Implementation Guide for APCO ANS Recommended Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators

This guide is meant to serve as a resource for agencies who aspire to meet the requirements of the Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators (APCO ANS 3.103.2-2015). Nothing in this guide is intended to supersede anything in the standard. While the standard outlines minimum recommendations, agencies are encouraged to implement more stringent performance requirements that are appropriate to the agency's specific mission, needs, goals, and objectives.

Introduction

The Communication Center Standards Committee is proud to offer this resource to public safety communications agencies seeking to provide the public with a consistently high-level standard of care while increasing the morale and proficiency of Telecommunicators through training and professional development. As a guide meant to serve as an appendix supplementing the Minimum Training Standard for Public Safety Telecommunicators (ANS 3.103.2-2015), it should serve only as a resource to help agencies meet the requirements of the standard. Nothing in this document supersedes the standard.

The 2015 revision of Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators represents a comprehensive change in the Committee's approach to standards development and provides communication centers with comprehensive assistance in developing and sustaining an effective and consistent training program.

Background of the Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators

APCO proposed the development of a training standard for Telecommunicators in 1995. This project was authorized to explore the need for Telecommunicator training standards, and to create those standards. Originally adopted by APCO's Executive Council in August of 1996, the proposal evolved into Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators. Since then, the standard has been revised on a regular basis to address changes in best practices and emerging technologies. The 2015 revision followed a scientific analysis of the job of a Public Safety Telecommunicator, called an occupational analysis.

Telecommunicators are the first, first responder in public safety situations. These dedicated individuals are often overlooked, underappreciated, and under trained. This standard addresses the need for minimum and continuing education requirements for these vital public safety professionals regardless of the individual's experience level.

Recognizing the need to provide the public with a consistent standard of care, the standard is intended to provide recommendations to the public safety communications community on the proficiencies a Telecommunicator must be able to demonstrate before being allowed to work unsupervised. **These proficiencies represent the minimum recommended standard; however, they are not intended to limit agencies that implement requirements that are more stringent**.

In addition to providing guidance on training that should be provided to newly hired Telecommunicators, this standard also addresses the training and professional development needs of veteran employees. Most noticeable is the new requirement of twenty-four hours of professional development continuing education annually. The inclusion of this requirement is not to further burden communication centers. Rather, it is to insure those on the front lines of public safety communications have the same opportunity as others in the public safety arena in meeting expectations; accomplished through continued education units (CEUs) and enhancing critical knowledge, skills, and abilities, thereby increasing professionalism. This guide will offer suggestions and ideas on how an Agency can provide every employee with a minimum of twenty-four hours of continuing education each year.

Overview of Content

The 2015 revision of the Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators is written and structured to allow ease of access to specific work functions found in the public safety communications center.

Chapter 1 offers an explanation of the scope and purpose of the standard and is followed by a glossary of terms that may not be fully defined throughout the context of the standard.

Chapter 2 identifies responsibilities specific to the Agency in providing Telecommunicators with the training they need to become and remain proficient in the duties required of them. Requirements for the Agency to ensure certain cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains of learning are addressed. Terms with specific meanings within the training evaluation field are also used.

Chapter 3 addresses issues related to organizational integrity including the mission and values of the profession generally and the hiring Agency specifically. Other topics addressed in this chapter are confidentiality, liability, and the scope of the Telecommunicators authority.

Chapter 4 defines core competencies for Telecommunicators. This chapter discusses the general skills, knowledge, and traits that are common among high performing incumbent Telecommunicators who participated on the various occupational analysis panels across the United States.

Chapter 5 addresses the need for trainees to demonstrate proficiency on all appropriate tools, equipment, and technology that they will be expected to operate within the public safety communications center. Discussed are the competent use of CAD, RMS, and other computer, radio, telephone, and mapping systems.

Chapter 6 identifies those components within Public Safety Communications that are critical for the professional competence of all public safety Telecommunicators. Some of these components are outlined in this document. Others have been identified as being necessary for developing, maintaining, and enhancing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of Telecommunicators.

Chapters 7 through 10 address the specific minimum training requirements of public safety Calltakers, law enforcement Dispatchers, fire service Dispatchers, and emergency medical services Dispatchers respectively.

Chapter 1 Introduction

The scope of this Chapter defines the importance of communicating both the nature of the standard and defining the position of a Public Safety Telecommunicator. The reason for establishing this training standard is clearly articulated, reminding the reader that the standard should be considered independent of other standards. However, users of the standard are encouraged to read and apply other standards, such as those established by APCO, CALEA, NFPA, as appropriate to their individual Agency.

As with other APCO standards, definitions of terms utilized throughout the document are provided. While most of these terms are commonly used, the specific definition provided explains how the term is used within the standard in order to provide a common body of knowledge.

Chapter 2 Agency Responsibilities

While the majority of the Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators addresses the training of new Telecommunicators, Chapter 2 outlines the responsibilities of the hiring Agency for providing training to both new and veteran employees.

Agencies wishing to comply are responsible for ensuring that they implement no less than those requirements enumerated in the standard, and that all local, state, tribal, and federal laws are followed. Although the standard presents a minimum level of proficiency in a variety of performance areas, the Agency is responsible for establishing its own minimum requirements, cognitive, psychomotor, and effective skills and traits needed to meet the needs of the Agency. These requirements may include, but are not limited to, reading comprehension levels, verbal and written communication skills, typing ability, decision making, and interpersonal communications skills.

Employee Orientation

One requirement of Chapter 2 is that the Agency provide each new employee an orientation to the Agency. To be most effective, this orientation should be conducted personally, with the newly hired employee being given a tour of the building layout. The tour should include physically showing the location of key work areas and facilities, break areas, evacuation routes and emergency plans, and the location of all automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) and first aid supplies. The trainee should also receive a verbal and written explanation of their work schedule and Agency time keeping procedures.

Employees must be provided with an in-depth explanation of the Agency's expectations for personal conduct and behavior, both on and off duty. Rules regarding outside employment, social networking sites, use of Agency logos, and other conduct related concerns should be discussed verbally and provided in writing to the employee. Employees should be provided with instruction on proper courtroom demeanor and the ethical rules set by the Agency. Agency adopted guiding principles (i.e., written mission, vision, or core values statement) should also be provided to each Telecommunicator during the orientation period.

New employees should be informed of the location of telephones available for personal telephone calls. Although an unrecorded telephone line for personal calls may be provided as a courtesy to employees, they should be informed that the Agency has the right to record all telephone lines in the building without notice to the employee, in accordance with local and state law.

Health and Wellness

Information regarding access to and participation in programs designed to maintain the employee's health and wellness must be provided. The Agency's Human Resources department may provide this information as part of a jurisdictional orientation; however, the Agency is responsible for ensuring this information is provided to the employee. Employees should receive a verbal explanation of such programs as Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), Stress Management, Safety and Risk Management, Critical Incident Stress Management and Debriefing programs. Such information should then be provided in a written format so that the employee has the information available later if needed.

The Agency should inform the employee of the existence of any state or local safety regulations that are applicable to his or her position. Information on procedures for filing an injury report or Worker's Compensation claim must be provided to all employees. Agencies falling under the regulations of the Occupational Safety and Health

Administration (OSHA) should make any applicable regulations available to the employee for review.

Proper documentation of the orientation program is necessary to prevent claims of improper training in these areas. Although rare, there have been cases of terminations being overturned by personnel boards, or even the courts, because a trainee claimed the Agency did not show them how to clock in and out for duty, or where the restrooms were located. The more thorough the orientation period, the more solid the foundation the employee will have for learning the more technical aspects of the job.

Quality Assurance and Performance Reviews

Compliance with the standard requires the Agency to provide opportunities for all employees to obtain and attend training necessary for receiving or maintaining required certifications or licenses. Such certifications may include NCIC or the state-level equivalent, Emergency Medical Dispatcher (EMD) or CPR certification. In addition to providing opportunities to obtain required certifications, the Agency must clearly identify actions and conduct that can lead to a loss of any certification or license.

Agencies must plan for and provide a detailed training curriculum to meet the internal needs of the communications center and those of the user agencies, as well as, local, state, tribal, and federal requirements. Such a curriculum will include a written description of the Agency's training program, performance benchmarks, and timelines for expected proficiencies.

In addition to position specific information, the training program should include information on:

a) Specialized response resources available to the Agency (i.e. SWAT, Canine, Search and Rescue, Hazardous Materials response teams, and heavy rescue);

b) The location of all fire stations, law enforcement headquarters or substations, pre-designated landing zones, specialized apparatus and equipment, and emergency planning documents (i.e. All Hazards Protocol); and

c) A comprehensive explanation and training in the use of applicable technologies available for facilitating interoperable communications.

The Agency must provide a clear and detailed explanation of what is expected of the trainee and important benchmarks or milestones for meeting those performance expectations. This should prevent the trainee from claiming that he thought he was meeting the requirements when in fact he was falling short of Agency expectations.

Negligent retention, as a legal consideration, can be avoided through the establishment of detailed and clearly defined performance objectives and/or employee remediation or reassignment. The Agency must make certain that performance deficiencies and unacceptable behavior are documented in a timely manner and addressed with the employee. Failure to address and/or document undesirable conduct or poor performance can result in disciplinary action and terminations being overturned, thus requiring the Agency to retain an employee who is unfit for the job or who creates tension within the communications center. Failure to effectively manage such employee challenges, coupled with the stressors of the job, can have a negative impact on department morale.

The key to maintaining a high-performing staff is the fair and consistent application of disciplinary processes associated with clearly articulated performance and Agency expected conduct. A clear and thorough explanation of those expectations and the consequences of failing to meet those expectations is the first step to consistent discipline. Recognizing situations are different, some decisions must be made on a case-by-case basis; however all employees should receive substantially the same consequences for the same behavior or performance deficiencies.

Regular review and evaluation of job performance is critical to the success of the training program and to the Agency itself. Industry accepted quality assurance or improvement practices should also be implemented. Staff should participate in regular performance reviews. During these reviews, employees should be encouraged to evaluate their own performance based on a set of standard guidelines established by the Agency. Employees should also be given the opportunity to identify professional goals and objectives they would like to accomplish during the next evaluation period. Identifying goals and objectives throughout their career can advance development within the Agency and provide for a happier and more well-rounded staff.

Training Program Administration

Consistent administration of the training program can have a direct impact on the success of the Agency's employees. All trainees should be provided detailed information on performance expectations, how their performance will be evaluated, timelines they must meet, tools and methods for accomplishing performance expectations, and any learning support that is available to them.

Standard evaluation guidelines should be used to assess trainee performance daily to ensure that the employee's daily efforts are consistent with the Agency's expectations and in compliance with acceptable standards of call handling and/or dispatching responsibilities. All evaluation guidelines must be written clearly to identify and explain specific expectations in each performance category. Additionally, agencies are encouraged to use industry-accepted guidelines when developing evaluation tools. Training models such as the San Jose or Reno Models of Field Training Officer programs and the APCO Communications Officer Training Program are good starting points for agencies wishing to design their own standard evaluation guidelines.

All employees should be provided with information on how and to whom they should address concerns about the training they are receiving. Open communication about any concerns an employee has about the quality of training or the fairness of evaluations should be encouraged to maintain the integrity of the training program.

In an effort to maintain consistency between trainees while minimizing liability for negligent training or retention, the Agency must establish a method for maintaining training records for each employee. These records should contain, at a minimum:

- The dates of all in-house and off-site training attended;
- The type of training conducted with that employee;
- The name of the instructor or facilitator who conducted each training session;
- Any test or performance examination scores or evaluations; and
- Periodic performance evaluations

Training records must be maintained for the entire length of the individual's employment and then for as long as local and state retention schedules require.

APCO has also created a training program certification process (commonly called P33 Training Program Certification) which allows agencies to have their training programs evaluated against the Recommended Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators standard for which this implementation guide was created. For more information on the certification process, visit the APCO website at: https://www.apcointl.org/training-and-certification/project-33-training-program-certification.html.

Continuing Education Requirements

Recognizing the disparity between continuing education requirements for other public safety personnel and the complete lack of any national standard for Telecommunicators, the 2010 and 2015 revisions of the standard include a requirement for no less than twenty-four hours of continuing education or recurrent training for every Telecommunicator on an annual basis. This requirement is intended to bring communications training up to a level on par with other public safety disciplines and to keep Telecommunicators current on emerging technologies. The need for continuing education and recurrent training has long been recognized by these other disciplines as necessary for maintaining the professionalism of their constituents. The public deserves, and in some cases, demands minimum training standards for emergency communications personnel. The inclusion of a continuing education component in this standard is an effort to meet those demands; and, to provide the dedicated professionals serving in our communications centers the tools they need to provide the highest level of public service.

Many agencies are already meeting or exceeding the annual requirement for twenty-four hours of in-service training. However, others may see this requirement as impractical at best and impossible at worst. Current economic conditions make the prospect of increased training seem daunting when some agencies are being forced to implement furloughs, reduce staff, and cut budgets. However, effective training can be accomplished with little to no cost in most communications centers.

Some training is already conducted by centers to meet requirements of other entities. For example, NCIC, CPR, and Emergency Medical Dispatching certification must be renewed every twenty-four months. Title II of The Americans with Disabilities Act requires on-going training of Telecommunicators on handling calls from people who are deaf, hearing impaired, or speech impaired. Human resource personnel encourage cultural diversity and sexual harassment training for all employees every two years. Other possible training topics may include ethics and professionalism, stress management, Agency-owned vehicle operation and safety policies, office safety (spills, trips, and falls) training, liability-risk management, and homeland security awareness-including how to handle calls reporting aircraft emergencies. These topics can serve as the foundation on which the continuing education program is built.

Agencies are encouraged to work with user agencies to develop meaningful training that can benefit all constituencies. Some agencies have implemented ride-along programs that require Telecommunicators to complete neighborhood profiles, write reports, or complete interviews of the field personnel with which they ride. This type of program could account for a full eight hours of the required twenty-four. Field personnel are often eager to help provide training to Telecommunicators, especially if such education will also benefit the responders in the field. Invite the SWAT team commander, or Heavy Rescue team to present a session to educate communications personnel about how those specialized teams work after they are dispatched. This type of information can help Telecommunicators understand why certain things are asked of them on particular types of calls.

Community resources can be tapped as a source of training opportunities. Power and natural gas companies may provide educational sessions on how Communications Centers and utilities can best work together during emergencies. Local telephone companies and other vendors can provide information on telecommunications issues and the way the systems work, trouble-shooting, reporting problems and other technical subjects.

Do not overlook your local police and fire academies, or local APCO chapter when looking for instructors. Some chapters have developed training that they offer at little or no cost. The Georgia Chapter, for example, has a group of members who have travelled around the state delivering free courses such as "Effective Practices for Emergency Communications Officers." This course reviews the basics of call-taking, handling TTY calls, liability, and even some supervisory level topics. Agencies that want to host the course invite surrounding agencies and provide refreshments for the participants. Other chapters may offer similar opportunities.

APCO publishes continuing education articles monthly in "Public Safety Communications," the Association's official publication. These articles can be shared with your staff. One Agency makes multiple copies of the tests that are included with the articles, issues one copy to each employee, and then includes the completed test and the score in each employee's training file.

Many agencies already provide recurrent training, but may not call it by that name. Roll call training, policy updates, CAD refreshers, and that training required by outside agencies all count toward the twenty-four hour requirement. The key for those agencies seeking certification of their training programs will be documentation of all training provided. Documentation must include the date the training was completed, the media by which training was provided (on-line, video, classroom, webinar, etc.), the name of the training program, the specific topic, length of training, the instructor or facilitator responsible for ensuring the training took place, and any test scores obtained by the student.

Continuing education and recurrent training for Telecommunicators are critical components of a prepared, professional workforce. By getting creative and ensuring a minimum level of training for Telecommunicators at all levels will provide our customers, both internal and external, with the highest level of service possible.

Note: Meeting the APCO Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators does not necessarily mean that an Agency has met the requirements of all local, state, tribal, and federal guidelines. Each Agency is responsible for checking specific requirements for their particular circumstances.

Chapter 3 Organizational Integrity

Chapter 3 addresses the mission and values of the emergency communications profession and Agency, in general terms. The purpose of this chapter is to help the Agency ensure the highest level of professionalism possible, which may help reduce the likelihood of exposure to liability. For example, breaches of confidentiality or violations of employment rules or regulations such as those established by collective bargaining agreements or civil service systems.

The scope of the Telecommunicators authority within the Agency, as well as, confidentiality and liability issues are also enclosed. The Agency must ensure its Telecommunicators can demonstrate comprehension of the specific requirements and can apply that knowledge on a day-to- day basis.

Trainees must be able to identify formal and informal values related to their role as a Telecommunicator. Successful organizations are guided by a set of core values that remain constant regardless of the political or economic environment in which it finds itself. Formal values include those that have been adopted by the Agency in a formal values statement and shared by the profession as a whole. While the entire profession has not adopted a specific values statement, certain values are common throughout the profession. These values include professionalism, integrity, justice, honesty, loyalty, teamwork, and customer service.

The Agency is encouraged, though not required, to adopt a formal vision, mission, and values statements. Any Agency going through the CALEA process will have to develop these documents. These documents help to construct a vision and sense of purpose for the Agency. One training program has adopted the core values of integrity, professional, justice, and excellence as its guiding principles.

Should the Agency chose to develop these documents, the values contained must be communicated to all employees and each must be required to identify its stated values, but also their role in living up to the values and helping the Agency achieve its mission and vision.

In addition to communicating the Agency's values and holding employees accountable for conducting themselves in a way that supports those values, the Agency must also ensure that other factors, which affect organizational integrity, are addressed. These factors include the Agency's expectations for employee conduct, essential duties, responsibilities, the scope of the Telecommunicators authority, and adherence to policies, rules, regulations, and laws.

Employees must be given the opportunity to meet Agency expectations for professional conduct. That opportunity starts with the Agency presenting a clear picture of what is and is not acceptable conduct. Whether the Agency has a formal code of conduct or not, employees must be told what type of conduct is acceptable and what type of conduct might result in administrative sanctions.

The Agency must also make it clear that certain conduct engaged in during off-duty hours may also affect the employee's job status. For example, does the Agency hold employees accountable for postings to social media websites such as Twitter or Facebook? Are employees required to notify Agency administration of criminal charges or traffic violations? Are employees allowed to sleep while on-duty? Is it ever acceptable to refuse to follow an order from a superior? While the answers to these questions may seem obvious to administrators and directors, it should come as no surprise that unless such behavior is specifically addressed, employees could claim ignorance to the issues when a situation arises, and litigation may follow any administrative action taken against an employee who violates the Agency's expectations.

Along with expectations of professional conduct, the Agency must require the employee to demonstrate not just a cursory understanding of their duties and the essential functions of the job, but a competent execution of those duties and a comprehension of how the Telecommunicator's position functions within the entire public safety environment. In general, the duties of any Telecommunicator are to receive, process, and transmit public safety information and to dispatch public safety responders to calls for service. Working long hours, shift work, and weekends is a fundamental part of the job, as is dealing with angry, hostile, hysterical, or other challenging callers and managing stressful situations. Employees must be given as clear a picture of the job as early as possible.

Given the litigious nature of today's society and the unpredictability of some employee relations or civil service boards, the Agency should make every effort to clarify conduct expectations. Not only should these expectations be discussed, the consequences for failing to meet those expectations should be unambiguous as well. While it is impossible to give an example of every possible type of violation or every possible consequence, agencies should, at a minimum, make it clear that disciplinary action, up to and including termination is possible for violations of the conduct policy. Employees should be informed of these expectations and consequences both verbally and in writing at the beginning of their employment, preferably as part of the orientation process. As an additional step, the Agency should document the employee's understanding of these requirements through a written acknowledgment statement.

The Agency must also be careful to clearly explain the scope of the Telecommunicators authority, including the ability to provide medical or legal advice; additionally, Telecommunicators must be required to demonstrate an understanding of that authority. Limitations to this power and the consequences of providing such advice without the use of Agency approved protocols must be specifically addressed both verbally and in writing during a review of other Agency policies.

Telecommunicators must be able to articulate and properly apply the directives, policies, and procedures established by the Agency. It is recommended to provide a detailed overview of all written policies, procedures, and regulations during the initial orientation period. In addition to a verbal explanation of those directives, Telecommunicators should be provided updates of any written directives.

In order to protect the Agency it is strongly recommended that Telecommunicators complete written examinations to ensure minimum comprehension of the Agency's directives. These exams can help the Agency identify any gaps in the understanding of the policies, and help combat claims of ignorance by an employee who is disciplined for violating policy.

Any discussion of policy must include an overview of the Agency's chain of command, a clear explanation of sanctions available to the Agency against an employee who violates those policies, and the Telecommunicators responsibility for complying with applicable local, state, tribal, and federal statutes, codes, or professional licensing/certification requirements. Additionally, the Agency must explain under what conditions and by which mechanisms a Telecommunicator can appeal disciplinary action taken against them, whether that disciplinary action is based on a policy violation or performance deficiency.

Confidentiality policies and rules should be established by the Agency to protect the integrity of information. Regulations such as the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, NCIC Rules, telephone company non-disclosure agreements, and others must be clearly explained to all Telecommunicators. Other areas that should be addressed in discussions about confidentiality include, but are not limited to, information accessible through data networks, records management systems, telephone systems and 911 databases, and information obtained directly from callers or service providers.

The final issue discussed in Chapter 3 is the need for the Telecommunicator to understand general liability concepts. Some of these concepts include negligence, failure to respond in a timely and appropriate manner, and the establishment of special legal relationships between the Telecommunicator and callers. Telecommunicators must demonstrate a comprehension of any specific state statutes addressing immunity protection for those working as part of an emergency communications system.

Chapter 4 General Knowledge and Skills

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the general skills and knowledge that are common among high performing incumbent workers. These items were identified in the Occupational Analysis conducted early in the standard revision process. While the lists included in the standard are not completely exhaustive of the knowledge and skills shared by the panelists, they do address those areas of knowledge and skills identified as the most critical for both new and veteran workers, regardless of their area of expertise.

At a minimum, agencies must require Telecommunicators to demonstrate competent proficiency in at least the following areas: jurisdictional boundaries and geography; Agency terminology; cultural diversity; and the Telecommunicators role in Incident Command Systems, the National Incident Management System, state or local emergency operations plans, and tactical interoperable communications plans.

Some skills identified as common among high performing incumbent workers include the ability to multi-task, think critically, solve problems, make quick, workable decisions, the ability to provide effective customer service and work effectively with others. Effective interpersonal communication skills are critically important for Telecommunicators. At a minimum, these skills include clear enunciation, the ability to be concise in verbal and written communications, appropriate use of Agency terminology, codes, and signals, an understanding of plain speech and language techniques, the ability to use the Agency approved phonetic alphabet, and to exercise active listening skills. Being able to communicate on a professional level with both internal and external customers and to use generally accepted customer service skills are important components of the Telecommunicators job. Agencies should actively seek to recruit and retain employees who can consistently demonstrate these skills.

Chapter 5 Tools, Equipment, and Technology

Chapter 5 addresses the need for Telecommunicators to demonstrate proficiency on all appropriate equipment and technology he or she may be expected to operate in the course of their duties. The Agency must be able to ensure that all employees can prove their knowledge and understanding the specific requirements necessary in operating the systems. This can be achieved by their application of this knowledge in the daily operational functions.

Each Agency will have their own specific and unique technology systems. Examples of the types of systems utilized may include Radio, Telephone, Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD), and Records Management. Other Agency specific technology software (like Email,

Internet, Intranets, etc.), as well as independent systems used to monitor alarms or access Criminal History checks, Wanted Person checks, Vehicle checks etc.

The Agency should have directives in place that enumerate the employee's responsibilities and capabilities with regard to operating the equipment and technology. How does your Agency handle incident data? Do you have written directives or Standard Operating Procedures that provide the Telecommunicator specific instructions? If a CAD system is used, how does your Agency train a Telecommunicator to create incidents, access the incidents, and update them? What methods of monitoring and documentation do you use as an evaluation process to ensure the Telecommunicator understands the training provided and demonstrates their ability to apply it? If your Agency does not use a CAD system, what methods are you using to answer the same questions? The answers to these questions will create the basis for developing your directives and documentation.

This same self-questioning technique can also direct the documentation and directives needed to demonstrate a Telecommunicators ability to operate Agency radio systems, telephone system and records management systems all within the Agency's established parameters. What are the procedures used by the Telecommunicator to operate the Agency's radio system, records management system, etc.?

Chapter 6 Professional Competence

Chapter 6 identifies components within public safety communications that are critical for enhancing the professional competence of all Telecommunicators. These components are necessary for developing, maintaining, and enhancing the knowledge and skills of Telecommunicators. While some of these components have been addressed in other parts of the standard as responsibilities of the Agency, Chapter 6 places primary accountability on the Telecommunicator for ensuring they remain both technically proficient and ethically sound.

Although the Agency is responsible for providing a supportive learning environment and comprehensive training program, the Telecommunicator must take full responsibility for their own learning by asking questions to clarify any misunderstandings and by providing honest and specific feedback to trainers regarding their individual learning needs. The Telecommunicator also has the responsibility of bringing to the attention of the appropriate personnel any issues that may influence their ability to learn and meet required performance objectives. Telecommunicators must be both mentally and physically prepared for all training in which they engage. Preparation for training includes presenting themselves in a professional manner, being punctual, and actively participating in their own learning. Telecommunicators must demonstrate job

proficiency in assigned job tasks while complying with all departmental, local, state, tribal, or federal regulations.

Position Specific Chapters

Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10 address the minimum training standards for Public Safety Calltaker, Law Enforcement Dispatcher, Fire Service Dispatcher, and Emergency Medical Services Dispatcher respectively. In conjunction with the APCO Minimum Training Standards, the Agency will need to define the levels of performance for each standard according to the Agency's written directives for each position performed by the Agency. For example, a Police Department that does not dispatch for Fire Services or provide EMS Dispatch services, would establish performance levels for the Calltaker and Law Enforcement Dispatcher positions only. Universal compliance to the established standards will require the Agency to train the Telecommunicator to the Agency level of performance within each standard, test to that standard, and ensure continued compliance with the established level of performance indefinitely.

Chapter 7 Public Safety Calltaker

Chapter 7 identifies and defines training requirements and essential duties of Public Safety Calltakers. The chapter is written so that agencies can easily establish performance expectations which, when met, will mean that the Calltaker has demonstrated the ability to apply the competencies identified within the standard.

The Calltaker is expected to demonstrate the ability to answer calls within Agency expectations. It is up to the Agency to establish the time within which a telephone call should be answered and what the Calltaker should say when answering the call. For example, the most commonly accepted ring time for 9-1-1 calls is within ten seconds (two to three rings.) Additionally, Calltakers are often taught to answer calls identifying their Agency by name, and asking a direct question such as, "Where is your emergency?"

Agencies should establish minimum requirements for the type of information to be obtained by the Calltaker. At a minimum, this information should include the location to which emergency responders need to be dispatched, the nature and severity of the call, a telephone number at which the reporting party can be reached, and the reporting party's first and last name.

Calltakers should be able to collect all available information related to the call and identify conditions, such as the presence of weapons or entrapment within a burning building, which may affect the safety of both the public and responders. This will include

determining whether the caller is in a location or position that places them in danger. Calltakers should be taught how to offer pre-arrival instructions that will help protect those callers in all situations. For example, the Calltaker needs to know what to tell a caller who is trapped in a burning building, sinking car, or who is dealing with a home invasion, etc. Agencies should be careful, however, to identify situations in which Calltakers are expected to provide protective action instructions and those situations in which the Calltaker is not permitted to give specific direction.

Agencies should require the Calltaker to document incident information using the Agency's CAD System or logging mechanisms. Additionally, Calltakers should follow the Agency's procedures for establishing call priority and call types, and assigning labels, signals, or codes to a specific incident.

Training on how to handle specific calls must be provided. Some of these types of calls include those involving missing, abducted and sexually exploited children, child callers, elderly callers, hysterical callers, callers who speak little or no English, and callers who are deaf, hearing impaired, or speech impaired. Agencies must establish a mechanism to evaluate the Calltaker's ability to process these calls in accordance with the Agency's guidelines, policies, and procedures.

Calltakers must be trained to verify and document information related to the call and then relay that information to the appropriate Dispatcher. This may include providing pre-arrival instructions approved by the Agency and telling the caller what action is being taken to respond to their request.

The Agency must also train Calltakers to demonstrate the ability to properly transfer or terminate telephone calls within the Agency's guidelines. For example, when transferring a call to another Agency, what information should the Calltaker obtain before making the transfer, and then, what information should be given to the receiving Agency? A good rule of thumb is to require Calltakers to obtain the location, nature of the call, and a callback number before initiating the transfer; telling the caller that they are being transferred and not to hang up; and then announcing the call to the receiving Agency by identifying your Agency, providing a brief description of the call, the location, and a callback number if needed. Then, after the receiving Agency and the caller make verbal contact, the original Calltaker can disconnect.

Chapter 8 Law Enforcement Dispatcher

Chapter 8 identifies and defines training requirements and essential duties of Law Enforcement Dispatchers. The chapter is written so that agencies can easily establish performance expectations which, when met, will mean that the Dispatcher has demonstrated competence as a Law Enforcement Dispatcher in compliance with the standard.

Law Enforcement Dispatchers must be trained to evaluate calls and determine the appropriate response based on the nature and priority of the incident. In addition to providing training that allows the Dispatcher to complete these tasks, the Agency must establish a mechanism to evaluate the Dispatcher's level of competence in fulfilling these duties. Additionally, Law Enforcement Dispatchers must be trained to create and update CAD records or incident logs by entering additional information as it becomes available. One of the most important duties of a Law Enforcement Dispatcher is to track and document radio activity, incident details, and the status of each unit assigned to a particular call.

Agencies must establish a method for evaluating the Law Enforcement Dispatcher's ability to relay calls to units within the Agency's specific guidelines. For example, how many officers should be dispatched to a domestic situation? How are back-up units assigned? How often should officer safety checks be conducted? How are incident updates relayed to officers on the scene? What is an accepted method of acknowledging a call from an officer? What is the accepted method of an officer acknowledging a transmission from the Dispatcher? The new Law Enforcement Dispatcher is likely to have these same questions. The Agency should consider the types of questions new Dispatchers may have and develop the training program to address these questions.

The Agency should train the Law Enforcement Dispatcher to determine when additional responders and resources should be deployed. For example, when should the SWAT Team or Bomb Squad be called?

Critical to the Law Enforcement Dispatcher's duties is the ability to identify the potential for a situation to escalate, which increases the danger to responders. Agencies should ensure that the Dispatcher is aware of changing conditions at the scene of a call, which could indicate that the potential for violence or other dangerous condition is increasing, and how that information should be relayed to responders. For example, a reporting party calls back to tell officers that an injury has occurred or one party has obtained a weapon. How is that information relayed to the responding units? Are updates sent

over a Mobile Data Terminal, relayed over the telephone to the officer's mobile telephone, or is the information broadcasted over the radio?

Law Enforcement Dispatchers must demonstrate, on a consistent basis, the ability to apply the Agency's guidelines for making notifications to the Chain-of-Command, off-duty personnel, political officials, and other agencies during both routine operations and unexpected events. For example, in the event of an officer-involved shooting, whom should the Dispatcher notify? Is there a procedure for mass notification of specific groups (i.e., SWAT Team, management personnel, etc.)?

Agencies often have mutual aid agreements with adjoining agencies. If this is the case, it is imperative that the Agency provide the Law Enforcement Dispatcher with the most up to date response plans, as mutual aid agreements change frequently. In addition, it is important that the Agency identify under what conditions the Dispatcher can implement these plans and the procedure for requesting mutual aid assistance. Requirements for documenting mutual aid activations should be clearly explained to the Dispatcher as well.

The use of proper radio etiquette is a critical piece of the Law Enforcement Dispatcher's job. The Federal Communications Commission has established regulations that govern the use of public safety radio, including improper radio transmissions. Dispatchers must be trained on proper radio broadcast techniques and FCC rules that directly govern their use of the public safety radio spectrum. See FCC Rules Part 90 (47 C.F.R. § 90.403 and 47 C.F.R. § 90.425) for further information on these regulations.

The Law Enforcement Dispatcher should be trained in the types of post-incident activities as required by the Agency. The Agency should identify the types of activities in which the Dispatcher is required to participate. Examples of these activities may include critical incident stress debriefings or after action critiques.

The Law Enforcement Dispatcher plays a key role in the effective response to crimes in progress and other law enforcement related calls. Training should focus on the standards identified within the APCO ANS 3.103.2-2015 as well as other areas identified as critical by the Agency. An understanding of how law enforcement officers operate within the Agency's jurisdiction will boost the Dispatcher's ability to provide effective support to the units in the field. Training which enhances the Dispatcher's professional relationship with the officers in the field can improve cooperation between agencies and increase officer safety.

Agencies should construct a plan to provide consistent training to all employees who may perform the functions of a Law Enforcement Dispatcher. Additionally, this training should be ongoing and provide updates as needed. Agencies would well be served in

developing a plan to document the training provided and will be better prepared to provide proofs of compliance with standards.

Chapter 9 Fire Service Dispatcher

Chapter 9 covers the training requirements and essential duties for Fire Service Dispatchers. The chapter is written so agencies can easily establish measureable performance expectations for the position. When these performance expectations are met, this will mean the Dispatcher has demonstrated competence as a Fire Service Dispatcher.

Appropriately evaluating calls and determining the appropriate response based on the nature and priority of the incident is one of the primary responsibilities of a Fire Services Dispatcher. These individuals must be trained in proper techniques and procedures. Besides providing training, the Agency must establish a mechanism to evaluate the Dispatcher's level of competence in fulfilling these duties. Additionally, Dispatchers must be trained to create and update CAD records or incident logs by entering additional information as it becomes available. One of the most important duties of a Fire Service Dispatcher is the ability to track and document radio activity including incident details and the status of each unit assigned to a particular call.

Agencies must establish methods for evaluating the Fire Service Dispatcher's ability to relay calls to units within the Agency's specific guidelines. For example, what apparatus should be dispatched to a house or apartment fire? How are units assigned during a multiple alarm fire? Is the Incident Command System used? How often should safety welfare checks be conducted, and how? How are incident updates relayed to Firefighters while enroute versus on the scene? What is an accepted method of acknowledging a call from a Firefighter? What is the accepted method of a Firefighter acknowledging a transmission from the Dispatcher? The new Fire Service Dispatcher is likely to have these same questions. The Agency should brainstorm the types of questions new Dispatchers may have and develop the training program to address these questions.

The Agency should train the Fire Service Dispatchers to determine when additional responders and resources should be requested. For example, when should a Hazardous Materials Team be dispatched? What additional resources are dispatched to an aircraft crash? At what point should automatic mutual aid be activated? When are law enforcement officers dispatched to fire service calls? How are Forestry units dispatched? When are Firefighters deployed as medical first responders or Advanced Life Support units? What apparatus are available for specialized rescue situations such as high angle, swift water, aircraft rescue firefighting, or trench entrapment?

Critical to the Fire Service Dispatcher's duties is the ability to identify the potential for a situation to escalate, increasing the danger to responders. Agencies should ensure the Dispatcher is aware of changing conditions at the scene of a call that could indicate that dangerous conditions are increasing, and how this information should be relayed to responders. For example, multiple calls reporting a series of small explosions have been heard at the scene of a possible fire. How is that information relayed to the responding units? Are updates sent over a Mobile Data Terminal or is the information broadcasted over the radio?

Fire Service Dispatchers must consistently demonstrate the ability to apply Agency guidelines for making notifications to the Chain-of-Command, off-duty personnel, political officials, and other agencies during both routine operations and unexpected events. For example, in the event of a working fire, whom should the Dispatcher notify? Is there a procedure for mass notification of specific groups (i.e., Command Staff, management personnel, etc.)?

Fire agencies typically have mutual aid agreements with adjoining agencies. It is imperative that the Agency provide the Fire Service Dispatcher with the most up to date response plans, as mutual aid agreements change frequently. In addition, it is important that the Agency identify under what conditions the Dispatcher can implement these plans and the procedure for requesting mutual aid assistance. Requirements for documenting mutual aid activations should be clearly explained to the Dispatcher as well.

The use of proper radio etiquette is a critical piece of any Dispatcher's job. The Federal Communications Commission has established regulations that govern the use of public safety radio, including improper radio transmissions. Dispatchers must be trained on proper radio broadcast techniques and FCC rules that directly govern their use of the public safety radio spectrum. See FCC Rules Part 90 (47 C.F.R. § 90.403 and 47 C.F.R. § 90.425) for further information on these regulations.

Dispatchers should be trained in the types of post-incident activities as required by the Agency. The Agency should identify the types of activities in which the Dispatcher is required to participate. Examples of these activities may include critical incident stress debriefings, notification to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) or after action critiques.

Fire Service Dispatchers are a critical part of the public safety team. The fast and efficient response to fire services related calls are essential if lives and property are to be saved. Training should focus on the standards identified within the APCO ANS 3.103.2-201 as well as other areas identified as critical by the Agency. An understanding of how the Fire Service operates within the Agency's jurisdiction will boost the

Telecommunicators ability to provide effective support to the units in the field. Training which enhances the Dispatcher's professional relationship with the firefighters in the field can improve cooperation between agencies and increase responder safety.

Agencies should construct a plan to provide consistent training to all employees who may perform the functions of a Fire Dispatcher. Additionally, this training should be ongoing and provide updates as needed. Agencies would well be served in developing a plan to document the training provided and will be better prepared to provide proofs of compliance with standards.

Chapter 10 Emergency Medical Services Dispatcher

Chapter 10 identifies and defines training requirements and essential duties of the Emergency Medical Services Dispatcher. The chapter is written so that agencies can easily establish performance expectations. When these performance expectations are met, this will mean the Dispatcher has demonstrated competence as an Emergency Medical Services Dispatcher.

It is important to distinguish between the Emergency Medical Services Dispatcher and Emergency Medical Dispatch (commonly referred to as an EMD). The Emergency Medical Services Dispatcher is tasked with actually dispatching medical units while EMD is an established set of protocols to gather information and provide pre-arrival medical instructions and, in some cases, to determine appropriate responses.

It is the Agency's responsibility to provide the EMS Dispatcher with training as required by local, state, tribal, or federal laws. This may include, but is not limited to CPR certification, state issued licensing or certification, and continuing education requirements.

The Agency must be sure to provide the EMS Dispatcher access to all the procedures, protocols, and guidelines used to determine appropriate EMS responses. One example of these guidelines is mutual aid agreements. Most EMS agencies utilize mutual aid agreements with neighboring jurisdictions and it is imperative that the Agency provide the EMS Dispatcher with the most up to date response plans, based on nature and location of the incidents.

Because the EMS Agency can provide varied responses, dependent upon nature and location, the EMS Dispatcher must have knowledge of local geography and Agency's jurisdictional boundaries.

In addition to providing access to these documents, the Agency must provide training on use and application of the various protocols in order to facilitate a quick, effective, and

efficient response to emergency medical calls. One key component of this training is an assessment of the employee's ability to perform to the Agency's expectations. Agencies should construct a plan to provide consistent training to all employees who may perform the functions of an EMS Dispatcher. Additionally, this training should be ongoing and provide updates as needed. Agencies would well be served in developing a plan to document the training provided and will be better prepared to provide proofs of compliance with standards.

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