



## **First Contact 9-1-1, LLC**

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### **How Do I Become a 9-1-1 Dispatcher?**

We get this question a lot, so we thought we'd take a few moments and explain a little bit behind the hiring process.

While our First Contact 9-1-1 generally trains 9-1-1 Dispatchers currently holding positions within a Public Safety agency, we'd like to invite you to join us in a very rewarding career!

9-1-1 Dispatcher candidates come from all walks of life. Some are interested at the fast pace, while others like the idea of a secure position with good pay and benefits. For whatever the reason, working in a Dispatch Center (called a **PSAP** - or *Public Safety Answering Point*) can be a fun and exciting career move for you.

A typical Job Description, from Denver 9-1-1, can be found [here](#).

E-how also has a general Job Description as well, [here](#).

Some PSAP's dispatch only for police or fire agencies, while others (called **'consolidated' Centers**) may dispatch all sorts of Public Safety agencies. PSAP's may also dispatch for public works, animal control, and other agencies that require radio communications. Dispatchers also answer general, non-emergency questions from the public, and take messages for Department personnel. Some PSAP's have separate positions for personnel who answer the 9-1-1 emergency and non-emergency telephone lines, (called **'calltakers'**) and others who receive and transmit calls over the radio for service (**'dispatchers'**) In many PSAP's, personnel perform both functions (often at the same time). It is important that you be able to multi-task, as the position may require you to perform several actions at the same time.

You should be prepared to work overtime, sometimes voluntary and sometimes mandatory. PSAP's vary on the length of a typical shift; it may be eight, ten or twelve hours in length. You should also be prepared to work

nights, weekends, holidays, or split shifts, according to the needs of the Department. This is a position requiring both decision making on your part, as well as the ability to follow Department policy and procedure. You may be working for more than one Supervisor, and it's imperative that you be a Team Player. Full-time, as well as part-time positions may be available.

Here are a few pointers in applying for a Dispatcher position. Agencies vary in their hiring procedures from city to city and state-to-state, but generally this is how it works:

First, locate the 9-1-1 Centers that operate near where you live. It may be in a City (Police or Fire Department), a County (such as Sheriff's Department), a State Agency, (such as the State Patrol, Forestry Department, State Parks or State Police) or it may be a standalone Center that dispatches for several different agencies.

**Please don't call 9-1-1 to ask for employment information!**

Next, call the agency and ask for the **Dispatch Supervisor** or **Training Manager**. Let them know that you have an interest in becoming a 9-1-1 Dispatcher; they may have several questions to ask you on your interests and employment history. Ask them if you may do a '**sit-a-long**'...that is, having an opportunity of coming to the Center and observing Dispatchers at work. Visit several nearby 9-1-1 Centers; each has a particular style and way of doing business. On your sit-a-long, ask questions from your Dispatchers; you'll soon get a feel if you may be a good fit for their Department.

We encourage you to apply for those Centers that interest you. It's also generally wise to apply for several agencies; the interview process will give you valuable information that will assist on what each agency desires in their Dispatch personnel. Fill out the employment application completely, and be sure not omit anything. Most agencies ask for a resume, and may ask for people that you know who can recommend you for the position. Most Centers ask for a Typing Test (usually 25 words per minute as a minimum); they may send you to a commercial vendor for the typing test, or they may do the test themselves, usually through their Human Resources department.

Once your application is accepted, you'll be asked to attend an **Oral Interview** session. There are many sites on the Internet that can describe how to do a great interview; one that we like can be found [here](#). Make sure to arrive to the interview on time, and sell yourself! The interview wants to get to know you, and you'll need to explain what they should hire you rather than another candidate.

After passing the Oral Interview, you may be asked to take additional tests, which may include:

- Written Examination
- Practical Examination
- Polygraph Examination
- Physical Examination
- Drug Screening
- Background Investigation
- a second Oral Interview, sometimes referred to as a '**Chief's Interview**'

After this process, you may be placed on an **Eligibility List**, in a numerical order of selection qualification. The List is usually active for one year. When your number on the List comes up, you'll be contacted again by the Agency to move further in the hiring process.

This process does not move very quickly...so please be patient. The process to this point may take from three to six months to complete; it's very similar to that given to candidates for Police Officer or Firefighter.

Once hired, you will be placed on a probationary period, which varies from agency to agency. Training also varies with each department; to show you how Denver 9-1-1 conducts its Training Program, click [here](#).

Good luck on your new career choice! We think you'll find that you'll have a career of a lifetime, and we wish you all the best!