

CENTRAL DISPATCH

The Central Dispatch Operations Center is located in the Police Department and receives calls for assistance for the Police and Fire Departments. They are responsible for the collection of important information to be given to personnel responding to the scene of an emergency. The assistance provided by the dispatchers in both day-to-day and life-threatening situations saves valuable time. The center is staffed by ten (10) fully trained personnel 24 hours per day, seven days a week including a Senior Dispatcher who oversees general supervision of the dispatch staff. This represents a reduction of three dispatchers since 2008 due to budget constraints. As a result, the overtime expended has increased proportionately. Each of the three shifts is staffed by a minimum of two (2) dispatchers at any given time who are responsible for the operation of six telephone lines for police, two for fire, two for Emergency 911, and six tie lines 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

In 2013, there were about 31,184 calls for service and of those 3,088 were Fire/EMS calls for service. Not all calls that are answered by the dispatchers are logged into the computer. Typically incidents that occur outside of the City of Saratoga Springs are transferred to appropriate agencies. Calls for personnel, City Court, or City Hall workers are either transferred, or the caller is given the correct number. Some of the calls are people looking for information such as

directions, telephone numbers, the weather report, road conditions, closings and so on. These types of calls triple the amount of calls coming into dispatch. In the summer, the number of calls coming into dispatch can be very challenging when the number of people in the city doubles.

All newly hired dispatchers are enrolled in the New York State training program for dispatchers. In addition, all dispatchers have completed mandatory training for the NYSPIN and E-Justice computer systems. Other mandatory training consisted of NIMS-ICS 100 and 700 through FEMA, Infectious Disease Control by Saratoga Hospital and HAZMAT training.

The Public Safety Dispatchers continue to perform vital and essential auxiliary tasks and services for the department. Their responsibilities include not only the expected tasks of answering phones, dispatching police/fire units and maintaining the blotter entries, but dispatchers perform numerous “clerical” duties as well. Examples of these clerical duties include, but are not limited to:

- § Monitoring the NYS Police Information Network (NYSPIN)
- § Completing DMV and criminal history checks for officers in the field
- § Inputting all warrants, Order of Protection and wanted persons into the records management system
- § Maintaining the Residence/Business records with updated emergency information
- § Taking “Walk-In” complaints

- § Maintaining “Trespass Notice” file
- § Monitoring City Hall generated panic alarms
- § Coordinating responses with Department of Public Works
- § Monitoring the “general” alarm board for incoming business/residence alarms
- § Gathering information and making phone calls for officers in the field relative to specific incident being handled

The availability of the department’s Public Safety Dispatchers allows officers to remain on the street more often and have also allowed the department to continue to function, absent an appropriate civilian support staff.