

Job Outlook

Employment of dispatchers is expected to grow as fast as the average for all occupations through 2010. In addition to those resulting from job growth, openings will arise from the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force.

Projected employment growth of police, fire, and ambulance dispatchers, or public safety dispatchers, stems from increased demand for emergency services. Many districts are consolidating their communications centers into a shared, areawide facility. Individuals with computer skills and experience will have a greater opportunity for employment as public safety dispatchers.

Population growth and economic expansion are expected to spur employment growth for other types of dispatchers. Employment of some dispatchers is more adversely affected by economic downturns than that of other dispatchers. When economic activity falls, demand for transportation services declines. As a result, taxicab, train, and truck dispatchers may experience layoffs or a shortened workweek, and jobseekers may have some difficulty finding entry-level jobs. Employment of tow truck dispatchers, on the other hand, is seldom affected by general economic conditions because of the emergency nature of their business.

Related Occupations

Other occupations that involve directing and controlling the movement of vehicles, freight, and personnel, as well as distributing information and messages, include air traffic controllers, communications equipment operators, customer service representatives, and reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks.

Sources of Additional Information

For further information on training and certification for police, fire, and emergency dispatchers, contact:

- ▶ National Academy of Emergency Medical Dispatch, 139 East South Temple, Suite 530, Salt Lake City, UT 84111. Internet: <http://www.emergencydispatch.org>
 - ▶ Association of Public Safety Communications Officials, 2040 S. Ridgewood, South Daytona, FL 32119-2257. Internet: <http://www.apcointl.org>
 - ▶ International Municipal Signal Association, 165 East Union St., P.O. Box 539, Newark, NY 14513-0539. Internet: <http://www.imsasafety.org>
- For information on train dispatchers, contact:
- ▶ American Train Dispatchers Association, 1370 Ontario St., Cleveland, OH 44113. Internet: <http://www.ble.org/atdd/about-atdd.asp>

Information on job opportunities for police, fire, and emergency dispatchers is available from personnel offices of State and local governments or police departments. Information about work opportunities for other types of dispatchers is available from local employers and State employment service offices.

(See introduction to the section on material recording, scheduling, dispatching, and distributing occupations for information on working conditions, training requirements, and earnings.)

Meter Readers, Utilities

(O*NET 43-5041.00)

Nature of the Work

Meter readers read electric, gas, water, or steam consumption meters and record the volume used. They serve both residential and commercial consumers, either walking or driving along the designated route. Their duties include inspecting the meters and their connections for any defects or damage, supplying meter repair and maintenance workers with the necessary information to fix damaged meters, and keeping track of the average usage and record reasons for any extreme fluctuations in volume.



A worker reads a meter outside a home.

Meter readers are constantly aware of any abnormal behavior or consumption that might indicate an unauthorized connection. They may turn off service for questionable behavior or nonpayment of charges, and also are responsible for turning on service for new occupants. They usually keep a record of receipt and completion of meter service.

Employment

Meter readers held about 49,000 jobs in 2000. About half were employed by electric, gas, and water utilities. Most of the rest were employed in local government, reading water meters or meters for other government-owned utilities.

Job Outlook

Employment of meter readers is expected to decline through 2010. New automated meter reading (AMR) systems allow meters to be monitored and billed from a central point, reducing the need for meter readers. However, because it will be many years before AMR systems can be implemented in all locations, there still will be some openings for meter readers, mainly to replace workers who leave the occupation.

Related Occupations

Other workers responsible for the distribution and control of utilities include powerplant operators, distributors, and dispatchers.

Sources of Additional Information

Information on employment as a meter reader, and on automatic meter reading technology, can be obtained from:

- ▶ Automatic Meter Reading Association. Internet: <http://www.amra-intl.org>

(See introduction to the section on material recording, scheduling, dispatching, and distributing occupations for information on working conditions, training requirements, and earnings.)

Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks

(O*NET 43-5061.00)

Nature of the Work

Production, planning, and expediting clerks coordinate and expedite the flow of information, work, and materials within or among offices. Most of their work is done according to production, work,