

HB

230

HFIN

FILE

(11)

HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Referred to Committee: February 4, 2000

FURTHER REFERRALS:

Date of Committee Action: 2/15/00

The FINANCE Committee considered:

HB 230

HOUSE BILL NO. 230

PERS BENEFITS FOR POLICE/FIRE DISPATCHERS

"An Act granting certain dispatchers in police or fire departments or for the state troopers status as peace officers under the public employees' retirement system; and providing for an effective date."

recommends it be replaced with the following committee substitute CS HB 230 (FIN) the same title a new title

additional referral to _____ Committee
 attached amendment(s)

ADOPTS: _____ Letter of Intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(s): (Dept) _____ APPROVES PREVIOUS: (Dept/Date) _____
 fiscal note(s) _____ fiscal note(s) _____

zero fiscal note(s) DBA _____ zero fiscal note(s) _____

SIGNING WITH RECOMMENDATIONS		DP	DNP	NR	AM
<i>Tom Therrault</i>	Therrault	X			
<i>Leon Mulder</i>	Mulder	X			
<i>Ellen Kushman</i>	Kushman	X			
<i>G. Davis</i>	G. DAVIS	X			
<i>G. Phillips</i>	G. Phillips	X			
<i>F. Davis</i>	F. Davis	X			
<i>J. Foster</i>	Foster	X			

CO CHAIR'S SIGNATURE *Tom Therrault* *Leon Mulder*

FISCAL NOTE

2

STATE OF ALASKA
2000 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. CSHB 230(FIN)

Revision Date/Time _____	Dept. Affected _____	Administration _____
Title <u>An act permitting certain dispatchers... to</u>	BRU	Centralized Administrative Services
<u>convert their credited service....</u>	Component	Retirement and Benefits
Sponsor <u>(H)JUD</u>		
Requester <u>(H)FIN</u>	Component No.	<u>64</u>

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						
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FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type)						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY2000) cost: 0.0

POSITIONS

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

The Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) allows peace officers to retire with 20 years of service and non-peace officers to retire with 30 years of service, regardless of age. The Finance Committee substitute to HB 230 would allow an individual with 20 years of PERS police or fire dispatcher service to convert that service to service as a peace officer, thereby allowing the individual to retire. The individual would be required to pay the full actuarial cost of this conversion, either in a lump sum or through a lifetime retirement benefit reduction. Since the full actuarial cost is paid by the employee, this legislation has no fiscal impact to the State of Alaska or other PERS employers.

Prepared by: <u>Guy Bell</u>	Phone <u>465-4471</u>
Division <u>Retirement and Benefits</u>	Date/Time <u>2/16/00 11:00 AM</u>
Approved by Commissioner <u>Robert Poe Jr.</u>	Date <u>2/16/00</u>
Agency <u>Department of Administration</u>	

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adopted 2/15/00

CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 230(FIN)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

**Offered:
Referred:**

Sponsor(s): HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 "An Act permitting certain dispatchers in police or fire departments or for the
2 state troopers to convert their credited service under the public employees'
3 retirement system to credited service as peace officers; and providing for an
4 effective date."

5 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

6 * **Section 1.** AS 39.35.370 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

7 (g) When an employee who was employed as a dispatcher in a state trooper
8 office or in a police or fire department in the public employees' retirement system
9 applies for appointment to retirement, the employee may convert the credited service
10 for that position to credited service as a peace officer by claiming the service as peace
11 officer service. When the member claims this credited service as peace officer service,
12 an indebtedness of the member to the system shall be established. The indebtedness
13 is equal to the full actuarial cost of the conversion of the credited service to treatment
14 as peace officer service. Any outstanding indebtedness that exists at the time the

1 member is appointed to retirement will require an actuarial adjustment to the benefits
2 payable based upon the conversion of the credited service.

3 * Sec. 2. This Act takes effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).

CS for House Bill 230 (State Affairs)

Under the proposed committee substitute for House Bill 230, the definition of "peace officer" or "fire fighter" is expanded to include dispatchers in a police or fire department or in a state trooper office. Current PERS members in these positions could convert their "Others" service to peace officer service by paying the full actuarial cost of this conversion. From the date of passage forward, these employees would pay the higher peace officer contribution rate (an increase from 6.75% of salary to 7.5% of salary).

Since the bill requires each affected member to pay the full actuarial cost there would be no measurable change in the System funded status or average employer contribution rate.

Approximately 274 PERS members would be affected by this bill. This would increase the Police/Fire membership by 10%. Also introduced this session are 2 other bills that would add other groups to the Police/Fire category. If all 3 groups were added, it is estimated that this occupational category will increase in membership by more than 20 percent.

Only two PERS employers have separate rates for Police/Fire versus Other employees: the State of Alaska and the Municipality of Anchorage. For FY 01 their rates are as follows:

	<u>Police/Fire</u>	<u>Other</u>
State of Alaska	7.69%	8.09%
Municipality of Anchorage	8.75%	6.52%

All other employers have combined employer rates for Police/Fire and Other employees. By shifting police dispatchers to the Police/Fire category, the State and the Municipality of Anchorage will see the above rate adjustments in FY 01 for the affected employees.

Historically, the Police/Fire employer contribution rate has been higher than the rate for all other employees. For any given employee the contribution necessary to fund Police/Fire benefits exceeds the contribution needed for Others benefits. This is due in particular to the ability of Police/Fire members to take normal retirement after 20 years in PERS versus the Other's requirement of 30 years.

Due to a set of extraordinary factors, the State of Alaska's Police/Fire rate has been lower than the Other's rate since FY-99. It is projected to remain lower for the next few years. However, our actuaries believe that eventually the employer rate will adjust and be higher, as it has been historically.

The lower Police/Fire rate is primarily a function of two factors: 1) the funded status of the system, and 2) current system demographics.

- Current accrued assets of the System exceed accrued liabilities. Since Police/Fire provisions are more generous than Others provisions, the Police/Fire accrued liability represents a larger percent of payroll than for Others. This means that a larger percentage of the system's assets accrue to the Police/Fire category, producing a lower past service rate.
- Under the current actuarial assumptions and with the current demographics, the consolidated rate for the Police/Fire membership is less than the consolidated rate for the "Others" membership. The consolidated rate is a function of the average age, average service, tier mix and many other items specific to each group.

As recently as June 30, 1995, the System was in an unfunded position. We expect the System to revert to this prior scenario at some point in the future, resulting in higher rates associated with the Police/Fire membership relative to the Others membership.

We must conclude that there is no way to accurately predict the future liabilities for this group and hence, the long-term fiscal impact of this legislation.

Sponsor Statement HB 230

HB 230 will require all dispatchers under the PERS retirement system, who elect to change from a thirty year retirement to a twenty year retirement, to pay the employees and the employers contribution of the costs to that twenty year retirement conversion.

Approximately 263 employees of PERS employers would be affected by this legislation. Of that number, approximately 65 are state employees. The cost to each employee for the employee contribution would be approximately \$450 per year of service under the PERS system. The cost for each employee for the employer contribution would be approximately an additional \$450 per year of service under the PERS system. That would mean a total cost of approximately \$900 per year for year of service under the PERS system for each employee that elects to change retirement terms. Under this legislation, there would be no cost to the employer and all costs would be paid by the employee when he or she voluntarily elects to make this change in their own retirement system.

SUMMARY

House Bill 230 was introduced by Judiciary Committee on May 7, 1999 to include the classification of "dispatcher" in Alaska Statute AS39.35.680(28). The case for including dispatchers into the 20 year retirement provision is three part:

- Job related stress is not on par with clerical positions; our retirement considerations should not be either.
- 20 year retirement will motivate dispatchers to work toward a pension, allowing agencies to retain experienced dispatchers.
- There will likely be zero cost to the State of Alaska since employees will make up the PERS contributions for both the employee and the employer.

Two statewide phone surveys were conducted this past year in a joint effort by Anchorage area dispatchers from Anchorage Police, Anchorage Fire, Alaska State Troopers and Anchorage Airport Police. Some of the significant findings were;

- 253 full time dispatchers are in 30 year PERS
- 14 full time dispatchers are in 20 year PERS
- 92% of the surveyed dispatchers said they would remain employed in their respective Dispatch Centers for 20 years but not for 30 years.

The Anchorage Police Department has experienced ongoing workplace turbulence as demonstrated by the high turnover rate within the Communications Center. As of December, 1999 eight employees had retired from the Communications Center--three on medical and the other five on aged-based retirement. Of the five age-based retirees, only two maintained employment beyond 20 years in the Communications Center.

- 36% of all personnel assigned to the Communications Center either quit or transfer to less stressful positions within PERS
- 40% of all new hires in the Communications Center at APD do not successfully complete the training phase of employment
- Only 4% of those who leave the Communications Center do so with a PERS pension

The Alaska State Legislature appears responsive to the needs of the PERS membership; as evidenced by the retirement change granted to the Adult Correctional Officers in 1990. PERS was designed to provide a sound retirement plan to all its members, yet the current 30 year system fails to encourage employment longevity in the Communications Center. The criteria for retirement eligibility would appear to have undermined the PERS original intent. A revision to Alaska Statute AS39.35.680(28) to include all Communications Center personnel in 20 year PERS would further the likelihood of reversing the high turnover in the stress laden and highly complex work environment.

There are similar efforts being made in other states.

- Texas has a 20 year retirement for dispatchers, however, the individual public safety agency can opt out of that requirement.
- Utah for 25 year dispatcher retirement, however, agency participation is optional.
- California is attempting to gain access to a 20 year retirement, however, there are 3 distinct retirement systems operating on a statewide basis—unduly complicating the retirement issue.
- Arizona is currently drafting state certification for public safety dispatchers and plan to go forward with a 20 year retirement effort in the near future.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Would a change from the existing 30 year PERS (Public Employees Retirement System) retirement plan to a 20 year PERS retirement option increase the likelihood of employment longevity in the Anchorage Police Department Communications Center?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To measure the employee turnover rates in the Communications Center from position inception to date. While employee turnover rates are easily measured, they merely represent a symptom of a more ominous problem. There are several avenues of potentially disruptive or detrimental factors to explore to get a more holistic view of the factors contributing to high turnover that is endemic to the Communications Center.

SETTING

Present day Anchorage started out as a tent city along the banks of Ship Creek in what is now the industrial section of the city. At the time Alaska was a territory of the United States and the town of Anchorage was referred to as "Ship Creek Landing." The United States Marshals were tasked with the law enforcement responsibilities as sanctioned by the federal government (APOA Handbook, 1995).

The City of Anchorage became incorporated in 1920 and hired its first law enforcement officer in 1921. APD's jurisdictional responsibilities at that time were primarily along the Ship Creek "tent city" area. As the population of Anchorage grew so did the jurisdictional boundaries of the Anchorage Police Department. By the time Alaska achieved statehood in 1959, APD retained several full-time employees. Since that time the service area has increased substantially—both in terms of geographic area and population density.

When APD acquired its first set of police radios the groundwork was laid for modern police dispatching. The duties of operating the two-way radio from the police station fell primarily to those officers who were senior on the daily patrol shift. A lone

officer would answer all the incoming telephone calls, make citizen contacts with "walk-ins" at the front counter, and maintain a log of shift activities (A. Olson, 1995). When the senior officer on shift declined assignment to the Communications Center (referred to as Dispatch) a less senior officer assumed the responsibility.

By 1970, then police chief John Flanigan recognized the need to staff the Communications Center with full time civilian employees. The first sergeant promotions at the Anchorage Police Department for duties other than Patrol and Investigations were those assigned to the Communications Center (A. Olson, 1995). The Communications Center sergeant supervised the newly hired civilian Communications Center employees. Eventually one sergeant was tasked with overseeing three sworn personnel of corporal rank assigned to supervise each of the three shifts of civilian employees (K. Olson, 1995).

The transition from a Communications Center staffed exclusively by patrol officers to one operated exclusively by dispatchers was a gradual one. The first radio dispatcher was hired in 1970 yet the last full-time sworn personnel (of corporal rank) did not transfer out of the Communications Center until 1983 (K. Olson, 1995). At that time, three dispatchers were promoted to the position of shift supervisor in the Communications Center to replace each of the three outgoing corporals. The Communications Center sergeant position still exists today.

The Anchorage Police Department employs over 500 full-time employees in a service area of 190 square miles with a 1998 population of 270,000. The Anchorage Police Department currently serves most residents of the Municipality of Anchorage—with one notable exception. The communities south of Potter Marsh (Indian, Bird Creek, Girdwood, and Portage) fall within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Alaska State Troopers.

Currently, the Anchorage Police Department Communications Center is staffed by 54 full-time employees. The Communications sergeant is the only sworn employee assigned to the Communications Center. The employees have union representation

and are subject to the provisions of the bargaining agreement between the Municipality of Anchorage and the APDEA (Anchorage Police Department Employees Association). Of the 53 non sworn Communications Center employees, 5 are shift supervisors, 40 are radio dispatchers, 3 are call-takers, and the remaining 5 are trainees. For purposes of this report, all references to the Communications Center employees will refer to the 53 non sworn personnel.

Shift vacancies generated from vacation leave or illness are filled by off-duty personnel. If no off-duty personnel are available, employees are offered 4 hour blocks of overtime in conjunction with their 8 hour shift. If shift vacancies still exist, personnel are ordered to work overtime by reverse union seniority (Collective Bargaining Agreement). Shift scheduling is done quarterly in accordance with APDEA contract by a shift supervisor in cooperation with the command staff (Collective Bargaining Agreement, 1990). Shift and days off are assigned by seniority.

Communications Center personnel and Uniform Field Services (patrol) personnel are the only two work units within the APDEA bargaining unit that receive one hour of paid breaks per work shift (Collective Bargaining Agreement, 1990). Scheduling of the two paid 15 minute breaks and one paid 30 minute break is coordinated with the shift supervisor (APD Communications Procedure Manual, 1995).

The duties in the Communications Center fall into a pyramid shaped hierarchical distribution. At the top of the pyramid are the supervisors, followed by the dispatchers, below which are the call-takers, and finally on the entry level are the trainees. In descending order, each job classification can perform the job functions of all the classifications subsequent to it. The duties of FTI (Field Training Instructor) can be performed by journeyman personnel of any classification and, consequently, are listed separately.

- Communications Clerk III (shift supervisor)

- (1) Maintain a thorough knowledge of the Communications Center operations and department policies and procedures.
- (2) Monitor and inspect the quality and quantity of performance of subordinates, with particular emphasis on developing skills and abilities.
- (3) Ensure employees adhere to policies and procedures and demonstrate reasonable and professional behavior.
- (4) Improve, assist and train employees in response to needs.
- (5) Oversee normal and effective operation of the shift, by:
 - (a) Scheduling to include completion of overtime sign-up worksheets.
 - (b) Approving or denying leave requests.
 - (c) Updating and submitting the time sheets.
 - (d) Preparing performance evaluations on employees assigned to the shift.
- (6) Call-out specialized units as requested by a Patrol Supervisor in accordance with written procedure.
- (7) Immediately notify the Medical Examiner when a death has been confirmed by the Officer at a scene.
- (8) Refer media inquiries to on duty Crime Prevention Specialist. If there are none on duty, answer questions from the media in accordance with the Victims Rights Act of 1991.
- (9) Ensure that appropriate in-house computer bulletin entries/updates are maintained. This includes entry of all felony and serious misdemeanor locates that are broadcast during the shift. This also includes "approach with caution" warnings for known armed or violent offenders.

(10) Perform duties as outlined for Police Clerk (call-taker) and
Communications Clerk II (radio dispatcher).

(11) Other duties as assigned.

- Communications Clerk II (radio dispatcher)

(1) Use of two-way radio and in-house computers to actively
monitor and keep current the status of assigned officers.

(2) Being aware of citizens' requests for police response.

(3) Dispatch calls to available and appropriate Officer(s) as soon
as possible providing explicit yet concise response
information.

(4) Provide or arrange for requested support assistance for other
law enforcement agencies.

(5) Accurately enter data on report forms.

(6) Make necessary notifications to appropriate chain of command
for any serious or life threatening activity.

(7) Enter and retrieve information from all computer systems in
the Communications Center.

(8) Provide training as assigned by the shift supervisor.

(9) Perform duties of the Police Clerk (call-taker).

(10) Other duties as assigned.

- Police Clerk (call-taker)

(1) Answer telephone calls made to the police department on non-
emergency (business) and emergency (911) lines.

(2) Determine the nature of the call and take one of the following
actions:

- (a) Obtain information for police response and enter that information into the in-house computer.
 - (b) Route the call to the appropriate agency.
 - (c) Refer or transfer the call to whom it is intended.
 - (d) Take necessary messages.
 - (e) Answer the caller's questions or otherwise resolve the call.
- (3) Take reports over the telephone for runaways, missing persons and stolen vehicles.
 - (4) Issue APD case numbers to the Magistrate for Domestic Violence Writs.
 - (5) Run warrant and vehicle registration inquiries in APSIN computer (Alaska Public Safety Information Network)
 - (6) Other duties as assigned.

- Field Training Instructor (FTI)

- (1) Trainers will complete daily performance evaluations using the standardized guidelines.
- (2) Training that addresses remedial needs will be documented.
- (3) Job performance that does not respond to remedial training efforts will be documented.
- (4) Monitor *all aspects* of the trainee's performance regardless of the trainee's competency on any particular job function until the trainee has completed the entire training program.
- (5) Familiarize the trainee with the contents of the Communications Center Procedural Manual.
- (6) Periodically test the trainee's job knowledge through the use of quizzes and checklists.

- (7) Coordinate training needs with other trainers.
- (8) Recommend the trainee be released from training when appropriate.

TRAINING COSTS

In 1995, the training costs associated with hiring replacement workers were conservatively measured. The pre-hire selection requires an average of 40 personnel hours to process each applicant (Hume, 1995). Pre-hire background investigations are currently handled by a senior patrol officer. The 40 personnel hours per applicant were calculated at the senior officer pay rate.

Current policy allots six months of training period per trainee, although that period can be extended at the discretion of the Training Coordinator and the Communications Center Sergeant. Few Communications Center trainees successfully complete their training period in less than six months. Although it is not uncommon for new hires to remain in training status for several months (with many exceeding one year of training) the six month training time span served as the basis for cost calculations.

Several journeyman level employees participate in classroom instruction during new-hire academy. The instructor must be replaced in the Communications Center while on temporary training assignment. Historically, the staffing shortage rarely allow for assigned personnel to be absent without having to replace that position with an off-duty employee at the overtime rate of pay.

A trainer currently receives a 5.5% pay incentive in addition to his/her hourly rate of pay for each hour spent training a new-hire. Even though they are drawing a salary, trainees do not factor in to the staffing levels and do not fill a position in the Communications Center. Any personnel shortages require overtime payments to journeyman level employees *regardless* of how many trainees are present for duty.

For purposes of calculating pre-hire costs, no allowance was made for the costs incurred by the Municipality of Anchorage in their role in the screening process. Likewise,

the prospective applicants that failed to pass scrutiny at the APD screening level were not factored into the costs. The only costs applied to the pre-hire screening were those incurred by APD for background checks on successful Communications Center candidates that were processed to start employment at APD.

For purposes of calculating the costs associated with classroom training the assigned C step of pay for the Training Coordinator (currently a Communications Clerk III) was set at 160 hours. The Training Coordinator conducts most of the in-class instruction during the academy. The salary expense for the Training Coordinator was added to the costs per new hire as follows:

From 1990-1995 the average size per group of new hires had been six employees. One/sixth of the Training Coordinator salary for 160 hours to include 5.5% pay incentive differential was added to the expense of each new hire. When measuring the in-room training costs, all FTI pay for Police Clerk and Communications Clerk II classifications were calculated at the C step. The 5.5% pay incentive was calculated at that rate. Since the new hire employees were required to work on all three shifts during their in-room training phase, a 3% shift differential cost was added to the new hire expense. The day shift trainers do not receive shift differential, the swing shift trainers receive 3%, and the mid shift trainers receive 6%. The average trainer shift differential cost was added to the trainee expense.

The FTIs must complete written performance evaluations and disseminate procedural information to the trainees on a daily basis. For costing purposes, one hour of FTI pay was factored into the cost of training in addition to the aforementioned pay incentive differential. No cost provisions were made for benefit packages such as vacation and sick accrual or health insurance.

Since the Anchorage Police Department no longer hires Police Clerks (call-takers) to work in the Communications Center, there exists no "fall back" position for failed dispatch trainees. Historically, the training expenditures that would have produced a journeyman level employee (albeit a non-dispatcher) will now be lost.

Those 1995 calculations for cail-taker trainee costs will no longer apply so, consequently, have been discounted from the cost equation.

DISPATCHER TRAINEE	
\$15,523.20	Salary: $\$16.17 \times 40 \text{ hr.} \times 24 \text{ wk.} = \$15,523.20.$ (Comm. Clerk I pay).
\$ 160.07	Classroom: see above formula.
\$ 1,020.80	Pre-hire Screening: see above formula.
\$ 2,207.00	In-room Admin.: $\$22.07 \times 1 \text{ hr} \times 100 \text{ day} = \$2207.00.$ (CCII x 5.5% x 3% x 1 hr).
\$ 1,211.00	FTI pay: $\$20.34 \times 5.5\% \times 3\% \times 7 \text{ hrs} \times 100 \text{ day} = \$1,211.00.$ See above formula.
\$ 20,122.07	TOTAL PER HIRING EPISODE (1995)

When calculating a 40% historical trainee failure rate at the Anchorage Police Department Communications Center, these conservative figures take on significant proportions.

PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE

The Communications Center of the Anchorage Police Department has experienced work place turbulence as evidenced by the high turnover rate. All employees hired into the PERS system after June 30, 1986 must work to the age of 55 for an early (reduced) pension and to the age of 60 for a full pension.

As of December, 1999 eight employees had retired from the Anchorage Police Department Communications Center, however not one of those employees received pensions based on the current requirement for 30 years PERS service. Three of the Communications Center retirees received medical disability and four of the remaining five retired on the "over 55 years of age" option. One retiree elected to take a reduced pension for an early retirement of "over 50 years of age." Of the five non-medical retirees, only two maintained employment beyond 20 years in the Communications Center.

No provisions can be made to measure the "inner turbulence" of turnover within the Communications Center. The work performance of novice employees may not be as speedy as journeyman level employees. It can be argued that the quality produced by a

novice in any profession, let alone an emergency communications center, is not on par with that of an experienced and seasoned worker.

The Anchorage Police Department, as a direct result of high turnover, has a relatively inexperienced work force. As of December, 1999 there were 4 employees who had passed their 20 year anniversary employed in the Communications Center. Three employees worked beyond their 15 year anniversary and another ten passed 10 years in the Communications Center. The remaining 36 workers (68%) had under 10 years longevity as dispatchers. A substantial number of Communications Center workers (47%) as of December, 1999 had less than 5 years experience--many of those having less than one year.

To receive a PERS pension the majority of the current Communications Center employees will be required to work for 30 years, take an early retirement at age 55, or receive a full pension at age 60. It should be emphasized that no one in the history of the APD Communications Center had reached the age of 60 while still actively employed (the closest was a retiree at age 59 with less than 20 years of service).

If the historical pattern of high turnover is any indication, relatively few employees should reasonably expect to work until retirement age in the Communications Center. The pay and benefits for the call-taker position (Police Clerk) are comparable with other less turbulent APD job assignments covered by the same PERS retirement (Collective Bargaining Agreement, 1990). Some employees exposed to high stress on a daily basis see little incentive to remain in the Communications Center for the requisite 30 years.

In order to present a thorough historical representation of Anchorage Police Department (APD) Communications Center employment turbulence, data were gathered on hiring and firing episodes since the inception of the position in 1970 to present day. All data represent the training disposition (failed or passed) and whether the employee terminated or retired.

Those employees assigned to the Communications Center during the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s witnessed many changes at APD. The administration merged the classification of two clerical positions into one (Fletcher, 1995). The management intent was to have a squad of "generic" clerks that could go to work in any position within the department as staffing demands dictated. The Police Clerk I and Police Clerk II became the same Police Clerk classification and many of their specialized duties were pooled together (Fletcher, 1995).

Many of the newly reclassified Police Clerks were assigned to the Communications Center after leaving behind such duties as typist or file clerk. These employees were provided minimal training and assigned the duties of answering the 911 emergency telephones and business (non emergency) telephones in the Communications Center (Fletcher, 1995).

By the spring of 1998, the APD administration determined that the "generic" police clerk was not viable in the highly specialized environment of the Communications Center. The position is being phased out through attrition. As of December, 1999 only three full time police clerks remain in the staffing.

There exists a myriad of people who benefit from low turnover rates or, conversely, suffer the consequences of wasted employment resources. Listed in ascending order are those affected, either directly or indirectly, by employment turnover in the Anchorage Police Department Communications Center.

- Taxpayers: Tax dollars that go toward the hiring and training of government employees are an expense of doing business. If the money spent does not yield effective results, more money has to come out of the taxpayers' coffers through Public Safety budgeting to continue the process until enough employees reach journeyman level. Since the Communications Center must be staffed at all times, there exists no option of "doing without" in order to save money and resources.

- General Public: Trainees acquire much of their job knowledge through means of on the job training (OJT) and are, therefore, exposed to the public long before they

are considered job proficient. Lower employee turnover would, in effect, substantially decrease citizen exposure to trainees.

- MOA and APD Administration: APD invests an average of 40 personnel-hours of pre-hire screening for each radio dispatcher applicant (Hume, 1995). The application process is costly—not only in dollars but also in personnel allocation. Lower turnover rates mitigate the number of hiring episodes needed to staff the Communications Center and the resulting associated costs.

- Fellow APD Employees: Employees that deal with serious situations or life threatening emergencies on a daily basis realize the need to handle each individual situation to the best of their ability. There exists little room for error. Even though an employee might expertly handle 99 out of 100 requests for assistance s/he may still face sanctions—both punitive and disciplinary—for the one call not properly handled.

Recognizing teamwork in the Communications Center as the cornerstone of effective job performance, many journeyman-level employees experience increased job stress while working with novice employees. That in itself is sufficient reason to seek a remedy to alleviate the high rate of job turnover.

- Trainers: If ever a situation requires the careful and deliberate allocation of limited resources, this is it. The trainers in the Communications Center face daunting challenges on a daily basis. They assume responsibility not only for their own actions but for the actions of their trainees as well. They must instruct trainees during time-critical situations and be ready to take over if the circumstances dictate. The trainers must constantly strive to balance the needs of the citizen with the instructional value afforded the trainees during "hands on" exposure. Add to this the constant threat of vicarious liability and the trainer position quickly loses its appeal.

The employees that take on the training responsibility generally do so not only out of a sense of job commitment but also because they realize better trained new-hires translate into more supportive workers in the future. The incentive to train is

greatly diminished; however, when trainers are required to direct their efforts toward trainees who eventually resign or transfer to less stressful positions.

Considering the ongoing trend toward a high trainee failure rate, new employees do not replace outgoing journeyman level employees at a constant "one for one" rate. Overall Communications Center trainee failure rates to date average 40%. Replacement training costs should be factored to reflect the employment trends. The turbulence factor accounts for lost expertise when seasoned employees terminate employment, resulting in increased performance demands on the novice employees.

All police employees can be subject to criminal and/or civil lawsuits and Communications Center employees are no exception. Employees are expected to perform in a manner based on a reasonable standard of care within the scope of their employment for the Municipality of Anchorage. As all telephone lines in the Communications Center are recorded, an employee can be held accountable for any statements made or action taken (APD Communications Procedure Manual, 1995). In order to lessen the risk of liability, both to the MOA and the individual, employees adhere to written procedure whenever possible.

Communications Center employees must have a working knowledge of Municipal Rules and Regulations, Department Procedure manual and Dispatch Procedure manual. Dispatchers are responsible for adhering to strict guidelines for computer entries and queries as outlined in Alaska Public Safety Information Network (APSIN) manual and the National Crime Information Computer (NCIC) manual. Any violation of the operating procedures expose the Communications Center employee not only to disciplinary action but also to criminal prosecution.

The Collective Bargaining Agreement (Union Contract) provides specifics on the pay and benefits as well as disciplinary proceedings and general working conditions.

PERS REQUIREMENTS

The Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) benefits and pensions are disseminated as per legislative requirements. The recipient classification is determined by the Alaska State Legislature and dictated by Alaska Statute.

For employees in PERS, the contribution rate is contingent upon the retirement classification. Those members in Peace Officers Retirement System for the 20 year plan must contribute 7.5% of their annual salary into the pension plan while actively employed (AK PERS Information Handbook, 1993). The 30 year PERS members contribute at 6.75% rate. Both plans base the retirement income level on a designated percentage of the three highest consecutive years of work based on total years of service.

For purposes of future cost calculation, PERS assumes 100% of the members who terminate employment prior to the age of 35 (both vested and not vested) will cash out the contributions made into the system (Church, 1995). Likewise, PERS calculates that 100% of the vested employees over age 35 will leave the contributions in the system in order to draw a pension and receive medical coverage at age 50, 55, or 60 depending on the option selected and date of hire. All PERS contributors, regardless of age, must cash out the contributions if they are not vested in the system. All contributors become vested after 5 years of service (AK PERS Information Handbook, 1993).

If a group is able to successfully petition the legislature to win a majority vote for a change from a 30 year to a 20 year retirement option, the contributors can retire at the 20 year anniversary. PERS allows employees to "catch up" in the payments from the 6.75% to the 7.5% contribution rate for each year of service prior to admittance into the 20 year plan. The "catch up" option is limited strictly to those employees who gain admittance into the 20 year plan for that specific job classification (Church, 1995). For example, a five year veteran of the Communications Center (30 year PERS) recently

transferred to patrol (20 year PERS). He must work a full 20 years in patrol to receive his PERS pension.

The Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) provides an exclusive 20 year retirement to peace officers and fire fighters as defined by Alaska Statute. AS39.35.680 (28) reads: "peace officer" or "fire fighter" means an employee occupying a position as a peace officer, chief of police, correctional officer, correctional superintendent, fire fighter, fire chief, or probation officer.

The most recent conversion to a 20 year retirement option in PERS were the adult correctional officers (ACO) and probation officers (PO). Prior to 1990, those (State of Alaska) employees were required to work a full 30 years in the PERS system or meet the age requirements as dictated by hire date into PERS. Employees hired prior to July 1, 1986 had to work until age 50 for early (reduced) retirement or age 55 for full retirement (AK PERS Information Handbook, 1993). The employees hired into PERS after June 30, 1986 had to work until age 55 for early (reduced) retirement or age 60 for full retirement. Although there was no perceptible change in job duties from 1989 to 1990, the adult correctional officers and probation officers were able to shave 10 years off their minimum requirement for retirement eligibility simply by winning majority legislative approval for such a change. The probation officers and adult correctional officers are required to be certified by APSC (Alaska Police Standards Council) as are all sworn law enforcement personnel in the Alaska.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of historical personnel data for the Anchorage Police Department Communications Center, it is a logical conclusion that a 20 year PERS retirement option for Communications Center personnel would have a positive influence on longevity rates. 92% of dispatchers responding to a statewide survey conducted in September, 1999 indicated they would stay employed in their respective

Communications Centers for 20 years however would not stay for the requisite 30 years.

As the duties in the Communications Center become more complex with the introduction of new technology, it will become increasingly crucial to retain qualified employees. High turnover in the workplace has a detrimental effect on training efforts, skill levels, and morale. Any reasonable efforts to mitigate the employment turnover should be actively pursued through the legislative process by management and employees alike. A 20 year retirement option for the workers of the Communications Center offers a practical solution to the journeyman level turnover rates endemic to the Communications Center.

The employees of the APD Communications Center are coordinating their efforts with other police and fire agencies statewide to pursue a legislative change in PERS. Since the process is a lengthy one requiring a high degree of commitment, the workload and resources will be coordinated in order to avoid duplication of efforts.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

AFD - Anchorage Fire Department.

Alaska State Pension Investment Board - The group of eight trustees responsible for managing and investing the PERS fund.

APOA - Alaska Peace Officers Association. A fraternal organization that provides training to the law enforcement community.

APSC - Alaska Police Standards Council. Administrative authority that certifies law enforcement trainers and law enforcement officers in the State of Alaska.

APSIN - Alaska Public Safety Information Network. The State of Alaska maintained computer system, this computer contains all criminal justice and motor vehicle information on a statewide level. The Alaska State Troopers (AST) utilize APSIN to issue case numbers and track case activity. All local and statewide warrants are entered into APSIN.

AST - Alaska State Troopers.

Call-taker - The call-taker is tasked with answering the 911 emergency telephones and business telephones and processing requests from citizens for police assistance in the APD Communications Center. This position is classified as a Police Clerk.

Communications Clerk I - Entry and training level position in the APD Communications Center in which employees learn to perform the duties of a Communications Clerk II (dispatcher).

Communications Clerk II - Radio dispatcher position in the Communications Center, this person is responsible for operating a two way radio and deploying police officers to citizens' requests for assistance. The Communications Clerk II also performs the duties of call-taker.

Communications Clerk III - Supervisory position in the Communications Center, this person oversees daily operations and supervises the duties of the Communications Clerk I (trainee), Communications Clerk II (dispatcher), and Police Clerk (call-taker).

DSN - Department Seniority Number. A individual number assigned in sequential order to departmental personnel to denote departmental seniority at APD. The DSN is also used as the badge number for all sworn APD personnel.

Dispatcher - See Communications Clerk II.

DMV - Department of Motor Vehicles (State).

DVW (or DV Writ) - Domestic Violence Writ. A restraining order obtained by a victim of domestic violence, these writs are issued by the Magistrate of the third judicial district and assigned case numbers by the APD Communications Center employees.

FTI - Field Training Instructor. A journeyman level Communications Center employee, the FTI trains new-hire Communications Center employees.

FTO - Field Training Officer. A sworn officer with the Anchorage Police Department, the FTO trains new-hire patrol officers.

NCIC/NLETS - National Crime Information Center/National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System. Restricted to law enforcement purposes, these computer networks provide national and international criminal justice information retrieval capability.

Non Sworn - Clerical and support personnel at the Anchorage Police Department that do not carry firearms in the scope of their duties or process prisoners. The Communications Center employees and Records employees are non sworn.

OJT (On the job training) - As applied to APD Communications Center, the training policy for new-hire personnel where they work one on one with a FTI. The OJT phase usually follows one to two months of classroom instruction.

PERS - Public Employees Retirement System. A State of Alaska managed retirement fund which covers most employees of state and local governmental agencies.

Police Clerk - see Call-taker.

Police Officer - see Sworn.

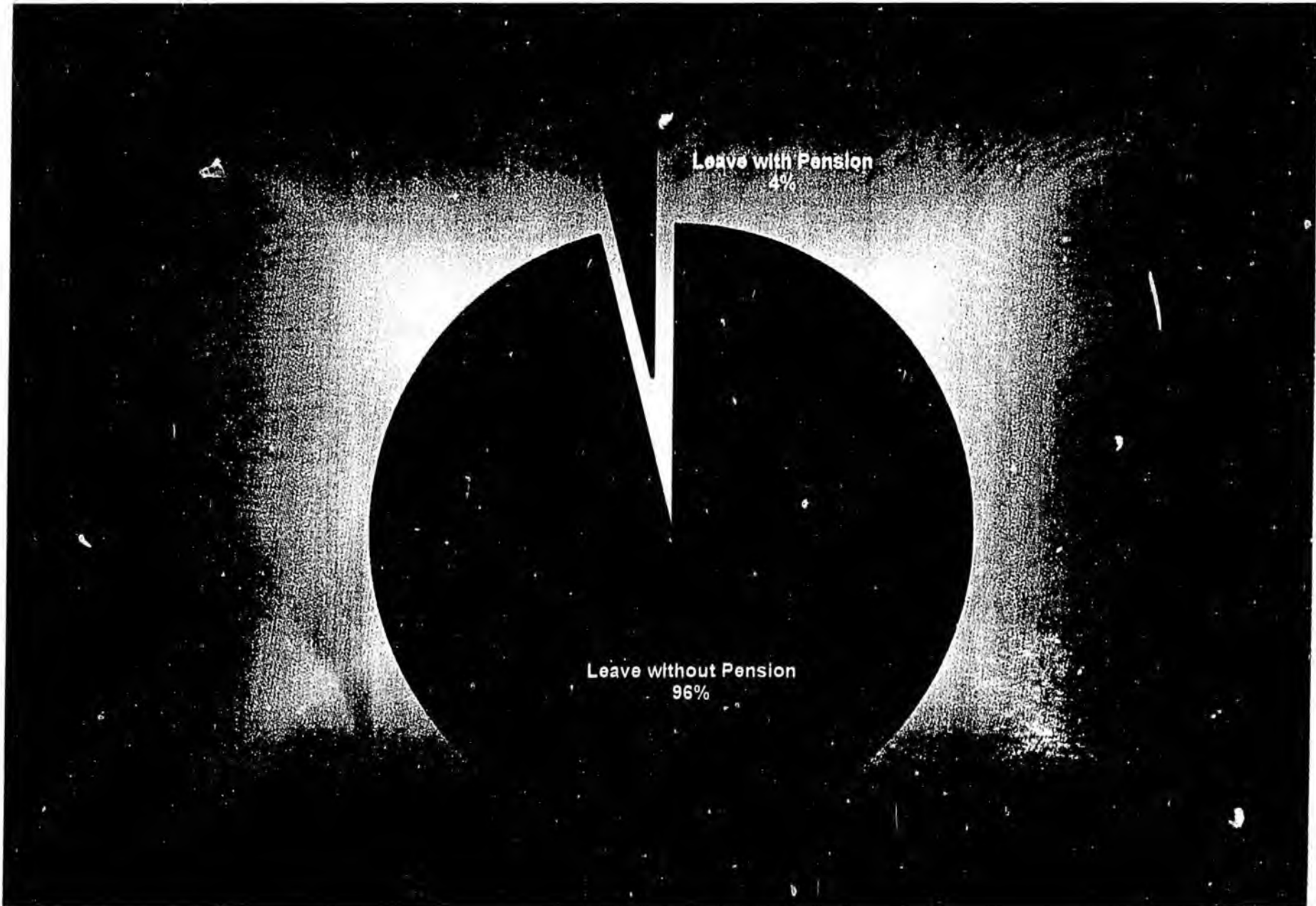
PSAP - Public Safety Answering Point. The agency tasked with answering 911 in the community. Anchorage Police Department is the PSAP for the Municipality of Anchorage. Anchorage Fire Department and the Alaska State Troopers are secondary PSAPs in the Anchorage area in that those agencies receive 911 calls only when transferred from the Anchorage Police Department.

Public Employees Retirement System - see PERS.

Radio Dispatcher - see Communications Clerk II.

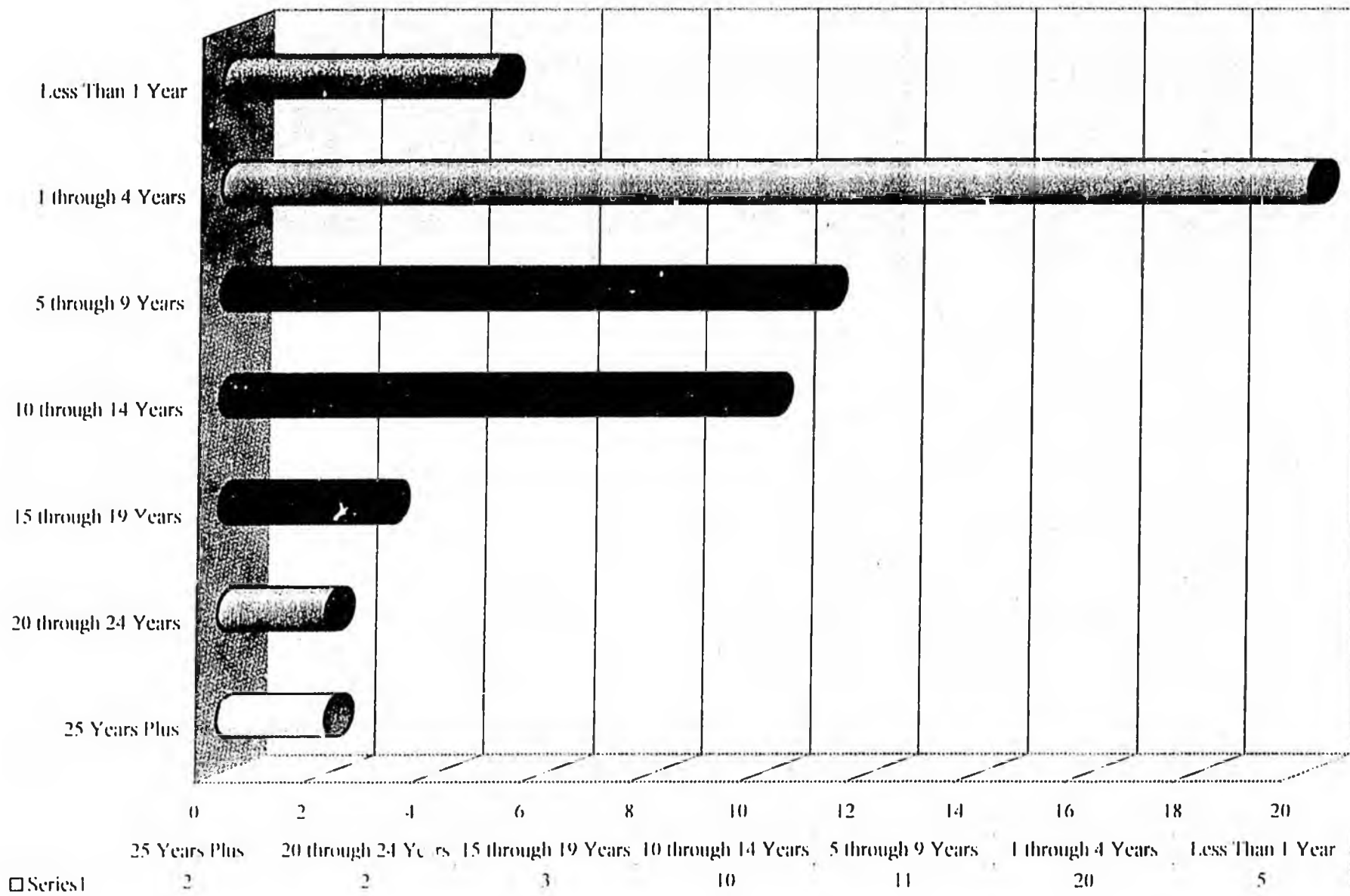
Sworn - Law enforcement personnel certified by the State of Alaska as peace officers. Sworn personnel must qualify to carry firearms and are empowered to enforce city, state, and federal law.

Employees Ending APD Dispatch Employment

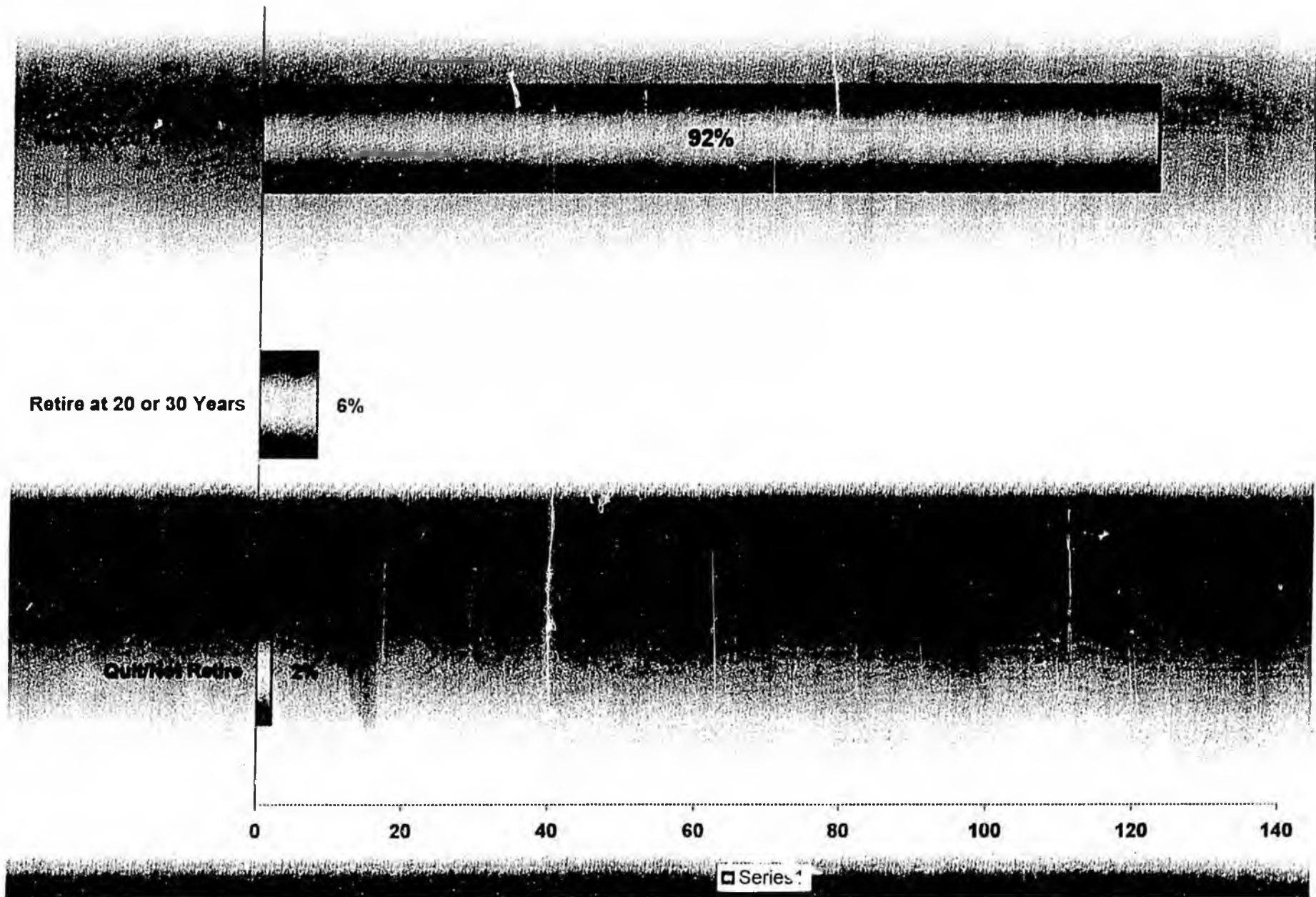


Circa 1970 through 1999

December 1999 Longevity Rates Anchorage Police Department

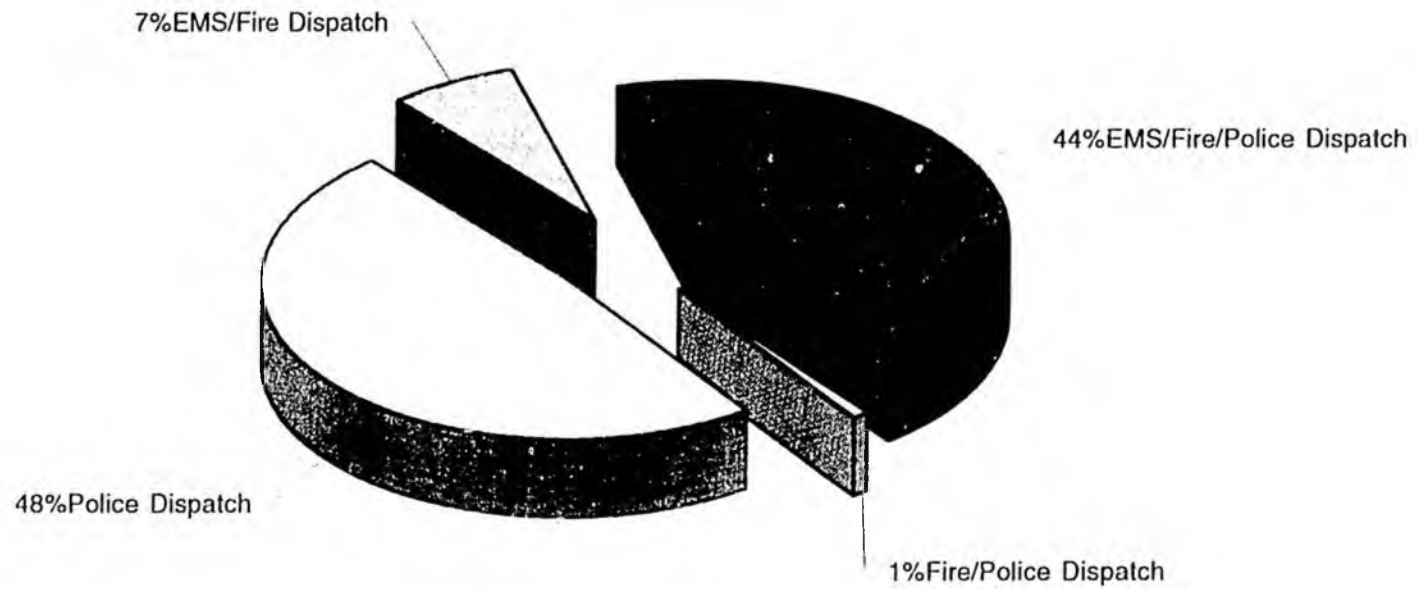


Statewide Anticipated Dispatch Longevity



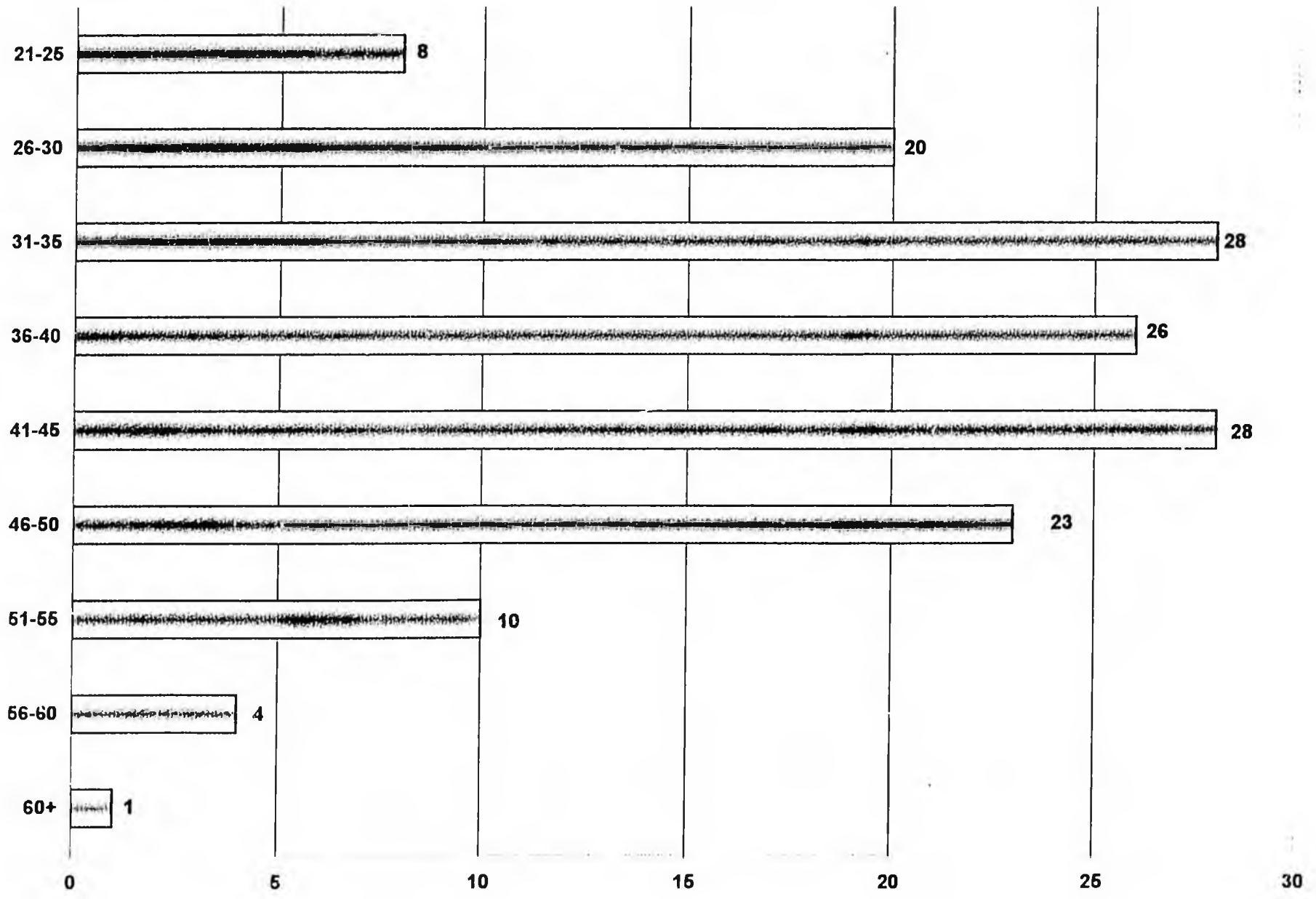
Survey Results, September 1999. Based on 133 Respondents

Statewide Dispatch Duties



Survey Results, September 1999

Statewide Dispatcher Age Breakdown



Survey Respondents September, 1999

APD Communications Center Circa 1970 through 1999

