



## MEMORANDUM

To: Louisville Metro Council  
From: John P. Hamm, Director of Human Resources  
Subject: Report for Public Safety Employee Compensation  
Date: March 2, 2017

As requested by Metro Council, Louisville Metro Human Resources conducted a Public Safety Employee Compensation survey of peer cities. The request centered on the compensation and benefits for the following job classifications: Police Officer, EMT, Paramedic, Firefighter, Communications Dispatcher, and Corrections Officer. Insofar as no two city governments are organized or operate alike, as further explained below, it was necessary to focus the survey to these broader classifications to best match equivalent positions in the responding cities.

The cities selected were from a list of sixteen peer cities compiled by the Greater Louisville Project: Birmingham, AL; Charlotte, NC; Cincinnati, OH; Columbus, OH; Grand Rapids, MI; Greensboro, NC; Greenville, SC; Indianapolis, IN; Kansas City, MO; Knoxville, TN; Memphis, TN; Nashville, TN; Oklahoma City, OK; Omaha, NE; Saint Louis, MO; and Tulsa, OK. For salary, it was decided to focus (as possible) on the starting salary of a classification so that length of service could not skew the results, as would happen if a simple average were used. For benefits, we requested the benefits offered and general costs of plans.

The Council also requested recruiting and retention plans for the Public Safety agencies. MetroHR provides the general tools and counseling for all LMG departments. And MetroHR has improved these tools during the past year as explained further below. The departments, each having unique business needs, missions, and set of interested applicants, take the lead for their own recruiting and retention. Accordingly, the second half of this report provides a summary of the departments' recruiting and retention plans and successes, along with a description of the services MetroHR provides to support those departments.

## **Compensation and Benefits**

### Explanation of Facts and Figures

While reviewing the data, it is important to bear in mind several caveats:

- All salaries and most benefits offered by Louisville Metro Government for these classifications, and most of those for the peer cities, are negotiated with union leadership and with consideration of approved department budgets. The union members then vote to approve, and Council ultimately approves. Therefore, the agreements involve many levels of negotiations and approvals.
- In instances when peer cities failed to respond to the survey, or offered incomplete data, information was supplemented by either researching the city's website for compensation information, or, where that was unavailable, using internet research through HR and other professional sources. These other sources often provide ranges based on mean data instead of specific starting pay.
- The base salary for any public safety classification may reflect only a portion of their take-home pay, which can be supplemented by several factors such as overtime, secondary employment, uniform allowance, wellness incentives, and state stipends.
- Finally, for recruiting and retention purposes, compensation is only one of several factors that influence a person's desire to work for and build a career with an employer. The nature of the work, tuition assistance, career development, family obligations, job duties, potential for advancement, and, particularly for public safety positions, a sense of giving to the community, each plays a role in finding and keeping top talent.

## **Summary of Peer Cities**

**Birmingham, AL**, starts their Police Officers at \$37,734. They do not report employing EMTs or Paramedics. They start Firefighters at \$37,606, Dispatchers at \$32,469, and Corrections Officers at \$39,036. They did not report any cost of benefits; however, they report offering the following benefits: health insurance, life insurance, sick time off, leave of absence, vacation time off, parental leave, Family Medical Leave (FMLA), a retirement/investment plan, tuition assistance, and an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

**Charlotte, NC**, starts Police Officers at \$42,640, while their benefits cost \$8,912 for total compensation of \$51,552. They do not report employing EMTs or Paramedics. Their Firefighters start at \$40,609, with benefits costing \$6,944 for total compensation of \$47,533. Dispatchers start at \$40,732, with benefits costing \$7,393 for total compensation of \$48,125. Corrections Officers start at \$39,386, with no benefits reported. They offer health insurance, short/long-term disability, life insurance, sick time off, leave of absence, vacation time off, FMLA, a spending account (HRA or FSA), a wellness program, a retirement/investment plan, tuition assistance, and an EAP.

**Cincinnati, OH**, did not respond to the survey, but their website and internet research through HR and other professional sources indicate that a Police Officer starts at \$55,746, a Firefighter starts at \$48,183, a Dispatcher starts at \$43,073, and a Corrections Officer starts at \$38,540. They do not list salaries for EMTs or Paramedics, and do not list benefits on their website.

**Columbus, OH**, did not respond to the survey, but their website and internet research through HR and other professional sources indicate that a Police Officer starts at \$53,934, a Firefighter starts at \$50,440, a Dispatcher starts at \$45,386, and a Corrections Officer starts at \$38,604. They do not list salaries for EMTs or Paramedics. Their website lists benefits only for a Police Officer: health insurance, life insurance, sick time off, vacation time off, FMLA, a wellness program, and tuition assistance, and an EAP.

**Grand Rapids, MI**, did not respond to the survey, but their website and internet research through HR and other professional sources indicate that a Police Officer starts at \$45,637, a Firefighter starts at \$41,211, a Dispatcher starts at \$39,277, and a Corrections Officer starts at \$39,532. They do not list salaries for EMTs or Paramedics, and do not list benefits on their website.

**Greensboro, NC**, starts Police Officers at \$35,556, while their benefits cost \$12,445 for total compensation of \$48,001. They do not report employing EMTs or Paramedics. Their Firefighters start at \$33,483, with benefits costing \$11,719 for total compensation of \$45,202. Dispatchers start at \$39,856, with benefits costing \$9,690 for total compensation of \$49,546. Corrections Officers start at \$37,351, with no benefits reported. They offer health insurance, short/long-term disability, life insurance, sick time off, leave of absence, vacation time off, parental leave, FMLA, a spending account (HRA or FSA), a wellness program, a retirement/investment plan, and an EAP.

**Greenville, SC**, starts a Police Officer at \$38,840, a Firefighter at \$33,488, and a Dispatcher at \$28,434. A Corrections Officer, who is employed by Greenville County, starts at \$32,229. They do not list salaries for EMTs or Paramedics, and did not list benefits.

**Indianapolis, IN**, starts Police Officers at \$47,650, while their benefits cost \$11,000 for total compensation of \$58,650. They do not report employing EMTs or Paramedics. Their Firefighters start at \$39,446, with benefits costing \$11,000 for total compensation of \$50,446. Dispatchers start at \$30,284, with benefits costing \$11,000 for total compensation of \$41,284. Corrections Officers start at \$29,434, with benefits costing \$11,000 for total compensation of \$40,434. They offer health insurance, life insurance, leave of absence, vacation time off, flex time, FMLA, a spending account (HRA or FSA), a wellness program, a retirement/investment plan, and an EAP. They also offer Police Officers and Firefighters sick time off. They offer Dispatchers short/long-term disability, and tuition assistance.

**Kansas City, MO**, starts Police Officers at \$43,404, while their benefits cost \$13,000 for total compensation of \$56,404. EMTs start at \$36,876, while their benefits cost \$13,000 for total compensation of \$49,876. Paramedics start at \$45,624, with benefits costing \$13,000 for total compensation of \$58,624. Their Firefighters and Dispatchers both start at \$36,456, with benefits costing \$13,000 for total compensation of \$49,456. Corrections Officers start at \$38,874, with benefits costing \$13,000 for total compensation of \$51,874. They offer health insurance, short/long-term disability, life insurance, sick time off, leave of absence, vacation time off, parental leave, FMLA, a wellness program, a retirement/investment plan, and an EAP.

**Knoxville, TN**, did not respond to the survey, but internet research through HR and other professional sources indicates that a Police Officer starts at \$44,583, an EMT starts at \$29,016, a Paramedic starts at \$34,828, a Firefighter starts at \$35,958, a Dispatcher starts at \$35,026, and a Corrections Officer starts at \$37,872. They do not list salaries or benefits on their website.

#### **Louisville, KY**

- Police Officers start at \$42,418 (including \$4,000 annual state incentive pay), while our benefits cost \$13,261 for total compensation of \$55,679. They also receive: court pay (\$60 per appearance); special assignment pay for Field Training Sergeant (one hour overtime per week), canine officers (45 minutes paid each day for off-duty animal care), and shift pay (additional \$.50 per hour); injury-in-the-line-of-duty pay (full salary for up to a year); clothing allowance (\$1,500 annually); equipment allowance (\$900 annually); and allowance increase (\$60 monthly).
- EMTs start at \$31,200, while our benefits cost \$11,661 for total compensation of \$42,861. They also receive: callout pay (1.5x for a minimum of 4 hours); preceptor pay (additional \$2 per hour); clothing maintenance (\$350 annually); and certification sign-on credit (\$1,000).
- Paramedics start at \$37,440, with benefits costing \$11,661 for total compensation of \$49,101. They also receive: callout pay (1.5x for a minimum of 4 hours); preceptor pay (additional \$2 per hour); clothing maintenance (\$350 annually); and certification sign-on credit (\$1,000).

- Firefighters start at \$49,427 (including \$4,000 annual state incentive pay), with benefits costing \$11,661 for total compensation of \$61,088. It should be noted that Firefighters work 2,912 hours in a year (56 hours per week), 832 additional hours compared to the 40-hour week. The 24/48 schedule is mandated for First Class Cities by KRS 95.275. They receive in addition: after 3 years, a Firefighter becomes eligible for longevity pay of \$.204 per hour which rises gradually to a maximum of \$3.672 per hour; hazardous rescue pay for specialized units (additional \$.35 per hour); a clothing allowance of \$950 annually is paid after one year as LFD supplies the first allotment of uniforms.
- Dispatchers start at \$46,550, with benefits costing \$11,661 for total compensation of \$58,211.
- Corrections Officers start at \$32,802, with benefits costing \$11,661 for total compensation of \$44,463. They also receive: callout pay (1.5x for a minimum of 4 hours); Field Training Officer (additional \$2 per hour); shift differential (additional \$.50 per hour for mid-shift, \$.25 per hour for late shift); uniforms provided by Metro; personal property lost or damaged on duty replaced (up to \$325 per incident); and injury-in-the-line-of-duty pay (full salary until Worker's Compensation takes effect after 8 days).
- LMG offers health insurance, life insurance, sick time off, leave of absence, vacation time off, FMLA, a spending account (HRA or FSA), a wellness program (for employees with Managed, Balanced, and Choice Plans and Police Officers hired after July 1, 2013), a Kentucky Retirement Plan, tuition assistance, and an EAP. We also offer Dispatchers long-term disability. Police Officers also receive unlimited sick leave, "Cadillac" health insurance, and In-Line-of-Duty injury full salary for up to one year. Firefighters receive a free annual medical examination.

**Memphis, TN**, starts Police Officers at \$47,341, while their benefits cost \$9,942 for total compensation of \$57,283. They do not employ EMTs. Paramedics start at \$53,368, with benefits costing \$11,207 for total compensation of \$64,575. Firefighters start at \$48,961, with benefits costing \$10,282 for total compensation of \$59,243. Dispatchers start at \$41,240, with benefits costing \$8,660 for total compensation of \$49,900. Corrections Officers start at \$38,303, with no benefits reported. They offer the other four classifications health insurance, short/long-term disability, life insurance, sick time off, leave of absence, vacation time off, flex time, parental leave, FMLA, a spending account (HRA or FSA), a wellness program, a retirement/investment plan, tuition assistance, and an EAP.

**Nashville, TN**, did not respond to the survey, but their website and internet research through HR and other professional sources indicate that Police Officers, EMTs, and Firefighters start at \$42,828, while Paramedics and Dispatchers start at \$47,436. Corrections Officers start at \$35,387. They do not list benefits on their website.

**Oklahoma City, OK**, did not respond to the survey, but their website and internet research through HR and other professional sources indicate that a Police Officer starts at \$52,973, a Firefighter starts at \$38,002, a Dispatcher starts at \$38,004, and a Corrections Officer (employed by the county) starts at \$39,012. They do not indicate starting salaries for EMTs or Paramedics, and do not list benefits on their website.

**Omaha, NE**, did not respond to the survey, but their website indicates that a Police Officer starts at \$49,400, a Firefighter starts at \$55,852, a Dispatcher starts at \$30,410, and a Corrections Officer (employed by the county) starts at \$36,088. They do not indicate starting salaries for EMTs or Paramedics, and do not list benefits on their website.

**St. Louis, MO**, starts Police Officers and Firefighters at \$43,141, while their benefits cost \$5,000 for total compensation of \$48,141. EMTs start at \$30,394, while their benefits cost \$5,000 for total compensation of \$35,394. Paramedics start at \$36,400, with benefits costing \$5,000 for total compensation of \$41,400. Dispatchers start at \$27,924, with benefits costing \$5,000 for total compensation of \$32,924. Corrections Officers start at \$39,600, with benefits costing \$5,000 for total compensation of \$44,600. They offer health insurance, life insurance, sick time off, leave of absence, vacation time off, FMLA, a wellness program, a retirement/investment plan, and an EAP. They offer EMTs, Paramedics, and Firefighters short/long-term disability. They offer Police Officers tuition assistance.

**Tulsa, OK**, did not respond to the survey, but internet research through HR and other professional sources indicates that a Police Officer starts at \$46,013, an EMT starts at \$29,946, a Paramedic starts at \$35,945, a Firefighter starts at \$37,111, a Dispatcher starts at \$36,149, and a Corrections Officer starts at \$39,087. They do not list salaries or benefits on their website.

## **Recruiting and Retention**

As stated above, each LMG department takes the lead with their recruiting and retention efforts. MetroHR provides tools and counseling, including new initiatives outlined below. This strategic partnership approach works best because each of the departments, even within Public Safety, is unique because of unique job requirements, Collective Bargaining Agreements, culture, budgets, and competition within LMG and the private sector. This also affects MetroHR's advice and decisions beyond recruiting and retention, such as accommodations, leave, EEO allegations, safety (OSHA), and training.

Finally, in our experience, one of the primary issues, especially with retention, is that retirement benefits have diminished through the last 10 years. There is simply no comparison between the original Tier 1 benefits, which provide excellent incentive to stay with LMG, and benefits offered now in the current Tier 3. The strong retirement incentive no longer exists for competition with the private sector.

### **MetroHR – Improvements During Past Year**

MetroHR has been active in improving the general recruitment process from the outside in to benefit all LMG departments.

- We recently modernized our job posting and application page, allowing potential applicants to search and sort through the postings more easily, to see their status in the process, and to upload their resume when they register their account so that it automatically populates many of the application fields whenever they apply for a job. This update also works very well on mobile devices.
- We have begun posting all open positions on Facebook (Louisville Metro Government Jobs) and tweeting them on Twitter (@louisvillemetrohr). These tools allow departments to forward or retweet. And we continue to work with departments to advertise outside of NeoGov and multimedia, such as targeted recruiting on department websites, department-specific media (written and online), and direct contact with potential candidates.
- Most recently, we trained Metro staff in the use of a Neogov interface that empowers hiring managers throughout Metro to manage their portion of the hiring process via an online tracking system that shows the status of every qualified applicant through every step in the recruiting process. This Online Hiring Center (OHC) can answer many of the questions that department hiring managers used to call MetroHR for, providing immediate information and speeding up the entire process.
- We are currently launching two digital initiatives that will have the dual impact of shortening the process by which an employee's compensation is adjusted and determining what factors are creating turnover. Our new digital Talent & Retention Request forms create a uniform process by which departments can ask to have an employee reclassified, have their pay adjusted, or to create or revise Job Descriptions. Plus, the digital approval process should take a process that has averaged 23 days and reduce it to a week or less. In addition, we are contracting with IQS Research to act as a

third party in conducting exit surveys for employees leaving LMG or transferring departments. The data compiled should give us a better idea of what motivates employees to turnover so we can address this with departments.

- In addition, MetroHR has been able to work with the existing Civil Service regulations to improve the available pool of talent for Civil Service positions. These positions are governed by the Rule of 3, which stipulates that MetroHR can send only the top 3 scoring candidates to the department for any one vacancy. Our Civil Service team has developed a system of grading applicants that places applicants in bands, which results in the departments being able to see more candidates for each vacancy while still complying with the regulations. Also, the regulations direct that if there is more than one vacancy, the department will have three additional candidates to choose from for each additional vacancy.

### Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD)

LMPD recently eliminated the requirement for LMPD recruits to have at least 60 semester hours of college credit or the equivalent in experience, resulting in a sharp increase in applicants and the formation of two new recruiting classes with a total of 48 recruits. Their data indicates that applications have jumped to 2,062 in 2016/17 after decreases in previous years. This is especially encouraging since in previous years they accepted applications continuously, but now restrict applications to a six-week period prior to each recruit class.

In addition, LMPD has started a class of lateral hires as their second class of rehired recruits. KRS70.293 allows for the rehire of retirees on a year-to-year contract, allowing LMPD to place officers on the street even faster because the retirees do not need to go through such an extensive recruit training process. LMPD is working with the FOP to develop contract language that would allow hiring part-time officers whose focus would be special details (e.g., Derby events, marathons, and University of Louisville sporting events), thereby freeing full-time officers to continue with their regular policing duties.

The Department also has increased recruit pay as high as is possible while still retaining room for a raise upon graduation.

Finally, LMPD has begun an aggressive social media campaign to proactively highlight positive news about the department (like our community policing initiatives) while simultaneously pushing job postings out via Facebook and Twitter, resulting in a marked increase in the number of retweeted and shared posts. All of this is in addition to attending job fairs, college visits, and advertising in radio, print, and television.\*

\* As availability allows, LMPD also provides Police Officers who have at least 3 years of service with take-home vehicles.



### Louisville Fire Department (LFD)

When LFD determines, based on budget and vacancies, that they will be starting a new Recruiting Class, they assemble a Recruiting Team made up of rank and file personnel. This team identifies events such as college job fairs and locations such as Ft. Knox to focus their recruiting activities. When a potential recruit is identified, a team member is assigned as a mentor. Because the hiring process is lengthy to ensure candidates are fit and qualified, the mentor guarantees that potential candidates are kept abreast of important dates within the process (e.g., application date, test dates, interviews). This approach has been very positive in recruiting diverse pools of candidates to our selection process. Last year, the LFD also reconvened the Minority and Female Recruitment Team. These 14 LFD team members worked not only to raise the number of overall minority and female applicants, but to increase the quality of the applicants so that more minorities and females would successfully complete the interview process. The final applicant numbers reveal that the Recruiting Team's efforts surpassed our record-setting numbers from the last hiring process by achieving an overall percentage increase of minority and female applicants.

The Division has not traditionally had an issue with retaining talent. Due to the security of the positions provided by the union contract and Metro Government, nearly all Division employees stay with LFD. Traditionally, less than five per year resign before retirement or being terminated. With the changes in the retirement system, however, it is unclear what effect there will be on future retention.

Finally, in the fire service throughout the United States, it is typical for generations of family members to serve. The Louisville Fire Department also has a history of family members following in the footsteps of their relatives. This trend has not decreased in the new millennium. It is not uncommon for many current and former firefighters' family members to apply for positions and continue the tradition.

### Louisville Metro Department of Corrections (LMDC)

LMDC continues to develop strategies to aggressively recruit candidates for Corrections Officer positions. Additional Corrections Officers are applying to LMPD as they qualify based on the new hiring standards. LMDC is proud their officers qualify and continue to serve LMG, while recognizing that revised strategies are needed for the recent LMPD change. LMDC and MetroHR have taken steps to improve the turn-out rate for the initial Corrections Officer Recruit testing process. Some applicants either do not respond to traditional communications or do not appear for the test process after reserving a spot. LMDC is addressing this in a couple of ways, first by looking into using text messaging sent to reach the applicants more effectively (in addition to the current emails), especially millennials who are less likely to use email. LMDC also increased the number of routine reminders sent to applicants. Early results of sending multiple reminder emails have been promising, yielding an 80% turn-out rate after the initial implementation phase.

In addition to researching the use of texts and increasing the number of email reminders sent to applicants, LMDC and MetroHR have also been working on improving the timing of the steps in the selection process. The goal is to increase engagement among the applicants and speed up the hiring process, which should result in a greater applicant pool. MetroHR is currently evaluating two methods of scheduling, which are 1) scheduling the first three steps of the selection process, including a physical agility test (PAT), on the same day, and 2) making the PAT at a later date, but ensuring that the dates of each step are planned well in advance and advertised to the applicants for their planning purposes. Both methods are intended to increase turnout and engagement.

Finally, they are looking into the possibility of hiring a dedicated Corrections Recruiter to their training staff, someone whose sole duties would revolve around identifying and attracting top talent and ushering them through the selection process. They are also considering the process to free up uniformed staff to attend job fairs and hiring expos to make the kinds of street-level contacts necessary to find top talent.

### Emergency Services (EMS)

Emergency Services has significantly increased its efforts to attract and retain employees. In an effort to attract more talent to its EMS division, they have held two EMT Recruit Classes in the past 12 months (minimum 150 hours of training for a new recruit to become an EMT). The first class resulted in 13 full-time hires and the second class, in session now, includes 20 full-time recruits. This last application period produced an applicant pool of 410 people to be considered as a recruit and trained as an EMT (highest number documented).

They are continuing with their recruiting efforts by directly contacting the more than 12,000 certified EMTs and Paramedics in Kentucky, as well as contacting Paramedic students in Indiana, Ohio, and Tennessee. They also are reaching out to all former employees who left in good standing over the last two years.

An increased social media presence for all of Emergency Services, as well as plans for a restructured website, is helping both recruit and engage employees. New promotional materials (flyers and videos) for the EMS and MetroSafe divisions are helping to recruit interested applicants and explain more precisely what to expect on the job and its requirements, as well as guide them through the application process. Emergency Services is also working to improve processes such as conditional offers, drafting a pre-polygraph booklet, and more aggressively reposting positions.

In addition to focusing on recruiting new employees, Emergency Services is developing ways to retain its existing personnel by providing career paths and other incentives. In FY2016, all MetroCall 311 operators were reclassified for higher pay and a new lead position was created to enhance advancement opportunities. They are starting an internal Paramedic Training Program, providing their EMTs with a clearly defined career path at a time of a national Paramedic shortage. Emergency Services is working with MetroHR's Civil Service to benefit recruiting of current or experienced public safety applicants to MetroSafe. Additionally, Emergency Services

worked with the County Attorney's Office to review the language in the job descriptions for Communications Specialists and the application/onboarding process. Once implemented, these initiatives will allow applicants to gain a better initial understanding of the job to help ensure retention once hired.

## CONCLUSION

Each of these Public Safety agencies, addressing its own unique issues, has made excellent progress to address recruiting and retaining staff, and they continue to plan for even better results. Public media and other forms of advertising and communication, like text messaging, have worked extremely well for initial applications and improving communication with applicants. MetroHR continues to modernize its methods to help these and the other 21 departments with better improvements to the application process and advertising, along with process improvements for hiring and personnel actions once employed. The greatest focus and progress has been increasing the applicant pool and educating those applicants about what the different positions truly entail to avoid turnover. And all this is being accomplished in the midst of increased competition with both the private and public sector for applicants and current employees, especially newer employees who have different career expectations without the benefit of the Tier 1 retirement system.