

**Mandated Study of Retirement Coverage for
Emergency Dispatchers**

**Presented by the
Correctional Coverage Advisory Committee**

to the

Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement

February, 2003

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PREFACE

Study Mandate

At the July 30, 2002, meeting of the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement (LCPR), pension commission staff introduced an amendment (LCPR02-083) for second consideration. The amendment mandated an interim study on the appropriate retirement coverage for emergency dispatchers and for post-sentencing officers. The amendment directed the LCPR to accomplish the following tasks:

- Identify the various public employees that fall within the emergency dispatcher and post-sentencing officer job classifications;
- Identify pension and other public policy issues related to the transfer of retirement coverage for these identified employees;
- Prepare an actuarial cost estimate of any potential retirement coverage transfers;
- Appoint an advisory task force to assist the LCPR in conducting the study; and
- File a report on or before February 28, 2003 with the Chairs of specified legislative committees.

Senator Dean Johnson addressed the task of establishing an advisory task force at the July 30th LCPR meeting. The amendment established a basic format for the advisory task force membership--22 members from a variety of employee and employer groups with a vested interest in the retirement coverage of the two job classes at issue. The LCPR decided it was best to downsize the taskforce. The LCPR suggested that a taskforce of half the suggested size would suffice. David Bergstrom, Executive Director of the Minnesota State Retirement System, was identified as the Chair of the newly established advisory task force and as such, was asked to set a meeting and establish membership of the task force and report back to the LCPR on August 29, 2002. The LCPR also nominated Senator Don Betzold as the liaison between the LCPR and the advisory task force. In his capacity as liaison, Senator Betzold attended advisory task force meetings and received all correspondence and research that was developed throughout the study process.

The first task force meeting was held on August 15, 2002. Meeting attendees established the formal membership of the advisory task force with the understanding that all meetings were open to the public and input from interested parties was welcome. Basically, the LCPR amendment identified eleven groups that would be represented via an appointment on the advisory task force. The eleven groups identified as having a vested interest in the study are identified below:

The Minnesota State Retirement System
The Public Employees Retirement Association
State Emergency Dispatchers
City and County Emergency Dispatchers
State Post-Sentencing Officers
County Post-Sentencing Officers (union)
County Post-Sentencing Officers (non-union)
County Officials
City Officials
Commissioner of Corrections
Chief of State Patrol

Task Force Membership

David Bergstrom, Minnesota State Retirement System
Mary Vanek, Public Employees Retirement Association

Rick Juth, State Patrol and President of the Minnesota Chapter of the Association of Public Safety
Communications Officials International
Bob Johnson, Teamsters 320
Brian Bergson, MAPE
Chris Cowen, AFSCME
Lana Bjorgum, Minnesota Association of County Probation Officers
Keith Carlson, Metropolitan Inter-County Association
Gary Carlson, League of Minnesota Cities
Ruth Dahl, Department of Corrections
Michele Tuchner, State Patrol Designee

Ancillary Members

Terryl Arola, Pine County Court Services
Mary Jo Balzart, Hennepin County 911 Communicator
Julie Bleyhl, AFSCME
Diana Borash, Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials
Ed Burek, Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement
Paul Cegla, Hennepin County
Henry Erdman, Teamsters
Cathy Fah, Department of Corrections
Anne Finn, League of Minnesota Cities
Patrick Guernsey, AFSCME Local 552
Bob Haag, MAPE
Steven Johnson, State Patrol
Mary Ann Mowatt, Minnesota Corrections Association
Jim Mulder, Association of Minnesota Counties
Sherry Munyon, Minnesota Association of County Probation Officers
Randy Nelson, Department of Corrections
Chuck Ness, Department of Corrections
Tom Peltier, Minnesota Association of County Probation Officers
Tom Perkins, Teamsters
Bob Peterson, Washington County Bailiffs
Cal Saari, Public Employees Pension Services Association
Robert Sutter, Department of Corrections
Daniel Wells, CEO, Law Enforcement Labor Services
Curt Yoakum, Association of Minnesota Counties

Correctional Plan History

Minnesota State Retirement System

Background

The MSRS Correctional Plan was established under Minnesota Laws of 1973, effective on July 1, 1973. The stated policy of the legislature in establishing the plan was to “provide special retirement benefits and contributions for certain correctional employees who, because of the nature of their employment, are required to retire at an early age....” (Chapter 352.90).

The first covered classifications were attendant guard, attendant guard supervisor, correctional captain, correctional counselor I, II, III, IV, correctional lieutenant, correctional officer, correctional sergeant, director of attendant guards, guard farmer garden and any former service prior to July 1, 1973 in classifications of houseparent, guard instructor, guard farmer dairy, license plant manager, prison industry foreman (general, metal fabricating, foundry), prison industry supervisor, food service manager, prison farm supervisor, prison farmer assistant supervisor, rehabilitation therapist (employed at the Minnesota State Security Hospital-St. Peter).

Additional classifications were added via law changes in 1974, 1990, 1996, 1999 and 2000. These various laws allowed for election to the Plan and purchase of past service in the newly covered classifications.

Eligibility to the Correctional Plan has been determined by adding positions specifically in legislation, or under an appeal process offered in statute from 1980 until it was repealed in 2000. Since this process was repealed, all added positions must be done by statute.

In 1996, many new positions were added. The additional positions were determined by the Department of Corrections, Department of Human Services and the Department of Employee Relations and generally require 75 percent inmate or patient contact.

Benefits

Retirement annuities for covered Correctional Plan service are computed using a 2.4 percent accrual rate per year (compared to 1.7 percent for the General Plan). The normal retirement age is 55 (compared to 65 for the General Plan). Under the Correctional Plan, retirement may occur as early as age 50, with 3 or more years of service (compared to age 55 for the General Plan). The amount of the annuity is reduced 2.4 percent annually for each year a person retires under age 55 (for example, an employee retiring at age 53 would have benefits reduced by 4.8 percent).

The definition of disability under the Correctional Plan is different than the definition of disability under the General Plan. Members are deemed disabled under the Correctional Plan if they are unable to perform their job. Members covered by the Correctional Plan are eligible for disability benefits, regardless of length of service, if the member was injured on the job. In order to qualify for a disability benefit under the General Plan, the member must have three years of service and the disability must be deemed "total and permanent" and result in the inability to perform in any job. The minimum job-related disability benefit under the Correctional Plan is equal to 50 percent of a member's high-five salary average if the member has less than 20 years and 10 months of allowable service. After 20 years and 10 months, the member earns another 2.4 percent for each year of service. In order to receive a non-duty

related disability (unable to perform job), a member must have at least one year of service. If a member qualifies for a non-duty related benefit, the member is entitled to receive 2.4 percent of his/her high-five salary average if the member has 15 or more years of service. If the member has fewer than 15 years of service, he/she are entitled to 36 percent of his/her high-five salary average.

Contributions

A comparison of current Correctional Plan contributions with those of the General Plan is provided below (both plans also require a 7.65 percent Social Security and Medicare contribution by both the employee and employer):

	Employee Contribution % of salary	Employer Contribution % of salary
Correctional Plan	5.69%	7.98%
General Plan	4.00%	4.00%

Public Employees Retirement Association

Background

The Local Government Correctional Employee Plan was originally established in 1987. The 1987 Plan was available to essential correctional facility staff employed by Hennepin County, Ramsey County, Dakota County, Washington County, or by a joint-powers correctional agency in which St. Louis County or its municipalities participated, if the employer elected to adopt the Plan. The benefits of this plan were modeled after the Minnesota State Retirement System's Correctional Plan. Due to the cost of the Plan (the employee and employer would each contribute 7.5 percent of salary), none of the eligible employers opted to participate in the Plan. The law authorizing the Plan was repealed in 1997.

In 1998, special duty disability coverage was extended to eligible local government correctional employees. Eligibility was limited to essential employees under the Public Employees Labor Relations Act (PELRA) working at a county-administered or regional jail or correctional facility who spend "at least 75 percent of work time in direct contact with confined persons".

In 1999, after a LCPR interim study, and following considerable deliberation and controversy, the Commission recommended and the Legislature enacted a second PERA Local Government Correctional Employees Retirement Plan. The plan was developed in response to public demands for improved retirement coverage beyond the PERA Coordinated Plan and beyond the 1998 special local government correctional duty disability coverage. The plan initially applied to local government employees working in a county-administered jail or correctional facility and who were certified by their employer to have 95 percent inmate contact.

In 2000, the Correctional Plan requirements were further refined, at the request of counties. The revision replaced the 95 percent inmate contact definition with the following requirement:

- Employed in a county correctional institution as a correctional guard or officer, joint jailer/dispatcher or supervisor of correctional guards or officers or of joint jailers/dispatchers;
- Directly responsible for security, custody and control of a correctional institution and its inmates; and

- Expected to respond to institutional incidents as part of regular employment duties and specifically trained to make such a response

Benefits

Retirement annuities for covered Correctional Plan service are computed using a 1.9 percent accrual rate per year (compared to 1.7 percent for the Coordinated Plan). The normal retirement age is 55 (compared to 65 for the Coordinated Plan). Under the Correctional Plan retirement may occur as early as age 50, with an actuarial reduction (compared to age 55 for the Coordinated Plan). Disability benefits under the Correctional Plan are calculated like a normal annuity; however, unlike the Coordinated Plan, there is a minimum duty-related disability benefit based upon 25 years of service and a minimum non duty-related disability benefit based on 10 years of service.

Contributions

A comparison of current Correctional Plan contributions with those of the Coordinated Plan is provided below (both plans also require a 7.65 percent Social Security and Medicare contribution by both the employee and employer):

	Employee Contribution % of salary	Employer Contribution % of salary
Correctional Plan	5.83%	8.75%
Coordinated Plan	4.75%	5.18%

Summary of MSRS' and PERA's Enhanced Plans

Summary of Plans			
	MSRS Correctional Plan	MSRS Fire Marshal Plan	PERA Correctional Plan
Employee Contributions	5.69%	6.78%	5.83%
Employer Contributions	7.98%	8.20%	8.75%
Full Retirement Age	55	55	55
Earliest Retirement Age	50	55	50
Early Retirement Reduction	2.4% for each year under age 55	N/A	Actuarial for each year under age 55
Formula Multiplier	2.4%	2.0%	1.9%
Disability Definition	Unable to perform job duties	Unable to perform job duties	Unable to perform job duties
Disability Calculation			
• Job-Related	50% minimum	40% minimum	47.5% minimum
• Non Job-Related	36% minimum	30% minimum	19% minimum

CORRECTIONAL TASK FORCE STUDY ON ENHANCED BENEFITS FOR EMERGENCY DISPATCHERS

Executive Summary

The Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement established a task force to gather information regarding covering the emergency dispatchers under the Minnesota State Retirement System or the Public Employee Retirement Association Correctional Plans. As expected, the employee representatives are interested in allowing the emergency dispatchers into the Correctional Plan and the employer representative opposes inclusion. The Correctional Task Force Report is attached and this cover page serves as an Executive Summary of the report.

ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING	ARGUMENTS AGAINST
<p>Emergency dispatchers are subject to increased stress levels.</p> <p>The stress levels of increased workloads suggest enhanced retirement coverage.</p> <p>Several states have recognized the dangers and stress of emergency dispatchers and have provided enhanced retirement benefits.</p>	<p>Workers Compensation claims do not support the need for additional coverage.</p> <p>Cities, counties and the state cannot afford the increased contributions required under the enhanced retirement program.</p> <p>Many different groups can make arguments for enhanced retirement benefits due to stress and increased workloads and other groups will be asking for enhanced benefits.</p>

While clearly there is no consensus that emergency dispatchers should be covered by the Correctional Plan, the task force did reach some agreements if the Legislature and Governor agree enhanced retirement coverage is appropriate.

- 1) A new retirement plan should be created for emergency dispatchers, with state emergency dispatchers paying into a plan established under MSRS and city and county emergency dispatchers paying into a plan established under PERA. The two plans would provide the same benefit levels.
- 2) The normal retirement age should be age 55 and the retirement formula should be between 1.7 percent and 1.9 percent.
- 3) The plan should not provide enhanced disability benefits.
- 4) The enhanced plan should cover prospective service only and past service will remain in the PERA Coordinated Plan or the MSRS General Employees Retirement Plan.
- 5) Coverage should only be extended to employees who meet a pre-determined definition of emergency dispatcher.
- 6) Coverage would be extended to part-time employees if they meet the requirements under item 5 listed above.
- 7) Coverage would be mandated for all employees and there would not be an option to remain in the existing plans.

EMERGENCY DISPATCHERS

I. INTRODUCTION

The Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement (LCPR) mandated a study to determine whether emergency dispatchers throughout the State of Minnesota should be eligible to become members of the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) or the Minnesota State Retirement System's (MSRS) Correctional Plans. This report is a compilation of information collected from position papers submitted by various employee and employer groups represented by the following organizations: The Minnesota Department of Corrections, The League of Minnesota Cities, Metropolitan Inter-County Association, AFSCME, MAPE, TEAMSTERS and the Minnesota Association of County Probation Officers. The Advisory Task Force Study also incorporates into this study input received from interested correctional employees and other groups that took the opportunity to submit e-mails or provided oral testimony at the advisory committee meetings.

Definitions

Emergency Dispatcher - Individual employed at a primary public safety answering point whose primary job responsibility is receiving 911 calls from the public which requires the response of police, fire and medical resources.

Public Agency - Any unit of local government or special purpose district located in whole or part within this state which provides or has authority to provide fire fighting, police, ambulance, medical or other emergency services.

Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) - A communications facility operated on a 24-hour basis which first receives 911 calls from persons in a 911 service area and which may, as appropriate, directly dispatch public safety services or extend, transfer, or relay 911 calls to appropriate public safety agencies.

Primary PSAP - PSAP to which 911 calls are directly routed.

Secondary PSAP - PSAP to which 911 calls are transferred from a primary PSAP.

II. EMPLOYEE ISSUES

Union groups have offered evidence that emergency dispatchers should be included in the Correctional Plan for the following reasons:

1. Demands of the job merit enhanced benefits;
2. Concerns about the long-term affect of increasing stress levels; and
3. A number of other states acknowledge or are considering these points by their treatment of emergency dispatchers with respect to pension eligibility.

Supporting Information Regarding #1

The demands of the job merit it: Please note the Department of Labor's position when describing what air traffic controllers do:

During busy times, controllers must work rapidly and efficiently. This requires total concentration to keep track of several planes at the same time and make certain all pilots receive correct instructions. The mental stress of being responsible for the safety of several aircraft and their passengers can be exhausting for some persons.

Could you not also write the same about emergency dispatchers?

During busy times, emergency dispatchers must work rapidly and efficiently. This requires total concentration to keep track of police cars or fire trucks or emergency medical vehicles at the same time and make certain all police officers or callers receive correct instructions. The mental stress of being responsible for the safety of several police cars, officers and callers can be exhausting for some persons.

Again, The Department of Labor writes in describing air traffic controllers:

Controllers must be articulate, because pilots must be given directions quickly and clearly. Intelligence and a good memory also are important because controllers constantly receive information that they must immediately grasp, interpret and remember. Decisiveness also is required because controllers often have to make quick decisions. The ability to concentrate is crucial because controllers must make these decisions in the midst of noise and other distractions.

And again, who would deny the following:

Emergency dispatchers must be articulate, because police officers, fire fighters, medics and callers must be given directions quickly and clearly. Intelligence and a good memory also are important because emergency dispatchers constantly receive information that they must immediately grasp, interpret and remember. Decisiveness also is required because emergency dispatchers often have to make quick decisions. The ability to concentrate is crucial because emergency dispatchers must make these decisions in the midst of noise and other distractions.

Supporting Information Regarding #2

These demands take a toll over time: The Department of Labor writes regarding air traffic controllers:

In addition, controllers can retire at an earlier age and with fewer years of service than other Federal employees. **Air traffic controllers are eligible to retire at age 50 with 20 years of service as an active air traffic controller or after 25 years of active service at any age. There is a mandatory retirement age of 56 for controllers who manage air traffic.**

This is not to mention median annual earnings of air traffic controllers in 2000 were \$82,520. The middle 50 percent earned between \$62,250 and \$101,570. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$44,760 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$111,150.

Though emergency dispatchers are considered career employees, very few ever work through retirement. (See Attachment 1: Hennepin County's turnover statistics from 1993 to 2002 for the Telecommunicator Job Class.) The Minnesota State Patrol Metro Communications Center staff with emergency dispatchers have a turnover rate of 29 percent. In reviewing exit interviews, most cited stress and the work

environment as reasons for resigning. (See Attachment 2: Minneapolis 911 Call Volume Statistics.) Statistics from the state of Arizona show that only 6 percent of all their emergency dispatchers reach 20+ years of service. 59 percent of their emergency dispatchers have 5 or fewer years of service. For more information on workload and experience measurements, see Attachments 3-4. Also available to the reader are excerpts of testimonials submitted by emergency dispatchers to task force members - see Attachment 5.

Occupational stress accounts for mental fatigue and oftentimes emergency dispatchers leave employment never reaching retirement age. Under Minnesota Statutes, Section 352.90 the State of Minnesota correctional officers are given special retirement benefits for losing "mental" capacity. Emergency dispatchers, like air traffic controllers, have issues of mental capacity. Further mention of the word "mental" appears in the State Patrol Plan 352B.10 and Local Government Correctional Officer Plan 353E.06. The point of this is that in law, mental capacity clearly is referencing occupational stress, which emergency dispatchers experience daily.

The Legislature made emergency dispatchers "essential employees" under Minnesota Statutes, Section 179A.

The costs to agencies to recruit, hire and train are high. On average it takes 21-26 weeks of training before an employee is able to perform the duties of an emergency dispatcher. Improved benefits may increase the number of experienced dispatchers, which in turn enhance officer safety and safety to the citizens of Minnesota.

Supporting Information Regarding #3

A growing number of other states acknowledge these points by their treatment of emergency dispatchers regarding pension eligibility:

AFSCME's Research Department, members and other organizations will be taking an in depth look at what other states are doing. What we do know is that Arizona just recently added emergency dispatchers to their Corrections Pension Plan. The National Association of State Retirement Associations recently conducted a survey. The survey specifically addresses emergency dispatchers and their retirement coverage. The attached survey tell us that currently the respondent states cover their emergency dispatchers in their General Plan. Their benefit might be better in some cases because their General Plan benefits are better than our General Plan benefits overall. (See Attachment 6.)

III. EMPLOYER ISSUES

Cost Impact

Cities. If emergency dispatchers were moved into the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) Correctional Plan, the employer contribution rate for these employees would increase from 5.53 percent to 8.75 percent. The plan could also provide emergency dispatchers with other enhanced benefits relating to early retirement and disability coverage. The cost increase would be difficult for cities to fund, especially during this time of state and local budget uncertainty. For instance, the City of Minneapolis reran some projections in their Budget Reporting and Salary Forecast System in order to estimate the cost of moving the PERA-General Plan to the PERA-Correctional Plan. The city found that transitioning all of their 911 operators and police/fire dispatchers from PERA-General to PERA-Correctional would cost the City of Minneapolis an additional \$100,000 a year in general fund dollars.

The League of Minnesota Cities opposes providing enhanced retirement benefits to emergency dispatchers at this time because of the downturn in the economy and the huge budget deficit. This seems to be an especially poor time to enhance employee benefits. These benefit enhancements will have a direct impact on city budgets and it has not been shown that there is a recruitment/retention problem nor that the proposed enhancements are the best solution to such a problem if it does exist.

Counties. Currently each employee covered under the Correctional Plan on average costs \$1,025 a year more than a similarly paid employee covered by the Coordinated Plan. The Metropolitan Inter-County Association (MICA) estimates that the cost for expanding membership of the local Correctional Plan to emergency dispatchers would likely be in excess of \$_____ million annually. Hennepin County alone estimates that extending Correctional Plan coverage to emergency dispatchers will cost the county \$71,000 per year. The MICA contends that counties would have no choice but to increase property taxes in order to cover the cost incurred due to the correctional coverage expansion.

State. Expanding coverage of the local Correctional Plan to emergency dispatchers would increase state costs for two reasons.

- 1) Employer contributions for state emergency dispatchers covered under the Correctional Plan are higher than the contribution rate they currently pay.
- 2) The total annual cost of health care coverage for Correction's early retirees between 55-65 ranges from \$3,649.92 to \$10,722.28. The monthly total cost is \$306.16 for a single retiree. The monthly addition for spouse and dependent coverage is \$590.28. These rates are for early retirees and spouses under the age of 65 regardless of insurance carrier.

Expansion Concerns

Cities: The League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) recently refreshed the survey it took 3 years ago when the topic of expanding Correctional Plan eligibility to the dispatchers initially came up. According to survey results, cities are experiencing no difficulties attracting or retaining dispatchers. As a matter of fact, survey respondents noted that, if a problem exists with attracting and retaining dispatch employees, salary adjustment would be a more effective tool in which to address the problem.

Another concern brought to the surface by the survey was that the job descriptions provided by respondents revealed that dispatcher responsibilities vary significantly between jurisdictions. In some cases, a dispatch position involves full-time dispatch duties while in other cases, the dispatch duties comprise less than 50 percent of the job duties. Some of these "part-time" dispatchers also handle secretarial and other administrative duties.¹

Most of the cities responding to the survey noted that they did not see a need for an enhanced pension benefit for emergency dispatchers. Respondents noted that emergency dispatcher positions were not physically demanding or personally dangerous; they do not have physical contact with the public or people in holding cells or jails. They also noted that there are many routine parts of their job that do not include emergency call dispatching.

¹ If readers are interested in reviewing the various position descriptions submitted by the League of Minnesota Cities, please refer to the List of Resources at Attachment 7 for directions on submitting a request for copies.

Members of the LMC Personnel Policy Committee, some of whom represent cities that would not be immediately impacted due to the fact that they do not have dispatch employees, expressed concern. They are concerned that expanding enhanced benefit coverage beyond employees performing under "hazardous and dangerous" conditions to inclusion of employees facing "occupational stress", could ultimately lead to even more future requests for pension benefit improvement to other groups of employees. The occupational stress classification will require new definitions, is more difficult to objectively quantify and the definitions may lead to broader inclusion in the PERA Correctional Plan.

Proponents of enhanced benefits for emergency dispatchers have claimed the stress level for this position is very high. In order to substantiate increased stress levels, call volumes for various dispatch centers are being examined as part of this report. (See Attachments 2-4.) However, it is important to point out that without knowing whether there has been an increase in the number of employees in each dispatch center, it is impossible to make judgments about the call volume per dispatchers. In fact, it is likely that most dispatch centers have increased the number of employees in relation to any increase in call volume, thereby keeping the ratio of calls to dispatcher relatively stable.

A related point made by a dispatch center supervisor was that they have seen an increase in the number of cellular phone calls and most of these are made in error. While it may be time consuming to clarify that these calls really are errors, these phone calls are clearly different from true emergency calls. Again, to the extent this report draws a link between call volume and stress levels, this factor should be considered.

Proponents of these enhanced benefits have compared air traffic controllers to dispatchers. While these two job descriptions may show some similarities, it does not mean they are comparable jobs for salary or benefit comparison purposes. Many jobs have similar aspects - duties, work hours, levels of occupational stress, levels of responsibility - but professional compensation experts do not generally make comparisons between jobs for purposes of matching salary and benefits unless there is a substantial match in actual duties performed.

Counties: Facts do not support the suggestion that either emergency dispatchers suffer job-related injuries or illnesses at anything close to the rate of corrections officers, further undermining the rationale for early retirement benefits for emergency dispatchers. If proponents are just suggesting that job-related stress alone is the reason for extending early retirement benefits to emergency dispatchers, one would expect substantial worker's compensation claims for those job classes. Instead, the available claims data suggests that when compared to correction officers, they suffer neither similar stress or job-related illness. (See Attachment 7: Workers' Compensation Claim Statistics). Regardless of whether emergency dispatchers deserve better pension coverage, they clearly do not fit into the Correctional Plan as currently defined in state law. If allowed into the Correctional Plan, historical information tells us that others will want to be included in the plan as well. For example, Government Center security guards will want comparability, particularly as a result of the County's increased focus on security since September 11. Snowplow drivers could argue they risk their personal safety driving heavy equipment in traffic under "whiteout" conditions. Nurses could argue they have both physical demands in dealing with patients and the emotional stress of administering potentially lethal medications and social workers have the stress of having to deal with emotionally distraught individuals and families. This phenomenon has already occurred in the MSRS Correctional Plan, which includes classifications such as, baker, carpenter, cook, dentist, dental assistant, electrician, groundskeeper, building maintenance worker, librarian, nurse, painter, plumber, social workers, teacher and teaching assistant.

Another concern to note is that while the task force is considering a plan that offers early retirement incentives, we are at a point in time when the work force is aging rapidly and the counties, as well as the state, are stressing recruiting and retaining employees to maintain a qualified, knowledgeable skilled work force rather than offering inducements for early retirement.

IV. PENSION PLAN ISSUES

It is essential that proper funding be established to cover the costs of adding members to an existing plan or creating a new pension plan.

If retroactive coverage in the new plan is allowed, these costs must also be recognized and properly funded.

We should try to avoid a proliferation of pension plans for each group that wishes to change pension coverage.

The pension plans are not in a position to resolve disputes as to whether or not certain groups or individuals should be allowed to participate when pension coverage changes are made.

Additional disability benefits and unreduced early retirement incentives can add considerable volatility to the cost of a small pension plan.

V. CONSENSUS

The group did not reach consensus that enhanced benefits should be provided at all. There was no consensus as to whether all dispatchers should be included in another pension plan, but the following provisions were agreed to if a new plan for 911 operators is established.

Voluntary or Mandatory Participation

If a new benefit plan is established for current emergency dispatchers, it was agreed that participation would be mandatory and all individuals would be moved into the new plan.

Part-Time Versus Full-Time Employment Status

It was agreed that any individual working in a position as an emergency dispatcher on a part-time basis should be included in the new plan design as long as a determination is made on how service credit will be computed for such individuals. It was also agreed that an individual who works in a position that includes dispatcher, in addition to other duties, could be included only if the percentage of time spent met a pre-determined value. The appropriate percentage of time will have to be determined.

Prospective Service

If it is decided that enhanced benefits would be afforded to emergency dispatchers, it should be for prospective service only.

Disability Coverage

It was agreed that the emergency dispatchers do not need enhanced disability coverage.

Formula Range

The task force agreed that if the Legislature decides to investigate the possibility of an enhanced pension benefit for covered employees, the multiplier should fall within the 1.7 percent to 1.9 percent range.

The group agreed to go as low as 1.7 percent because if you drop the normal retirement age to 55, the result is no early retirement deduction. Even with the 1.7 percent multiplier, the benefit is already greatly enhanced. (Normal retirement age in the General Plan is 65. If you retire at age 55, your benefit is reduced by about 40 percent.)

Parity Between the Public Employees

Whatever benefits we agree upon should be the same for state, city and county 911 operators. MSRS would administer the plan for state 911 operators and PERA would administer city and county pensions.

VI. IDENTIFYING JOB CLASSIFICATIONS IMPACTED BY THE STUDY

Cities: Below is a list of cities that have dispatcher positions and the titles they use.

City	Job Title	Hrly Pay	# of FTEs	Hrs Per Wk
Albert Lea	Dispatcher	\$14.92	8	40
Hutchinson	Communications Specialist	\$16.82	4	40
St. Peter	Communications Technician	\$14.48	4	40
Sauk Rapids	Secretary Dispatcher	\$17.76	1	40
E. Grand Forks	Secretary Dispatcher	\$16.00	2	40
Little Falls	Dispatch/Records Technician	\$13.99	2	40
Litchfield	Secretary	\$14.55	1	40
Eveleth	Secretary	\$15.22	1	40
Sauk Centre	Dispatcher/Head Dispatcher/Court Clerk	\$14.13	3	40
Breckenridge	Dispatcher	\$14.13	4	40
Benson	Police Administrative Secretary	\$12.90	1	40
Melrose	Dispatcher	\$14.76	2	40
Roseau	Police Dept. Administrative Asst.	\$13.57	1	40
Perham	Dispatcher	\$11.14	1	40
Ortonville	Police Secretary/Dispatcher	\$18.11	1	40
Bloomington	CIV Dispatcher	\$18.93	12	40
Eagan	Dispatcher	\$20.77	10	40
Burnsville	911 Dispatcher	\$18.63	9	40
Eden Prairie	Telecommunicator	\$19.78	7	40
Minnnetonka	Dispatcher	\$19.37	7	40
Apple Valley	Police Dispatcher	\$21.81	8	40
Edina	Communications Specialist	\$20.36	7	40

St. Louis Park	Dispatcher	\$18.78	9	40
Lakeville	Communications Technician	\$19.36	7	40
Maplewood	Dispatcher	\$19.23	8	40
Richfield	Dispatcher	\$19.26	5	40
Cottage Grove	Dispatcher	\$16.99	6	40
Brooklyn Center	Dispatcher	\$17.48	6	40
Oakdale	Dispatcher	\$15.83	2	40
White Bear Lake	Dispatcher	\$17.06	4	40
W. St. Paul	Dispatcher	\$18.37	6	40
Hopkins	Dispatcher	\$16.54	5	40
Stillwater	Dispatcher	\$20.30	2	40

The City of Minneapolis has a police-fire dispatcher classification and a 911 Operator-C classification.

State:

Job Class	Job Code	# of Employees
Radio Communications Operator	583	77
Radio Communications Supervisor	777	13
Security/Communication System Monitor	2028	7

Attachment 1

10/14/02--Submitted by Paul Cegla, Hennepin County

Telecommunicators' Turnover Status Sheet - Overall View

2002 Authorized Strength = 42

Hired = 9

Resigned = 5

Terminated = 0

Changed Job Class = 0

12% Turnover Rate of Authorized Staff

Reason	Status
Real estate business	Resigned
Unknown	Resigned
Other law enforcement	Resigned
Family problems	Resigned
Unknown	Resigned

2001 Authorized Strength = 42

Hired = 7

Resigned = 7

Terminated = 0

Changed Job Class = 3

24% Turnover Rate of Authorized Staff

Reason	Status
Wouldn't have passed probation	Resigned
Family obligations	Resigned
Promoted to Telecomm. Sgt	Changed job class
Medical reasons	Resigned
Not compatible with job	Resigned
Personal reasons	Resigned
Returned to school	Resigned
Change of career (teacher)	Resigned
Promoted to Telecomm. Sgt	Changed job class
Went to CRC position	Changed job class

2000 Authorized Strength = 42

Hired = 10.5

Resigned = 12

Terminated = 0

Changed Job Class = 0

29% Turnover Rate of Authorized Staff

Reason	Status
Unknown	Resigned
Child care	Resigned
Relocating	Resigned
Personal reasons	Resigned
HCMC	Resigned
Marriage-Relocating	Resigned
Incompatible with job	Resigned
Day care issues/Shift work	Resigned
Unknown	Resigned
Metro Airports Commission	Resigned
Went back to former job	Resigned
Personal financial priorities	Resigned

1999 Authorized Strength = 42

Hired = 10

Resigned = 9

Terminated = 0

Changed Job Class = 0

21% Turnover Rate of Authorized Staff

Reason	Status
Didn't specify	Resigned
Didn't specify	Resigned
Incompatible with job	Resigned
Incompatible with job	Resigned
Eden Prairie PD	Resigned
HC Property Services	Resigned
Accepted another dispatch job	Resigned
HCMC	Resigned
Didn't specify	Resigned

1998 Authorized Strength = 40

Hired = 5.5

Resigned = 2

Terminated = 1

Changed Job Class = 2

13% Turnover Rate of Authorized Staff

Reason	Status
Didn't pass probation	Terminated
Didn't specify	Resigned
Promoted to Telecomm. Sgt	Changed job class
Public Safety Agency	Resigned
Promoted to Telecomm. Sgt	Changed job class

1997 Authorized Strength = 40
 Hired = 7
 Resigned = 3
 Terminated = 1
 Changed Job Class = 1
 13% Turnover Rate of Authorized Staff

Reason	Status
Deceased	Deceased
Other law enforcement	Resigned
Promoted to Telecomm. Sgt	Changed job class
Didn't pass probation	Terminated
HCMC	Resigned

1996 Authorized Strength = 39
 Hired = 5
 Resigned = 3
 Terminated = 2
 Changed Job Class = 0
 13% Turnover Rate of Authorized

Reason	Status
Incompatible with job	Resigned
Terminated	Terminated
Didn't pass probation	Terminated
HC Social Services	Resigned
New Hope Fire Dept	Resigned

1995 Authorized Strength = 39
 Hired = 12
 Resigned = 4
 Terminated = 1
 Changed Job Class = 2
 18% Turnover Rate of Authorized Staff

Reason	Status
Didn't specify	Resigned
Incompatible with job	Resigned
Promoted to Telecomm. Sgt	Changed job class
Didn't specify	Resigned
Didn't pass probation	Terminated
Promoted to deputy	Changed job class
Relocating	Resigned

1994 Authorized Strength = 37

Hired = 11

Resigned = 3

Terminated = 1

Changed Job Class = 2

16% Turnover Rate of Authorized Staff

Reason	Status
St Paul Fire Dept	Resigned
Relocating	Resigned
Personal reasons	Resigned
Promoted to Telecom. Sgt	Changed job class
Promoted to Telecom. Sgt	Changed job class
Didn't pass probation	Terminated

1993 Authorized Strength = 29

Hired = 5

Resigned = 2

Terminated = 2

Changed Job Class = 0

14% Turnover Rate of Authorized Staff

Reason	Status
Didn't pass probation	Terminated
Police officer w/Apple Valley	Resigned
Didn't pass probation	Terminated
PT position with Crystal PD	Resigned

Attachment 2

Minneapolis 911 Call Volume and Other Calls

10/23/02--Submitted by Chris Cowen, AFSCME:

2000 Totals by Month

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
911 Calls Rec'd	29,866	28,858	32,900	34,648	39,434	40,562	43,168
348/347 Calls Rec'd	20,676	18,718	20,516	19,553	21,222	21,468	22,936
Total Incoming Calls	50,542	47,576	53,416	54,201	60,656	62,030	66,104
Police CCNs	27,939	30,008	33,838	32,213	35,345	35,772	35,085
Fire CCNs	2,863	2,562	2,774	2,643	2,990	2,888	3,054
Channel 7	10,740	12,731	14,403	12,925	13,850	13,147	12,534

	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		Yrly
911 Calls Rec'd	41,121	36,222	34,045	30,373	30,135		421,332
348/347 Calls Rec'd	22,148	21,279	22,088	18,674	19,190		248,468
Total Incoming Calls	63,269	57,501	56,133	49,047	49,325		669,800
Police CCNs	36,827	35,045	33,971	27,579	27,093		390,715
Fire CCNs	3,034	2,980	3,055	2,755	3,086		34,684
Channel 7	13,649	13,479	13,229	11,277	10,878		152,842

2001 Totals by Month

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
911 Calls Rec'd	28,222	27,059	31,920	34,100	37,858	40,598	40,758
348/347 Calls Rec'd	18,083	17,046	19,388	19,058	20,720	21,193	22,054
Total Incoming Calls	46,305	44,105	51,308	53,158	58,578	61,791	62,812
Police CCNs	28,511	23,014	28,610	30,964	34,520	35,549	35,822
Fire CCNs	2,836	2,527	2,754	2,747	2,925	2,942	3,278
Channel 7	11,981	9,722	11,803	11,962	12,621	12,970	11,703

	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		Yrly
911 Calls Rec'd	41,076	38,339	37,981	35,714	32,798		426,423
348/347 Calls Rec'd	21,409	19,447	20,883	18,752	16,967		235,000

Total Incoming Calls	62,485	57,786	58,864	54,466	49,765		661,423
Police CCNs	36,292	33,011	31,956	29,474	28,595		376,418
Fire CCNs	3,426	2,829	3,006	2,880	2,774		34,924
Channel 7	12,124	11,673	11,720	10,977	11,093		140,349

2002 Totals by Month

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
911 Calls Rec'd	31,067	28,460	31,599	34,607	38,131	41,617	44,113
348/347 Calls Rec'd	16,566	15,040	16,980	17,285	18,390	18,996	19,246
Total Incoming Calls	47,633	43,500	48,579	51,892	56,521	60,613	63,359
Police CCNs	28,138	26,680	27,580	29,307	32,603	33,343	34,506
Fire CCNs	2,657	2,445	2,820	3,058	2,755	2,967	3,210
Channel 7	11,325	10,776	11,775	12,209	13,237	13,008	13,718

	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		Yrly
911 Calls Rec'd	44,920						
348/347 Calls Rec'd	19,741						
Total Incoming Calls	64,661						
Police CCNs	34,781						
Fire CCNs	3,036						
Channel 7	14,197						

Attachment 3

MINNEAPOLIS EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Subject: Minimum Staff

In order to run MECC at maximum efficiency and productivity, minimum staffing levels have been established. These staffing levels are based on the volume of business which fluctuates by time of the day as well as time of the year. Staffing levels are not only based on the number of people who normally work any given position but also on the total number of bodies that can be utilized in another area. (Example: dispatchers working as an operator.) The purpose of having and maintaining minimum staffing levels is to ensure there are always adequate staffing to handle routine day or day business as well as any critical incident that may occur.

Minimum scheduling levels are not the same as minimum staffing. Employee scheduling is based on the number of employees scheduled at any given time. It is in the best interest of the center to maximize the number of employees scheduled in order to prevent the assignment of costly overtime. Whenever possible, management will attempt to schedule on above minimum staffing levels. If a request for incidental time is made when the scheduling level is one above minimums, the request may be granted. Conditionally, that is, if no employee calls in sick, causing staffing levels to fall below minimums. Such requests are not automatically considered. There may be occasions when staffing levels must be above minimums, due to special events, training or employee meetings to reviews. Such occasions should be identified in advance whenever possible by the supervisor.

Under normal circumstances the day shift (06:30 to 14:45) staffs 12 employees until 10:30 and 13 after 10:30. Staffing minimums are as follows:

06:30 Staffing minimums 7 dispatchers/5 operators 6 dispatchers/6 operators 5 dispatchers/7 operators
--

10:30 Staffing minimums 7 dispatchers/6 operators 6 dispatchers/7 operators

As 5 dispatchers after 10:30 do not allow for a 3 channel dispatch configuration, the minimum is set at 6.

On holidays the affected supervisor may choose to work one below minimums, depending on anticipated workload.

On the middle shift, minimum staffing levels are determined by seasonal levels. From: May-September, staffing level is set at 15 employees which can be either:

7 dispatchers/8-911 operators 8 dispatchers/7-911 operators
--

October-April, staffing level is set at 14 employees which can be:

7 dispatchers/7-911 operators
 8 dispatchers/6-911 operators
 6 dispatchers/8-911 operators

On the night shift, minimum staffing levels are determined by seasonal activity levels as well as time of day. From: May-September, staffing level is set at 14 employees, Sunday through Thursday, 15 employees on Fridays and Saturdays at 22:30.

If the level is 14, it can either be 7 dispatchers/7-911 operators or 8 dispatchers/6-911 operators.
 If the level is 15, it can either be 8 dispatchers/7-911 operators or 7 dispatchers/8-911 operators.

May-September, staffing level is set at 13 employees, Sunday through Saturday at 02:30 which can be either:

7 dispatchers/6-911 operators
 6 dispatchers/7-911 operators

October-April, staffing level is set at 14 employees, Sunday through Saturday at 22:30 which can be:

7 dispatchers/7-911 operators
 8 dispatchers/6-911 operators
 6 dispatchers/8-911 operators

October-April, staffing level is set at 13 employees, Sunday through Saturday at 02:30 which can be either:

7 dispatchers/6-911 operators
 6 dispatchers/7-911 operators

In these quieter months of the year, the supervisors on nights will have discretionary power to drop minimums by one at 02:30 on non-weekend nights if the workload level permits it.

May through September

Shift	Staffing Times	Dispatchers	Operators	Total	Comments
Days	0630-1030	5/6	7/6	12	
	1030-1430	6/7	7/6	13	
Mids	1430-2230	8	7	15	

		7	8	15	
Nights	2230-0230	7/8	7/6	14	Sun-Thu
		7/8	8/7	15	Fri/Sat
	0230-0630	7/6	6/7	13*	

*At Supervisor's discretion, one below the total minimum is acceptable between the hours of 02:30 and 06:30.

October through April

Shift	Staffing Times	Dispatchers	Operators	Total	Comments
Days	0630-1030	5/6	7/6	12	
	1030-1430	6/7	7/6	13	
Mids	1430-2230	7/8/6	7/6/8	14	
Nights	2230-0230	7/8/6	7/6/8	14	
	0230	0630	7/6	6/7	13*

* At Supervisor's discretion, one below the total minimum is acceptable between the hours of 02:30 and 06:30.

Attachment 4

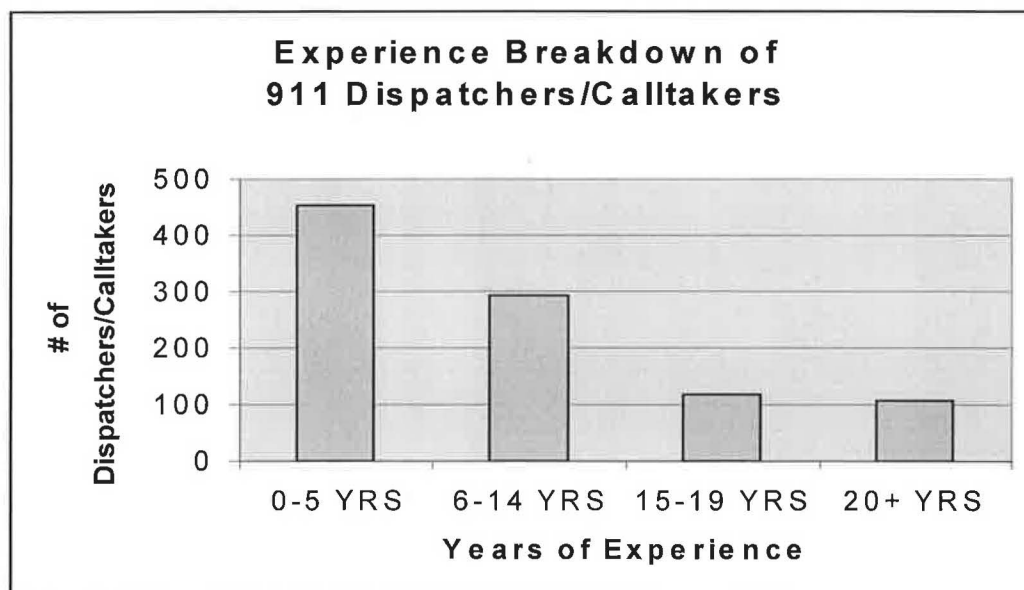
10/22/02--Submitted by Rick Juth, MN State Patrol:

Attached are the results of our survey of the 119 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in Minnesota. 81 PSAPs responded. Some of them were unable to provide all the information requested. In those cases, fields were left blank.

The following is a summary of the survey results:

PSAP	FTE DISP	PTE DISP	FTE CALL	PTE CALL	0-5 YRS	6-14 YRS	15-19 YRS	20+ YRS
81	746	204	21	0	454	293	117	107

PSAP	UNITS	CALLS	EVENTS
81	2,323	2,138,237	2,836,920



CALL TYPES

- Aircraft disasters
- Barricaded suspect
- Breaches in security
- Domestic assault in progress
- Farm accidents
- High risk traffic stop
- Home invasion
- Kidnapping-child abduction
- Multi-vehicle crashes with multiple injuries
- Person not breathing
- Armed robbery in progress
- Bomb threats - aboard aircraft & in buildings
- Car-jacking
- Drowning
- High risk search warrant on drug related cases
- High risk warrant arrest
- Hostage situation
- Major forest fires
- Officer needs help/officer down
- Police pursuits

- School shooting hostages
- Structure fire
- Threats of terrorism
- Trouble in jail

- Shots fired
- Suicidal person
- Tornadoes
- Unknown disturbance

Attachment 5

Excerpts of Testimonials Submitted by a Variety of Emergency Dispatchers Throughout the State.

Submitted 12/3/02 by a dispatcher with 17 years of experience.

The past several hirings we have done over the past 3 years has been very difficult. Dispatchers are required to pass the same background/psychological requirements as police officers and firefighter/paramedics. This narrows the field of candidates down. On our last list we had 2 eligible applicants out of 53 applications. We routinely wash out 75 percent of all candidates based on backgrounds alone. The past 5 dispatchers we hired had no experience in dispatching or law enforcement when they started. Currently, all these dispatchers have less than 2 years experience. Finding good dispatchers is getting harder to do.

As for the work environment, it is lacking. Unlike law enforcement, a dispatcher must sit for 8 to 10 hours a day. They all wear headsets which can affect their hearing. We have had 3 dispatchers report hearing loss based on unexpected feedback from radios and telephones. We have been fortunate that none of them have suffered a permanent hearing loss. Dispatchers must always have someone performing their job. If a dispatcher is working alone, in order to have a break for the restroom/lunch/etc., someone else must be covering their job. Because of the level of technology necessary to do the job, often a replacement cannot be found from within the ranks of patrol supervisors/officers. This means that there are times when a dispatcher cannot use the restroom for up to and over 4 hours at a time. This also means that they cannot eat lunch, except at their console. They can't stretch, walk around or change their focus further than their headset cord can reach. With the repetitive nature of their job, we have had dispatchers experience carpal tunnel. One dispatcher has been placed on permanent disability due to repetitive stress injuries.

Now let's talk about stress. Patrol officers/firefighters deal with one situation at a time. While they face physical dangers, they do not face the same psychological stresses that a dispatcher does. Imagine yourself keeping a parent on the phone whose baby has just died, while waiting for help to arrive on the scene. Imagine yourself listening to other phones ring, knowing that they need to be answered while you are talking to that parent. Imagine yourself talking with the victim of abuse while the suspect is trying to break down the door and all you can do is hope and pray that the officers arrive before you (as the dispatcher) hear shots fired. This is what dispatchers face everyday. While they take routine calls about parking, theft and barking dogs, they need to be just as prepared at a moments notice to deal with the true emergencies. This takes a toll physically on all dispatchers. High blood pressure, depression and weight control are just some of the manifestations of stress in the dispatch world.

Having said all this, dispatching is a wonderful profession. The dispatchers who stay long term are dedicated to making a difference in the lives of those around them. They are the lifeline for many officers, paramedics and firefighters as well as the citizens who call in need of assistance. But like patrol officers and firefighters, this is a young person's profession. The overall reasons for early retirement for those professions are the same. Again, imagine a 65-year-old dispatcher needing to make the life and death decisions that dispatchers make each day. At this time, dispatchers have no options. They are not eligible for early retirement under PERA. They cannot take early Social Security. They are being forced to either leave the profession, which a great many do, or live with the knowledge that as they age, they may be unable to perform the demanding tasks of their chosen profession.

I ask you to consider what the dispatchers see as the strengths and weakness of their retirement plans as you make decisions which affect not only the dispatchers, but the entire public safety network.

Submitted by a dispatcher that has worked for a county for more than 12 years:

I have seen an increase in call-load, radio traffic, numbers of officers on the street and in general business overall. I have seen our department increase its staffing of 7 full-time people and 2 part-time people to our current level of 9 full-time and 5 part-time dispatchers. We have migrated from a "paper and pencil" operation to using sophisticated computer software, to running multiple applications to do our job. There have been many changes over the years.

Currently, police officers and fire fighters have age-defined retirement plans. Custody officers also have a plan for this. However, dispatchers do not have this option. Under the current PERA rules, I will be dispatching until I turn 65 to receive full benefits. This should not be the case. 911 dispatchers answer hundreds of phone calls each shift. Each phone call could be a life-or-death phone call for that caller. These calls may come in on 911, administrative lines, "transfer lines" that other departments can patch a call to, or any combination. It is the dispatchers job to determine what is needed for that call, whether it is police, fire, or EMS personnel. Many calls require a combination of the three. This can be very taxing on dispatchers, both physically and mentally.

When a police officer is dispatched to the scene of a call, the dispatcher gives that officer the appropriate information. The officer knows that he/she is responding to his call, that there are weapons present, that there are only two people known to be causing a problem and that people are yelling and hitting each other. How does that officer get the information? Through the dispatcher. How does the dispatcher get this information? By talking to the caller, many times hysterical, and calming the caller down enough so that information can be obtained. Many times these calls come in on phone lines that do not show where the call is coming from. The dispatcher then has to find out that information before help can be sent. This is not an easy task with many callers.

The police officer sent to this call is responding and mentally going through what he/she needs to do when on the scene. Making sure the scene is safe, making sure each party has a chance to tell their side of the story, etc. At the same time, the officer is trying to go through this information, the dispatcher is still trying to get more information from this caller about this incident, putting that caller on hold to answer another 911 call from a woman who's husband just collapsed, sending responders to the medical call, going back to the disturbance that one officer is going to, finding out things have escalated and people are hitting each other, putting the call on hold again to answer another 911 call where the neighbor's dog is barking, putting that on hold and returning to the original disturbance. All this takes place in 3-4 minutes before an officer arrives. That 3-4 minutes is a fairly quick response time and for an agency that has responders close by. For _____ County, if that disturbance call is in one corner of the county and the deputies are coming from another, that 3-4 minutes can stretch out to 20-25 minutes in good weather. And while our department does have two people on duty, people do take breaks and may be out of the room for fifteen minutes. We have had many times where both dispatchers are doing that same "juggling act" of phone lines and calls.

In the information provided about departments that have added personnel to help with wireless-phone callers, I can tell you that our department has not been able to do this. Wireless callers have added another hurdle for dispatchers. Anyone can be anyplace, anywhere and call 911. However, many times, they do not know where they are. For two of the wireless providers that ring into our center, we get a phone number of the phone calling us and a tower that is being hit. We still do not know where that caller is. Our center has taken calls from wireless callers in several counties, neighboring states and I recall one

that my partner took one night from the southern US, which he recognized the road number the caller gave from having part of his military training there.

How does a dispatcher learn to do this? Most departments have some sort of “on-the-job training” (OJT). For very small departments, this can be as little as three weeks. For larger departments, the training process can last as long as a couple of years. Our department has a base period of 12 weeks. This can be extended if needed, which it quite often is. During this period, people are taught various computer programs. They are taught various techniques to calm callers down and to extract information from them. They are taught how to give this information out to responders in a format that can easily be understood and organized. Trainees must be taught on OJT that there will be calls that upset them. However, they must be able to handle that call, take a breath and move on to the next line or radio channel. This is very hard for many people and not everyone that starts training will finish. On the OJT period, trainees also get experience working the various shifts. Our department has a minimum of two dispatchers on duty 24 hours each day. This can be a “wash-out” period for trainees, too, as they learn that their body won’t allow them, medically, to be up at all hours, or that their family life suffers too much from not being at home with loved ones.

All of these calls can lend a hand in building up stress for a dispatcher. Dispatchers do not have the “luxury” of being able to be “busy” until the last piece of paperwork is done for an officer. Dispatchers do not have the “luxury” of when being called on the radio, telling the officer, “10-6 (busy) on the phone. Stand by”. When 911 rings in a dispatcher center, that line has to be answered. When the radio burst with traffic, that traffic has to be logged and answered.

I worked with a lady who retired at age 66 from dispatching a few years back. She had trouble hearing the radio at times. She had trouble reading maps. She came across as rude to many people. However, she stayed in the profession. I never had a chance to ask her why she stayed in as long as she did, but I can only imagine it was to keep the retirement benefits building. I know that there have been shifts I have come home from work just exhausted, as most people do at some point, saying, “I just need to get out.” However, I love this job. I love the differences in the calls. I love the people I work with. I could easily go find a 9-5 job, Monday through Friday. But I would not be doing the job I have trained for and love. However, I also know I will not be able to do this job until I am 65.

Lowering the age for dispatchers to 55 will decrease the turnover of departments. It may also prevent errors from being made by people not able to hear the radio or the phone correctly or not able to read a map quickly. In rural areas, many dispatchers already have this as a benefit because they are also custody officers and are vested in that plan. This needs to be a benefit for all dispatchers, whether at a large center, or a small center.

Submitted by City Dispatcher with 12 years of experience:

...While it is true that there are many 911 hang up calls that come in each day, not all of them are the “wrong number”. Some of the hang up calls dispatchers have taken turned out to be domestic assaults, medicals and the like. It takes a dispatcher with experience to know the difference. The 911 hang up calls are treated with the same priority as other calls because there is always the potential of a serious situation. For example: Officers responding to a burglar alarm do so in the same way for each alarm, even if the alarm turns out to be false. The potential for a real burglary in progress is there. The same procedure has to be followed each and every time - just in case it is valid. The same procedure is followed in dispatch for each and every call that is received.

One of the Chiefs commented, “their agency had hired more dispatchers to handle the increase in wireless calls, so stress isn’t an issue”. I doubt that hiring a few dispatchers took care of every problem in that PSAP. It is not just the amount of calls that cause the dispatchers stress; it is the combination of many things. The type of calls that are received: suicides, domestics, assaults, medicals, the always present responsibility of officer safety, the shift work that is necessary for a 24 hours PSAP, long hours spent in one place and having to multitask are just a few examples of stressors. I have never heard of any PSAP that has as many or more dispatchers than they need. Most of the agencies I am familiar with would welcome additional dispatchers. Their hiring of more dispatchers to handle wireless calls is commendable. But as the use goes up and the wireless calls increase, will that Chief keep adding on to his dispatch staff? Do his/her current dispatchers feel they have enough dispatchers to cover every shift and that there is never any stress? I doubt that the answer is “Yes!”

Attachment 6



Responses to NASRA Survey Emergency Dispatch (911) Operators

This survey was conducted October 8-22, 2002, in response to a request from a NASRA member, seeking information about retirement benefits for emergency dispatch (911) operators.

1. Does your retirement system provide pension benefits for emergency dispatch employees (911 operators)?

Yes: 13
No: 4

2. Under what plan are 911 operators covered?

General employees: 10
Other: 3

- Regular Class (comparable to general employees but not treated as a separate retirement plan).
- If working for an eligible public employer, 911 operators would be under the General Employees Plan.
- General [plan] but participation of the district is optional.

3. Are 911 operators eligible for any pension benefits that are different than for other participants of the same plan?

Yes: 0
No: 13

4. What are the normal retirement provisions for employees who are 911 operators?

- Under the DB Plan: Regular Class is 62/6; 30 years regardless of age. Under DC Plan - Vesting occurs after 1 year of service and normal retirement provision is not applicable.
- Plan 1 Age 60 with 5 years of service Any age with 30 years of service Plan 2 Age 65 with 5 years of service Plan 3 Age 65 with at least 10 years of service credit or Age 65 with 5 years of service include 12 months after age 54 Age 65 with 5 years of service earned at the time of transfer from Plan 2.
- Non-Hazardous Classification: Age 65/1 month of service credit.
- 60/5 55/25 any age/30
- 30 yrs at any age; Age 60 with at least 5 yrs

- 5 yrs/age 60 25yrs/any age 20yrs/any age
- 65/5 60/25 any age/30
- 65/1 62/10 Rule of 85
- 65/5 or Rule of 90
- 60/no minimum
- Same as regular fund previously described
- Any age /30; 65/4

5. *What are the early retirement provisions for 911 operator employees?*

- Under the DB Plan: Regular Class is 42 years and 1 month old/6 years. Reduction is 5 percent per year prorated on a month-by month basis. Under the DC Plan: Vesting occurs after 1 year of service and early retirement provision is not applicable.
- 50/10
- Plan 1: Age 55 with 25 years service. Plan 2: Age 55 with 20 years of service with actuarially reduced benefit for retirement prior to retirement at age 65. Plan 3: Age 55 with at least 10 years of service with an actuarially reduced benefit prior to retirement at age 65. Age 55 with 30 years of service with an actuarially reduced benefit at 3 percent per year for the difference between retirement age and age 65.
- Non-Hazardous Classification: Age 55/5 years (reduced benefit); any age/25 years (reduced benefit); any age/27 years (unreduced benefit).
- none
- 25 yrs age 55 with at least 10 yrs
- 60/5 50/20
- 55/10
- 55/5
- 50/10, Rule of 70
- none

Attachment 7

Workers' Compensation Claims

County	Period Covered	Number of Workers Comp Claims		Number of Positions	
		Correction Officers	911 Dispatchers	Correction Officers	911 Dispatchers
Carver	1999 thru 2001 to date	8*	1	39	11
Dakota	1991 thru 9/2001	114**	11	NA	12
St. Louis	2000	3	0	48	37
Sherburne	2000 & 2001 to date	10	0	49	9
Stearns	2000 & 2001 to date	NA	26***	NA	22
Washington	1997 thru 9/2001	94	12	75	14
Winona	2000 & 2001 to date	18	2	NA	NA

* Carver County correction officers are in the "detention deputy" job class.

** Correction officers count includes assistant probation officers who are members of PERA Correctional Plan.

*** 24 of 26 claims relate to air quality issues contributed to by car exhaust in adjacent basement parking ramp.

Submitted by the Association of MN Counties on 12/23/02

This is a compilation of information received from the counties (32 counties responded). The totals under each year represent the number of workers' compensation claims in those occupations. The "total # of employees" column represents the total number of employees employed in those positions by the responding counties.

	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	Total # of Employees
Corrections	275	222	191	171	183	1689
Dispatchers	36	28	42	32	22	412 & 17 Part time

Claims submitted by State Patrol Dispatchers in the past five years:

Year	No. of Claims
1997	2
1998	4
1999	3
2000	7
2001	6
2002	3

Information provided by the Minnesota State Patrol

Workers Compensation Claims and Number of Employees for 911 Dispatchers (911) and Correction Officers (COs), submitted by MICA and AMC.

	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	Total	WC Claims Based on 2001 WC Claims	WC Claim Rate Based on average of 1997 to 2001 WC claims
911	24	16	33	17	18	134	2.32%	2.09%
COs	111	89	67	66	101	634	17.51%	13.69%

Workers Compensation Claims: Claim statistics provided by the Department of Labor and Industry².

Injury Year	# of Claims		911	PA	911**
	Public Administration (PA)*				
1995	1125	5	0.81%	1.26%	
1996	979	5	0.70%	1.26%	
1997	1069	2	0.77%	0.50%	
1998	1131	5	0.81%	1.26%	
1999	1443	3	1.04%	0.75%	
2000	1339	4	0.96%	1.01%	
Total	7086	24	5.10%	6.03%	

***Public Administration Comparison Group
PERA and MSRS 911 Job Classes

**139,066 total employees
398 total employees**

² Claim statistics pertain to indemnity claims. Indemnity claims are claims in which indemnity benefits are paid. Indemnity benefits include wage-loss benefits, and survivor benefits. The remaining claims are medical-only claims. Those claims with medical costs but not indemnity benefits. Approximately 20 percent of all paid workers' compensation claims in Minnesota are indemnity benefits. However, indemnity costs make up about 55 percent of total costs.

Average Age at Injury for Indemnity Claimants (1995-2000)

	Public Administration		911 Dispatchers	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Age at injury	41.8	42.0	40.8	38.2

Average weeks of total disability for indemnity claimants (1995-2000)

	Public Administration		911 Dispatchers	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Weeks of total disability	6.6	2.2	12.8	38.2

Average Total Indemnity Paid (1995-2000)

	Public Administration		911 Dispatchers	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Total indemnity paid	\$5,597	\$1,350	\$9,696	\$2,100

Part of Body for Indemnity Claims (1995-2000)

	Public Administration	911 Dispatchers
Head-neck	348	2
Upper extremity	1712	12
Back-spine	1498	1
Trunk-body	457	2
Lower extremity	1725	2
Multiple parts	1170	4
Other-unknown	171	1
Total	7081	24

Nature of Injury for Indemnity Claims (1995-2000)

	Public Administration	911 Dispatchers
Burn	61	
Contusion	287	1
Cuts	326	
Disloc	142	
Fracture	470	1
Sprains	2840	3
Other-cumul	270	7
Multi-other inj	802	2
Illnesses	149	2
Unknown	1734	8
Total	7081	24

Cause of Injury for Indemnity Claims (1995-2000)

	Public Administration	911 Dispatchers
Exposure	114	1
Caught	133	
Cut	172	
Fall	1554	3
Motor vehicle	504	1
Strain	2830	12
Contact	309	
Struck by	345	2
Misc	588	2
Unknown	533	3
Total	7081	24

Attachment 8

LIST OF RESOURCES

Position Papers

"Retirement Coverage for Emergency Dispatchers Paper", written by Chris Cowen, Political Action Director/Lobbyist, AFSCME. Includes "Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Dispatchers Joining the Arizona State Retirement System's Corrections Officer Retirement Plan".

"Retirement Coverage for 911 Dispatchers and Probation Officers", written by Michele Tuchner, Minnesota State Patrol.

Paper untitled submitted by Robert Johnson, Teamsters

Addition of 911 Operators and Probation Officers, written by Randy Nelson, Department of Corrections.

"Thoughts/Issues on Expansion of the PERA Local Correctional Plan", written by Keith Carlson, Metropolitan Inter-County Association.

"Public Employee Retirement Association Plan for Dispatchers", written by Gary Carlson and Anne Finn, Intergovernmental Relations Department, League of Minnesota Cities. Includes the following attachments: List of cities that employ dispatchers; a list of the questions included in the survey distributed to human resource directors; a summary of the human resource director survey responses; and, sample city job descriptions for dispatchers.

"Standard Operating Procedures--Minimum Staffing", submitted by Minneapolis Emergency Communications Center.

"Master Glossary Standard of 911 Terminology", published by the National Emergency Number Association, updated October 2002.

Articles:

Effective 911 Dispatching Identified, taken from the Legislative Auditor's Web Site at www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/pe9806.htm.

Interoffice Memorandum:

"Updated Police Dispatcher/Operators Information", Lindsey Alexander, Finance, City of Minneapolis which includes budget reporting and salary forecasts.

"Correctional Plan", written by Paul Cegla, Hennepin County, dated 11/8/2001.

Other:

Workers' Compensation Data, submitted by the Department of Labor and Industry.

Workers' Compensation Data, submitted by Minnesota State Patrol.

Workers Compensation Claims and Number of Employees for 911 Dispatchers (911) and Correction Officers , submitted by MICA and AMC.

Testimonials submitted by a variety of emergency dispatchers.

Note: If you are interested in getting copies of any of the listed resources, please send your request to Paige Purcell at MSRS, 60 Empire Drive, Suite 300, St. Paul, MN 55103-3000.