magnified once you are 'on the floor' as a dispatcher. If you answered 'no' to most of the questions, then the position probably is not suitable for you. We cannot train you to handle a work environment that is not natural or comfortable for you.

If you feel that your temperament, personality, and work style preferences are similar to those indicated on this assessment, then please continue with the application process. You will be asked to sign this acknowledgement at your interview.
Applicant Acknowledgement:

I have reviewed the suitability Assessment openly, honestly and to the best of my ability and agree with the requirements.

Signature _____ Date _____