

Becoming a Dispatcher: Navigating the Hiring Process

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Are you ready to commit to the job of a lifetime? Dispatching can be one of the most rewarding and exciting jobs available. Did you know that at Irvine, the majority of our dispatchers have been on the job 5 years or more? Combine lucrative wages, benefits and excitement and you'll understand why.

Where do I sign up, you ask? First let us ask you a question. Do you know what dispatchers really do? Have you ever toured a dispatch center or sat with a dispatcher to observe their job functions? Unlike other clerically based positions, dispatching is a technically challenging career requiring patience, compassion, common sense, quick thinking and the ability to react under stress, among other traits. The first question a successful candidate should ask, and answer, for themselves is why they want this position above others. Unlike other positions, dispatching requires a considerable commitment on the part of the employee. Commitment to complete the intensive 6 month training program, commitment to work night shift, weekends and holidays, commitment to endure sometimes hostile or intense calls and situations, commitment to work 12 hour shifts without leaving your work station, for no more than a few minutes, if necessary. If you have not addressed your feelings on these matters it is imperative you do so *before you apply for this position*. We are very interested in those persons who have taken the time to research and examine this position and decide it's the job for them. If you aren't sure, the following information may help you decide if this job is for you. Make an informed decision whether to apply or not. It's been our experience that a large percentage of our attrition rate can be attributed to newly hired employees who were not clear about what they were getting into when they took the position.

Ready to take the plunge? Here are the steps involved in the hiring process for the position of Public Safety Dispatcher for the City of Irvine.

THE HIRING PROCESS

1. **Apply.** The first step is completing and turning in the application. During the recruitment process applications can be downloaded from the City's website at <http://agency.governmentjobs.com/irvine/>.
2. **Typing Test.** A typing certificate, if dated within the past 12 months, may be submitted with your application indicating your ability to type at net 45 wpm.

All candidates also have the option of taking a city sponsored typing examination.

3. **Written Test.** The City of Irvine uses the POST Entry-Level Dispatcher Selection Test Battery written test for their applicants. (POST is an acronym for Peace Officer Standards & Training, a division of the California Department of Justice)

The test is designed to measure your aptitude for performing public safety dispatcher work. It measures general abilities that are normally developed over an extended period of time. It is not designed to measure job-specific knowledge or skills that are taught in training. The abilities measured are summarized below:

- **Verbal Ability:** the ability to read and listen to information and identify facts and draw conclusions; and the ability to write clearly.
- **Reasoning:** the ability to apply general rules to specific problems and to attain logical answers; and the ability to correctly follow rules to arrange things or actions in a certain order.
- **Memory:** the ability to store and retrieve facts, details, and other information.
- **Perceptual Ability:** the ability to quickly and accurately compare letters and numbers presented orally and in written form; and the ability to shift back and forth between two or more sources of information, both written and orally imparted, in performing a task.

The battery is comprised of 11 brief tests. Each test is administered with its own set of instructions and is timed separately. The tests range from about 5 minutes to 15 minutes each. The entire battery takes about 2 ½ to 3 hours, including a short break.

Six of the tests use a traditional paper and pencil, multiple choice format. The remaining five tests require that you listen to information and then answer multiple-choice questions contained in a test booklet. Some of the tests require that you take notes while information is being presented. However, your notes will *not* be scored, so you may abbreviate your notes in any manner. Only your final answers marked on the answer sheet will be scored.

4. **Oral Interview.** Successful applicants will be invited to an oral interview. Oral interviews are typically conducted by a 3-person panel consisting of one of the shift supervisors, the Communications Bureau Supervisor and a representative from the City's Human Resource division.
5. **Practical Exercise.** Applicants that score in the average and above average range in the oral interview process may be further evaluated during a sit-along in dispatch. This is a basic, preliminary instruction and quiz designed to

test the applicant's ability to retain information presented as part of the practical exercise.

6. **Determination of Ranking and Eligibility.** Applicants that have passed the above steps are ranked based on the compilation of scores achieved to this point. Depending on the number of vacancies, certain applicants will be chosen to continue with the process. Those chosen are from the top of the ranked list, while the other applicants are placed on the eligibility list for future vacancies.
7. **Polygraph test.** The next step for applicants continuing with the process is the polygraph test. Polygraph tests are used to determine whether past behavior includes actions that are inconsistent with the high standards of integrity required of this position.
8. **Background investigation.** Applicants passing the above steps will undergo a thorough background investigation. The background investigation is based on the concept that past behavior is perhaps the best predictor of future performance. As a government agency the City or Irvine incurs liability if no attempt is made to screen for these behaviors. Applicants should be aware the investigator may interview current and past employers as well as neighbors and relatives during this process.
9. **Psychological evaluation.** Applicants will be evaluated by a City appointed psychologist to determine mental fitness for performing dispatch functions. As part of the psychological evaluation applicants may complete a standardized psychological test, such as the MMPI (Minnesota Multi-Phasic Index).
10. **Medical examination.** As the last step in the hiring process, applicants will be examined by a City appointed physician to determine physical fitness for performing dispatch functions.

Each of the above steps are exclusionary in nature. That is, you must successfully complete each step in order to progress to the next one. This can seem like a daunting and time consuming process, it is not, however, impossible to achieve. Successful candidates can speed the process by responding to appointments as scheduled.

We wish you the best of luck in your endeavor and look forward to working with you!