

Janeea Choiniere  
Emergency Communications Dispatcher  
Rutland PSAP  
(802) 558-6713  
jlc12300@yahoo.com

AGAINST the consolidation of the Vermont PSAPs.

My name is Janeea Choiniere and I would like to discuss the training aspect of becoming a dispatcher and what it entails. When discussing the possibility of current dispatchers being unable to relocate and fill the positions needed at the consolidated PSAPs, the suggestion was made to shorten the training process to get dispatchers in chairs more quickly.

I have recently completed the dispatchers training program, so I have a fresh perspective of how it works.

The current training program is outlined to last between 5 and 6 months. It is grueling and intense and serves not only to prepare fresh recruits for the world we dispatchers live in, it also helps weed out those who are unable to keep up with the demands of this job. At the Rutland PSAP alone, in the past 5 years, 17 people have started the training process (after they have already been vetted by the hiring process). Of those 17, only 7 completed and became full fledged dispatchers. That should give you some reference for the rigors of this work. Now, of the 17 trainees, 8 - including 3 of the 7 who completed - needed the 6 month training period extended. Not due to incompetence or a lack of ability, but simply because it can take that long for all the pieces to click. Even after a trainee is graduated to dispatcher, the national – not state – average amount of time before a dispatcher is completely competent and can handle anything, which in this line of work is a prerequisite, is 2 years. That's 24 months.

They are proposing 3. 60 days on the job before you can walk a woman through giving birth. 60 days on the job before you can handle an officer screaming over the radio that shots have been fired. 60 days to learn every main roadway, every landmark, every municipal department, every emergency responder for every single town you dispatch for, which if this plan goes through would be either 121 towns, or 133 depending on which center you work for.

If you don't have alarm bells ringing in your head yet, you really should. Not only is this a massive public safety issue, it's also setting every trainee up for failure and the Department of public safety has made it very clear that the dispatchers are liable for any mistake resulting in damage, injury or death. Just to sum this up, we want a person with no previous dispatching experience to train for 60 days, learn 121 different town's responders, several new computer systems, how to talk to the public, what questions to ask, how to listen – really listen – to a panicked person's rambling and pick out the important information – all the while knowing that a single misstep resulting in any problem, and the department of public safety will step back and say, “Well, we trained them according to our program – it must be their fault.”

There is simply no safe way for this consolidation to continue. Every time a problem in this proposal arises, the solution they throw at it results in even more safety issues for the people of Vermont. Please, rethink this massive safety hazard disguised as a money saving solution and end this possible consolidation.