


JEFFCOM 911 COMMUNICATIONS JOB DESCRIPTION



TITLE: Communications Officer
REPORTS TO: Communications Supervisor
ADOPTED: November 13, 2024, replacing 2015 version
APPROVED BY: Matt Stewart, Director 

POSITION SUMMARY:

In a multi-jurisdictional emergency communications center and under general supervision, the Communications Officer (CO) answers 911 and other emergency telephone systems, performs electronic and radio dispatch of routine and emergency police, fire and medical calls for assistance and performs a wide variety of related operations.

The CO is typically the first point of contact between a person reaching out for help and the public safety community. The CO must be capable of working independently in a high-stress environment while receiving and evaluating incoming emergency and administrative requests for emergency services; triaging those requests for service; providing guidance, assistance and medical direction to the public in life-safety situations; and coordinating public-safety responses to high-risk, high-stress situations with the objectives of keeping all involved safe.

Key to the success of a CO are dedication to following procedures; adaptability and common sense sufficient to apply procedure and training to always varying and emergent circumstances; a high degree of situational awareness to synthesize information received simultaneously via multiple computer applications, radio channels and telephone calls; a level of technical acumen sufficient to adapt during training and throughout the CO's career to changing, specialized computer applications and the problems encountered using them; and an exceptional memory for local, state and national procedures, practices, related circumstances and training to be applied to specific circumstances.

ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS:

The following duties are not inclusive of all duties. The communications officer performs other related duties as required or directed. The dispatch center is heavily dependent on advanced technology, meaning change in systems and processes is inherent in the CO role; this results in career-long changes to the way work is performed even while the underlying responsibilities of the CO remain the same.

Operate emergency, administrative, and backup telephone and related communications systems effectively. Use training and policies to screen requests for emergency services, using appropriate technology to communicate with callers, answering them professionally, recognizing if a call is received from telephone, text, video or an automated data feed.

Obtain information for and assign priorities to calls for service and dispatch appropriate response. Ascertain incident information by obtaining and verifying caller information and location, determining the nature of the incident and all available data including but not limited to automated data, social media information, text message, images or video, and providing information to dispatched personnel verbally and/or digitally.

Demonstrate clear and effective communications with active listening, call control, judgment, respect, and empathy with callers that range from calm to panicked. Manage challenging callers using appropriate handling of hostile, confused, distressed, autistic, hearing-impaired, child, elderly and foreign-language-speaking callers and those in mental-health crisis. Provide direct counseling to children, persons threatening self harm, domestic-violence victims and suspected offenders and barricaded subjects.

Use TDD and relay services to comply with standards for handling calls from hearing-impaired callers; language interpretation services; and mental health resources for appropriate contacts with callers who have mental health barriers to receiving help.

Provide pre-arrival and post-dispatch instructions within procedure to those that require assistance during high-stress situations, such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), childbirth, hemorrhaging, active shooter and entrapment.

Handle multiple duties at one time and prioritize duties according to the nature of the request and knowledge of law enforcement, fire and EMS protocols to prioritize and sequence calls promptly in limited time with limited or no supervision. Operate multiple systems and conversations simultaneously without mistake, including comprehending phone traffic, multiple channels of radio traffic and in-center coordination conversations simultaneously.

Interpret caller location by using geographic knowledge, tools and location-tracking capabilities. Interpreting automatic number and automatic location data provided by the emergency communications phone system and verifying data using mapping software for accuracy and reliability. Interpret and understand Jefferson County and regional geography to quickly and accurately identify the location of incidents and dispatched personnel to improve response times. Maintain familiarity with major roads, hospitals, schools, churches, commercial and residential buildings and other landmarks in Jefferson County and regionally. Relay geographic information for static and moving incidents to dispatched personnel in a brief yet complete manner.

Use available vehicular, bystander and/or law enforcement information for the purpose of protecting the public at the scene as well as on-scene responders by identifying the need for advanced life support resources or specialized extrication or rescue. Utilize training and reference resources when determining the nature and priority of emergency incidents that have live-streaming videos, graphic images and text.

Maintain telephone communications during life-threatening emergencies, providing safety/lifesaving instructions within procedure, and maintain control of phone conversations.

Respond to telephone requests from, and relay information between, various public agencies using a variety of equipment. Facilitate the transferring of calls and mutual-aid requests to the appropriate resources such as surrounding dispatch centers, poison control centers and medivac providers.

Operate a sophisticated workstation comprised of multiple computer systems, computer-aided dispatch (CAD) software and geographical information systems (GIS), state and federal clearinghouses, call handling including teletypewriter (TTY) and text-to-911 sessions, as well as communications systems such as radio dispatch consoles and recording/playback systems.

Document incident details quickly and accurately to establish incident urgency, categorizing the incident type and dispatching appropriate resources and urgency. Document thoroughly and accurately all incident activities while maintaining awareness of scene activities. Manage chain of custody for records and documentation used in court proceedings and legal discovery.

Maintain competency in procedures necessary to operate the public-safety system during periods of system down time, including use of backup systems, manual dispatching and area-command procedures and maintenance of paper records of logs, run cards and other forms of documentation.

Operate radio dispatch consoles requiring the simultaneous monitoring and concurrent use of multiple radio channels providing communication to dispatched law-enforcement and fire/EMS agencies as well as mutual-aid and public-service partners.

Maintain radio communications during life-threatening emergencies. Maintain effective control of the radio net during periods of heavy traffic, extreme urgency on the part of dispatched personnel and conflicting information and poor situational awareness on a developing call for service. Demonstrate clear and effective communications and active listening with dispatched agency personnel using appropriate terminology, codes and signals via radio,

electronic communication and telephone. Relay initial information for dispatch accurately and review and relay additional call-for-service details as situational awareness increases.

Conduct health-and-safety status checks of responders and using other available technology to ensure dispatched personnel safety.

Notify key personnel of critical incidents, using judgment to determine the need to contact other law enforcement and public safety agencies for additional information and resources as needed, or relaying information regarding incidents and situational awareness.

Maintain a calm demeanor under chaotic and stressful circumstances, multiple conversations and frequently noisy environment in a confined secure area with no outside contact. Remain in work area for assigned shift including lunch and breaks with the majority of the time at the dispatch console.

Work with concentration despite any distractions, interruptions or problems. Deal with sensitive and confidential information in a discreet and professional manner. Adhere to agency policies and procedures and state and federal law, remaining aware of liability to the CO and the agency.

Remain alert, calm, and courteous under extreme stress situations. Work closely with others in a compatible and mutually supportive way in a teamwork concept.

Use debriefing tools, stress management techniques and critical-incident-stress management (CISM) programs to deal with mental and emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse and demanding circumstances. Aid coworkers and dispatched agency personnel in maintaining mental health through professional compassion.

Work shift-work including holidays, weekends, nights and in a potential variety of shift lengths including eight-, ten- and twelve-hour shifts. Typically required to work over forty hours in a work week including scheduled overtime and coverage of open shifts.

Appear for scheduled work with regular, reliable and punctual attendance. Establish and maintain cooperative, effective and productive working relationships using tact, patience and courtesy. Effectively plan and organize work and complete tasks within prescribed timeframes.

Complete training, certification, and competencies as needed by actively seeking training, completing the training and certifications required by policy, state law and industry standards for assigned position and completing continuing education and career development as necessary.

ADDITIONAL JOB FUNCTIONS BY ASSIGNMENT:

Upon designation to one or more ancillary roles by management or Communications Supervisors, the CO may perform additional duties. These duties may include additional compensation as determined by the applicable collective-bargaining agreement, while others may result in compensated overtime hours or can be completed on shift as part of the core functions of a CO (particularly an experienced one). These duties may be short-duration or ongoing and include but are not limited to the following:

- * Full shifts as a Records Specialist in the extended absence of a Records Specialist
- * Performance of Records Specialist-grade duties during a CO shift
- * Communications Training Officer
- * Training Coordinator
- * Terminal Agency Coordinator
- * Production of public records
- * Public education and outreach
- * Public education and public information via social media
- * Providing peer-support or CISM support to colleagues and peers in other agencies
- * Maintaining and updating reference information and procedures

- * Attendance at local, regional and national industry events
- * Participation on hiring and promotion panels for Jeffcom and surrounding agencies
- * Performing background checks for potential employees
- * Representing Jeffcom to its User Group
- * Hosting sit-alongs for potential employees, personnel from other agencies and other approved persons
- * Participating in ride-alongs with other agencies
- * Participation in training of dispatched agencies at their training sites
- * Enhancing the Jeffcom work environment (excluding facility maintenance)
- * Enhancing the Jeffcom social environment by support of coworkers – and peers in dispatched agencies – in good and bad times

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Essential:**
- * 18 years of age at time of application
 - * Ability to pass the Jeffcom background check process including its automatic and discretionary disqualifiers
 - * Ability to pass fingerprint and criminal-history checks
 - * Ability to multitask and process information quickly
 - * Ability to make appropriate decisions under stressful conditions
 - * Strong oral and written communications skills
 - * Computer literacy sufficient to be trained in specialized systems
 - * Ability to speak English clearly and distinctly at all times
 - * Ability to work rotating shifts including weekends and holidays
 - * Ability to work more than 40 hours in the workweek including mandatory overtime and callback
 - * Ability to complete Criminal Justice Information Services training
 - * Ability to complete state-mandated telecommunicator training and to maintain state telecommunicator certification through ongoing training requirements
 - * No hearing loss in excess of 25 decibels in the speech frequency range of 500, 1,000 and 2,000 Hz in either ear as measured by Jeffcom-contracted testing
 - * No medical conditions or medications that would interfere with performance of the essential job skills

Education: * High school graduate or GED

- Experience:**
- * Type 33 words per minute accurately as measured by Jeffcom-contracted testing
 - * Possess a valid Washington State driver's license at the time of appointment, or the ability to obtain one within thirty (30) days
 - * Desired: Experience as a 911 operator or emergency dispatcher in a public-service agency

REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITIES:

- * Must be able to use logic, critical thinking and reasoning to reach conclusions and solve problems.
- * Must adhere to policy and procedure requirements that are stringent, rigorous and unwavering, including confidentiality of information and trustworthiness while dealing with sensitive information.
- * Must communicate clearly, concisely, and effectively; relay details accurately; listen actively; and think and act quickly.
- * Must compile and analyze operational data and prepare and maintain accurate records.
- * Must effectively interact with people of different social, economic and ethnic backgrounds.
- * Must establish and maintain cooperative and professional working relationships with co-workers, supervisors, representatives from other departments and other emergency services agencies.
- * Must consistently follow instructions, spell correctly and write clearly.
- * Must be able to handle multiple tasks simultaneously, under pressure and in emergency and stressful situations.
- * Must maintain the ability to learn quickly and retain public-safety and technology knowledge.
- * Must demonstrate regular, reliable and punctual attendance.

- * Must be able to obtain information from hostile, confusing and emotional callers.
- * Must provide effective customer service and deal tactfully and courteously with a demanding public.
- * Must be able to handle complaints and difficult situations, remaining calm under pressure.
- * Must remember names, numbers, and locations accurately.
- * Must read and interpret geospatial data and maps quickly and accurately.
- * Must be resilient and resourceful while coordinating high-risk, high-stress operations, with the objective of keeping all participants safe.
- * By the end of the probationary period, must obtain and retain a thorough knowledge of the policies, procedures, processes, laws, ordinances and regulations affecting public safety telecommunicating and the ability to apply them appropriately.

WORK ENVIRONMENT:

The CO's work is performed in a high-security, high-activity-level emergency communications center, which is a confined and secured area with no outside contacts. The CO must remain in this work area for each assigned shift, including paid lunches and breaks, and must be able to work closely with others in a compatible and mutually supportive way as a teammate.

The work level can fluctuate from minimal to fast-paced and high volume. The CO deals with crisis situations that require them to quickly make major decisions involving people, resources and property with limited direct supervision and frequently limited precise direction.

The CO must work scheduled shifts at any time of the day and on weekends and holidays. Must be able to cope in a safe manner with stressful situations, emotional callers, irate responders and unprofessional contacts. Under unusual circumstances, usually after specific additional training in tactical dispatching, the CO may be required to perform duties at or near the scene of any emergency.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS:

This work is sedentary and requires little to no exertion of force. Work regularly requires speaking and hearing and frequently sitting, using hands to finger, handle, or feel, reaching with hands and arms and repetitive motions. Work requires close vision, distance vision, ability to adjust focus, depth perception and peripheral vision. Vocal communication is required for expressing or exchanging ideas by means of the spoken word and conveying detailed or important instructions to others accurately, loudly or quickly. Hearing is required to perceive information at normal spoken word levels and to receive detailed information through oral communications, and/or make fine distinctions in sound. Work requires preparing and analyzing written or computer data. Work requires exposure to loud noises, extreme emotions and stressful environments. Work is generally indoors and in a moderately noisy location surrounded by others talking on the phone or radio.

The majority of time is spent at the dispatch consoles and requires sitting or standing for the entire shift, exposure to multiple computers and display monitors and high noise levels and sounds including tones, radio feedback, loud telephone callers and surrounding conversations. The employee must wear a headset connected to the phone and radio systems for the entirety of each shift.