

APCO Member Message on Increasing Recognition of 9-1-1 Professionals by Aligning Job Descriptions With the Protective Nature of the Work

As part of APCO's ongoing effort to increase recognition and respect for 9-1-1 professionals, we are offering suggestions for job descriptions that will align with the protective, lifesaving nature of the work. These suggestions may look familiar, as they mirror the [recommendations](#) APCO made for revising the federal government's catalogue of occupations and the published findings of APCO's Project 43 report on [Broadband Implications for the PSAP](#). We are seeing major changes for public safety communications. To improve recruitment, retention, and recognition for 9-1-1 professionals, job descriptions may require updating to highlight the challenging, life-or-death nature of the work performed, and potentially to eliminate or avoid over-emphasizing any clerical tasks that were more relevant to the early days of 9-1-1.

Suggestion 1: Use the Job Title, "Public Safety Telecommunicator"

"Public Safety Telecommunicator" is a comprehensive term that is now used for federal occupational statistics. One key advantage is that it more obviously conveys the "public safety" nature of the work, which is important for distinguishing these occupations from non-public safety jobs such as taxi dispatchers. Further, traditional job titles such as "call taker" and "dispatcher" can be interpreted to mean more of a clerical or secretarial function.

Suggestion 2: Ensure Job Descriptions Convey the Protective Nature of the Work

Public Safety Telecommunicators play a critical role in emergency response. Job descriptions should reflect as much and avoid over-emphasizing any clerical or administrative duties. When applicable, descriptions should reference duties such as:

- Gathering, analyzing, and reporting critical information during life-or-death situations such as crimes in progress, medical emergencies, and fire/rescue incidents;
- Administering care by providing pre-arrival medical instruction or directing callers through procedures such as CPR, childbirth, or controlling of blood loss while emergency medical services are enroute;
- Managing communications of emergency personnel responding to incidents and assisting with incident operations during events such as active shooter and officer down responses;
- Taking protective actions for first responders by providing life-safety information during responses such as officer down and MAYDAY calls;
- Analyzing conflicting and/or limited location information to direct first responders to the scene;
- Negotiating with suicidal callers or hostage takers; and

- Deploying to the scene of planned events, major emergencies, or ongoing incidents.