



Project 33 Revised
Minimum Training
Standards for
Public Safety
Communications
Telecommunicators



APCO, International

Association of Public Safety Communication Officials

TO: APCO Members

FR: Chris Fischer, Chair
Call Center Training Standards Committee

RE: REVISED Project 33 Training Standard – As Approved

On behalf of public safety communication professionals across the nation, the Committee accepted the task of revising the APCO Project 33 – Training Standard. A group of working public safety communication professionals from various sized agencies reviewed, revised and revised again the content and language of the standard. The expansion of the core competencies necessary to begin more formal, localized training as a public safety communications official creates some new challenges for trainers and managers. The focus is on helping students achieve more than just memorization of processes and rules. The best candidates are those that in addition to knowing, can understand, analyze, synthesize and apply the elements to the wide variety of situations they are bound to encounter during their career.

For the progressive trainers, that are comfortable with recognizing and evaluating the cognitive ability of their students across its full range of definition, the additional elements may not cause a substantial increase in the actual training time necessary to meet the requirements. For the traditional trainer, who has always defined classroom seat time as the measure of one's ability to know, understand, analyze and apply the elements of good practice, the expanded curriculum will take more hours of instruction than previously needed. The Committee has identified additional and expanded training modules anticipating the need to provide additional structure in such situations. In total, 14 hours of additional training time is recommended under the revision, as needed. This training should be accomplished within the first 12 months of hire.

Responding to the valid needs of our members, dealing with the rapidly expanding and ever changing service environment, the Committee came together and reviewed the old standard, line by line. It was recognized that the industry has changed, that calls arrive from a variety of sources now and that public expectation and agency user requirements have changed dramatically. Also changed is the technology used to complete the mission. The dynamic nature of the public safety telecommunications industry has driven the need to revise this standard.

The following document is the product of these efforts. Thanks to all of you on the Executive Council that commented, and to all of our members who commented and provided valuable feedback. This collaboration of industry professionals has only increased the validity and value of this document.



Project 33 Committee Members

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Questions or comments on the Project 33 Revised – Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators should be sent to 911services@apco911.org



Project 33 Revised – Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators

Chapter 1 Administration

1.1 Scope

This standard identifies the minimum training requirements for public safety telecommunications officers, telecommunicators, calltakers and/or dispatchers.

1.2 Purpose

The standard specifies the minimum training requirements in general of all personnel assigned to any public safety communication 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 hiring authority/agency shall establish no less than these minimum training standards and supplement each as necessary for localized operational necessity.

1.3.2 The hiring authority/agency shall define the cognitive and psychomotor skills required to successfully achieve compliance with these training standards. This shall include the basic skills of reading, spelling, speech, mathematics, basic language, written communication and active listening.

1.3.3 The hiring authority/agency shall monitor the performance of the public safety communication officer et al, to assure that the daily effort is consistent with the acceptable standards of call handling and dispatch responsibility. Special attention shall be paid to timely and accurate information-gathering and dissemination.

1.3.4 The hiring authority/agency shall maintain complete training records and assure that all public safety communication operatives, in all agency classifications, remain current in all areas of required performance 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):

The agency or body which defines the roles, responsibilities, policies and procedures, as well as the performance standards that direct the activity of the public safety telecommunicator. In multi-discipline centers, the hiring authority governs the operation providing calltaking/dispatch 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 The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and its inclusive guidance requires all PSAPs to provide direct, equal access to their services for people with disabilities



Project 33 Revised – Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators 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 competencies within various sections of the training program. Basic competency per section shall mean the unique, requisite knowledge, comprehension and application of skills and situational analysis leading to the appropriate synthesis of an effective response to the caller, event and field unit consistent with these general practices, as well as locally defined response parameters.

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 and training in order to provide the highest possible level of public safety communications services.

2.1.9 Public Safety Communications 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 Shall:

¹ Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)- 5



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Within the context of this standard, shall indicate a mandatory requirement.

2.1.11 Skill sets:

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

Chapter 3 Candidate Requirements – Agency Orientation

3.1 General

The candidate shall understand the agency personnel policy/practices:

- 3.1.1** The candidate shall demonstrate an 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 candidate shall be aware of and understand the opportunity to participate in such programs as:
 - (1) Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
 - (2) Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)/Critical Incident Debriefing (CISD)
 - (3) Health and Wellness Programs
 - (4) Stress-Management techniques
- 3.1.3** The candidate 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).

Chapter 4 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 General

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

- 4.1.1** The candidate can articulate formal and informal values that support public safety professionalism.
- 4.1.2** The candidate can identify formal and informal values that relate to his/her role as a public safety communications professional.
- 4.1.3** The candidate understands and can articulate the importance of ethical behavior for which he/she has a direct responsibility. This includes agency guidelines for handling sensitive information for which confidentiality is required and/or expected. Specific knowledge of national and state law-enforcement databases is required.
- 4.1.4** The candidate shall be able to articulate the agency's expectations of professional conduct.
- 4.1.5** The candidate shall be able to articulate and demonstrate the professional standards essential to competent performance as related to effective and efficient call processing/dispatch/monitoring of all event types.
- 4.1.6** The candidate shall demonstrate basic competency in the knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes required of an effective public safety telecommunicator.



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- 4.1.7 The candidate shall be able to articulate the difference between policies and procedures; correlate the policies and procedures to the required performance, as well as identify state, local rules relating to the performance requirements of their duties.
- 4.1.8 The candidate understands and complies with the agency's approach to risk management.
- 4.1.9 The candidate demonstrates the ability to identify the boundaries, addressing and topography issues and features within the agency's service area.
- 4.1.10 The candidate shall be able to identify public safety customers, demographics, as well as local authorities and resources.
- 4.1.11 The candidate shall be able to identify the hiring authority/agency's customers as callers, community members, public/private entities, responders, user-agency personnel and others so designated.
- 4.1.12 The candidate shall be able to identify pertinent demographic information necessary to generate an appropriate response.
- 4.1.13 The candidate shall be able to recognize non-traditional public safety service providers, including but not limited to agency partnerships, tribal authorities, military liaisons, port authorities, private/proprietary security forces and others.
- 4.1.14 The candidate shall understand and be able to articulate his/her role as a member of the agency's public safety team. This includes a clear acceptance and understanding of the "first, first responder" concept and such performance as related to the delivery of public safety services to all customers.
- 4.1.15 The candidate shall demonstrate an understanding of his/her role within the agency regarding release of information to the media, public and others. Candidates shall understand the terms "confidential", "sensitive" and "protected information."
- 4.1.16 The candidate shall be able to identify and use available resources, partnerships and tools to enhance the delivery of public safety services.

Chapter 5 Liability

5.1 General

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

5.2 Special Relationships

- 5.2.1 Candidates shall be able to demonstrate comprehension of the specific liability issues related to calltaking and dispatch of law enforcement responders.
- 5.2.2 Candidates shall be able to identify and evaluate the specific liability issues related to calltaking and dispatch of fire and rescue responders.
- 5.2.3 Candidates shall be able to list and define the specific liability issues related to calltaking and dispatch of emergency medical service responders.
- 5.2.4 Candidates shall be able to identify and define the specific liability issues related to mutual aid, automatic aid and operational recovery planning responses.



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5.2.5 Candidates 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.

5.3 Responder Safety

5.3.1 Candidates shall be able to articulate and demonstrate understanding of their roles in and responsibility for responder safety. Examples: the effective collection, assessment and dissemination of event information for selected call types; appropriate response to emergency call from field unit; adequate deployment of resources to emergency calls in progress.

Chapter 6 Interpersonal Communications

6.1 General

The candidate must have significant competency in all aspects of interpersonal communication, including teamwork concepts. Communication skills are critical to the proper receipt and assessment of information, as well as to the effective delivery of the information to responders. Appropriate use of the chain of command for notification and escalation of incidents is essential. Effective interpersonal communications is also required for all interactions with all and especially diverse caller types.

6.1.1 The candidate shall demonstrate competency in the basic skills, knowledge, abilities and attitudes necessary for effective communication as a public safety telecommunicator.

6.1.2 The candidate shall be able to identify both internal and external agency customers.

6.1.3 The candidate shall demonstrate the appropriate customer-service communication skills and techniques to effectively serve all customer types.

6.1.4 The candidate shall understand and demonstrate the techniques for effective communication with deaf/hearing-impaired, as well as speech impaired customers.

6.1.5 The candidate shall understand and demonstrate the application of procedures for communicating with non-English or limited-English speaking customers.

Chapter 7 Public Safety Communication Center Technologies

7.1 General

The candidate shall be able to understand and demonstrate effective use of existing technology within the public safety communication center. Further, the candidate shall be able to articulate the policy/procedure, as well as demonstrate effective call-handling processes for calls using emerging technology to access the public safety communication center.

7.2 Telephony via traditional technology

The candidate shall be able to understand the purpose of and demonstrate the proper operation of all classes of telephony technology within the public safety communication center, including the following as applicable:

7.2.1 9-1-1 and Enhanced 9-1-1 with traditional wireline and wireless access



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- 7.2.2 ANI – Automatic Number Identification
- 7.2.3 ALI – Automatic Location Identification
- 7.2.4 Selective Routing – the capacity of the 9-1-1 switch to route calls to the appropriate PSAP based on ESN – Emergency Service Number.
- 7.2.5 PBX – Private Branch Exchange/ Multiple Line Telephone Switch which can serve a large building or complex from a central location (e.g., hotel, factory, office building) and uses the location of the “switch” as the location reporting the emergency, despite the actual location of the event being served by the “switch.”
- 7.2.6 Agency phone system – An agency phone system may serve those within the same building (intra) or between buildings (inter).
- 7.2.7 TTD/TTY –Telecommunications Device for the Deaf – Teletypewriter device used by hearing-and speech-impaired persons to communicate via the public switch telephone system.
- 7.2.8 Call box – device capable of delivering voice to the PSAP via a direct connect or direct routing via multiple means. Usually reserved for emergency use from fixed locations (e.g., public swimming pools, airports, designated high-traffic areas, etc.).

7.3 Telephony via emerging technology

The candidate can articulate a basic understanding of current and emerging telephony technologies and their impacts upon public safety communications. Examples include common wireless 9-1-1 service, VoIP (Voice over the Internet Protocol), Telematic Service Providers (TSP).

- 7.3.1 Wireless 9-1-1 service – the candidate shall demonstrate understanding of and effective response to Phase 0, Phase I and Phase II wireless 9-1-1 call data as presented to the PSAP.
- 7.3.2 Longitude and latitude – the candidate shall demonstrate an understanding of and effective use of longitude and latitude data associated with wireless 9-1-1 calls, as related to event location, as well as customer dispatch.
- 7.3.3 Mapping applications – the candidate shall demonstrate effective use of existing map interfaces, mapping program features, including resolution parameters, multiple layers and zone and beat configurations, as applicable.
- 7.3.4 VoIP – Voice over Internet Protocol – the candidate shall be able to articulate an understanding of how such calls are delivered to the public safety communication center, as well as the application of agency policy/procedure regarding calls of this type.
- 7.3.5 PDA – Personal Digital Assistant – the candidate shall be able to articulate and understanding of this call-type technology, as well as demonstrate the application of agency policy and procedure regarding calls of this type.
- 7.3.6 Telematic Service Providers – the candidate shall be able to articulate the agency policy/procedure, as well as demonstrate the call-handling processes for customers of these third party call centers, providing access to PSAPs via the network serving the subscriber/ customer:
 - (1) Emergency notification with voice
 - (2) Airbag/ACN/AACN incident without voice
 - (3) Emergency notification without voice
 - (4) Vehicle tracking (stolen vehicles, missing/endangered people)



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7.3.7 Number portability – the candidate shall be able to articulate the agency policy/procedure, as well as demonstrate the call handling process for these call types.

7.3.8 Enhanced alarm company notification - the candidate shall be able to articulate the agency policy/procedure, as well as demonstrate the call-handling processes for this type of call (as applicable).

7.4 Recording Devices

The candidate shall be able to articulate the agency policy/procedure regarding the recording of voice and/or data within the public safety communication center.

7.4.1 The candidate shall be able to describe the operation of the agency's recording devices.

7.4.2 The candidate shall be able to articulate the legal requirements/restrictions associated with the recording of information within the PSAP.

7.5 Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD)

The candidate shall be able to articulate an understanding of the current capabilities, as well as demonstrate proper operation of the existing CAD system. This includes accurate data entry, effective screen navigation, prompt information retrieval and system integration.

7.5.1 The candidate shall be able to identify the CAD system's individual components and its integration with other systems.

7.5.2 The candidate shall be able to articulate the relationship between the effective use of the CAD system and the successful delivery of public safety services.

7.5.3 The candidate shall be able to understand and demonstrate the effective application of back-up procedures for processing calls in the event of a CAD system failure.

7.6 Additional Technologies

7.6.1 When applicable, the candidate shall be able to demonstrate the effective use of Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) systems as related to the prompt delivery of public safety services.

7.6.2 When applicable, the candidate shall be able to demonstrate the effective use of Mobile Data Computer/Terminal (MDC/MDT) systems as related to the response to requests for service by agency customers.

Chapter 8 Radio

8.1 General

The candidate shall be able to understand and demonstrate the efficient and effective use of agency's radio system(s). The candidate shall be able to articulate and apply the policy/procedures related to normal and emergency radio-system uses.

8.2 The candidate shall be able to identify and list the components of the agency's radio system(s), as well as be able to articulate an understanding of the use of each component, including:

8.2.1 Frequency/talk group, assignment and controls as defined within the policy/procedure.

8.2.2 Equipment features, as authorized to use by the policy/procedures.

8.2.3 Mobile radios, as assigned and used within the field and the PSAP.

8.2.4 Portable radios, as assigned and used within the field and the PSAP.



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8.2.5 Paging systems, as authorized by the policy/procedure.

- 8.3** The candidate shall be able to demonstrate the appropriate use of talk groups or frequency coordination.
- 8.4** The candidate shall be able to articulate the application of existing interoperability communication plans.
- 8.5** The candidate shall be able to demonstrate the appropriate and professional use of the radio system, with all classes of customers, in the delivery of public safety communication services.
- 8.6** The candidate shall be able to list the current FCC rules pertaining to the use of public safety radio spectrum.

Chapter 9 Call Processing Techniques

9.1 General

The candidate shall be able to articulate an understanding of and demonstrate the ability to efficiently and effectively process calls for service from all classes of agency customers. Example: controlling the caller, collecting event specific information, assessing the information, selecting the proper call type and causing the appropriate response.

9.2 Call receipt

The candidate shall be able to demonstrate the ability to process emergency and non-emergency calls for service consistent with the hiring authority policy/procedure and professional conduct.

9.3 Interviewing

The candidate shall be able to demonstrate the ability to interview callers and with promptness and accuracy obtain all pertinent information related to the call.

9.4 Controlling the conversation

The candidate shall be able to demonstrate the ability to effectively control a conversation using appropriate techniques consistent with the agency policy/procedure.

9.5 Types of callers

The candidate shall be able to demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate with different callers to facilitate the appropriate delivery of public safety services.

9.6 Third Party Callers

The candidate shall be able to demonstrate the ability to gather information from a third party call center to facilitate appropriate delivery of public safety services;

9.7 High risk/crisis intervention/difficult callers

The candidate shall be able to demonstrate the ability to gather and disseminate information obtained from callers in crisis. Special attention to and understanding of the dynamics and agency protocols regarding domestic violence/exploited children and adult calls, as well as potential homeland security/terrorism incident calls will also be required. As applicable, the call-processing parameters of calls requiring secondary notice to others (e.g., Amber Alert, Agency Alert calls) shall be demonstrated. Other difficult caller types include suicidal callers and callers in any high-risk incident.



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Chapter 10 Call Classification

10.1 General

The candidate shall be able to demonstrate by application, the ability to categorize, prioritize, as well as determine the appropriate response levels for all types of law enforcement, fire/rescue and emergency medical calls. This shall include emergency calls in progress, mutual and automatic aid responses, as well as events requiring upward notification of individuals/agencies.

10.2. The candidate shall be able to demonstrate the ability to accurately and appropriately categorize all calls for service, as authorized by policy/procedure.

10.3 The candidate shall be able to demonstrate the ability to appropriately prioritize all calls for service as authorized by the policy/procedure.

10.4 The candidate shall be able to demonstrate the ability to determine the appropriate resources to be used in response to the call for public safety services, as authorized by the policy/procedure.

Chapter 11 Dispatch Techniques

11.1 General

While plain English is preferred by many agencies, to avoid any misunderstanding as to type of call and/or call priority; the candidate shall be able to demonstrate the efficient and effective use of agency approved and required radio codes and signals. In addition, the candidate shall demonstrate an understanding of his/her role in maintaining responder safety by the use of appropriate skills and resources. The candidate further shall demonstrate an understanding of Incident Command/ Integrated Command Systems and Tactical Dispatch Teams as authorized by the agency.

11.2 Procedures and Protocols

The candidate shall be able to demonstrate appropriate dispatch techniques, including as authorized by existing policy/procedure, the following:

11.2.1 Proper message-formatting.

11.2.2 Use of phonetic alphabet.

11.3 Appropriate Radio Speech

The candidate shall be able to demonstrate the elements of appropriate radio speech, as authorized by the existing policy/procedure, including the following:

11.3.1 Clear Speech.

11.3.2 Proper diction, modulation, rate of speed.

11.3.3 Authorized phraseology and terminology.

11.3.4 Paraphrasing without distortion or loss of information elements.

11.4 Responder safety

The candidate shall be able to demonstrate the ability to respond appropriately to distress calls from field units as authorized by the policy/procedure. Efforts to maintain responder safety shall as authorized include the following:

11.4.1 Use of status checks.

11.4.2 Location verification.

11.4.3 Use of appropriate CAD file/responder safety tools.



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11.5 National Incident Command or Management System (NIMS/ICS/IMS)

The candidate shall be able to demonstrate an understanding of the applicability of the incident command/management system, as authorized by the hiring authority /agency policy / procedure. Further, the candidate shall be able to articulate his/her role and responsibilities within the National Incident Command/Management System, consistent with the most recent nationally approved models used within the service areas.

11.6 Tactical Incident Dispatch Teams

The candidate shall be able to demonstrate an understanding of incident or tactical dispatch teams, when applicable, based upon agency and agency policy/procedure.