



WHAT IS A 911 DISPATCHER?

At Skagit 911



GENERAL INFORMATION

Skagit 911 answers, processes, and dispatches all 9-1-1 calls within Skagit County and parts of Whatcom County. Skagit 911 serves nine law enforcement agencies, four municipal fire agencies, seventeen fire districts, and one EMS agency. Skagit 911 utilizes and maintains several different technologies, such as a CAD (Computer Aided Dispatching) system, 911 phone system, multiple radio towers, and the core radio system for emergency responders in Skagit County.



THE PUBLIC'S FIRST CONTACT

“I’m standing in the Walmart parking lot and just watched part of the I-5 bridge collapse.”

- *Skagit County Citizen, 2013*



TRUE MULTITASKING

Skagit 911 Dispatchers have three primary responsibilities and missions:

1) Answer emergency calls from the public *2) Dispatch* emergency calls *3) Monitor* and *assist* public safety responders

9-1-1 Call-Taking

Every Dispatcher at Skagit 911 is trained to answer and process all calls that come into our center. Most of these calls are law enforcement response calls, fewer are medical response calls, and the fewest are fire response calls.

Most 9-1-1 calls are started the same way: “Where are you?” “What is going on?” “Are you injured?”

No one call or caller is the exactly the same as the other, so Dispatchers need to think and act quickly. Most callers are experiencing the worst day of their lives and can be difficult to focus on answering key questions needed to get them the right help at the right place.

Emergency Dispatching

At the start of every shift, Skagit 911 Dispatchers are assigned to different public safety agencies. For example, one of these agencies is the Skagit County Sheriff’s Office (SCSO). The Dispatcher assigned to SCSO will dispatch calls in their jurisdictions and monitor the deputies that are on duty.

This is where true multitasking comes in. Skagit 911 Dispatchers are required answer 9-1-1 calls, dispatch priority incidents, and assist their assigned responders (deputies in this example). Sometimes this means listening to two people talk at once and being able to register what both people are saying.

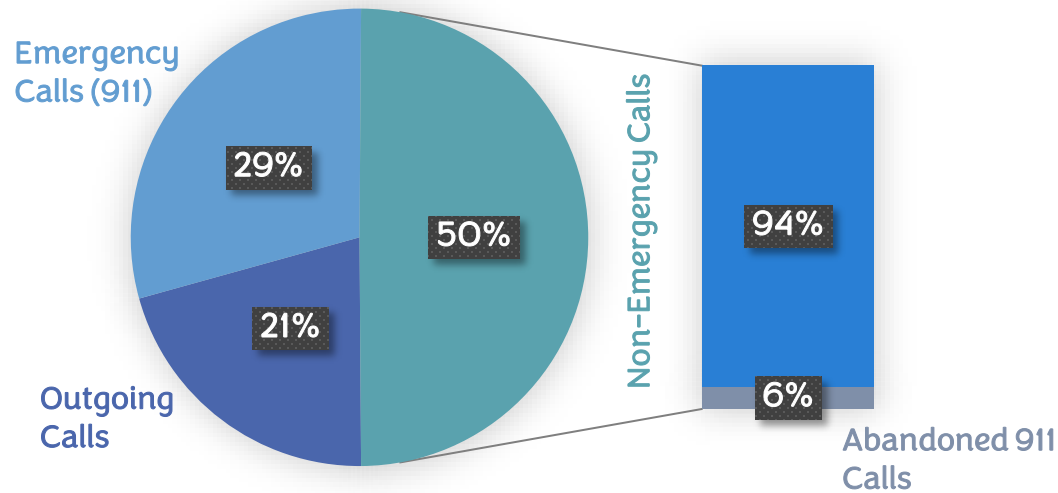
Point of View of the Dispatcher by NORCOM 911

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=497uMOa8oqQ>

STATS

Call-Taking

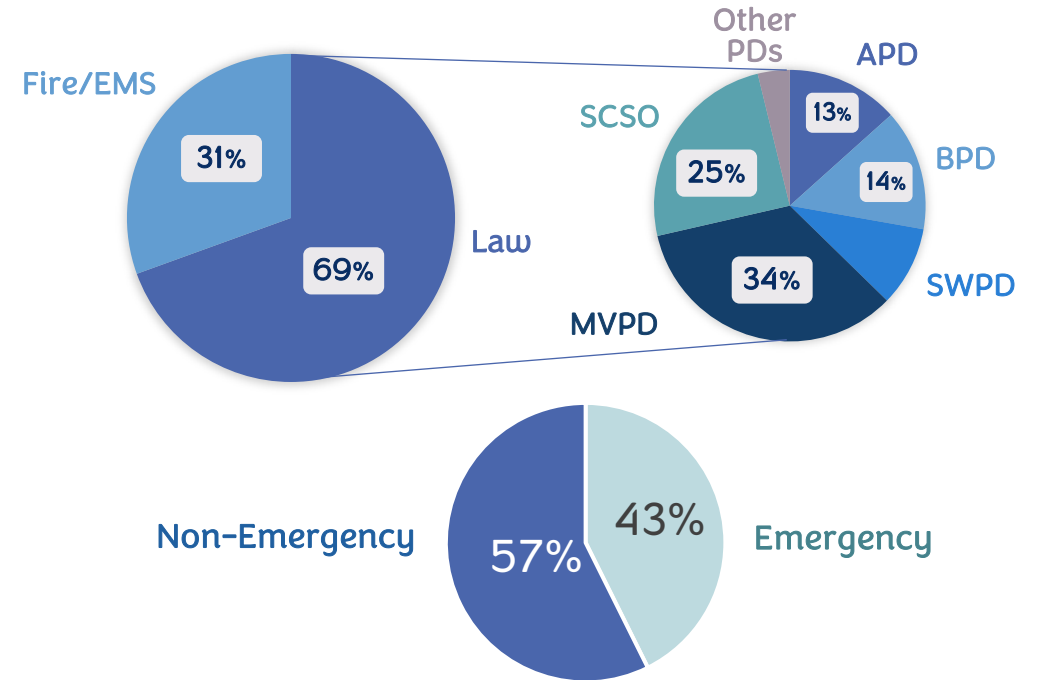
Skagit 911 processed approx. 250,000 phone calls in 2023.



These stats are based on calls received through certain phone lines (example: a call received from a 9-1-1 line is labeled an “emergency call” while a call from 360-428-3211 is labeled as a “non-emergency call”).

Dispatching

Skagit 911 dispatched approx. 100,000 incidents in 2023.



Not all non-emergency calls come in through the non-emergency line (360-428-3211). Some non-emergency calls come through the 9-1-1 lines.

ORGANIZATIONAL MOVEMENT

Management

Skagit 911's Executive Director, Operations Manager, and Deputy Operations Manager originally started as 911 Dispatchers.

Supervisors

Skagit 911 is funded for five Dispatch Supervisor positions, one of which is our Training Supervisor. All originally started as 911 Dispatchers. Dispatch Supervisors are assigned Dispatchers to monitor and meet with regularly.

Leadership

Skagit 911 is funded for seven Lead Dispatchers. Lead Dispatchers monitor and lead the daily dispatch operations and assist in call-taking and/or dispatching when needed.

Projects

Skagit 911 offers a variety of different premium pays for projects that 911 Dispatchers volunteer to work on.

SCHEDULE

Skagit 911 operates 24/7, 365 days a year. 911 Dispatchers work holidays, weekends, birthdays, anniversaries, etc.

The Schedule

Currently, Skagit 911 Dispatchers work 12-hour shifts in the following format:

Group A							
	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
Week 1	ON	ON	ON	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF
	ON	ON	ON	ON	OFF	OFF	OFF
Week 2	ON	ON	ON	ON	OFF	OFF	OFF

Group B							
	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
Week 1	OFF	OFF	OFF	ON	ON	ON	ON
	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF	ON	ON	ON
Week 2	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF	ON	ON	ON

Most “Day” shifts are 6am to 6pm and most “Grave” shifts are 6pm to 6am. Two hours each week are built-in overtime hours and are either cashed out at 1.5 times the hourly rate or converted to time off at the 1.5 rate (*this is the employee’s choice*).

There are currently no part-time positions. Skagit 911 is only hiring full-time employees in the year 2022 and 2023.

Due to the critical nature of this work, employees are expected to be at work and ready to answer 9-1-1 calls at the start of their shift.

PAID TIME OFF

Vacation Bank

Skagit 911 Dispatchers earn a certain amount of vacation every two weeks of work based on their time at Skagit 911:

Years of Service	Annual Vacation
0-2	96 hours
3-4	108 hours
5-6	132 hours
7-9	148 hours
10-12	164 hours
13-15	180 hours
16-18	196 hours
19+	212 hours

Holiday Bank

Since Skagit 911 Dispatchers are required to work holidays, all employees are credited 8 hours of time off to use at any point of the year. Holiday time is earned in the pay period (pay periods are every two weeks) the holiday falls in.

Sick Leave Bank

Skagit 911 Dispatchers earn 4 hours of sick leave every pay period (8 hours every month). There is no sick time cap.



COMPENSATION

Skagit 911 Dispatchers are members of SEIU 925

Hourly Rates

The starting rate for a Dispatch Trainee is currently \$27.48 per hour. **Below is the scale for the hourly rates for 2024.**

Step #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Months at Step</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	
Public Records Tech	23.28	23.98	24.70	25.44	26.93	27.61	28.04	28.45	28.89	29.48
Call-Taker/ Trainee	27.48	27.78	28.61	29.47	30.56	30.56	31.99	31.99	32.47	32.47
Law Dispatcher	28.30	29.15	30.03	30.93	32.07	32.07	33.58	33.58	34.08	34.08
Fire/EMS Dispatcher	28.30	29.15	30.03	30.93	32.07	32.07	33.58	33.58	34.08	34.08
Cross-Trained Dispatcher	29.15	30.03	30.93	31.85	33.03	33.03	34.59	34.59	35.10	35.10
Lead Dispatcher	31.13	32.07	33.03	34.02	35.28	35.28	36.94	36.94	38.61	38.61

Premiums

Skagit 911 pays a set “premium” over the employee’s current wage for performing the following roles:

- Acting Lead
- Training Lead
- Trainer
- Coach
- Mentor

Skagit 911 will work with SEIU 925 to create new, temporary premiums as projects become available.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Set Up

Skagit 911 shares a building with EMS (Emergency Medical Services) and DEM (Department of Emergency Management). The room that Dispatchers work in is called the “Dispatch Floor”. The desks that Dispatchers work at are called “dispatch consoles”. On the Dispatch Floor, there are twelve dispatch consoles. Each dispatch console has eight screens.



COE = Common Office Environment (email, internet, etc.)
CAD = Computer Aided Dispatching

Team

Skagit 911’s Dispatchers work together to help callers and first responders. Skagit 911’s Dispatchers are of different generations and backgrounds. Very few dispatchers had public safety jobs or education before becoming highly skilled Dispatchers. The Dispatchers at Skagit 911 are also very compassionate. Several times a year they will come together to help groups and individuals struggling in and outside of Skagit County.



TRAINING

Skagit 911 conducts in house academies of two to four trainees every two months. Trainees are paid for all their time training and work a 40 hour a week schedule.

The Academy

Skagit 911 hires in groups of one to six. First day starts in Skagit 911's academy. The academy is an in-house training program that works with new Dispatch Trainees to get them ready for their floor training.

Dispatch Trainees learn about the following:

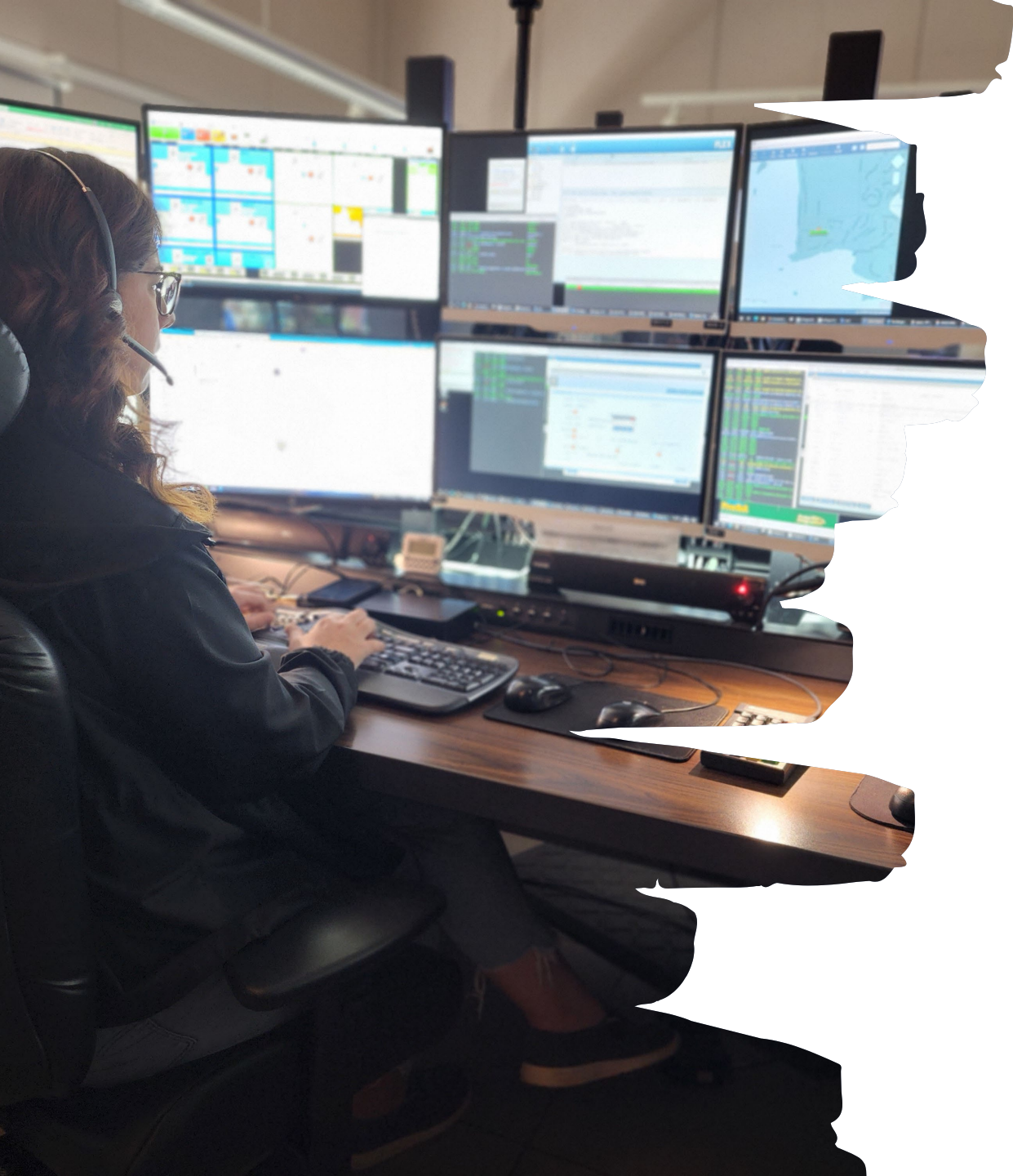
- Policies & Procedures
- CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch)
- Geography of Skagit County
- Non-Emergency Call-Taking
- Emergency Call-Taking

Floor Training

Floor training begins after passing the academy's "Call-Take Final". Trainees are assigned a Trainer that best matches the Trainee's learning style. Trainees still work a 4-10 schedule but match up with the days their Trainer works.

While working with a Trainer on the Dispatch Floor, Trainees take real, live 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls. At the beginning of this process, Trainers will coach their Trainees on what to say or do. As training progresses, the Trainer will move toward silently monitoring the Trainee until they can recommend being signed off on call-take training. On average, Trainees will spend around 240 hours on call-taking training.

This process repeats for radio training. This also take around 240 hours of radio training.



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



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