City of Bellingham
Classification Specification

CLASS TITLE	**What-Comm Public Safety Telecommunicator-In-Training** **What-Comm Public Safety Telecommunicator I** **What-Comm Public Safety Telecommunicator II**
DEPARTMENT	**Police**
UNION:	**What-Comm Dispatchers Guild**
SG:	**A/B**
CS:	**Y**
FLSA:	**Y**
EE04|SOC:	**TE|43-5031**

NATURE OF WORK:

A Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST) receives and processes voice, text and multimedia requests for police, behavioral health, fire, and medical emergency response. The incumbent in this position determines the nature, urgency, and jurisdiction of a report and either dispatches public safety personnel and equipment to respond or transfers the call to the appropriate jurisdiction. The PST enters information from the reporting party and responding units into a computer-aided dispatch (CAD) software program and continually updates the status of those responding to the incident via radio, CAD, and phone communication. The PST provides guidance and assistance to the public in life-safety situations; and coordinates appropriate responses to high-risk, high-stress operations, with the objective of keeping all participants safe. The What-Comm Emergency Communication Center (ECC) serves as the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for Whatcom County. This position is essential and must report to work during times when the City is closed.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS:

What-Comm Public Safety Telecommunicator in Training
This is the entry-level position for new PSTs during their training period. A new hire will go through a structured training program to learn What-Comm policies and procedures for handling emergent and non-emergent calls as well as other agency, department, and dispatch center protocols.

What-Comm Public Safety Telecommunicator I
A PST in Training will promote to PST I in a non-competitive promotion when they successfully complete the initial training period, can independently perform emergency and non-emergency call receiving, and have obtained the Call-Taking Certification as required under the Washington State PST Certification Program.

What-Comm Public Safety Telecommunicator II
A PST I will promote to a PST II in a non-competitive promotion when they can independently operate all dispatch consoles as well as perform emergency and non-emergency call receiving and have obtained a Dual Certification as required under the Washington State PST Certification Program.

SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIPS:

PSTs work under the supervision of a shift supervisor and receive general direction from the What-Comm Deputy Director of Operations. Adheres to strict City of Bellingham, Bellingham Police Department, and What-Comm Emergency Communication Center policies, procedures, and protocols.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:

1. Receives, prioritizes, and routes emergent and non-emergent reports from the public to appropriate jurisdictions. Accurately documents the location, nature, and source of the emergency report into a computer terminal using computer-aided dispatch (CAD) software. Develops and maintains familiarity with major roads, local businesses, and geographic features.

2. Professionally controls calls using de-escalation techniques and clear, effective verbal communication. Uses critical thinking and problem-solving skills to make decisions quickly in accordance with policy and procedures. Maintains a calm demeanor under chaotic and stressful circumstances, multiple conversations, and a frequently noisy environment. Employs effective stress management to maintain wellness and efficacy. Adheres to confidentiality, disclosure, and privacy related policies and laws.

3. Relays incident information and/or dispatches appropriate Police personnel to the scene of the reported incident. Retrieves and evaluates information from multiple databases based on knowledge of dispatch and emergency response procedures. Regularly contacts and updates status of field units according to established procedures and protocols. Contacts various resources as requested by field units. Switches rapidly between emergent tasks, prioritizing duties as needed to support the safety of responders and citizens.

4. Queries databases and evaluates warrant, order, stolen property, and missing person information. Enters stolen vehicles and missing persons or runaways into state and nationwide law enforcement databases and transmits requested information to law enforcement personnel in the field. Receives, documents, and processes incident information from various sources including but not limited to phone, text, TTY, relay services, telematics companies, and radio. Generates routine reports such as the incident history reports and incident shift summaries.

5. Communicates with a variety of local, state, and federal agencies regarding law enforcement activity and resources available for emergencies.

6. Develops and maintains working knowledge of best practices pertaining to public safety telecommunications. Maintains currency with industry changes and participates in continuing education and professional development.

7. Works mandatory overtime, including evenings, weekends, and holidays, as required to support 24/7 dispatch center operations and ensure adequate staffing during peak periods, emergencies, or unforeseen staffing shortages.

ADDITIONAL WORK PREFORMED:

1. May participate in developing and recommending updates to comprehensive dispatch policies, procedures, and protocols as necessary for the efficient operation of the center. Identifies and recommends new policies and procedures to improve dispatch operations and minimize liability.

2. Performs Lead Worker duties as assigned to include posting and mandating overtime, making seating charts, and notifying Supervisors or the Deputy Director of equipment/personnel issues and significant events which may impact staffing.

3. Performs training of new employees to include call receiving and radio dispatching, as assigned.

4. Performs other duties within the scope of the classification.

5. Manages chain of custody for records and documents used in court proceedings and legal discovery as assigned.

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities):

Knowledge of:

- Working knowledge of interagency and international call protocols and resources.
- Basic knowledge of laws regarding civil and criminal acts to be able to discern the difference.
- Knowledge of or ability to learn the geography of Whatcom County including cities and towns, locations of highways, main streets, major buildings and businesses and common places such as parks.
- Use of computer software to perform various tasks and assignments, including reading and interpreting geospatial data quickly and accurately.

Skill in:

- Demonstrated oral communication and interaction skills necessary to work effectively with a diverse group of people including citizens, personnel from other local agencies, and other City employees.
- Clear, concise, and effective communication including relaying details accurately, listening actively, and applying critical thinking in order to take necessary action quickly.
- Demonstrated multi-tasking and critical thinking skills including interpersonal sensitivity, adaptability, flexibility, reasoning, and time management to reach conclusions and solve problems.
- Appropriately prioritize simultaneous responsibilities in potentially stressful situations.

Ability to:

- Function calmly and effectively under stress and to assimilate and accurately recall large amounts of detail and demonstrate flexibility with unplanned changes that occur in stressful circumstances.
- Perform searches of locals, state, and national databases for wants, orders, and flags such as missing persons or runaways as well as fulfill requests from the field units such as searches on addresses and phone numbers to locate persons and places.
- Handle several different tasks at the same time.
- Willingness and ability to learn to effectively use a computer-aided dispatch computer program and other software programs.
- Speak clearly and concisely in English to relay information in the context in which it is received.
- Follow instructions with strict attention to detail.
- Recognize and respond to certain computer warnings and alarm activations.
- Enter and research information such as warrants, orders, vehicles, boats, property, guns, missing persons, and criminal histories in State, Federal, and local law enforcement databases.
- Use a computer keyboard to quickly enter information into a computer and process information from a video display terminal, utilize keyboard at a speed appropriate to keep up with the call volume.
- Receive, process, document, and transmit telephone, oral, written and radio communications quickly and accurately.
- Obtain information from hostile, confusing, intoxicated, and emotional callers, tactfully providing effective customer service and remaining calm under pressure.
- Work rotating shifts, weekends, and holidays, including responding to callouts and overtime needs.
- Problem solve for the public and co-workers with courtesy, tact, and good judgement.
- Operate within the What-Comm chain of command. Make urgent, independent decisions adhering to policy and procedure requirements that are stringent, rigorous, and unwavering, including confidentiality of information and trustworthiness while dealing with sensitive information.
- Determine appropriate response priority for complaints and requests.
- Maintain consistent and punctual attendance.
- Ability and willingness to demonstrate the Public Service Competencies of Service Orientation, Results Orientation, and Teamwork and Cooperation.

  Physical ability to perform the essential functions of the job including:
  - Frequently remain stationary for long periods of time;
  - Frequently operate a computer and other office machinery such as a keyboard, mouse, phone, and fax machine;
  - Receive and communicate accurate information in a stressful or confrontational environment;
  - Hearing within, or correctable to, normal limits across the speech frequencies and recognition of speech in the very good to excellent range.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT:

The work is performed in an office environment at a computer workstation using different desktop computer systems, a multi-line telephone system and extensive radio communications equipment to receive, input, and process urgent information. Frequently receives reports from extremely distressed members of the public requesting an emergency response. Employees regularly interact with members of the public who relay very unpleasant situations in graphic detail or may be hostile. Workload intensity varies considerably and requires frequent swings from urgent independent decision making to cooperative teamwork.

The working environment includes:

- Rotating shifts covering 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays.
- Mandatory overtime.
- Frequent changes in multi-jurisdictional policies and procedures, periodic workstation relocation and changes in equipment availability.

EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:

What-Comm Public Safety Telecommunicator in Training

- One year of experience in a position with intensive public contact.
- Keyboard entry skills at a minimum of 40 wpm net.
- Experience or training in the use of computer software such as word processing, spreadsheets, database management, desktop publishing programs or other business/educational software preferred.
- Experience using multi-line phone systems preferred.
- Previous experience in public safety dispatching preferred.
- Must acquire within first year of training a working knowledge of the geography of Whatcom County to include: cities and towns, locations and names of highways, main streets, major buildings and businesses and establishments such as names of parks.
- An individual in the What-Comm Public Safety Telecommunicator in Training position will move to the What-Comm Public Safety Telecommunicator I position in a non-competitive promotion upon successful completion of the initial training period, demonstrated proficiency in performing the call receiving function independently, and upon obtaining the Call Taking certification.

What-Comm Public Safety Telecommunicator I

In addition to the experience and training requirements listed above:

- Successful completion of the initial training period and demonstrated proficiency in performing the call receiver function independently.
- Successfully obtained the Call-Taking Certification as required under the Washington State PST Certification Program.
- An individual in the What-Comm Public Safety Telecommunicator I position will move to the What-Comm Public Safety Telecommunicator II position in a non-competitive promotion upon successful completion of the Public Safety Telecommunicator I training period, demonstrated proficiency in independently operating all dispatch consoles as well as performing the call receiving function, and upon obtaining the Dual Certification.

What-Comm Public Safety Telecommunicator II

In addition to the experience and training requirements listed above:

- Successful completion of the Public Safety Telecommunicator I training period and demonstrated proficiency in call receiving and operating all dispatch consoles independently.
- Successfully obtained the Dual Certification as required under the Washington State PST Certification Program.

NECESSARY SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Employment contingent upon passing a criminal convictions check, background investigation, polygraph examination, and fingerprinting. Subject to re-check every five years.
- Must be able to obtain and maintain ACCESS Level 2 and CJIS Level 3 certification within six months of hire.
- Must obtain and maintain Telecommunicator 1 & 2 certifications within twelve months of hire.
- Must obtain and maintain certifications as required under the Washington State PST Certification Program.
- Continuing education courses and recertification will be required as identified by the department.
- Failure to obtain and maintain appropriate certifications within established time limits will result in demotion to the lower class for which qualified, until such time as the required certification is achieved or termination if incumbent is not qualified for a lower class.
- Must pass a hearing evaluation prior to hire.
- Must pass a pre-employment drug screen.
- Must have a regular form of communication such as a land line telephone or a cell phone and the willingness and ability to respond to mandatory recall to duty.
- Willingness and ability to work rotating shifts covering 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays and mandatory overtime.

A 12-month Civil Service probationary period applies for all Telecommunicators following placement into the Telecommunicator In Training classification.

PREPARED BY: L. Hill
Dispatch Work Group
10/07
A. Everbeck
A. Sullivan
J. Honga
4/23
J. Rasmussen
J. Honga
6/25
J. Rasmussen
J. Honga
10/25

REVIEWED BY: _____
Rebecca Mertzig
Chief of Police

COMMISSION ADOPTION: October 8, 2025