



SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATIONS SECTION OVERVIEW

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CITY OF SEATTLE

Population: 640,500
Geographical Size: 143 Square Miles
Type of Government: Mayor-Council
Size of Police Department: Sworn: 1,300+ Civilian: 500+

PERSONNEL

One-hundred eighteen personnel are assigned to the Seattle Police Department's Communications Section. 6 individuals are sworn and 112 are civilian. Of the total personnel, 98 function as call receivers and/or radio dispatchers.

DISPATCH UNIT

Communications Section dispatchers are assigned to one of five watches: First Watch (2300 to 0700 hours), Second Watch (0700 to 1500 hours), Third Watch (1500 to 2300 hours), Fourth Watch (1900 to 0300 hours), or Fifth Watch (1100 to 1900 hours). The purpose of the overlapping Fourth and Fifth Watch is to provide additional personnel for peak workload hours.

In order to maximize efficiency and public service, the Section operates under the Primary/Secondary concept of call receiving. A certain number of operators are assigned to the 911, or emergency, incoming lines. It is their responsibility to assess each call and make a rapid, accurate decision concerning its disposition. These operators work under an objective of averaging 90 seconds or less per call. If a call is not an emergency and cannot be handled in a reasonable length of time, and an emergency transfer is not required (for example, transfer to the Fire Department), the call can be transferred to a Primary/Secondary operator. Primary/Secondary operators handle requests for information, many non-emergency or routine complaints, and certain types of investigative reports (simple thefts, property damage incidents, and so on).

Radio dispatching is comprised of four zones dispatchers and a data frequency dispatcher. All dispatchers are supervised at all times by a Chief Dispatcher. Each radio dispatcher is responsible for assigning calls, logging officers to on-view incidents and providing support to the field units on that zone. In addition to the initial dispatching of calls, dispatchers are responsible for receiving and logging arrivals at calls, logging clearances from calls, dispatching to and clearing from administrative service details (periods of unavailability which include equipment maintenance, arrest transportation, etc). Many of these tasks can also be completed by field units using the Mobile Data Computer (MDC) in the patrol cars. This allows the radio dispatcher to focus on dispatching calls and reduces the amount of air time used for routine radio traffic.

Seattle Police Department - Communications Section (2/2/2015)

WORKLOAD

In 2014, the Communications Section received a total of 853,885 telephone calls, an average of 2,339 per day. Radio dispatchers processed the following volumes of work:

Dispatched or handled calls received from citizens:	240,029
Recorded and cleared on-view incidents:	86,480
Recorded and cleared traffic stops:	16,369

EQUIPMENT

Seattle Police Communications is designated as a primary PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point) and answers all 9-1-1 requests for service within the Seattle city limits. Requests for fire or medical response are then transferred directly to the Seattle Fire Department dispatch center. Seattle has used 9-1-1 as an emergency number since April 1971. The current system processes both TTY and VoIP calls but has not yet been upgraded to handle video, images or text messaging.

Call-takers and dispatchers use the CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) terminals to rapidly record and transmit call event information to the officer's MDT in the field. The resulting call event history data is pushed to a Records Management System, providing extensive capability for production of management reports and workload monitoring.

All radio talk groups, telephone lines, and many of the intercom lines are recorded on the Section's Voice Recorder. This allows for instantaneous replays and provides documentation for later research.

There are three telephone numbers available to the public that can be used to request police, fire, or medical services:

9-1-1 - for any in-progress, life-threatening emergency (police, fire, or medical) for callers inside the city limits. In general, cellular phone calls are routed to the PSAP where the cell phone tower receiving the signal is located.

583-2111 – the seven-digit emergency number used by callers outside the city limits.

625-5011 - a non-emergency number that can be used to report past incidents or general requests for service (such as abandoned vehicles or vacation watches).

If unsure of which telephone number to use, citizens are encouraged to call 9-1-1.

The Seattle Police Department website (<http://www.seattle.gov/police/>) also provides valuable information including the SPD Blotter, 911 incident map and ability to report a crime online as well as the web page for information on the 911 Center. You can also follow SPD via Tweets by Beat located on the website or directly through Twitter at <https://twitter.com/SeattlePD> and on **Facebook**. If interested in pursuing a career in Dispatch, please check out our recruiting video at <http://www.seattle.gov/police/jobs/civilian/911.htm>