



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

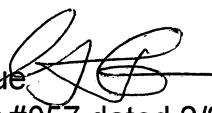
George L. Fosque, Emergency Communications and 911 Director

Thomas F. Cahill, Chief of Emergency Operations

Kenneth T. Pitts, Public Safety Computer Systems Manager

Pat Macher, Administrative Assistant

Memorandum

To: Bob Healy
From: George Fosque 
Re: Council Order #057 dated 2/24/97
Date: 3/10/97

The City Council has asked about staffing shortages in the Emergency Communications Center.

Summary

We have never experienced a staffing shortage that has endangered public safety. In fact, we have strict rules about the minimum staffing of all shifts. Whenever an upcoming shift appears to be short-staffed below specific thresholds we bring in dispatchers on overtime. Each shift is staffed with the appropriate number of personnel, whether working regular time or a mix of regular time supplemented by personnel working overtime.

In addition, we maintain a balance among skill sets available in any workgroup so that both experienced former fire alarm operators and experienced former police dispatchers are always present on a shift.

We always attempt to provide staff with proper meal and rest breaks (we do not allow eating at workstations). We have equipped the Center with an eat-in kitchen that allows meals to be taken within 20 feet of the main dispatch room - so that in an emergency a dispatcher on break can be quickly recalled.

There is always a minimum of 5 persons in the ECC on a non-peak shift with between 6 and 7 available for busier, peak-load shifts. In addition, the Chief of Operations overlays many shifts as does the relief Supervisor -

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providing additional personnel. Both the Chief and the Relief Supervisor staff actual positions to relieve dispatchers for breaks.

Our main staffing problem has been the excessive use of overtime to meet our staffing thresholds. We have recently been recruiting three additional dispatchers (to raise our compliment from 24 to 27) and plan to bring them into Pre-Service Dispatcher Training in late March through early April. This increase in our total compliment should reduce the use of overtime, provide greater relief for training, and provide more scheduling flexibility.

Detail

We have been operating the combined center since July 30, 1996 with a compliment of 24 dispatchers and 6 Supervisors. This compliment provides the pool from which all of the 21 shifts each week are staffed. Staffing ranges from a low of 5 persons per shift (e.g., most 11PM to 7AM shifts) to a high of 8 persons (some weekdays) depending on the time-of-day and day-of-week.

A compliment of 5 persons includes 4 dispatchers and one Supervisor who is a "working foreperson" and spends much of the shift at a regular position. Larger compliments include additional dispatchers working overlay shifts (e.g., Tuesday through Saturday Days) or dispatchers working overtime to match resources with projected workload.

Every shift has a working Supervisor. The Supervisor balances his or her time among work at a dispatch position, relief for dispatchers going on break, and supervision or training duties.

We have created a special workgroup that is staffed by dispatchers working overlay shifts to better match resources to projected workload. Currently, only two persons are in this workgroup: one works M-F days; the other works T-Sat days. The five weekday shifts are the busiest because of the additional burden of non-emergency phone answering (for both the police and fire departments); the presence of many special police and fire units that need dispatch center support; and the influx of persons working at daytime Cambridge businesses.

We hope - with the additional three positions - to staff one or two overlay straight evening positions and to create a position a position for training and vacation relief.. Finally, we note that we always try to staff the first four hours of Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evening into overnight (e.g., from 11PM until 3AM) with an additional dispatcher to give us a

margin of staffing to meet "late-night partying" and bar-closing-related call demands.



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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

March 17, 1997

To The Honorable, The City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report Item Number 20, regarding staffing at the Emergency Communication Center, please find attached a response submitted by George Fosque, Director of Emergency Communications.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/dls
attachment

Consent Agenda #17

S-142

Relative to Awaiting Report Item
Number Twenty, regarding staffing at
the Emergency Communication Center.

In City Council March 17, 1997

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