

### 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.)

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## Meter Readers, Utilities

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(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>

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## Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks

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(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,



*Production, planning, and expediting clerks compile reports on the progress of work and on production problems.*

or shipment schedules. The schedules are reviewed and distributed after being considered by supervisors who determine work progress and completion dates. Production, planning, and expediting clerks compile reports on progress of work and production problems. They also may schedule workers, estimate costs, schedule shipment of parts, keep inventory of materials, inspect and assemble materials, and write special orders for services and merchandise. In addition, they may route and deliver parts to ensure that production quotas are met and that merchandise is delivered on the date promised.

*Production and planning clerks* compile records and reports on various aspects of production, such as materials and parts used, products produced, machine and instrument readings, and frequency of defects. They prepare and distribute work tickets or other production guides to workers. They coordinate, schedule, monitor, and chart production and its progress, either manually or using electronic equipment. Production and planning clerks also gather information from customer orders or other specifications to prepare a detailed production sheet that serves as a guide in assembly or manufacture of the product.

*Expediting clerks* contact vendors and shippers to ensure that merchandise, supplies, and equipment are forwarded on the specified shipping dates. They communicate with transportation companies to prevent delays in transit, and they may arrange for distribution of materials upon arrival. They may even visit work areas of vendors and shippers to check the status of orders. Expediting clerks locate and distribute materials to specified production areas. They may inspect products for quality and quantity to ensure adherence to specifications. They also keep a chronological list of due dates and may move work not meeting the production schedule to the front.

### Employment

In 2000, production, planning, and expediting clerks held 332,000 jobs. Jobs in manufacturing made up 44 percent and jobs in wholesale trade and groceries and related products comprised about 6 percent. About 8 percent worked in the personnel supply services industry.

### Job Outlook

Employment of production, planning, and expediting clerks is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through 2010. As increasing pressure is put on companies to get things produced and delivered more quickly and efficiently, the need

for production, planning, and expediting clerks will grow. The work of production, planning, and expediting clerks is less likely to be automated than is that of many other administrative support occupations. In addition to openings due to employment growth, many additional job openings will arise from the need to replace production, planning, and expediting clerks who leave the labor force or transfer to other occupations.

### Related Occupations

Other workers who coordinate the flow of information to assist the production process include cargo and freight agents; shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks; stock clerks and order fillers; and weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers, recordkeeping.

### Sources of Additional Information

Information about job opportunities may be obtained from local employers and local offices of the State employment service.

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## Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks

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(O\*NET 43-5071.00)

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### Nature of the Work

Shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks keep records of all goods shipped and received. Their duties depend on the size of the establishment and the level of automation used. Larger companies typically are better able to finance the purchase of computers and other equipment to handle some or all of a clerk's responsibilities. In smaller companies, a clerk maintains records, prepares shipments, and accepts deliveries. In both environments, shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks may lift cartons of various sizes.

*Shipping clerks* keep records of all outgoing shipments. They prepare shipping documents and mailing labels, and make sure orders have been filled correctly. Also, they record items taken from inventory and note when orders were filled. Sometimes they fill the order themselves, obtaining merchandise from the stockroom, noting when inventories run low, and wrapping or packing the goods in shipping containers. They also address and label packages, look up and compute freight or postal rates, and record the weight and cost of each shipment. Shipping clerks also may prepare invoices and furnish information about shipments to other parts of the company, such as the accounting department. Once a shipment is checked and ready to go, shipping clerks may move the goods from the plant—sometimes by forklift truck—to the shipping dock and direct its loading.

*Receiving clerks* perform tasks similar to those of shipping clerks. They determine whether orders have been filled correctly by verifying incoming shipments against the original order and the accompanying bill of lading or invoice. They make a record of the shipment and the condition of its contents. In many firms, receiving clerks use hand-held scanners to record barcodes on incoming products or enter the information into a computer. These data then can be transferred to the appropriate departments. The shipment is checked for any discrepancies in quantity, price, and discounts. Receiving clerks may route or move shipments to the proper department, warehouse section, or stockroom. They also may arrange for adjustments with shippers whenever merchandise is lost or damaged. Receiving clerks in small businesses also may perform duties similar to those of stock