



**Minimum Training
Standards for
Public Safety
Communications
First-Level Supervisor**



Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications First-Level Supervisors

APCO, International

Association of Public Safety Communication Officials

TO: APCO Members

FR: Julie J. Righter, Chair
Call Center Standards Committee

RE: Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications First-Level Supervisor

On behalf of public safety communications professionals across the nation, the Call Center Standards Committee has diligently worked to complete comprehensive Minimum Training Standards for First-Level Supervisors. The Committee, made up of a group of working public safety communication professionals from various sized agencies and backgrounds, reviewed and validated occupational analysis data for the Minimum Training Standards for First-Level Supervisor. The need for core supervisory competencies necessary to build upon those skills outlined in the P33 Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications Telecommunicator creates new challenges for both supervisors and managers. The focus of the Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications First-Level Supervisor is to provide training necessary to foster levels of consistency for supervisory staff, as well as to promote the leadership role of the supervisor in a public safety communications center. It is expected that supervisory staff wishing to meet this standard be trained within the next 12 months or within the first three months of promotion or hire.

Responding to the valid needs of our members, dealing with the rapidly expanding and ever-changing service environment, the Committee worked together over the last nine months to refine the tasks and subtasks relative to the First-Level Supervisor. Once the tasks were complete the Committee met for a work session where the standard was drafted. The standard was announced in the APCO Bulletin, as well as posted on the APCO Web site, with comment solicited from the membership. Before you is the final draft of Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications First-Level Supervisor as approved by the Board of Officers on August 2, 2006 and ratified by the Executive Council on August 5, 2006.

The Committee thanks those on the Executive Council who assisted in disseminating this standard for review by the membership. This collaboration of industry professionals can only increase the high degree of professionalism we all seek within our agencies.



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Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications First-Level Supervisors

Chapter 1 Administration

1.1 Scope

This standard identifies the minimum training requirements for First-Level Public Safety Communications Supervisors. This position is typically charged with overseeing the daily operations of a public safety answering point and the actions of telecommunicators (as defined in 2.1.8). This document seeks to define supervisory training in certain knowledge, skills, and abilities to be provided by the agency. This standard should be seen as independent and stand-alone from standards addressed in the Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators, August 2004 (APCO Project 33); however, when a supervisor performs the tasks of a telecommunicator, they should meet the requirements of APCO Project 33. Supervisors should be cognizant of other relevant standards such as National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Commission on the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), etc.

1.2 Purpose

The standard specifies the minimum training requirements in general of all personnel assigned to any public safety communications supervisory function; it recognizes the need to supplement these basic competencies with agency-specific information and existing equipment-use parameters, as revised.

1.3 General

1.3.1 The agency/hiring authority shall establish no less than these minimum training standards, supplementing each as necessary for localized operational needs.

1.3.2 The agency/hiring authority shall define the base-line literacy requirements in addition to cognitive and psychomotor skills required to successfully achieve compliance with these training standards.

1.3.3 The agency/hiring authority shall monitor the performance of the supervisor to assure that the daily effort is consistent with the acceptable standards of managing the call-handling and dispatch responsibilities of his/her subordinates. Special attention shall be paid to timely, accurate, and objective support and discipline of subordinate personnel in accordance with agency/hiring authority policies.

1.3.4 The agency/hiring authority shall maintain complete training records and assure that all supervisors remain current in all areas of required performance and certifications through competent training.

Chapter 2 Definitions

2.1 General

Most terms used throughout this standard are defined as they appear in the text. Additional definitions are provided here.

2.1.1 Agency/Hiring Authority (agency):



Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications First-Level Supervisors

The agency or body which defines the roles, responsibilities, policies and procedures, as well as the performance standards that direct the activity of the supervisor. In multi-discipline centers, the hiring authority governs the operation providing calltaking/dispatching and related services to customer agencies; in single discipline centers, a single agency may direct these services for one or more departments within a service area. Both have the duty to define training appropriateness, content, format, and in-service requirements.

2.1.2 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its inclusive guidance requires all PSAPs to provide direct, equal access to their services for people with disabilities who use teletypewriters (TTYs), which are also known as “telecommunications devices for the deaf (TDDs). Training Standards must comply with ADA requirements in providing direct, equal access to 9-1-1 for persons with disabilities who use TTYs.

2.1.3 Basic Competency:

The standard frequently refers to the need for the demonstration of basic supervisory competencies within various sections of the training program. Basic competency per section shall mean the unique, requisite knowledge, comprehension, and application of skills for an effective response to operational and supervisory activities, as locally defined.

2.1.4 Calls for Service:

A call that results in the dispatch of some class of public safety/service response.

2.1.5 Knowledge:

Fundamental understanding one must have in order to perform a specific task. Comprehension is required to effectively apply the knowledge in the analysis of each activity resulting in the synthesis of an appropriate action.

2.1.6 National Incident Management System/ Incident Command System (NIMS/ICS):

An organized method to define roles, responsibilities, and standard operating procedures used to unify multiple disciplines in order to manage emergency operations, under one functional organization as required.¹

2.1.7 Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP):

A facility equipped and staffed to receive emergency and non-emergency calls requesting police, fire, emergency medical, and other public safety services via telephone and other communication devices. A primary PSAP is a facility at which emergency calls are first answered and triaged. The primary PSAP may also be the point from which calls are dispatched. The secondary PSAP is the point to which a primary PSAP transfers calls for service for dispatch or further processing.

2.1.8 Public Safety Communications First-Level Supervisor (supervisor):

The first-level public safety communications professional that is responsible for decision-making, problem solving, and monitoring the work of subordinate public safety telecommunicators. A supervisor promotes individual and organizational performance to achieve the agency mission, standards, and goals through leadership

¹ Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)- 5



Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications First-Level Supervisors and training in order to provide the highest possible level of public safety communications services.

2.1.9 Public Safety Communications Telecommunicator (telecommunicator):

The first-line public safety communications professional who essentially serves as a first responder to every class of emergency for which public safety services are provided. The individual employed by a public safety agency whose primary responsibility is to receive, process, transmit and/or dispatch emergency and non-emergency calls for police, fire, emergency medical, and other public safety services via telephone and other communication devices.

2.1.10 Public Safety Communications Training Officer (CTO):

The first-line public safety communications professional who demonstrates superior conduct, professionalism, skills, and knowledge in the training of a new hire. This is accomplished through the use of adult-learning principles using agency-defined training parameters. Training can be accomplished in a classroom setting and through on-the-job/one-on-one interactions and simulations.

2.1.11 Shall:

Used within the context of this standard indicates a mandatory requirement.

2.1.12 Skill sets:

The essential knowledge, skills, and/or abilities necessary to perform specific supervisory functions.

Chapter 3 Supervisor Requirements

3.1 General

The supervisor shall have effective interpersonal communication skills and leadership qualities in addition to having a thorough working knowledge of the agency's policies, practices, operational activities, and telecommunicator skill sets². The supervisor shall be provided with training to reach these basic supervisory competencies and agency-specific requirements:

3.1.1 The supervisor shall demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of agency resources and capabilities, including location of public safety/service buildings, apparatus and equipment, emergency-management services, and facilities and emergency-planning documents.

3.1.2 The supervisor shall receive basic supervisory training in interpersonal communication skills and leadership.

3.1.3 The supervisor shall be aware of and understand the opportunity of all employees to participate in such programs as listed below, demonstrating the ability to inform subordinates of these services and make referrals, as necessary:

- (1) Employee Assistance Program (EAP);
- (2) Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)/Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD);
- (3) Health and Wellness Programs;

² Such training as defined in the Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators (APCO Project 33, August 2004).



Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications First-Level Supervisors

- (4) Stress-management techniques.
- 3.1.4** The supervisor shall fully understand the safety requirement of the position as required by the agency, appropriate state regulations and, if applicable, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).
- 3.1.5** The supervisor shall fully understand the impact of the ADA-specific requirements of PSAPs for equal access, as well as internal hiring and accommodation practices.

Chapter 4 Duties and Responsibilities

4.1 General

The supervisor shall understand the agency's mission and can demonstrate the same by articulating their duties within the organization toward accomplishment of the mission.

- 4.1.1** The supervisor can articulate formal and informal values that support public safety professionalism.
- 4.1.2** The supervisor can identify formal and informal values that relate to his/her role as a public safety communications supervisor.
- 4.1.3** The supervisor understands and can articulate the importance of ethical behavior for which he/she has a direct responsibility. This includes agency guidelines for handling sensitive personnel information for which confidentiality is required and/or expected.
- 4.1.4** The supervisor shall be able to articulate the agency's expectations of professional conduct.
- 4.1.5** The supervisor shall appropriately and professionally represent the agency, as authorized.
- 4.1.6** The supervisor shall have a thorough knowledge of the agency practices and training programs.
- 4.1.7** The supervisor shall maintain operational and technological competence, as defined by the agency.

4.2 Operations

The supervisor shall clearly understand the roles and responsibilities in the job description, as defined by their agency, toward accomplishment of the organization's mission.

- 4.2.1** To assure compliance with policies and procedures, the supervisor shall:
 - (1) Demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of all agency policies and procedures using all available resources to enforce said policies and procedures;
 - (2) Review policies and procedures on a regular basis while ensuring accuracy and integrity;
 - (3) Review policies and procedures and compliance expectations with all employees;
 - (4) Document employees' acknowledgment of the applicable policies and procedures, memos, or workplace changes;
 - (5) Review and address non-compliance of policies and procedures with subordinates and report findings per agency protocols.
- 4.2.2** The supervisor shall provide direction and leadership to subordinates:
 - (1) Act as an information resource to employees assisting with decision-making, as needed;



Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications First-Level Supervisors

- (2) Facilitate and ensure the dissemination of relevant information, changes, and/or updates to staff in a timely manner;
- (3) Facilitate constructive communications within the agency;
- (4) Encourage employee professional development.

4.2.3 The supervisor shall maintain adequate shift coverage based upon agency guidelines:

- (1) Prepare and disseminate the staffing schedule in a timely manner;
- (2) Demonstrate an understanding of the variables affecting scheduling and their implementation, i.e., sick leave, annual leave, training, unplanned/planned leave, FMLA³, FLSA⁴, and other applicable federal, state, and local regulations, as well as any applicable collective bargaining agreements.

4.3 Administrative

The supervisor has a role in administrative processes supporting all facets of the PSAP.

4.3.1 Monitor employee attendance and hours worked while verifying the accuracy of employee time records.

4.3.2 Prepare memorandums and reports, as required, using good written communication skills.

4.3.3 Demonstrate effective verbal communications and active listening skills during interactions with internal and external customers.

4.3.4 Act as an information resource in support of all organizational activities, as authorized.

4.4 Performance

The supervisor shall participate in the review and evaluation of PSAP activity supporting current operating processes and performance requirements, as defined by the agency.

4.4.1 Actively participate in performance review and evaluations articulating and documenting results:

- (1) Monitor employees to document positive and negative performance issues;
- (2) Meet regularly with subordinates to maintain open communications;
- (3) Communicate critical errors to employees immediately;
- (4) Identify the need for reinforcement and remedial training, as appropriate;
- (5) Recognize exceptional operational achievements and challenges.

4.4.2 Participation in agency quality-assurance processes conducting quality-assurance practices with documentation and timely feedback to subordinates, as defined by the agency.

4.4.3 Conduct appropriate level of inquiry in response to performance-related complaints, as defined and authorized by the agency.

4.4.4 Recommend and/or participate in disciplinary action, as defined and authorized by the agency.

Chapter 5 Liability

5.1 General

³ Family Medical Leave Act www.dol.gov

⁴ Fair Labor Standards Act www.dol.gov



Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications First-Level Supervisors

The supervisor shall understand general and agency-specific liability concepts and terms, with emphasis related to responder and community safety. The public safety communications professional, in addition to understanding the general principles of liability and the consequences of lawsuits, shall demonstrate by application the specific liability factors related to law enforcement, fire, rescue, and emergency medical call types.

5.2 Supervisory liability

5.2.1 The supervisor shall be able to demonstrate comprehension of the specific supervisory-liability issues related to overall PSAP operations:

- (1) Negligent hiring;
- (2) Failure to train;
- (3) Negligent entrustment/assignment;
- (4) Negligent supervision;
- (5) Negligent retention;

5.2.2 The supervisor shall understand the legal implications of Title 42 United States Code § 1983.

5.2.3 The supervisor shall be able to articulate the specific liability issues related to the interaction with other agencies (local, county, state, and federal), particularly in the area of emergency management, disaster events, threat notification, and homeland-security information.

Chapter 6 Training

6.1 General

The supervisor plays an integral role in the success of any training program. The supervisor shall actively seek opportunities for self-development and further professional-development of subordinates through training and involvement in professional organizations.

6.1.1 Provide input on training and its effect on new-hire performance from an operational perspective.

6.1.2 Monitor and document the progression of new-hire training, which may include observations on the effectiveness of communications training officers, as defined by the agency.

6.1.3 Provide input on remedial training from an operational perspective.

6.1.4 Provide input on continuing education programs as available through local, state, and professional organizations.

6.1.5 Assess subordinate training in order to identify additional training to improve performance and meet operational needs. These may include new and emerging technologies, legislation, and processes.

6.1.6 Monitor and document subordinate training to ensure that mandated training requirements are being met, as defined by the agency.

Chapter 7 Equipment and System Operations

7.1 General

The supervisor shares responsibility to maintain operational integrity of the complex and interrelated systems, technologies, and processes that support emergency communications



Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications First-Level Supervisors

within the agency. When possible, the supervisor should actively seek opportunities for participation in technical workgroups (CAD, interfaces, radio, telephony, IP networks, etc.) in order to maintain an awareness of emerging technologies that may impact the operations of the PSAP.

- 7.1.1** Maintain awareness of the functionality of operating systems and interfaces to quickly identify any degradation that could interrupt service.
- 7.1.2** Troubleshoot, report, and document any malfunctions, interruptions, or threats to operational integrity.
- 7.1.3** The supervisor shall have a knowledge of and ability to direct all operational systems providing for operability and interoperability for day-to-day events and all hazard situations, as defined by the agency.
- 7.1.4** Maintain working knowledge of upgrades to operating systems or technologies within the PSAP and ensure operational continuity.
- 7.1.5** Coordinate with technical staff, as defined and authorized by the agency.