

ABOUT THE GRAND JUNCTION REGIONAL COMMUNICATION CENTER

The Grand Junction Regional Communication Center (GJRCC) is a 24 hour, 365 day a year operation, responsible for answering 911 and non-emergency calls. The GJRCC is located in the Grand Junction Police Department and has a staff of 45 dispatchers and supervisors who dispatch for 9 Law Enforcement and 13 Fire/EMS agencies in Mesa County.

QUICK FACTS:

- In 2011, the GJRCC was named the Communication Center of the Year for the State of Colorado.
- In 2016, The GJRCC dispatched 157,213 incidents and processed 316,908 telephone calls, of which 70,107 were on 9-1-1 emergency lines.

WHAT IS A DAY LIKE FOR A 911 DISPATCHER?

The Communication Center plays several pivotal roles in the community. Here, you and your team of coworkers act as a hub, connecting all of the Mesa County Law, Fire, and EMS agencies with the public. You take calls from the community requesting help, ranging from emergency (fires, medical issues, crimes currently unfolding, etc.) to the routine (cold crimes, custody questions, and so on). You then dispatch the responding agencies to provide requested help. Even though you have dispatched the call you still continue to check the safety of the responders as they handle the incident.

It is important to know that being a 911 Dispatcher is not a normal 9 am to 5 pm kind of job. This position requires a unique set of skills. Obviously, a dispatcher works under extremely stressful conditions at times but also must remain awake and alert throughout an 8 – 10 hour shift when much of that shift might be very quiet and uneventful. Incidents may come in clusters in a short amount of time, or they may be spread sparsely throughout the shift.

People call 911 when they don't know what else to do. In this state, people are often afraid, angry, confused, panicked, and less than enthused about answering questions. Your patience and sympathy will be tested, but you have continual opportunities to help those that have nowhere else to turn. You can take pride in being a last resort, or an only resort, to people in crisis. You are a reassuring and confident voice in the middle of a citizen's chaos. You are the first point of help. You start helping even before a police car or an ambulance ever gets on scene.

The position requires the ability to interpret maps and drawings, use independent judgment to make good, quick decisions, and perform multiple tasks in a high stress environment. While the 911 team enjoys humor and camaraderie, they take their work seriously. They take pride in helping the citizen callers through some of the most frightening, stressful experiences of their lives. Confidentiality is required and many aspects of your work cannot be discussed with anyone. You may never know the outcome of many incidents. All callers must be treated with courtesy and professionalism and given your full attention. This code of behavior is also the standard by which the 911 team treats one another.

Every day is different in the Communication Center. There will be good days and there will be bad days. Some days you will save a life, others you may assist in solving a crime but some days you will be witness to a tragedy. It is important to remember that you are not alone in any of it. The dispatchers are a team; we celebrate the victories and we comfort one another through the struggles.

WHAT TYPE OF TRAINING DOES A NEW DISPATCHER RECEIVE?

Dispatchers go through 9-12 months of extensive training. You'll be guided through a series of consoles, including Call Take (taking the public's requests for service, both emergency and otherwise) and dispatching Law, Fire, and EMS. After experiencing a variety of trainers and working each shift, you will be permitted to work without a trainer. And even though you are now "on your own," you are still and always will be part of a larger team. When a critical incident occurs, an awesome thing happens; everyone in the Center—dispatchers, supervisors, agents—all quietly and quickly work together until the situation is resolved. It is like choreography, or a hive where all the bees work in concert. The teamwork is phenomenal, and essential to making the Communication Center the professional organization that it is.

WHAT ARE THE SCHEDULES LIKE?

After training is complete, you will be assigned to a vacant shift. There are six basic shifts that comprise a hybrid 5/8 - 4/10 work schedule:

Day Shift: 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (8 hrs.) or 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (10 hrs.)

Swing Shift: 3:00 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. (8 hrs.) or 3:00 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. (10 hrs.)

Power Shift: 5:00 p.m. to 3:30 a.m. (10 hrs.)

Grave Yards: 9:00 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. (10 hrs.)

Each fall the entire staff bids for their shifts for the coming year based upon seniority. This means that after the training period, the newest dispatchers will likely be working the last shifts available, usually swing shift or grave yard shift and will probably work most weekends and holidays (you will be required to work weekends, holidays, day, swing and/or late shifts with hours and days subject to change).

SO WHAT IS ONE THING I REALLY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE JOB?

You will be joining a very select group of highly skilled "multi-processors." Although the support of your family for your career is essential, no one will understand the types of calls you are fielding more than another 911 dispatcher does. You can expect to receive support and encouragement from all your trainers and co-workers. Everyone tries to help one another whenever and however needed. You will be no stranger to stress, frustration, and heartache. But you will be proud of what you do, and surprised by how much you can do. As you serve the public and the responders that protect them, you can be confident that you make a difference every day.