



City of Newton
Emergency Telecommunications Dispatcher
Pre-Employment Preparation Guide



NEWTON POLICE HEADQUARTERS

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in working as an Emergency Telecommunications Dispatcher (Dispatcher). Dispatchers deliver an essential service to the community; they provide public safety communications for fire, police, EMS, and utility services as well as answer and process emergency 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls for service. Those who live, work, and enjoy spending time in the City of Newton can rest assured that their calls for assistance are handled rapidly, professionally, and compassionately by a highly trained and qualified Dispatcher.

Due to the complex and highly demanding nature of emergency communications, the City of Newton Communications Bureau requires candidates to successfully complete a series of examinations to assess candidates' abilities and aptitudes for the Dispatcher position. This guide has been designed to help prepare candidates to successfully complete the hiring, screening, and testing processes to become a Dispatcher for the City of Newton.

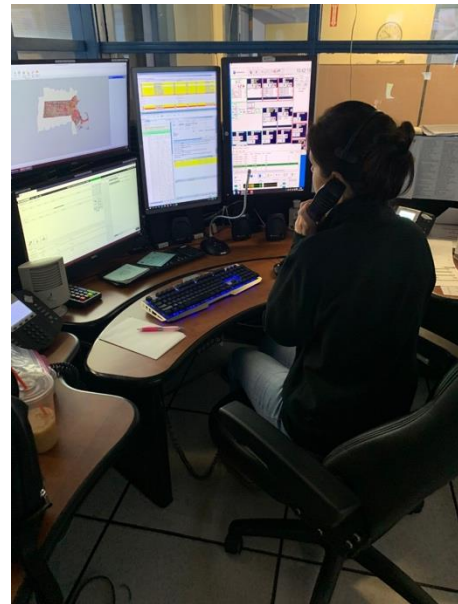
The Role of the Dispatch Center

The Dispatch Center receives nearly 174,500 incoming telephone calls annually, of which approximately 54,000 are dispatched for service. We receive an average of approximately 400 routine calls and 78 emergency 9-1-1 calls per day. A routine call is a non-emergency call from a person in need of non-urgent assistance. For example, citizens may call to inquire if a vehicle was towed or to report a larceny that occurred a week ago.

The Dispatch Center is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days per year including nights, weekends, and holidays, and we maintain minimum staffing levels dependent upon operational needs. Our staffing complement includes Dispatchers, Shift Supervisors, a Senior Administration Supervisor and a Bureau Commander. The Bureau Commander oversees the entire Communications Bureau and reports directly to the Chief of Police. Due to the nature of public safety communications work, there are instances where forced overtime is mandatory to meet minimum staffing levels.

Dispatchers perform many important duties and maintain a wide range of responsibilities. The following are some of the numerous duties of a Dispatcher:

- Coordinating the operations and activities in the Dispatch Center.
- Testing, monitoring, and operating police and fire signaling systems.
- Receiving and processing police, fire, and EMS-related emergency calls guided by various national, state, and local protocols.



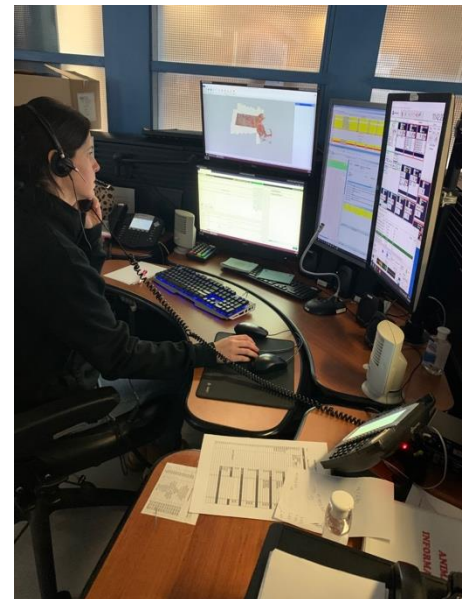
- Dispatching police, fire, EMS, and other emergency units and personnel as needed.
- Monitoring and operating radios, computers, telephones, and other specialized equipment in support of public safety communications and dispatch functions.
- Performing other dispatch, signal monitoring, and communications support duties as assigned.

Desirable Candidates

Due to the demands of the role of the Dispatcher, candidates should demonstrate they possess several required areas of knowledge, skills, abilities, and qualifications.

Examples of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and qualifications are listed below.

- Possession of a high school diploma or GED.
- Type at least 30 words or more per minute.
- Must have interest in, and be suitable for, work in a combined police, fire, and EMS Dispatch Center.
- Demonstrate maturity of judgment and character.
- Ability to learn and understand the basic field operations of police, fire, and EMS departments.
- Actively listen to callers on the telephone and first responders on the radio.
- Ability to gather information quickly and accurately.
- Can relay information to police officers, firefighters, EMS providers, etc. in a clear tone of voice.
- Ability to answer and satisfy the requests of public safety field units operating in the field.
- Have the capacity to provide instructions to callers, including emergency medical instructions.
- Read and understand a map and give directions.
- Ability to learn to use various types of technical equipment, including computer aided dispatch (CAD), signaling, alarm monitoring, telephone consoles, and general personal computers.
- Have natural customer service capabilities but can speak with a professionally authoritative tone of voice.
- Remain calm during emergency situations, peaking workloads, and handle multiple simultaneous responsibilities.
- Work well on a team with others and independently as appropriate
- Learn to prioritize incidents and manage multiple demands for attention.
- Work a schedule that includes rotating shift including days, nights, weekends, holidays, and forced overtime.
- Take proper care of themselves so that they may care for others and contribute to a positive work environment.



Preference is given to those candidates who can demonstrate the following knowledge, skills, abilities, and qualifications:

- Detailed knowledge of the City of Newton, including Newton streets and locations.
- Demonstrated experience in one of several areas of public safety, including one year of experience as a police, fire or EMS Dispatcher, a police officer, firefighter, EMT, or paramedic.
- Applicants with one year of experience as a police/fire alarm or telecommunications system installer, call center operator, or Dispatcher in non-public safety agency or private agency.
- Certification from the A.P.C.O. 40 Hour Basic Telecommunicator training, 9-1-1 equipment training, C.P.R. training, emergency medical dispatch certification, and CJIS certification from the Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board.
- The City of Newton's workforce, like the community it serves, is diverse. Candidates must demonstrate the capability to work effectively with individuals and groups with a variety of identities, cultures, backgrounds, and ideologies.

How to Apply

To apply for the Dispatcher position, interested persons should visit the City of Newton Human Resources website at: www.newtonma.gov/jobs.

This site provides the current methods being used by the City of Newton Human Resources Department through which candidates may apply. For a listing of all job postings (vacancies), scroll down a few paragraphs and look for “**All Job Opportunities**”. Clicking on this link will bring you to the page where the specific job listings are located. Search the displayed opportunities for “**Emergency Telecommunicators/Dispatchers.**” Clicking on “Emergency Telecommunicators/Dispatchers” will bring you to the job posting. At the bottom of this job posting is a button you may click to “**APPLY**”! The job posting may answer many of the questions you could have. Should you need further clarification you may email the Human Resources Department at hr@newtonma.gov. Should you not have access to email, the Human Resources mailing address is:

City of Newton
Department of Human Resources
City Hall, Room 210
1000 Commonwealth Ave
Newton, MA 02459

Phone:(617) 796 – 1260

Fax: (617) 796 – 1272

hr@newtonma.gov

Testing Process

The Newton Communications Bureau utilizes a series of assessments to evaluate candidates' suitability for the Dispatcher position. After an evaluation of candidates' cover letters and resumés, qualified candidates are invited to testing sessions. Testing sessions are in-person. The testing takes place at the Newton Police Department Headquarters located at 1321 Washington Street, West Newton. The testing process takes approximately two (2) hours. Testing components are described below.

CritiCall Dispatcher Skills Test

The CritiCall Dispatcher Skills Test offers a miniature replica of emergency communications work. No previous experience as a dispatcher or specialized training is required to succeed during testing. By simulating dispatcher tasks, CritiCall enables candidates to preview the job while they test for the position. This section of the testing measures the skills and abilities a person must have prior to any on-the-job training. Candidates should ensure that they follow instructions carefully. Practice examples are given for each section of the exam. Practice examples are not timed but each section has a time limit and the exam has a maximum time limit of two (2) hours.

Candidates are *highly* encouraged to visit CritiCall's applicant preparation website, located at <https://criticall911.com/dispatcher-testing/applicants/>, where applicants will find practice tests and incredibly helpful test preparation information. The City of Newton CritiCall Test consists of various components:

Keyboarding

This is a typing test. Candidates are offered a practice session that is not evaluated. Once candidates complete the practice session, they will begin the typing test. Follow the instructions as they contain pertinent information as to how to score well. Candidates must type at least 30 word per minute. We recommend practicing prior to taking the test and utilizing a classic keyboard rather than a flat laptop style keyboard.

Decision Making

This assessment requires decision making while simultaneously performing other tasks, such as determining which type of emergency response unit to send to a call based upon instructions given during the exam.

Data Entry

Test takers enter information, received either vocally or in writing, utilizing a keyboard. Like the decision-making module, candidates will perform other tasks simultaneously.

Call Summarization

This module measures a candidate's ability to hear and understand information. It also tests the ability to take notes on a computer while listening to vocal information. The assessment measures the candidate's ability to filter out non-essential distractions and summarize key facts.

Cross Referencing

The cross-referencing portion of the test assesses alphabetic, character recognition, and numeric searching skills. The test taker responds to both written and oral requests for information.

Character Comparison

Test takers are presented with a series of characters and text, which they must correctly identify against a group of similarly phrased alternate characters.

Memory Recall

This section tests candidates' memory and selective attention for written and audible information. It requires character recognition and listening accuracy.

Prioritization

Candidates must determine the priority status of a situation based upon parameters described during the testing instructions.

Sentence Clarity

Writes statements in a way that clearly conveys a specific meaning to others.

Reading Comprehension

The reading comprehension section measures an applicant's ability to read, comprehend, and retain details contained in a short paragraph.

Spelling

Candidates must spell commonly misspelled or misused words correctly.

Background Check

Dispatchers hold a position of public trust and have access to highly confidential and protected information. Therefore, upon completion of the testing, those who are selected to proceed further in the process will be asked to complete a thorough background check. The background check packet will be mailed or emailed to the candidate. The background check, once the candidate has completed and returned it, will be conducted by the Newton Police Department. The background check includes, but is not limited to, a review of the candidate's completed application, verification of work history, contact with personal references, and a criminal records check. Candidates may also be required to furnish documents, such as a copy of a driver's license, social security card, educational transcripts, birth records, financial records, and other similar documentation. Candidates will also be required to submit other items such as email addresses, social media accounts, licensure and certification information, and military record information. Candidates must sign a release of information to facilitate the background check process.

All candidates are asked to participate actively with investigators and provide timely follow up and open communication. Candidates are encouraged to advise their references of the

Dispatcher application process so that they expect a telephone call from an investigator and quickly respond to any messages. The background process can take several weeks due to a variety of factors, but rapid responses from candidates and their references can greatly speed up the process.

If a candidate submits an application and successfully passes all the assessments, the candidate will be notified that they have been selected for a formal interview. Those candidates whose scores do not meet requirements will be notified. Candidates who do not pass the process are welcome to apply for future openings, but they will not be reconsidered for the current process.

Interview Panel

If candidates successfully pass the above assessments, they are invited to participate in an interview with a panel that may consist of: the Bureau Commander, a Dispatch Supervisor, a Fire Department representative, and a member of the Human Resources Department. The interviews provide an opportunity for candidates to share about their skills and qualifications and to ask any questions they have about the position. Candidates should plan for the interview to last approximately forty- five (45) minutes.

Selection

Upon successful completion of all elements of the above process, candidates will be notified that they have been selected for the position of Emergency Telecommunications Dispatcher. Those selected for hire will receive a conditional offer of employment from the Department of Human Resources. From there, candidates must undergo the City's pre-employment process, which includes a criminal background check (CORI check), a sex offender background check (SORI check), a third-party background check through Creative Services, Inc. (CSI) and a pre-employment drug screen and physical. The City's pre-employment process for external candidates can take at least one (1) month to successfully complete. Candidates will not be cleared to begin employment with the City of Newton until such time they are cleared by the Department of Human Resources. Dependent upon the number of applicants and the number of open positions, there may be candidates who successfully pass the departmental screening process but are not selected for a position. Those candidates not selected will be notified that they have been placed on a list for future openings.

Post Hire

If hired, candidates, now referred to as trainees, begin onboarding with orientation and training. The training program may take up to several months to complete. Below is a list of some objectives of the training program.

- Successfully complete required training certifications.

- Retain and apply skills learned during the training process under a Communications Training Officer (CTO) and training program Supervisor.
- Perform the essential functions of the position during the probationary period of one (1) year and thereafter.



Conclusion

It is our sincere hope that this document assists candidates through the pre-employment process. Of course, candidates should always follow specific instructions provided to them by the Communications Bureau leadership, as each hiring process may be a bit different dependent upon various factors including the number of vacancies.

The City of Newton Emergency Communications Department thanks all candidates for their interest and wishes them the best in the journey to become an Emergency Telecommunications Dispatcher.

The City of Newton has a long standing record of nondiscrimination in employment and providing equal opportunity without regard to race, color, sex, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, disability, or age. The City is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer. We place high value on diversity and on ensuring that City employees are representative of the multi-cultural community we serve.