

Vermont Department of Public Safety  
State Police Division



Public Safety Answering Points (Dispatching Centers)

2020 Fee Structure Report

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Updated February 2020

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## *Current Organization*

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The Vermont State Police currently operates two dispatching services centers commonly referred to as a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). There is one located in each of the two Troop areas (Public Safety Districts). Each of these locations covers approximately half (geographically) of the state. The PSAPs are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide emergency and non-emergency support to the citizens and visitors of Vermont.

The two PSAPs provide full-service dispatching for a number of State Agencies including the Vermont State Police, Vermont Fish and Wildlife, Vermont Liquor Control, Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles (Enforcement and Investigations) and Vermont Agency of Transportation. Additionally, a varying level of dispatching services are provided for 46 fire departments, 20 rescue/EMS departments, 25 police departments, 13 town constabularies and 4 County Sheriffs. The dispatchers have regular interaction with Vermont Department of Corrections, local mental health agencies, Vermont Courts (Family and Criminal), Vermont State's Attorneys, Vermont Department of Child and Family Services and federal agencies including but not limited to the Agency of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Drug Enforcement Administration, US Forestry Service, US Fish and Wildlife, Border Patrol and Immigration and Naturalization.

The dispatchers are most often the initial point of contact for victims and complainants involved in or reporting a variety of incidents to include motor vehicle accidents, burglaries, thefts, domestic and other types of assaults, homicides, deaths, sexual assaults, missing persons, fires, medical emergencies and numerous other complaints. The information they receive is most often by way of regular telephone or E-911 transfer. Once information is received the Dispatcher is responsible for contacting the appropriate agency(s) by telephone, radio or other electronic means and relaying the information accurately and timely while properly recording and documenting the information. After the

initial dispatching process, they are often required to provide regular information updates while monitoring the situation status and units assigned to the incident.

The two State Police PSAPs are currently staffed with 85 employees. 64 are full time employees and 21 of them are temporary. Administrators and supervisors account for 10 of the full-time positions. The supervisors are “working supervisors” required to cover dispatching shifts in addition to their supervisory duties. Personnel costs for State Fiscal Year 2019 were \$6,493,697.13, which includes \$931,374.14 for overtime.

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### *PSAP vs Dispatch Center*

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The titles “PSAP” and “dispatch center” are often inappropriately interchanged and confused. A dispatcher works in a dispatch center and their primary responsibility is to receive information and transfer it to the proper authority. They use identified protocols and procedures to obtain information and then transfer it by radio, telephone or other electronic means (email, text and instant messenger, to name a few). The person that answers an E-911 call (or text) is referred to as a call-taker. When someone calls for assistance using the E-911 system (calls or texts 911) it is a call-taker that answers the call and then directs the call to the appropriate dispatch center depending on the nature and location of the call. A dispatcher and call-taker are two different functions but in some instances are handled by a single person. In Vermont the title of PSAP is reserved for the dispatching centers that also perform E-911 functions.

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### *Vermont PSAPs*

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The State Police PSAPs are two of the six in the state responsible for handling all E-911 calls. This requires most of the dispatchers to perform dual duties. They

will often answer the E-911 call as a call-taker and then transition into the responsible dispatcher for the incident. E-911 funds the PSAPs at a rate of \$22,500 per position and the remainder is based on call volume. The FY 2021 reimbursement for DPS is \$733,484.34. The State PSAPs account for 16 positions and the other PSAPs (Lamoille County Sheriffs, Hartford Police Department, St. Albans Police Department and Shelburne Police Department) account for eight positions. The State Police PSAPs handled 69% (141,738) of all E-911 calls for Vermont in FY 2019.

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*Current Fees Charged by State Police for Dispatching Services*

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In 2016, then DPS Commissioner Keith Flynn suspended DPS charging for the eight local agencies that had been paying fees for dispatching services. This was done with the rationale that since other local agencies were not paying anything, DPS would not charge any local agency until there was an “across the board” charge for all.

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department pays the Department of Public Safety the average salary (with benefits) for 1.5 dispatchers each pay period (26 times annually); however, there is currently no established mechanism or formula for determining an amount to charge an agency for dispatching services. The amounts charged in the past were negotiated and agreed upon during the contract for services on an individual basis.

➤ Prior Assessed Fees

Town / Agency	Annual Charge
Warren	3,600
Lyndonville	7,550
Thetford	7,600
Vernon	11,920
White River Valley	
Ambulance	2,000

Orleans Cty Sheriff	1,720
Swanton PD	5,600

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*Current Dispatching Fee Structures Used in Vermont*

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Various dispatching agencies in Vermont use a variety of formulas and systems to determine the amount they charge for their dispatching services. Some are more cumbersome than others, but their current systems meet their individual needs. They are based on populations, property values, call volumes or a combination thereof and related back to their operating costs. Most of them contract with a limited number of communities and agencies. All of them require what would equate to a significant amount of accounting and administrative work if applied to the State Police and the number of agencies / disciplines we dispatch for.

Outlined below are five examples of dispatching fee structures currently used in Vermont. These are synopsized to provide the basics of the fee structures.

➤ Shelburne PSAP

A per call rate is calculated each year based on their operating budget. The call volume is estimated for the next year by dividing each agency's total calls into the operating budget.

➤ St. Albans PSAP

Total calls for service are reviewed and a dispatch usage formula is developed. The City of St. Albans' percent of usage (approximately 60% for the last seven years) is paid by the City and the remainder is shared between the other stakeholders. The remaining percentage shared by the other stakeholders is assessed on a "per capita" fee.

Using the 60% City usage figure, the formula is:

Total budget X 40% = Total stakeholder / Total population = Per capita rate.

➤ Hartford PSAP

Total call volume of each agency is divided by the total call volume of the center to determine their percentage of the center's volume. This percentage is multiplied by the total operating cost of the center to determine their cost. There is a minimum charge of \$8000.00 (this information is from the 2013 report as Hartford PD has not yet responded to my request for updated data).

➤ Lamoille PSAP

The cost for each town is calculated half on population and half on the town's grand list. One half the operating budget is divided by the total population resulting in a per capita amount. Each town's grand list is divided by the total of all grand lists resulting in a percentage of the amount. The population amount of the budget is then added to the grand list amount of the budget to determine the town's share. The town can further break this down into individual department percentages.

- $\frac{1}{2}$  of budget / total population = per capita. Per capita X town population = population portion of budget.
- Town grand list / total of grand lists = town's % of grand list total.  $\frac{1}{2}$  of budget X town's % = Grand list portion of budget.

The results above are then added together to determine the cost to each town.

➤ Barre City Police Dispatch

The total operating cost of dispatching is divided by the total number of calls for service. This determines a per call cost. A base fee per year is then set based on

what bracket an agency fits into based on call volume. Brackets: 1-100, 101-200, 201-300, 301-400, 401-500. Over 500 calls are charged on a per call basis. Call volumes are estimated and projected for three years with a set contract amount for that time period.

Agency	Calls	Fee
Barre City PD	11764	
Barre City FD/EMS	2595	
Washington County SD	2585	\$9467.00
Williamstown FD	150	\$6768.00
Williamstown Ambulance	408	\$9467.00
Washington FD/Fast Squad	110	\$6768.00

These fees were primarily established several years ago by the City of Barre. In 2006 the originating fees were call volume based with the fees established below. Each year the fees have increased at the rate of 2.75% to 3.5%.

0	100	\$3500
101	200	\$4700
201	300	\$5900
301	400	\$7700
401	500	\$8700

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*New State Police Fee Structure*

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To address the ongoing fiscal challenges, the Commissioner of Public Safety will notify all entities currently receiving dispatching services from a Vermont State

Police PSAP that effective July 1, 2021, a fee will be assessed for the dispatching services provided to them. The fee structure employed will be pursuant to the authority established in Title 20 VSA 1871(i).

*20 V.S.A. § 1871. Department of public safety; commissioner*

*(i) The commissioner of public safety may enter into contractual arrangements to perform dispatching functions for state, municipal or other emergency services, establishing charges sufficient to recover the costs of dispatching. Dispatch positions which are fully funded under such contracts may be authorized under the provisions of 32 V.S.A. § 5(b).*

The goal is to recover dispatching services costs provided to those entities with no other options for dispatching. Fees will be comparable with other dispatch centers to help ensure an equitable yet competitive service that will not undermine services currently provided by other dispatching facilities. This service is only available for those currently receiving dispatching services from the State Police. Those receiving services on a part-time basis would have a reduced rate.

Meetings will be organized and scheduled in the two public safety districts to discuss the fee structure with all affected agencies and departments. They will be scheduled far enough in advance to allow each to discuss the changes with their communities allowing them to adjust future budgets. The necessary steps will be taken to work with each of them independently to address individual issues. No one will be left without dispatching services.

A flat rate annual fee structure based on the organization's discipline (fire, police or rescue) and size (sworn officers or annual calls for service) will be created. Rates will be set for a contract period and only adjusted when the contract is renewed.

➤ Police

Police departments will be categorized by the number of sworn officer positions allotted to their department (1-2, 3-10, 11-15, 16+) and charged a flat rate per year based on the category. It is difficult to charge by call volume alone for some agencies respond to calls without generating an incident number and some are much more active in motor vehicle enforcement than others resulting in limited incident numbers but high demand on dispatching services. The number of incident numbers generated is not necessarily a good indicator of an agency's overall impact on dispatching services. All will be required to work towards acquiring and using mobile data computers.

Police Agency Fee Chart

Number of Officers	Annual Fee
1 to 2	10,000
3 to 10	15,000
11 to 15	30,000
16+	40,000

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*Current Police Agencies Dispatched by State Police*

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Agency size is estimated with input from the Vermont Police Academy

<u>DEPARTMENTS</u>	<u>SIZE</u>		<u>CALLS (2018)</u>	<u>Suggested Charge</u>
	F/T	P/T		
Wilmington	3	2	1470	15,000
Dover*	7	1	1134	15,000
Chester	6	2	1107	15,000

Weathersfield	5	2	642	15,000
Royalton	2	2	363	15,000
Lyndonville	3	0	765	15,000
Brighton	1	0	107	10,000
Bradford	3	1	639	15,000
Thetford	3	0	709	15,000
Canaan	1	0	70	10,000
Orleans Sheriff *	7	8	1908	7,500
Essex Sheriff	5	8	416	30,000
Brandon	5	1	856	15,000
Fair Haven	7	8	2115	30,000
Castleton	4	5	2950	30,000
Vergennes	6	3	1856	30,000
Bristol	4	1	2874	15,000
Winhall	8	1	1084	15,000
Rutland Town	6	1	1053	15,000
Pittsford	1	6	269	15,000
Middlebury *	16	0	484	20,000
Richmond	4	3	1180	15,000
Williston*	16	0	4525	20,000
Swanton	6	10	2073	30,000
Grand Isle Sheriff	3	9	2354	30,000
Berlin	8	4	1557	0
Northfield*	8	3	2124	30,000
Killington	0	3	292	15,000
Bennington Sheriff*	16	18	16	40,000
Total	164	102	<u>36992</u>	<u>542,500</u>

\* Indicates a department with their own current dispatching capabilities that receive dispatching services from the State Police on part-time basis.

Averaging the cost of dispatching, an overall average hourly wage was calculated using all full time dispatchers including supervisors and excluding command staff

and part time employees. The average hourly wage for the Williston PSAP is \$26.46 and the average hourly wage for the Westminster PSAP is \$25.67.

➤ Constabularies

The constables will receive what is referred to as lifeline services. This means they will have the ability to call the PSAP to report incidents they are responding to for officer safety reasons or to request assistance. A majority of the constables that currently receive dispatching services from the State Police work limited hours and primarily provide assistance to a police agency responding to an incident. Those constabularies that engage in regular motor vehicle and criminal enforcement activities will be considered a police department for fee assessment purposes.

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*Current Constabularies Dispatched by State Police*

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<u>Town</u>	<u>Access Level</u>	<u>Dispatch Center</u>
Bethel	Full	VSP Westminster
Castleton	Restricted	VSP Westminster
Fair Haven	Restricted	VSP Westminster
Granville	Full	VSP Westminster
Hartland	Restricted	VSP Westminster
Mendon	Restricted	VSP Westminster
Mt Tabor (x2)	Restricted	VSP Westminster
Pawlet (x2)	Restricted	VSP Westminster
Plainfield	Pending	VSP Williston
Poultney	Full	VSP Westminster
Wallingford	Restricted	VSP Westminster

Warren (x2)	Restricted	VSP Williston
Wells	Restricted	VSP Westminster

➤ Fire and Rescue

Fire and rescue departments would be categorized by the number of annual calls (1-25, 26-100, 101-200, 201-300, 301-400, 400+) and charged a flat rate per year based on category. Call volumes would be projected based on past call volumes and recalculated with the renewal of the contract. Both fire and rescue appear to accurately track and report the number of calls they are activated for. The greatest demand on dispatching services from fire and rescue is the initial notification to the responding organization and their response. A call later determined to be false requires the same initial work by dispatch as a major incident. All would be required to assume command and communications at the scene level once deployed.

Fire Department Fee Chart

<u>Number of Calls</u>	<u>Annual Fee</u>
1 to 10	2,500
11 to 25	5,000
26-100	10,000
101-300	15,000

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*Current Fire Agencies Dispatched by State Police*

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<u>DEPARTMENTS</u>	<u>CALLS (2018)</u>	<u>Suggested Charge</u>
Barnard	73	10,000
Bethel	87	10,000

Broadbrook	0	0
Chelsea	48	10,000
Hancock	11	5,000
Granville	63	10,000
Rochester	35	10,000
Stockbridge	50	10,000
Tunbridge	34	10,000
North Troy	32	10,000
Lowell	33	10,000
Jay	60	10,000
Westmore	7	2,500
Albany	21	5,000
Derby Line	119	15,000
Newport Center	46	10,000
Glover	35	10,000
Charleston	23	5,000
Craftsbury	67	10,000
Brighton	40	10,000
Troy	45	10,000
Middlebury*	72	5,000
Arlington	146	15,000
Shaftsbury	68	10,000
Benson	55	10,000
Brandon	135	15,000
Castleton	173	15,000
Chittenden	53	10,000
Clarendon	89	10,000
Danby / Dorset	61	10,000
Hubbardton	25	5,000
East Wallingford	5	2,500
Ira	18	5,000
Mt. Holly	73	10,000
Pittsford	100	10,000
Pittsfield	24	5,000
Proctor	47	10,000

Rutland Town	194	15,000
Killington	209	15,000
Shrewsbury	16	5,000
Tinmouth	17	5,000
Wallingford	75	10,000
West Haven	14	10,000
West Rutland	95	10,000
Warren	92	10,000
Underhill /Jericho	136	15,000
Total	2904	410,000

\* Indicates a department with their own current dispatching capabilities that receive dispatching services from the State Police on part-time basis.

Rescue Agency Fee Chart

<u>Number of Calls</u>	<u>Annual Fee</u>
Under 25	5,000
26 to 100	10,000
101 to 300	15,000
301-500	20,000
501-1000	25,000
Over 1000	30,000

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*Current Rescue Agencies Dispatched by State Police*

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<u>DEPARTMENTS</u>	<u>CALLS (2018)</u>	<u>Suggested Charge</u>

Barnard First Response	20	5,000
First Branch Ambulance	253	15,000
Granville First Response	52	10,000
Stockbridge First Response	17	5,000
White River Valley Ambulance	1071	30,000
Orleans	527	25,000
Glover	73	10,000
Missisquoi	361	20,000
Arlington	604	25,000
Benson	19	5,000
Brandon	728	25,000
Castleton First Response	23	5,000
Chittenden First Response	94	10,000
Mt. Holly Rescue	147	15,000
Pittsfield First Response	10	5,000
Pittsford First Response	252	15,000
Regional Ambulance Service*	248	15,000
Killington First Response	160	15,000
Wallingford Rescue	260	15,000
Fair Haven Rescue	412	20,000
Total	5,331	290,000

\* Indicates a department with their own current dispatching capabilities that receive dispatching services from the State Police on part-time basis.

Each PSAP is responsible for assigning cases for agencies receiving dispatching services from VSP. The total number of cases assigned out of the Williston barracks for police, fire, and EMS during calendar year 2018 was 16,030. The total

number of cases assigned out of Westminster was 26,338. These numbers do not include mutual aid calls for assistance which can add substantially to these calls.

This fee structure for dispatching services only applies to entities that the State Police currently provides dispatching services to and is not available for those with other current dispatching services. Entities with their own dispatching services that rely on partial time dispatching from the State Police will be required to assume full responsibility for their own dispatching. With the current level of dispatching and E-911 call-taking duties, the State Police cannot handle a significant increase in dispatching duties with the current staff, equipment and infrastructure. The fees assessed would be for dispatching services only and not for administrative work.

Based on calls pulled from Spillman for 2018, the following numbers represent an average time from initial call of service to the time the agency is back in service. EMS data is derived from time of first tone to time cleared the scene. It does not include transport time, which could add a significant increase in total time.

Municipal Police/Sheriffs	1hr 49mins	All Spillman Agencies
Fire	1hr 6mins	61,291 Spillman Cases
EMS	1hr 10mins	454,000 Spillman Cases

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*Other Dispatch Centers in Vermont*

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There are at least 21 other dispatch centers in Vermont. A majority of them dispatch for their own community police, fire, rescue and highway services. There are a couple of them that dispatch for a limited number of other organizations / agencies. None of the dispatch centers listed below performs E-911 functions.

Dispatch Center
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Barre City Police
Bennington Police
Brattleboro Police
Burlington City Police
Colchester Police
Essex Police
Ludlow Police
Manchester Police
Middlebury Police
Montpelier Police
Newport Police
Rutland City Police
Rutland County Sheriff
South Burlington Police
Springfield Police
St Johnsbury Police
UVM Police
Williston Police
Windham County Sheriff
Winooski Police
Woodstock Police

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*St. Albans City Police Current Fees*

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<b>Central Dispatch (St. Albans City PD)</b>		
<b>Organization/Community</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>2019</b>
Bakersfield Fire & EMS, 1st Response	1340	12,868.00
Berkshire Fire & EMS, 1st Response	1711	16,469
Enosburg Fire & Rescue	2737	27,069
Fairfax Fire & Rescue	4632	41,708

Fairfield Fire & EMS	1917	18,406
Fletcher Fire & EMS	1324	12,430
Franklin Fire/ Rescue	1417	13,676
Georgia Fire & EMS, 1st Response	3635	43,947
Highgate Fire & EMS	1197	34,408
Milton E-911	3590	22,293
Milton Police, Fire, EMS	10352	207,174
Montgomery Fire & EMS, 1st Response	1197	11,690
Richford Fire & Rescue	2299	22,465
Sheldon Fire & EMS, 1st Response	2232	21316
Swanton Village/Town Fire & Rescue	6514	12512
St. Albans Town Fire/ EMS	6432	19583
Westford EMS	2029	12837
St. Albans City Water		10000
St. Albans City Sewer		10000
Total	47,746	570,851

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*Hartford Police Current Fees*

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<b>Hartford PD</b>		
<b>Org.</b>	<b>Pop.</b>	<b>2,018</b>
Norwich	3,414	50,434
Windsor	3,553	170,306
Hartland	3,393	14,817
Weathersfield	2,825	13,901

Reading	666	9,877
W. Windsor	1,099	9,877
S. Royalton	2,773	14,642
Sharon	1,790	9,877
Hartford	9,952	326,375
Norwich	3,414	50,434
Chester	3,154	17,580
Cavendish	1,367	9,270
Total	33,986	\$646,956

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*Lamoille Sheriff's Department Current Charges*

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<b>Lamoille Sheriff's</b>		
<b>Org.</b>	<b>Pop.</b>	<b>FY2020</b>
Belvidere	389	9,140
Cambridge	3,945	112,952
Eden	1,482	36,060
Elmore	923	30,187
Hyde Park	3,043	74,306
Johnson	3,429	75,255
Morristown	5,173	140,172
Stowe	4,406	284,230
Waterville	686	16,790
Wolcott	1,805	42,753
Hardwick	2,952	64,645
Greensboro	775	35,708
Barre Town	9,066	238,195
Total	38,074	\$1,160,393

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*Summary*

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The goal of the outlined fee structure was to create a relatively simple method that could be efficiently applied to the many entities for which the State Police currently provide dispatching services. Other fee structures and formulas used in Vermont are complex and require a great amount of work hours to compile the needed information. Formulas that take into consideration population and grand lists are more suited for communities with multiple dispatching needs. It does not take into consideration that a particular police, fire or rescue service may be privately owned or already receive their needed services elsewhere. By breaking it down by discipline, it allows for an application of fees for the specific dispatch uses. The State Police does not have the ability to determine individual agency usage percentages. By grouping, we attempt to provide equity based on dispatch usage as determined by call volume or department size.

The intent is to create a fair service fee structure for those that currently receive dispatching services from the State Police at no charge. It is not available for those that currently receive their dispatching services from another source.