

A Guide to Purchasing 911 Dispatch Consoles

What You Really Need to Know When Buying Dispatch Console Furniture

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
How Long Does Dispatch Console Furniture Really Last?	4
When Should You Start Thinking About Dispatch Furniture Proposals?	6
Planning and Timeline for a New Dispatch Furniture Project	10
Making Dispatch Furniture Bids & RFP's Work For Your 911 Comm Center	14
How Much Does New Dispatch Furniture Cost?	18
How to Ensure for Success!	21
Conclusion	25

Introduction

For most people, purchasing dispatch furniture for a Communications Center is a once-in-a-career task. It's only natural that you'd want to get it right. We understand the challenges! There's a lot of pressure to make a well-informed investment that satisfies the needs of your staff, supervisors, and city, county, or state stakeholders.

No doubt, it's a big responsibility!

But if you're in this field, you're no stranger to pressure, right?

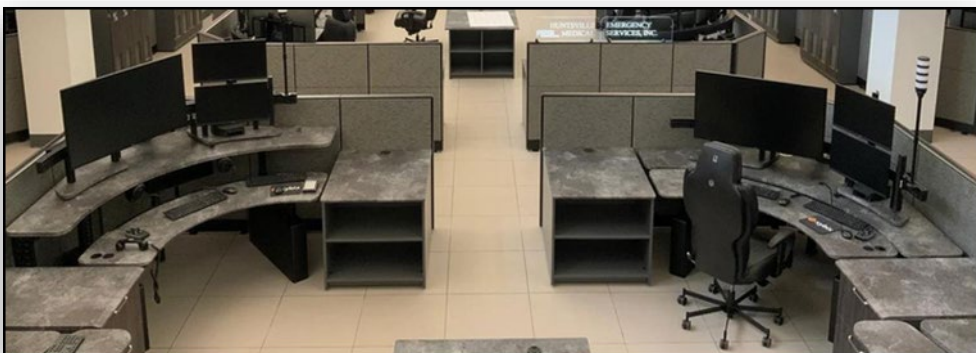
That's why we've created this guide, to help you navigate the process with confidence!

Inside, you'll find valuable insights to aid your initial research, prepare you with realistic timelines, and understand the costs associated with investing in new dispatch furniture consoles for your Comm Center.

Our goal is to help ease the burden and set you up for success as you tackle this significant project.

While this guide doesn't cover everything, it's designed to provide you with a solid foundation, enabling you to ask the right questions, get the answers you need, and deliver your project on time and within budget.

If you have any questions or need further support, don't hesitate to reach out. We're here to help every step of the way!



How Long Does Dispatch Console Furniture Really Last?

It's a common question: "What's the average lifespan of dispatch console furniture?" Potential customers often raise this question, which calls to mind advice shared by a real estate agent during house-hunting: should buyer's ask why sellers are selling? "No, they won't give you the full story anyway." It's a fair point. No one's likely to admit, "The neighbor's dog barks all night and drives us crazy." When questions about console furniture durability arise, it's tempting to make a remark like, "It lasts a thousand years!" But the topic is important. Everyone wants to know if the furniture will endure or if unexpected replacement costs will crop up in just a few years. Here is an informed and detailed perspective on what to expect.

The Real Question: When Will I Need to Replace My Furniture?

The truth? It depends. Dispatch consoles are often replaced for reasons beyond wear and tear. Trends like consolidation frequently drive upgrades, as agencies merge and invest in new equipment. Some states even allocate funds specifically for furniture replacement every seven years or so. Occasionally, a customer will call with a surplus budget they need to spend before it's reallocated elsewhere. This has nothing to do with the condition of their furniture, it's just about seizing the opportunity for an upgrade.

Average Lifespan: 7-12 Years

Most dispatch furniture replacements occur in the 7–12-year range, with the sweet spot around 10 years.

How Long Does Dispatch Console Furniture Really Last?

That said, this doesn't mean your consoles are doomed after a decade. Some customers' setups have lasted 16 years under 24/7 use. We even have a client still using 20-year-old consoles in their backup center, and they're working just fine.

As a Comm Center Director, a smart approach is to budget for new furniture every 10 years. Think about how much cars evolve over a decade. If you drive a 10-year-old car and then test-drive a brand-new model, it's a whole different experience, sleeker features, smoother performance, and enhanced comfort. Dispatch console furniture follows a similar trajectory. Year after year, advancements make these products better and more ergonomic.

The Bottom Line

When it comes to dispatch console furniture, you can reasonably expect over 12 years of 24/7 use. But to get the most out of your investment, budget wisely, choose a reliable vendor, and keep an eye on industry innovations. After all, the upgrades aren't just functional, they make the work environment more comfortable and efficient for your team.

Longevity is not just about durability. It's about ensuring you have the right support system and a plan to adapt to future needs. That's how you make your investment truly last.

When Should You Start Thinking About Dispatch Furniture Proposals?

The short answer: it depends. Each state, and even each communication center, has its own purchasing process, which can greatly affect the timeline for acquiring new dispatch consoles.

Here's a quick tip, if any of these scenarios apply to your center in the next 2–3 years, it's time to start planning:

- You're upgrading radios, CAD, or phone systems.
- You're moving to a new building.
- You're consolidating with another center.
- You're adding more positions than you have seats.
- Your current furniture is outdated (over eight years old) or doesn't function well.
- You're building or renovating a backup center.

Pro Tip: *Three years is generally too early to seek proposals unless you're planning major renovations or building a new facility. In these cases, involving your furniture vendor and architect early on can ensure a harmonious, ergonomic design that lasts for decades.*

Why Plan Ahead?

You might wonder, "Why not just drop a workstation into a blueprint and call it a day?" Unfortunately, it's not that simple. Dispatch furniture is custom-designed to fit the unique needs of each communication center. To create a proposal, vendors need precise details like room dimensions, equipment requirements, and storage needs.

When Should You Start Thinking About Dispatch Furniture Proposals?

Follow these steps to streamline your furniture planning process

Step One: Understand Your Purchasing Process

Before meeting with a vendor, get familiar with how your center handles furniture purchases. If you're unsure, your sales representative can often connect you with a nearby center for advice.

Here are some key questions to discuss with your procurement team:

- What is the budget?
- When is the budget due?
- Are grants available to fund workstations?
- Can you purchase through state contracts or cooperative purchasing groups?
- Is a formal RFP required, or can you collect three quotes?
- Can you "sole-source" a vendor or "piggyback" off an existing contract?

Step Two: Find Vendors

Once you've got the green light to start gathering proposals, seek referrals from neighboring agencies or attend local state conferences to meet vendors.

Scheduling an onsite meeting may take a few weeks. It's essential to have your IT team, dispatch supervisor, and project manager involved in this initial meeting.

When Should You Start Thinking About Dispatch Furniture Proposals?

Vendors will gather room dimensions, monitor specs, and CPU requirements. They'll also want to understand your project timeline. Depending on revisions and modifications, finalizing a proposal could take anywhere from a month to a year.

Note: Equipment upgrades (e.g., monitors) often affect furniture design. Coordinate radio/CAD upgrades with furniture planning to avoid mismatches.

Step Three: Align Your Budget

Once your proposal is finalized, it's time to secure approval from procurement. Be sure everyone is aligned on deadlines, as fiscal years and budget patterns vary by state. If your request gets denied during budget hearings, you'll have everything ready to try again next year.

If your budget is approved, congratulations—but don't celebrate just yet! There are still a few steps left to get the project completed.

Step Four: Finalize the Details

With the design and quote approved, it's time to address finishing touches. This includes:

- Selecting finishes and colors.
- Collecting purchase orders and signed drawings.
- Conducting a pre-construction meeting with all vendors involved.

When Should You Start Thinking About Dispatch Furniture Proposals?

Depending on schedules, this phase can take anywhere from two weeks to two months.

Step Five: Plan for Production and Installation

Here's a fun fact: production time for dispatch furniture typically takes 8–12 weeks. Installation timelines depend on factors such as:

- Whether the room is empty or operational during installation.
- Coordination with other vendors (radio, CAD, flooring, etc.).
- Whether installation happens during the day, night, or weekends.
- Unexpected delays (because there's always something).

After reading through these steps, you've likely realized the importance of starting early. Two years might not seem like a long time anymore, does it?

Unlike other equipment, dispatch furniture is custom-built to last 10–20 years. Taking the time to plan ensures you get ergonomic, durable workstations that meet your center's unique needs. Even if you're three or more years away from making a purchase, getting a budgetary estimate now can help you prepare for future opportunities.

Planning and Timeline for a New Dispatch Furniture Project

Achieving a goal such as launching, expanding, or remodeling a control center starts with setting a realistic completion date. Without a clear target and supporting milestones, it becomes challenging to stay on track or remain accountable. Your timeline will be as unique as your project, typically ranging from 4 months to 2 years.

Here's a breakdown of key phases to help you plan effectively:

Initial Meetings: 1–4 Weeks

This phase involves meeting with furniture solution vendors to discuss your needs, vision, and goals. It's a chance to explore the latest products, innovations, and vendor approaches while gathering estimated budget figures. If your budget requires approval, this downtime can be used to visit nearby centers that have completed similar projects for inspiration.

Design Process: 3 Weeks–1 Year

Preliminary Design:

Typically delivered 2 weeks after the initial site visit.

Review: Lasts 3 weeks to 1 year, depending on the complexity and responsiveness of stakeholders.

This phase includes reviewing equipment and space needs, selecting workstations, and refining the layout. Most projects require 2–3 revisions to finalize the design and ensure it's optimized for long-term functionality.

Planning and Timeline for a New Dispatch Furniture Project

Tip: *If building a center from scratch, involve a professional furniture designer early in collaboration with your project manager and architect. This helps ensure adequate square footage and layout planning.*

Finish Selection: 1–4 Weeks

Choosing colors and finishes should be straightforward, but it often involves additional decisions, especially if the project includes updates to flooring, window treatments, or paint. Approvals for these updates may take extra time.

Procurement: 1 Week–6 Months

Procurement timelines depend on whether you're purchasing off a contract or issuing a bid. Contract or sole-source purchasing can significantly reduce time, though this depends on your organization's agreements and policies.

PO and Sign-Off: 1–4 Weeks

The timeline for submitting purchase orders (PO) and obtaining sign-off depends on your purchasing department. Understanding this process in advance helps prevent delays.

Production: 8 Weeks

Most manufacturers require a standard lead time of approximately 8 weeks for production and installation. This can vary depending on the complexity of the project, so submitting signed orders early ensures smoother planning.

Planning and Timeline for a New Dispatch Furniture Project

Installation: 2 Days–4 Weeks

Installation time varies with the project's scope. On average, installation teams can complete 2 workstations per day, though larger projects may require additional crews to expedite the process.

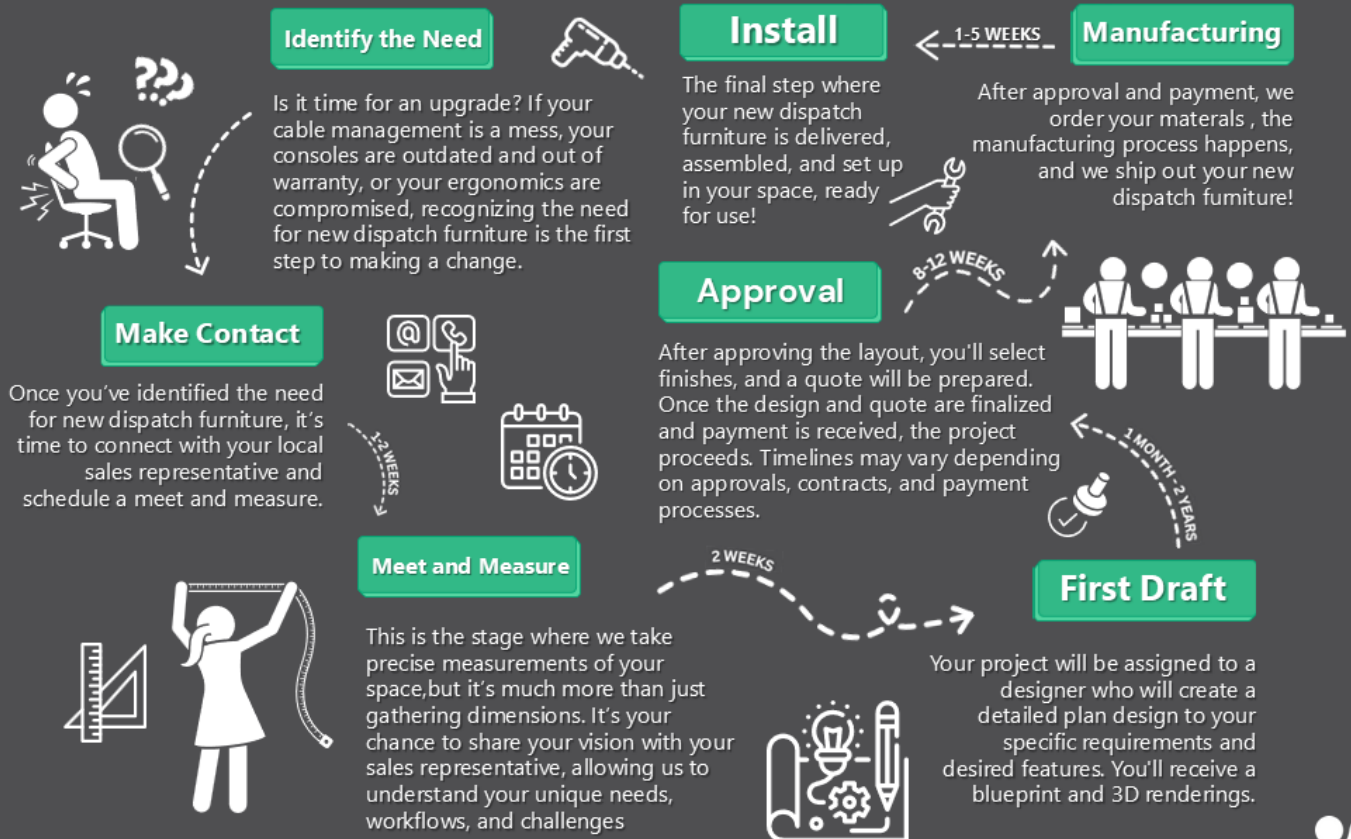
Total Timeline

Adding up these phases, 16 weeks is the minimum timeline for completing a dispatch or control center remodel. However, projects often extend up to 60 weeks (just over a year), depending on internal processes, approvals, and dependencies like flooring or electrical work.

While the process may take time, the payoff is significant: your new consoles or workstations will provide 10–20 years of reliable service, even with 24/7 operation. Investing time upfront ensures a durable and efficient solution that meets your center's long-term needs.

NEW DISPATCH FURNITURE TIMELINE

New dispatch furniture projects can take 16 weeks to 2 years to complete, depending on factors like internal processes and prerequisites. The timeframe may seem daunting, but be assured, your furniture is designed and built to last for 10-20 years with for continuous 24/7 use.



Making Dispatch Furniture Bids & RFP's Work For Your 911 Comm Center

When it's time to purchase new furniture for your 911 center, many city or county agencies rely on their purchasing departments to determine whether the acquisition should go out for competitive bidding or can be made directly. But what does "going out to bid" actually mean?

The term "bid" often serves as a catch-all for competitive purchasing processes. Two primary methods of competitive purchasing are the Invitation to Bid (IFB) and the Request for Proposal (RFP). Understanding the differences between these two approaches is essential for making the best purchasing decision for your dispatch center.

Invitation to Bid (IFB)

An Invitation to Bid, or IFB, is typically used for purchasing commodity items - products that are essentially identical, where the lowest price is the primary factor. In an IFB process:

- Vendors submit sealed bids that are straightforward to evaluate.
- The agency knows exactly what it is getting.
- Price is the sole determinant of the winning bid.

This process works well for simple, standardized purchases like office supplies but is generally unsuitable for complex acquisitions such as dispatch furniture.

Making Dispatch Furniture Bids & RFP's Work For Your 911 Comm Center

Furniture for 911 centers involves many variables, including design, customization, and installation, which cannot be adequately captured in a low-cost bid process.

Request for Proposal (RFP)

A Request for Proposal is the most common method for purchasing dispatch furniture due to the variety of manufacturers, product complexities, and project-specific requirements, such as freight and installation. Unlike an IFB, an RFP allows:

- Agencies to evaluate factors beyond price.
- Vendors to propose performance-based solutions tailored to the agency's needs.
- More in-depth analysis of responses, which takes additional time but ensures a better outcome.

Structuring an Effective RFP

To ensure a successful RFP process, include a ranking chart to communicate the evaluation criteria to vendors. Think of it as a grading system that totals 100 points. For example:

- Pricing: 30%
- Proof of meeting national standards: 15%
- Installation time frame: 10%
- Warranty: 10%
- Customer service: 15%
- References: 20%

Making Dispatch Furniture Bids & RFP's Work For Your 911 Comm Center

This transparent scoring system helps vendors understand your priorities and submit competitive proposals.

Negotiating and Clarifying RFP Details

One significant advantage of the RFP process is the ability to negotiate with vendors after receiving their submissions. This doesn't necessarily mean haggling over price; it's about refining the proposal. For instance, you may discover:

- A component was overlooked.
- Installation needs to shift from a single-stage to a multi-stage process.

In such cases, you can request updates or adjustments from the vendors to ensure the final proposal aligns with your agency's requirements.

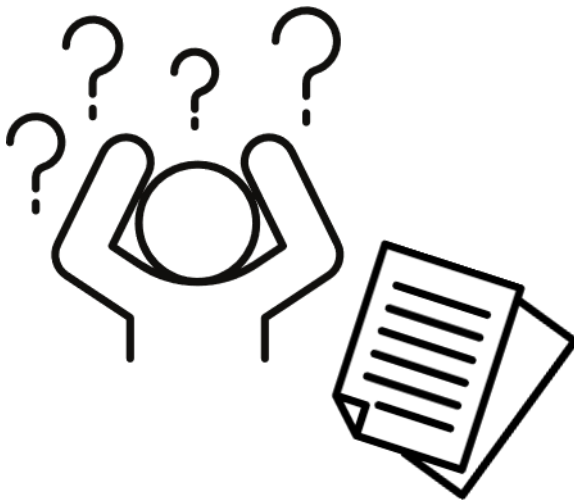
A Word of Caution: Vendor-Provided Specifications

Be cautious when using specifications provided by vendors. These are often written to favor their own products and confuse purchasing departments, creating unnecessary delays and eliminating fair competition. Instead, rely on clear, unbiased specifications to streamline the process and foster healthy competition.

Making Dispatch Furniture Bids & RFP's Work For Your 911 Comm Center

Navigating the Challenges of RFPs

Let's face it: RFPs can be tricky. But they're also the best way to ensure your agency gets the best value for its investment. If you need guidance in creating a fair, effective RFP for your 911 center furniture, reach out to Ken Carson at kenc@xybix.com. Ken can help you navigate the process and secure the right solution for your agency.



How Much Does New Dispatch Furniture Cost?

Let's start with the basics. Asking, "How much does dispatch furniture cost?" is a lot like asking, "How much does a car cost?" It depends on your needs and preferences. Do you want the essentials, or are you looking for premium features? Three primary factors influence the cost of PSAP workstations:

1. Dispatch Center Layout

The size and shape of your room are critical. A standard rectangular room is relatively straightforward to design. However, if your space includes curved walls, columns, or pass-through windows, it will require greater customization and may increase costs.

2. Amount and Placement of Equipment Per Workstation

A small call-taker station with a few monitors and computers will cost less than a larger supervisor station outfitted with eight monitors and multiple computers. Larger stations often need additional equipment, support systems, and infrastructure.

3. Number of Workstations Needed

The more workstations you purchase, the lower your cost per unit for freight and installation. Scaling up typically results in cost savings per station.

To help you plan, here's an overview of three pricing tiers for PSAP workstations. All costs include typical freight and installation expenses.

How Much Does New Dispatch Furniture Cost?

BASIC Dispatch Workstation

Price Range: \$11,000–\$14,500

This entry-level option includes:

- Dual-surface height adjustment
- Computer storage
- Extension cables
- Monitor focal depth adjustment
- Side work surfaces
- Full-service design

MID-LEVEL Dispatch Workstation

Price Range: \$15,000–\$21,500

Includes everything in the BASIC tier, plus additional features:

- Personal climate control
- Acoustical panels
- LED task lighting
- Personal storage
- Supplemental storage for the workspace

TOP-LEVEL Dispatch Workstation

Price Range: \$16,000–\$25,000

Includes everything in the MID-LEVEL tier, with premium enhancements:

- Customization for unique or small spaces
- Premium acoustical materials
- Whiteboards and glass panels
- Status indicator lights
- Optional etched and lit acrylics

How Much Does New Dispatch Furniture Cost?

What's Included in My Quote?

Transparency is essential when comparing quotes. Some vendors may only show you a base price without highlighting the additional features or services you've requested. At Xybix, we ensure your quote includes:

- An itemized list showing both the “list price” and the discounted Xybix price
- Payment terms and any available early-pay discounts
- Freight, installation, and labor costs
- A clear outline of the warranty
- Optional add-ons (marketing services or design upgrades)

By reviewing costs and details upfront, you'll avoid surprises later in the process and will be able to make the right choices for your center with confidence!



How to Ensure for Success!

Updating dispatch furniture is no small task. After all, it's a process that happens only once every 10–15 years, and for good reason! The coordination required between teams, vendors, and timelines makes it more like orchestrating a symphony than a quick shopping trip to IKEA.

When you finally get to the point of requesting a purchase order, it can feel like the heavy lifting is behind you. But many Comm Center Managers will tell you: *you're just getting started*.

Think about it, would you buy a new car without double-checking the paperwork? Imagine expecting a sleek white car and ending up with a bright yellow one! Mistakes like these are preventable, and the same level of preparation applies when purchasing dispatch furniture.

Here's five essential steps to help you prepare for your dispatch furniture update and make the process as smooth as possible.

1. Double-Check Equipment Size and Quantity

Rushing to get a quote or to finalize can lead to overlooked details that might derail your project. Before installation day, revisit your design and ask yourself:

- Are the monitor sizes and quantities correct?
- Do we have adequate space for CPUs?
- Are the correct types of monitor extension cables included?

How to Ensure for Success!

The dimensions of your workstations are directly influenced by the equipment they'll house. The last thing you want is to install your furniture only to realize your monitors hang awkwardly over the edges of the desks - yikes! Taking the time to verify these details early can save you headaches later.

2. Coordinate with All Vendors

Dispatch furniture is often just one part of a larger Comm Center update. Your project might also involve:

- Radio system upgrades
- CAD updates
- Flooring replacements

To ensure everything runs smoothly, create a detailed timeline and confirm lead times with all vendors involved. Make sure everyone is clear on the order of operations and their role in the process. Clear communication and coordination are key to avoiding delays and missteps.

3. Plan for Cable Management and Hole Locations

If your room has raised flooring and you're reconfiguring the layout or replacing the floor, you'll need a hole location plan. This ensures that your IT and electrical teams have enough slack in the cables to reach all workstations and that power lines align with CPU cabinets.

How to Ensure for Success!

A poorly planned cable setup can turn into a logistical nightmare during installation. Avoid the chaos by reviewing these plans with your team well in advance.

4. Develop a Cutover Plan

In a perfect world, no one would call 9-1-1 while you upgrade your Comm Center. But, we live in the real world, so you'll need a detailed cutover plan to keep operations running while making changes.

Consider these options:

- Temporary Alternate Site
- Phased Installation

Also, plan for the smaller logistical details:

- Where will you stage the furniture?
- Do you have dumpsters on-site for disposing of old furniture and materials?

Every detail matters when you're working in a live dispatch environment.

5. Verify Room Dimensions

Even the most talented architect or designer can't prevent last-minute changes to a construction plan. After studs and drywall are in place, take the time to verify the dimensions of your space before furniture installation.

How to Ensure for Success!

This is especially critical for tight spaces where even an inch or two can make or break the configuration. Most furniture vendors will require a sign-off on drawings that confirm room dimensions. Getting this step right avoids costly errors and delays.

Remember the adage: "Measure twice, cut once."

Taking the time to work through these details ensures a smoother installation process and prevents avoidable mistakes. Once your dispatch furniture is installed, you'll be using it for many years to come. It's worth the effort to do it right the first time and set your Comm Center up for success!



Conclusion

Purchasing dispatch console furniture is a significant investment, not just in terms of budget but also in creating a functional, ergonomic, and durable environment for your team!

As we've explored throughout this guide, the process involves thoughtful planning, attention to detail, and collaboration with key stakeholders to ensure the outcome meets the unique needs of your communications center.

We hope this guide has provided the clarity and confidence needed to succeed in your mission-critical role!

