



COMMUNICATOR

Working for Dane County Public Safety Communications is more than just a job; it's a challenging and rewarding career that allows you to work with the latest technology, dedicated people, and the personal satisfaction of knowing that you make a difference in people's lives.

Emergency Communications is not a job: It is a personal commitment of our minds and talents to benefit the people we serve. It is a higher calling, with tremendous responsibility that demands personal sacrifice, not for self-interest, but for the common good of all people. It is a calling not suited for everyone, but we have chosen it as ours.

Dane County offers a competitive salary and an excellent benefits package.

The following pages contain a general description of the position of COMMUNICATOR, outlining the duties, responsibilities, new hire training program, and working conditions of the position.

Essential Job Tasks

9-1-1 Communicators (sometimes referred to as Dispatchers or Telecommunicators) have a primary responsibility to process calls by answering emergency, non-emergency, and administrative telephone calls, properly questioning callers utilizing nationally recognized protocol and local policies and procedures, to determine location and nature of emergencies while simultaneously entering the information into the computer aided dispatch (CAD) system.

Calls for police, fire & emergency medical services (EMS) responses are dispatched over a public safety radio system, according to established procedures. Communicators monitor system status by continuous tracking of unit locations and availability, maintain support resource files, etc. and must provide answers and solutions for all non-emergency requests for information and services. They also continuously review and train to maintain current levels of operational knowledge, stay abreast of continuous system changes, enhance knowledge and learn new skills.

Training

Newly hired Communicators successfully complete an intensive Communicator Training Academy which includes classroom instruction, assigned readings, simulation and scenarios, as well as a period of closely-supervised on-the-job performance instruction and evaluation.

The training program requires frequent written, verbal, and performance-based testing. Communicators must expect to receive regular reminders of and correction of errors and mistakes from Communications Training Officers and are expected to learn from these errors and mistakes. Upon successful completion of the training program, the Communicator remains on probationary status until their one-year anniversary of employment with the department.

Comprehensive monitoring of on-the-job performance will be done both during and after the initial new-hire training period. Failure to consistently perform up to established performance standards during or after the training period, excessive tardiness, unexplained absence or other policy or rule violations will be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Communicators learn and correctly use an extensive vocabulary of law enforcement, fire, EMS related terminology and must be able to read and understand large volumes of written material including training manuals, policies, procedures, protocols, and other documents. Communicators must learn and be able to consistently apply user agency policies and procedures.

Communicators must develop hand-eye coordination sufficient to operate and view multiple computer monitors, their associated computer keyboards, and complex radio & telephone communications equipment in rapid succession and/or simultaneously. Systems in use include but are not limited to a computer aided dispatch (CAD) system, radio communications control console, and computerized telephone system with integrated mapping. These systems require the memorization and accurate use of a large number of short command codes to obtain and input data accurately and rapidly on a consistent basis.

During the first twelve (12) months of employment Communicators will successfully complete and obtain certification in; Emergency Telecommunicator (ETC), Emergency Police Dispatch (EPD), Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD); Emergency Fire Dispatch (EFD) and CPR. In addition, a newly-hired Communicator may also become certified to staff at least one dispatch (radio) position.

Performing on the Job

Communicators must arrive for duty to allow enough time to receive a proper briefing by off-going personnel. Communicators are expected to retain and use this information, as needed, during the coming shift.

Communicators rotate positions on a daily basis, each with different responsibilities and duties.

Communicators continuously weigh and evaluate large volumes of information.

Communicators must consider numerous factors in determining the appropriate responses to requests such as: nature of the incident, proper response agency, availability of resources, potential safety of the caller and response personnel, geographic location of incident and the emotional and physical condition of caller.

Communicators must accurately and rapidly interpret disjointed information and make quick decisions regarding the urgency of a response, applicability for referral to other agencies, etc. One or more person's safety and/or life may be dependent upon these decisions. Communicators are expected to make appropriate decisions based on established policies, procedures and protocols as well as training, experience, and judgment.

Communicators' decisions are subject to constant review. Mistakes or errors in judgment and decision-making will result in constructive feedback and/or correction. Communicators must be able to quickly and accurately recognize letters, numbers, addresses, names received by radio, by telephone, or on a computer monitor. Data is often presented simultaneously or in rapid succession. Data must be accurately compared with information from previous calls (addresses / locations, problem / nature, direction of travel, etc.) to determine if it is new and/or updated, and if so, should be reported as such.

Communicators must quickly and accurately obtain information from callers to determine the appropriate incident type and if a response is required. Communicators must control conversations and obtain needed information in an accurate, timely, and assertive manner. This may be complicated by callers who may be distraught, confused, aggressive, profane, impaired by mental defect, or sometimes nearly incomprehensible.

Communicators must maintain high standards and attitudes when speaking with callers regardless of the callers demeanor. Communicators must respect and protect any and all confidential information that is received. Any breach of confidence by the release or communication of confidential job information by the Communicator will not be tolerated.

Communicators must have sufficient verbal and written communications skills to accurately and efficiently relay relevant call information via radio or computer system. Written communications must be concise and to the point while providing accurate information that the Communicator determines may be important to the safety of a caller and/or responding personnel. Any call may require the Communicator to perform several tasks simultaneously.

Communicators often work at a very rapid pace over which they have little control due to workload and the nature of incidents. Communicators are often unable to follow-up on or learn the final resolution of calls received earlier in their shift.

Working Conditions

Communicators work within an organization structured on a formal chain of command. Initially, Communicators have little input into scheduling decisions, and may be assigned to work any shift,

and may have their work schedules changed on short notice, regardless of personal considerations or family needs. Communicators must report for duty as needed in emergencies such as severe weather or disasters, regardless of personal considerations or family needs.

Communicators work in a secure facility and usually will not be allowed to leave their workstation for other than brief breaks as the workload allows. A Communicator is normally scheduled two 15 minute breaks in an eight hour period.

Communicators work in an often noisy and distracting environment and must be able to concentrate on their jobs for extended time periods while other personnel are taking calls, people are walking around them, and conversations are taking place in close proximity to them.

Scheduling

Communicators work a variety of schedules with different start times, typically working 4 days on & 2 days off. Because the department must be staffed at all times, mandatory overtime may be assigned at any time with little or no advance notice.

The department must maintain adequate staffing levels 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Due to the 4 on/2 off schedule, Communicators typically work a high percentage of weekends and/or holidays.

Communicators may be assigned to any shift and their assigned shift and/or days off may be changed to meet the operational needs of the department.

Communicators must be prepared to remain in the communications center for an entire work shift and must schedule meals and breaks as their workload allows. The communications center is housed in a non-smoking facility and due to varying and unpredictable workload conditions, uninterrupted break times are not guaranteed. There is no lunch break scheduled.

Communicators must not be late to work, since each position must be covered at all times. An employee who is late may cause another Communicator to be assigned to work overtime to cover the position. Tardiness is subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

Transportation

Communicators are required to report to work in all weather situations. Communicators must have a reliable means of transportation available which will allow them to get to work for any assigned shift including shifts scheduled on weekends and holidays, as well as periodic short-notice overtime assignments and during periods of inclement weather.

Essential knowledge, skills and abilities

Communicators must have the ability to handle objectionable contacts with tact & diplomacy, the ability to retain emotional control, honesty & productivity while under pressure from irate or abusive callers, shortage of time, personal problems, and requirements of supervisors or other sources.

Communicators must have the ability and willingness to adapt to new and/or unique situations; the ability to learn and apply new information; the ability to remember and recall numerous details (excellent memory retention and recall).

Communicators must have the ability to act in a decisive manner, using good judgment (“common sense”) and the ability to maintain objectivity in the decision-making process.

Communicators must have the ability to appropriately handle stressful situations; the ability to maintain appropriate & constructive behavior & attitude in response to difficult or adverse situations.

Communicators must have the ability & willingness to accept criticism and/or accept responsibility for their actions.

Communicators must have the ability to contribute to a pleasant and productive working environment by maintaining a positive attitude when carrying out duties and complying with department policies and procedures; the ability to work cooperatively with supervisors and establish cohesive, effective working relationships with peers (i.e. positive team-worker skills & abilities).

Communicators must have the ability to act in a mature dependable fashion; the ability and willingness to maintain dependable work habits such as reporting for duty on time, without the need for prompting and/or supervisory intervention.

Communicators must show initiative in completing work assignments; the willingness & ability to support & carry out directives without prompting.

Communicators must have ability to perform multiple tasks simultaneously; the ability to do several things at one time and still remain focused under stress.

Communicators must have the ability to respect and maintain confidential information.

Supervision

Communicators work under the general supervision of a Communications Supervisor and must conduct duties and act in accordance with established policies, procedures, protocols, rules and regulations. In view of the infinite number of special and unusual circumstances that can be present in this work, the Communicator is also expected to regularly exercise reasonable judgment, work experience and discretion on a consistent basis.

Minimum Qualifications for Appointment

Candidates successfully passing pre-employment testing and screening processes, and may be invited to appear before an oral interview board.

Applicants selected to advance in the selection process also undergo an extensive personal and criminal background check.

Top ranking candidate(s) (numbers depend upon the needs of the department) will receive a conditional job offer from the department after the Support Services Manager has compiled information from test results, background checks and interviews.

Progressive advancement through each phase of the hiring process is predicated upon successful completion of each previous phase. Candidates who fail to show up or are late for any scheduled testing or interview sessions during the selection process may be eliminated from further consideration for appointment.

Candidates must have the ability to hear and understand simultaneous sound sources coming through a communications headset and/or radio speaker(s) and/or standard telephone receiver.

Candidates must have the ability to hear and understand other outside sound sources while wearing a communications headset (i.e. the ability to hear sound sources not coming through the headset; the ability to hear out of both ears).

Candidates must have the ability to speak English clearly, fluently and articulately using vocabulary appropriate to the audience and have the ability to write English clearly, using proper English grammar, spelling, punctuation, and structure.

Candidates must have the ability to record names & numbers accurately (i.e. not transpose numbers and/or letters).

Candidates must be able to read and understand written communications; the ability to read & discern visual images on a variety of media.

Candidates must have the ability to remain seated at the same work station for at least 8 hours at a time, taking only short breaks as the workload may allow for.

Candidates must have High School Diploma or Equivalent, and a demonstrated ability to multitask.

If you think you might be interested in a career with Public Safety Communications, we encourage you to spend some time in the communications center. This is a career unlike many others and we want you to make the right decision.

Contact us for more information or to schedule a visit.

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