

2015

Costs for Dispatching Services



Presented By: Keith Flynn, Commissioner
Vermont Department of Public Safety
5/15/2015

PSAP/Dispatch Report Requirements in Compliance with H. 490

1 INTRODUCTION

The 2015 Vermont General Assembly enacted the following language requiring the Department of Public Safety to determine the costs of operating a dispatch center and present it to the Joint Fiscal Committee on May 15, 2015. The language is below.

Sec. E.208.3 DISPATCH REQUIREMENTS

- (a) By May 15, 2015, the Commissioner of Public Safety shall report to the Joint Fiscal Committee on the costs required to support the current level of dispatching services at the four State-operated 911 call and dispatch centers in Derby, Rockingham, Rutland, and Williston.
- (b) For the purposes of this section, costs required to support the current level of dispatching services shall not include any costs associated with taking 911 calls, but shall include the following types of dispatch calls: police departments, excluding the Vermont State Police; constabularies; emergency medical services; and fire and rescue departments.
- (c) This cost information shall be calculated by determining the minimum number of full time dispatching personnel that would be needed if the combined emergency service providers mentioned above were to provide their own dispatching within the areas of the four dispatch centers in Derby, Rockingham, Rutland and Williston.
- (d) The costs shall be made available to the municipalities that rely on dispatch services from the four State-operated 911 call centers and dispatch centers.

The Department of Public Safety does not have the capacity to determine the specific dispatch call types as mentioned in (b) above.

2 COST MODEL

Staffing

The Department of Public Safety does not have access to data regarding the actual dispatch calls. Therefore, determining the workload that different emergency service providers have on dispatching is not possible. Nonetheless, the Department will make the following assumptions about the dispatching service workload.

- The dispatching services for the Vermont State Police will be transferred to the consolidated centers in Rockingham and Williston.
- Derby, Rutland, Rockingham and Williston will only provide dispatching services for those local and county agencies they provide service as of this writing and at the same service level that is

provided today. No new services or agencies will be added (current level of dispatching services only).

- For this cost model it is assumed that two console (equipment or EQ) positions will be staffed. This may be changed based on the desire of the local and county first responders who receive dispatch services.
- Overtime is not calculated into this cost model as it is assumed with 12 personnel the staffing of console position may be flexed so that the two console position do not need to be filled all the time.
- Any change in console (EQ) positions may lower or increase the cost model depending on whether you add positions or reduce positions.
- The cost model is based on Derby and Rutland but the model is found to be reflective of all the dispatch centers.
- The facility equipment cost is based on the indirect cost model used by the Department of Public Safety.

The Department of Public Safety has researched the staffing models used to identify the number of personnel required to staff a dispatch center. Some formulas use a minimum of 4.2 employees while others use a model of 5.1 full time employee (FTE) equivalent to staff a center. However, for the purposes of this report the Department has focused on using the model published by the Association of Public Safety Communication Officials (APSCO).¹ The Department believes this model is best as it takes into consideration the numerous Vermont labor management contract issues associated with time off. The model utilizes a variety of worksheets to calculate staffing levels including the calculating of hourly processing capability. Because the Department of Public Safety cannot determine specific calls for service we cannot calculate dispatcher call processing capability. Regardless, we can determine the minimum number of staff required to meet the needs of a 24 hour dispatch operation. The calculation below is based on the number of staff needed to operate two console positions.

<u>Estimate Staffing Needed for Coverage Positions</u>		
Steps	Hours needing coverage: 24 hours	
A	Total number of consoles that need to be covered for this position	2
B	Number of hours per day that need to be covered	24
C	Number of days per week that need to be covered	7
D	Number of weeks per year that need to be covered	52
E	Total Hours needing coverage = A x B x C x D	17472
Employee Availability:		
F	Net Available Work Hours - enter average NAWH from worksheet	1669
G	Full Time Equivalent base estimate (FTE) = E ÷ F	10
H	Turnover Rate - from retention worksheet, convert to decimal	19%
I	Full Time Equivalent required to accommodate turnover, prior to any adjustments based on quality indicators: FTE = G x (1+ H)	12
Estimated Staffing Need (in FTEs from Step I above)		12

¹ APCO entitled, Project RETAINS: Responsive Efforts To Address Integral Needs in Staffing, developed by The University of Denver Research Institute.

The cost to staff a dispatch center at a minimum can be determined by multiplying the number of FTE's times a standard cost for one full time employee, which is approximately \$85,000 per year including salary and benefits. The Department also recommends a supervisor position be part of the plan. Therefore, a total of 13 FTE's are required. For calculation purposes the \$85,000 per year number will be used for all positions as this is a general average cost calculation.

Cost of Full Time Employees		
Number of FTE's	Cost per employee	Total
13	\$ 85,000	\$ 1,105,000

It should be noted that the cost number from above can be changed based on the desired staffing levels within a dispatch center and the actual costs associated with the pay scale of a full time employee.

Facility and Equipment Costs

The average cost for fee for space as charged back to the Department of Public Safety by the Department of Building and General Services for the dispatching space in the Vermont State Police Office's is \$15, 308.

Two new radio consoles will have to be purchased as startup costs to keep Derby and Rutland open. This is an approximate capital cost of \$60,000. The annual maintenance costs are factored using the Department of Public Safety's authorized indirect rate of 26.4% or \$15,840 annually.

3 COST SUMMARY

The following cost summary is the total from the model above and is a realistic calculation based on what the Department of Public Safety would need to operate dispatch centers for local and county first responders. In the development of this cost model the Department has taken into consideration the State of Vermont's labor management agreement that articulates employee benefits and the need to provide on a consistent basis two operating console positions.

<u>Cost Summary</u>	<u>One Time Costs</u>	<u>Annual Costs</u>
Personnel		\$ 1,105,000
Facility Usage		\$ 15,308
Equipment Usage		\$ 15,840
Equipment Purchases	\$ 60,000	
Total	\$ 60,000	\$ 1,136,148

This cost summary could change if the assumption that were previously made changed. However, this change would have to be clearly articulated in a contract for services or a service model agreement entered into by all parties.