

Police Department that is providing Police, Fire and Fire-Paramedic Dispatching from their own communications center with less dispatchers normally on duty 24 hours a day.

We are still "studying" this question. From the survey of similar size/calls for service agencies, it appears that (with only one exception) agencies who provide Police, Fire and Paramedic dispatching services, try to staff and provide at least 2 Dispatchers on duty at almost all times.

Survey comments suggest that a single dispatcher who must dispatch Police, Fire and Paramedic services simultaneously is quickly overwhelmed. This is because paramedic dispatching normally requires that the Dispatcher stay on line with the caller to provide continuous first aid and medical instruction and gain valuable "pre-arrival" medical information until the Paramedics are on scene.

Dispatching a paramedic call can demand 100% of the dispatcher's attention and time until paramedics arrive on scene. This is because many paramedic emergency calls are routinely also Police calls or covered by other Fire units. In even these routine emergencies it quickly becomes more than a single Dispatcher can reasonably handle for the duration of the call. As a result the dispatching of other new emergencies (911), non-emergency phones, responding to police radio and inquiry, or other fire unit activity cannot be done without some level of compromise to safety. To paraphrase one agencies comment on this level of dispatch staffing..."the only way a single dispatcher can dispatch Police, Fire and Paramedic units is to never have an emergency".

Caution may be in order for police agencies that are involved in paramedic dispatching or are considering providing such services. From the survey responses it appears that some agencies are attempting to provide paramedic dispatching but may be unaware of local or County Emergency Medical Services requirements to train and then quarterly re-certify their dispatchers on paramedic dispatching or use of medical instructions while awaiting paramedic response. These agencies simply dispatch the paramedic call and may even disconnect from the caller without attempting to give instruction or obtain additional medical information that may be valuable to the paramedics in their pre-arrival preparations.

It is uncertain as to what liability this may create for agencies who are providing paramedic dispatching but not meeting their County EMS training or pre-arrival first/aid instruction requirements. It is strongly recommended that agencies should contact their local County EMS Director to determine if a standard has been established for training or re-certification of paramedic dispatchers and providing pre-arrival medical/first aid instruction.