

# MOONLIGHTING: TELECOMMUNICATORS AND SECOND JOBS

A survey finds secondary employment is common among public safety telecommunicators.

By Chelsi Halstead

## OVERVIEW

The goal of this survey was to collect and organize data on the motivations and habits of full-time emergency service telecommunicators who hold secondary employment in the United States. These results are from a national online survey that had 140 respondents and representation from 38 of 50 states. All full-time telecommunicators were encouraged to take this survey whether they hold a second job or not with the survey being longer for those with secondary employment.

## HOW MANY OF US HAVE SECOND JOBS

In all, 76.4% of respondents state they hold a job outside of their full-time agency. It is important to note that people who do not hold second jobs may have been less interested in taking the survey. Therefore, this number may reflect some survey bias. With this in mind, the survey asked respondents how many telecommunicators at their agency hold a second job. The survey found that 60.9% of respondents report that at least 10% of their staff hold secondary employment; 30% of respondents report less than 10% of their staff hold secondary employment; 8% of respondents report not knowing how many hold secondary employment; and 1.1% report that none of their staff hold secondary employment. Based on these responses, it would be safe to say that a majority of emergency communication centers (ECCs) in the United

States have employees who work more than full-time. Also, breaking those numbers down a little further, 17.2% of respondents state at least half of their staff hold a second job. This means at those centers 1 of every 2 telecommunicators put in additional hours outside of the primary workplace.

## HOW MUCH MORE ARE WE REALLY WORKING

Our respondents with second jobs report working between two and 70 hours per week at their secondary employment, with an average of 19.23 hours each week. If a standard full-time week is equivalent to 40 hours, this means these subjects are working an average of 59.23 hours per week. "I have never held just the public safety job. At times I have worked four jobs," states one respondent. A few telecommunicators without second jobs report working so many hours of overtime at their primary ECC that it feels like a second job.

## OUR MOTIVATION FOR WORKING SO MUCH

The resounding answer to this is, you guessed it, the money. In all, 63.8% of respondents state their reasoning for holding a second job is the income. An additional 6% cite something more specific that still pertains to money such as "paying off student loan debt" or "paying for a gym membership." Among respondents, 46.2% state they rely on the additional income from their second

job to pay bills or buy necessities such as groceries and toiletries. This implies that for almost half of the respondents a second job is a requirement for and essential to their current lifestyle.

A total of 10.6% of telecommunicators indicate their reason for working a second job is to relax, de-stress or take their mind off of their primary workplace. There were a few telecommunicators who even referred to their second job as their "fun job," while 7.6% of respondents claim to work a second job to keep busy.

## WHERE WE ARE WORKING

It seems that a majority of telecommunicators seek secondary employment outside of emergency telecommunications with 34% of respondents defining their secondary employment as not pertaining to public safety or dispatch/telecommunicating. Some of the jobs mentioned were retail work, bartending, fitness center employment, flight attending and driving for services such as DoorDash or Uber. A total of 25.5% define their secondary employment as a public safety job that does not pertain to telecommunicating. The most popular job in this category was an EMT or firefighter. Others record working for security companies or the military, and 22.6% indicate being self-employed. Several of these self-employed telecommunicators have creative jobs such as crafting, selling on sites like Etsy or photography. The remaining