

To the Select Committee on Pension Policy and Staff,

The Washington State Chapters of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) and the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) have recently become aware of the potential for and incidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in E9-1-1 Telecommunicators (study attached).

As a result of this knowledge, the Washington Chapter conducted a survey of Washington State communications centers taking E9-1-1 calls. Responses were received from 62% of agencies taking E9-1-1 calls, and included county, municipal, and federal agencies representing over 600 telecommunicators. Analysis of the results provided some thought-provoking information:

- 69% of telecommunicators are between the ages of 26 and 45 years.
- 11% work as telecommunicators for 20 or more years.
- 63% of responding agencies stated that telecommunicators have left employment with that agency due to the stress of the job.
- 96.7% of responding agencies have had telecommunicators retire, leave service, or be terminated because they were unable to perform the functions of the job versus retiring with dignity at the age of 65.
- The average age of those terminated in the past 10 years is 37 years.

The Chapter's limited survey, in addition to the study indicates that the career life span for a telecommunicator is relatively short. The Chapter believes that this is very likely due to the stresses of the job and the increased technological demands.

As we approach the age of Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1), and anticipate the receipt of text, photo, and video, the Chapter is convinced that the technical expertise required to perform the functions of the job will increase astronomically. In addition to that, the visualization of crime, medical, and fire scenes will add untold stress to the intricacies of an already detailed and technical position. It will become extremely difficult for E9-1-1 centers in Washington State to recruit and retain staff.

The Washington Chapters of APCO and NENA urge the Selection Committee on Pension Policy to consider the inclusion of telecommunicators in a public safety early retirement program. The benefits to the individual who has dedicated a career to public safety as well as to the agency attempting to recruit and retain staff are well worthy of your consideration.

Thank you for your time,