



APCO
ProCHRT

Professional Communications Human Resources Committee

2019 Report



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

In 2019 the field of telecommunications is moving faster than ever, and we could argue more efficient as well as more technical as we integrate into the age of Next Generation 9-1-1. We continue to evolve into a very skilled profession, and you would be hard-pressed to find another profession which has experienced the changes and associated learning curves as public safety communications. These continuous changes will affect the health and well-being of public safety telecommunicators. Yet, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) refused to reclassify public safety telecommunicators from an administrative/clerical occupation to the group of "Protective Service Occupations."

Public safety telecommunicators are still the unsung heroes, the invisible component of public safety. Public safety telecommunicators are rarely recognized for the work that they do because it is behind the scenes. Even though the role played is not as visible to the public as that of other first responders, it is every bit as vital and indispensable. APCO has not given up the reclassification fight, and there is progress with bipartisan legislation - the 9-1-1 SAVES Act - in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate to give public safety telecommunicators the classification we deserve.

This report is a reflection of the work of the APCO ProCHRT committee during the past year. The APCO ProCHRT committee continues to support the mission of ProCHRT to achieve the goals that align with the Long Range Strategic Plan of APCO International and to promote and support the human aspect of public safety communications. The committee has worked hard this year to recognize the work of communications officers on our social media platforms and through our exciting new program "Teammates in Action." This report updates the survey results from prior years and includes an Emergency Communications Center demographics survey that was completed this year.

Public safety telecommunicators are the caller's first contact during a critical situation, and the training and skills of these communications officers are crucial to the outcome of every situation. Now more than ever it is important to recognize the role of public safety telecommunicators and prepare them for what is ahead. ProCHRT is committed to supporting and recognizing these highly trained individuals as the first of the first responders and as part of public safety.

Sincerely,

Celeste Baldino

Celeste Baldino

ProCHRT Chair 2018-2019

CHAPTER RESOURCE

The Chapter Resource Workgroup was formed to assist local chapters with the “human” element of telecommunications at the local level. Awareness of the profession and the challenges faced is part of the ProCHRT strategic plan. Change begins at the local level, and chapter level ProCHRT committees can ultimately influence change on a larger scale.

The ProCHRT Chapter Resource Group meets each year at the annual conference. At the conference in Las Vegas in August 2018 there were 14 attendees from 10 different chapters. A common theme at this meeting was how to start a chapter ProCHRT and then what to focus on. Attendees were given references from the Toolbox and ideas from other attendees, and it was agreed that there would be a question about what chapter level ProCHRT committees are currently focusing on. The workgroup also had a conference call on June 28th, 2019, with representation from 5 different chapters. One of those had an active committee, one with a committee that they are trying to get active, and two that were just starting. There was good discussion, questions, and participation from all involved helping each other.

Several times throughout the year requests for information about how to begin a chapter level ProCHRT and information about specific areas to focus on were answered via phone calls and emails. The chapters within APCO encompass a unique and diverse group, and a focus for one may not be the focus for another. A goal for next committee year’s Chapter Resource Group will be to garner more participation, not just on conference calls, but through regular interaction and conversation in the PSConnect community. This way, chapters may communicate with each other on issues such as retention, retirement, QA/QI, EMD, training requirements, or any other topics concerning their members. We continue to say “Don’t reinvent the wheel; everyone is willing to share information; success stories and failures alike will help others.” So, encouraging the chapters to participate in discussions on the PSConnect group is a way to collaborate within the Chapter Resource Group to make ProCHRT a valuable resource to all our members.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Over the past several years, social media has become a part of everyday life. Not only for the public safety industry in general, but specifically for public safety communications. Social media has gone beyond a platform for just sharing photos and updates; it has become a go-to location for breaking news and information. It has also become a tool for disseminating emergency bulletins such as evacuation orders and disaster updates. Some jurisdictions use social media as a tool for reporting non-emergency issues.

The members of the ProCHRT committee have watched and acknowledged this growth, and over the past several years have started to use the various platforms, Facebook and Twitter specifically, to share news, recognition, and updates regarding all things 9-1-1.

On Facebook, ProCHRT currently has 1,553 likes with 1,578 follows. To date, the members of the social media committee this year have made 182 posts, which have reached over 175,000 unique users. Facebook uses statistics and analytics to measure a “user-engagement rate,” which is based on the amount of people who saw your post (reach) and then engaged with the post via a like, comment, share, or link click. The committee has aimed to find posts and news that are hot trending topics in the public safety communications field and strives to continue to do so.

Like last year, this year’s committee was tasked with one of the four main ProCHRT goals which was, “Provide positive recognition of Public Safety Telecommunicators via Social Media.” The committee accomplished this task by creating the “Teammates in Action” recognition program which aims to acknowledge the everyday accomplishments of public safety telecommunicators throughout the country. On October 23, 2018, the first recipient was named, Kellie Parsons of the Orange County, Florida Sheriff’s Office, for her assistance with saving the life of a suicidal male. To date, five telecommunicators have been recognized as “Teammates in Action,” and the program continues to grow. Every day, lifesaving work is being done in Emergency Communications Centers everywhere. This program allows for anyone to easily submit a nomination for their fellow co-worker. It is hoped to continue the momentum of this program so that it may continue to recognize telecommunicators for being the “first” first responders.

2018-2019 APCO ProCHRT TEAMMATES IN ACTION RECOGNITION

Public safety telecommunicators play a crucial role in achieving a successful resolution in critical situations every day. APCO International is proud to acknowledge their efforts as we recognize our ProCHRT Teammates in Action.

Kellie Parsons - October 23, 2018

Orange County Sheriff's Office, Florida

Kellie used calming techniques and a reassuring tone of voice to build rapport with a despondent man who wished to harm himself and had already placed something around his neck. For 41 minutes, she redirected and helped him focus on the good of his life while keeping him on the line, eventually getting him to remove the cord from around his neck. When deputies arrived, Parson continued on the call and assisted to coax him inside. The man refers to Kellie as his "angel" for saving his life that day.



JJ Evans, Molly Peterson, and the Communications Platoon - November 13, 2018

Chester County, Pennsylvania



Gunshots were reported during the early evening. A man attempted to shoot his ex-wife before going to a second location where he shot and killed both of his parents. He fled and a county-wide manhunt ensued. He was spotted and pursued; officers took fire from him several times

The Communications Platoon faced an uphill battle, working flawlessly to keep field responders from

law enforcement, fire, and EMS agencies up to date. Patching radio groups, manning the Mobile Communications Vehicle, and disseminating information to the news and social media outlets are just a small example of the extra tasks put upon the center that evening.

Judson Smith - December 10, 2018

Hanover County Emergency Communications Center, Virginia

As the telecommunicator assigned to fire/EMS radio, Judson handled the high volume of radio traffic resulting from an accident which resulted in the on-duty death and injury to field responders. He remained confident, professional, and, most importantly, calm. He fielded requests for additional resources without hesitation and voiced, through his calm demeanor and tenor, reassurance to the responders who were coming to the aid of their fallen and injured comrades.





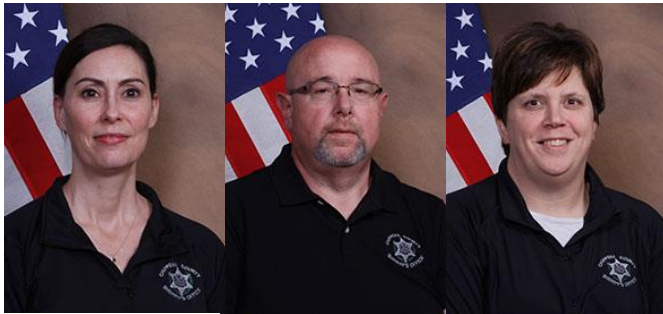
Kaitlynn Rhude - March 15, 2019

Johnson County 9-1-1, Indiana

When a man threatened to kill his mother and boyfriend, Kaitlynn listened and made the decision to talk to him. Even though the suspect said police would make the situation worse, Kaitlynn got him to let his mother and her boyfriend go. When officers arrived, Kaitlynn talked the man into giving up the knife and surrendering. The offender told officers it was because of Kaitlynn and her genuine care for him that he calmed down, de-escalating a situation that could have ended much differently.

Tamee Foldy, Hera Novak, Mike Sokup and Pam Crandall - June 6, 2019

Chippewa County Sheriff's Office, Wisconsin



Telecommunicators Pam Crandall and Tamee Foldy received the first phone calls from distraught parents who witnessed a car drive off the roadway and into a ditch striking several Girl Scouts who were picking up trash. The crash killed three girls and one adult. Pam and Tamee did an exceptional job calming

them down to obtain the information they needed. Tamee was also primary for that channel and sent out the initial dispatch. Teammates Hera Novak and Mike Sokup helped answer radio and called in three air ambulances and additional ground ambulances. Resources from ten different agencies responded, and the team of four excelled at coordinating it all.

TOOLBOX

The ProCHRT Toolbox is a set of resources available on the APCO International website for the benefit of all public safety communications personnel. It is a free, and available to everyone from frontline telecommunicators to upper-level management, industry partners, and even members of the public. The toolbox contains the following categories:

- Health and Wellness Resources
- Training / Certification / Standards
- Legislative Resources
- Personnel and Recognition
- Public Education / Media Relations
- Public Safety Communications

The purpose of the Toolbox Workgroup is to educate APCO members and all public safety communications personnel and partners about this valuable set of tools and to increase its contents to include current and trending topics and resources within our profession.

Each team member took responsibility for a section of the Toolbox this year. The team has worked to update the links to articles and resources and to add new material to the Toolbox. Each team member was also responsible to monitor PSConnect for conversations that could benefit from resources within the Toolbox and especially threads related to their assigned section. When discussions were found that could benefit from resources in the Toolbox, workgroup members replied to the discussion to provide education about, and direct readers to the specific area of the Toolbox that would be of benefit.

Team members were constantly looking for new materials and even new categories if needed to keep the Toolbox a relevant and living resource. As the public safety communications and 9-1-1 industry is constantly changing and evolving, the Toolbox members have worked to keep the best tools possible in the Toolbox. It needs to be a go-to resource for all levels of public safety communications staff well into the future.

Updates over the year have included resources on the health benefits of sleep, obtaining a work and life balance, and a state's efforts to add incentive pay for obtaining training benchmarks.

PTSD and 9-1-1 TELECOMMUNICATORS

Who is a dispatcher? What does a dispatcher do? Public safety telecommunicators are often the forgotten first responders. Our callers don't see us respond the same way that police, fire, and EMS respond. As dispatchers, it is our job to do precision guess work that is usually based on unreliable information supplied third-hand by those with limited knowledge of the current situation. When a call comes in, the telecommunicator focuses on the entirety of the incident, not only the caller, but the units responding, usually with two or three things going on at the same time. Larger departments may have trained call takers and dispatchers in separate roles while telecommunicators in smaller, more rural departments may handle everything 24/7/365 (emergency, non-emergency, and administrative, for police, fire, EMS, and walk-ins).

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is becoming more common among public safety telecommunicators. PTSD is a mental condition that results in a series of emotional and physical reactions in individuals who have either witnessed or experienced a traumatic event. According to the article, "Duty-Related Trauma Exposure in 9-1-1 Telecommunications: Considering the Risk for Post-Traumatic Stress," 18-24 % of telecommunicators report being continually exposed to graphic traumatic details of events as part of one's job. Emotionally, veteran telecommunicators have the highest rate of PTSD and the lowest job satisfaction rate. It has to do with job longevity and negative beliefs about the world.

According to the article "Differences in PTSD Symptomology between Veterans and Emergency Dispatchers," published September 2017, dispatchers are more likely to meet criteria for avoidance-related intrusive symptoms and are more likely to endorse cognitive avoidance rather than physical avoidance of trauma reminders.

As stated earlier, public safety telecommunicators look at the incident as a whole, from the caller to the first responders and their safety, as well as the safety of the general public. According to an article from PoliceOne.com by Melissa Mann, telecommunicators experience vicarious trauma (compassion fatigue) due to injury or death of a child, suicidal callers, and officer involved shootings. The emotional responses are feelings of fear, helplessness, or horror.

Symptoms of PTSD include flashbacks, nightmares, recurring thoughts, emotional numbness, extreme worry, guilt, anger, and hopelessness, as well as the avoidance of people and places, being on edge or jumpy, and problems with drugs and/or alcohol. There is also somatization that occurs as well. Somatization translates emotional stimuli to physical symptoms which include migraines, gastrointestinal distress, nausea, insomnia, and an increased susceptibility to illness. Emotional responses may interfere with the ability to function in day to day activities.

What help is available to telecommunicators who suffer from PTSD? Hopefully, at your agency there is some kind of an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). After a critical incident, it is important to have a critical incident stress debriefing (CISD). A majority of times, the telecommunicators that work the call are not included. If you are not fortunate to attend the CISD, check your departments for chaplain services. In most cases, they are able to assist you and can point you in the right direction if more help is needed. You can also check with your local hospitals or clinics to see if they have a therapist or counselor that specializes in treating persons suffering from PTSD.

There are challenges for people when they are struggling with PTSD. Avoidance is something that people with PTSD do very well. There is also a stigma with mental health, that if you seek help, it shows weakness or “cracks in the armor” and people should be able to deal with it or toughen up.

Telecommunicators will turn inward and hide distress rather than feel the prejudices or discrimination of their co-workers. For some, they may feel a fear or anxiety about “not being up for the job.” Things to consider in survivors are the loss of psychosocial resources, less social support, and how important emotional support can be. Romeo Vitelli, PHD, says that providing an emotional sounding board for survivors to share their experience and support can boost resilience when someone is struggling.

One way you can help yourself is to use the P.I.E.S. Wellness Wheel. The “P” stands for physical. If you exercise a minimum of two times a week for at least 30 minutes each, the endorphins released is your body’s way of coping in a positive way. Physical also means your health and nutrition. It discourages unhealthy lifestyles and allows for you to monitor your body’s signs. The “I” stands for Intellectual. Educate yourself on what is going on and what you can personally do to manage your PTSD symptoms. The more knowledge you have, the better you will be equipped to handle yourself when symptoms try and take over. The “E” stands for Emotion. The emotional part of the PIES method recognizes and accepts one’s feelings. This includes positivity and capacity to manage feelings and recognize one’s limitations, independently realizing the importance of seeking and appreciating the support of others. This would include therapy and/or other counseling. The “S” stands for spiritual. Search for more meaning and purpose in human existence, whether you pray more or go to church more. With this last piece of the PIES method, your actions become more consistent with your own beliefs and core values.

An April 2012 article from the Journal of Traumatic Stress talks about veteran dispatchers and how they have the highest rate of PTSD and the lowest job satisfaction rate. The article goes on to say that dispatchers don’t quit their jobs because of the benefits, dispatchers quit from calls involving children, an officer involved shooting, line of duty deaths, and other calls that are hard to classify. Physically, 83% are considered obese. Problems occurring from being overweight include headaches, back aches, insomnia, heart burn, upset stomach, cortisol deregulation. Further, shift work negatively impacts quality of sleep.

Resources and treatments include prolonged exposure, cognitive therapy, peer support groups, and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy. Things to consider when trying to find a PTSD therapist include:

- Make sure provider has experience in treating people who have experienced trauma.
- Try and find a provider who specializes in evidence-based medications for PTSD, or effective psychotherapy for PTSD.
- Find out what types of insurance the provider accepts and what you will have to pay out of pocket. Call health insurance to find out mental health providers that are covered.
- You may find more than one therapist.
- Contact family doctor to ask for recommendations, or ask friends, family members, or co-workers if they can recommend someone.

Depending on how long someone has been a telecommunicator and the types of calls that he or she has had, it may be that person should seek in-patient care or go to a treatment center. Not every state has

the resources or specific treatment centers/facilities for first responders. Here is a small list of Treatment Centers for first responders to serve as a reference of specialized treatment examples:

- Sabino Recovery - Arizona
- EMDR Therapy Psychotherapeutic Trauma Recover network - Washington
- BioSound Therapy - California
- Institute for Responder Wellness - Washington
- Recover Centers of America (located throughout states)

Local resources that someone in need can turn to is the CISD or CISM team for the debriefing. Also, there is a group called the Emergency Chaplain Group in Texas as well as Nationwide Chaplains in Illinois. Each of these groups' focus is:

- How did it impact me?
- What do I need to do to care for myself?
- How do I get closure?
- Who else is struggling?
- How does this impact the next shift? Next call?

PTSD is growing in our profession of public safety communications. It is important to seek help sooner rather than later. It is also important to educate yourself and your team to know the signs when someone is suffering.

PTSD RESOURCES for 9-1-1 TELECOMMUNICATORS

www.ptsd.va.gov

1. Symptoms

- Flashbacks, nightmares, and recurring thoughts
- Emotional numbness
- Extreme worry, guilt, anger, or hopelessness
- Avoidance of people, places, or things that are reminders of the trauma
- Loss of interest in things that once gave pleasure
- Feeling anxious, on edge, jumpy, startle easily
- Sleep issues
- Problems with alcohol, drugs, or food

2. Resources

- Ardent Center Counseling for Meaningful Change - Chicagoland/ Iowa
- Emergency Chaplain Group – TX
- Nationwide Chaplains - IL
- Sabino Recovery - AZ
- EMDR Therapy Psychotherapeutic Trauma Recovery Network - WA
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - CA
- Bio sound Therapy - CA
- Institute for Responder Wellness - WA
- Code Green Initiative
- Recovery Centers of America
- CISD/CISM
- Local (EAP) Employee Assistance Program (internal or external)
 - How did it impact me?
 - What do I need to do to care for myself?
 - How do I get closure?
 - Who else is struggling?
 - What if anything do I need/want to do for my brothers/sisters who also experienced this exposure?
 - How does this impact our next shift? Call?

3. Things to Consider

- PTSD Survivors of 9/11
 - Loss of psychosocial resources
 - Less social support
 - How important emotional support can be

Romeo Vitelli, PHD

Providing an emotional sounding board for survivors to share their experiences, support can also boost resilience.

Psychology Today

Enabling hypothesis- social support helps survivors by building up their sense of self-efficacy, belief in their ability to overcome obstacles and face challenges

Lack of Social Support

Romeo Vitelli: Everything Guide to Overcoming PTSD

- Traditional treatments including psychotherapy, drug therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy
- New methods of support- mindfulness and animals
- Ways to reverse physical effects of PTSD

PTSD Workbook: Simple, Effective Techniques for Overcoming Traumatic Stress Symptoms

Mary Beth Williams and Soili Poijula

Psychology Today

Stigma

Post-Traumatic Stress Injury to disorder

Build Resilience

- Connections with others
- More supportive, caring, trustworthy people you have in your life, the more able to cope with experiences
- Important to manage feelings, improve communications skills, and develop more realistic and positive ways of viewing yourself and your experiences
- Family and Friends

Challenges

- Acknowledging the problems
- Cracks in the armor
- Deal with it or toughen up
- Attitude
- Fear- not being up for the job
- Stigma around mental health
- Prejudice or discrimination
- Turn inward and hide distress

09/21/2017 PSYCHOLOGY TODAY

Duty related trauma - indirect exposure to someone else's traumatic experience (following protocol, despite variability in situations)

2016 - Ontario Government passed legislation for better Mental Health support including 9-1-1 dispatchers

07/07/16 PTSD & Emergency Telecommunicators

April 2012 Journal of Traumatic Stress

"Duty Related Trauma Exposure in 9-1-1 Telecommunicators Considering the Risk For Post-Traumatic Stress:"

18-24% being continually exposed to graphic traumatic details of events as part of one's job does fall into the definition of trauma

*Job longevity w/ positive beliefs about the world

* Veteran dispatchers have the highest rate of PTSD and the lowest job satisfaction

Why don't dispatchers quit?

1. Job Benefits
2. Role of TCO as family financial bread winner

Why quit?

1. Kid Calls- follow-up necessary
2. Officer involved shooting/ line of duty death
3. Other- hard to classify

Physically

83% are obese or overweight with 53% Obese

- Headaches
- Back aches
- Insomnia
- Heart burn
- Upset stomach
- Cortisol deregulation
- Shift work (sleep)

Treatments

Prolonged exposure

Cognitive therapy

Peer Support Groups

Dr. Michelle Lily (NIU)

Are 9-1-1 Dispatchers at Risk of PTSD?

Feelings of helplessness and the horror of inability to do anything more to help the person

With proper stress management-reduced

Not knowing

www.911dispatcherprograms.org

Frontline Responder Services/www.frontlinerehab.com/emergency-dispatchers-suffer-ptsd-silence

Mark Lamplugh Jr. VP of Responder Services

ABC News 2012 NIU Study

Dispatchers are forgotten first responders

[www.aedjournal.org/Differences in PTSD Symptomology between Veterans and Emergency Dispatchers](http://www.aedjournal.org/Differences%20in%20PTSD%20Symptomology%20between%20Veterans%20and%20Emergency%20Dispatchers)
09/12/2017

- Dispatchers more likely to meet criteria for avoidance-related intrusive symptoms and predictive different domains of functional impairment
- Avoidance-dispatchers endorse cognitive rather than physical avoidance

PoliceOne.com 04/12/16 Melissa Mann

- Vicarious Trauma (Compassion fatigue)
 - Injury or death of a child

- Suicidal callers
- Officer involved shooting
- Emotional responses- feelings of fears, helplessness or horror

Somatization- translates emotional stimuli to physical symptoms include: migraines, gastrointestinal distress, nausea, tension headaches, other physical symptoms include: exhaustion, insomnia, and increased susceptibility to illness
 Increased use of alcohol and drugs
 Anger and irritability and impaired ability to make decisions

Emotional responses: painful response by healthy people to abnormal situation to the point it interferes with your ability to function

Michelle M. Lily - Predictors of obesity and physical health complaints among 9-1-1 Telecommunicators
 Duty related post-traumatic stress symptoms in 9-1-1 telecommunicator
 Director, Trauma, mental health and Recovery laboratory
 815-753-4602 milily1@niu.edu

Find a PTSD Therapist

Things to consider:

1. Make sure the provider has experience in treating people who have experienced a trauma
2. Try to find a provider who specializes in evidence-based medications for PTSD or effective psychotherapy for PTSD (for example: cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) prolonged exposure therapy (PE) or eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR)).
3. Find out what type(s) of insurance the provider accepts and what you will have to pay (out-of-pocket) for care
4. You may find more than one therapist. We also have information about Types of Therapists
5. First Steps
6. Contact your family doctor to ask for a recommendation. You can also ask friends and family if they can recommend someone.
7. If you have health insurance, call to find out which mental health providers your insurance company will pay for. Your insurance company may require that you choose a provider from among a list they maintain.

National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

THE BENEFITS OF LOCAL TRAINING

A common problem among Emergency Communication Centers is the ability to get their staff to outside trainings, as they are often understaffed and have tight training budgets. Many centers have found that bringing the training to them has many advantages over sending their staff outside for training.

The host agency will generally receive free registrations up front. It might depend on the total class registration, but agencies can expect to see two or more free registrations per class. The agency will also be able to pick the topics that are relevant to their agency or its employees. There are many 9-1-1 specific training companies with topics covering how to deal with negativity, hostage negotiations, career development, leadership, etc.

When an agency brings in training, they also have the opportunity to develop a relationship with the trainers, which gives access to subject matter experts when needed. Relationships and reputations built among the attendees from outside agencies is also an advantage, and if their experience is a good one they will spread the word as well as look for future trainings from the host agency.

Not every agency has the facility, ability, or means to host training, but looking for training offered by surrounding agencies or state and regional conferences is another viable option. While sending employees to national conferences can be expensive due to the cost of hotels, flights, per diem, and coverage in the center for not only the conference days, but travel days, too, trainings and conferences held nearby are more affordable.

Hosting trainings takes time, work, and the right facility, but in the end it can save the agency money and bring the training they desire to their location.



RECLASSIFICATION

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) manages a job classification system to categorize all forms of employment for statistical purposes. The classifications have no direct impact on pay or benefits. The first Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) was published in 1977 with recent updates occurring in 2000, 2010, and 2018. The most recent revision process, finalized in 2017, began in 2014. It is during this revision period where public safety communications professionals began to become more proactive in their effort to reclassify “public safety telecommunicators.”

Public safety telecommunicators (previously labeled “Police, Fire, and Ambulance Dispatchers”) are currently classified as Office and Administrative Support Occupations, which is inaccurate. Correcting the classification is important for appropriate recognition of the lifesaving nature of the work performed. To be clear, this profession was never easy. When police officers had to communicate via callboxes or citizens had to alert the fire department with a fire alarm call box, the profession was still stressful and unappreciated. In the years since the classification system was first published, 9-1-1 has developed into its own conception of public safety, and an expectation of consistent, professional, and expeditious service became a demand. Being classified within the same category as those who dispatch service vehicles such as tow trucks is unacceptable. Public safety telecommunicators should be reclassified as Protective Service Occupations. It is understandable that there was so much passion for reclassification when it became an issue in 2016. Despite significant advocacy by APCO and support from many stakeholders for this sensible change during two public comment opportunities, OMB determined to leave the current classification in place. APCO staff continued to explore ways to convince OMB to reverse its decision, and ultimately found an alternative in a legislative effort.

On March 7, 2019, Representative Norma Torres (D-CA 35), a former public safety telecommunicator, and Representative Brian Fitzpatrick (R – PA 1), a former FBI special agent, introduced the 9-1-1 SAVES Act (H.R. 1629) in the House of Representatives to reclassify public safety telecommunicators within the Protective Service category. The bill has a Senate version (S. 1015), introduced April 3, 2019, by Senators Richard Burr (R-NC) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN). Both bills have strong bipartisan support. Currently, both sit within the appropriate committee for each chamber. The bill would not create any cost to the federal government. It would also not change any pay or benefits afforded to public safety telecommunicators. Separately, some states have legislated changes to state-level classifications that impact benefits. However, the SOC reclassification is simply about recognizing the profession for what it is and correctly placing it into the Protective Service category.

VIRTUAL CONSOLIDATION

Virtual consolidation among PSAPs is on the rise in our ever-changing field of emergency communications. In more rural, widespread areas it is a feasible option; whereas in some areas it is not. Virtual consolidation is when multiple dispatch centers share the same CAD/RMS systems, and are shared over a multiprotocol label switching (MPLS) line. There are pros and cons to any joint project such as this. Virtual consolidation promotes inter-agency relationships and cooperation, and is time saving when seconds matter. Virtual consolidation promotes the accessibility between departments, as well, which is huge for officer/responder safety.

Inter-agency cooperation is a must when working emergency communications. In order for us to do our jobs, there are many times where we have to rely on other agencies to assist with calls. Virtual consolidation helps to do this. When taking on a project like this, committees or boards from all agencies involved must be ready and willing to help each other when needed. Agreements need to be drawn up so there is no question as to which agency is taking care of what or if they are able to fulfill their part of the virtual consolidation process. Inter-agency cooperation also allows for multiple backup systems if needed. If phone lines fail and calls have to be rolled over to another agency, departments are able to send employees over to the covering agency to assist. In the event of natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, or earthquakes, departments rely on TERT teams to provide mutual aid. Smaller departments do not have the resources to be part of TERT.

Another aspect of virtual consolidation is the accessibility. Accessibility with virtual consolidation includes “real time” up-to-date information, quicker response times, more area covered, and officer safety information. Each of these points work hand in hand. Up-to-date information provides quicker response time for officer safety and police contacts, and also covers a wider area than just one agency. Officer safety and the safety of other emergency responders is extremely important. If an officer goes out with a subject on a traffic stop, the dispatcher can look that person up to see if there are any field notifications and what type of police contacts that person has had, if any. Accessibility also means that more area is covered. In West Central Illinois, Warren, Mercer, Hancock, McDonough, and Henry county 9-1-1 use the same CAD/RMS vendor. In total, these counties cover approximately 3,350 square miles. Major travel routes go through each of these counties including I80, I74, US 34, and US 67. With the area that is covered by these counties, there are approximately six colleges that fall in their jurisdictions, including Western Illinois University and Monmouth College. Having six colleges in this area means that the likelihood of an agency having contact with a person is greater. The other point of accessibility is the amount of officer safety information that is available. Each state and NCIC has specific criteria that need to be met before a field notification can be entered. Sharing CAD/RMS would allow agencies to look up persons and check if he or she is a known drug user, or for any other officer safety information.

Maintenance/upkeep is both an advantage as well as a disadvantage with virtual consolidation. There is a chance that the more agencies that share or participate in the consolidation, the cheaper the overall cost would be. Each jurisdiction has a different budget, fiscal year, and population. Properly maintaining equipment, hardware, and other software requires ongoing costs. The number of PSAPs and staff in each center also make a difference when it comes to being able to consolidate. It is important for the agencies participating to have contracts in place for such a venture. Technology changes every day. When that occurs, agencies need to be able to upgrade or add software/hardware

as needed. Agencies that are more populated generally have more money in order to get the latest and greatest equipment.

Another disadvantage to virtual consolidation includes data entry. Not all agencies are trained to enter data the same way. This can lead to duplicate records as well as problems with mapping/addresses. Not every agency enters the address in the same way. In some mapping systems, addresses have to be entered a specific way in order to bring up the exact location, which means that some agencies maintain duplicate records.

Virtual consolidation could potentially lead to actual consolidation. With new technology that is available, it is possible to dispatch for a much larger area. With advancement in communications, this is more likely going to happen sooner rather than later. As an example, the Illinois State Police consolidated some of its dispatch centers. District 14 in West Central Illinois merged its communications headquarters from Macomb, IL, to Springfield, IL (roughly 85 miles South). With the digital communications technology available, this may become more common than what we would like.

APCO ProCHRT 2019 SURVEY

And the Survey Says.....

One fundamental goal of the APCO International ProCHRT committee is to provide resources, data, and reference material to support our public safety professionals. Over the last three years the committee has solicited information from all APCO chapters/states on the status of the profession in the states they represent. The survey asked about each state's:

1. Basic and continuing education training requirements;
2. Retirement benefits;
3. Hiring requirements;
4. EMD Regulations;
5. Employee retention efforts; and
6. Chapter ProCHRT committee information.

In 2019, the previous replies were sent back to the chapters/states for updates, and the full survey was sent to those chapters/states where a reply was not received in either of the previous two years. APCO representatives from twenty-nine chapters/states replied to the survey in 2017. Nine chapters/states updated their information and three new chapter/states replied to the survey in 2018. In 2019, fourteen chapters/states responded to the survey request, four updated their responses from 2017, eight updated or confirmed their responses from 2018, and one new response was received. Here are a few excerpts from the 2019 survey.

Training Requirements:

Twenty of the thirty-three chapters/states that responded currently have training mandated by the state. In addition, 17 states reported state legislated PST Certification and 16 reported none. Four states did report that there is a voluntary certification.

Retirement

Retirement varied from state to state with some on state systems and some on municipal. Details may be seen within the statistics posted in the APCO ProCHRT Toolbox.

EMD

Only a few states reported mandated EMD. Some states, such as Montana, include EMD training within their basic certification courses but have no mandate over PSAPs for its use.

Chapter ProCHRT Committee

Currently, nine states report having an active chapter ProCHRT committee with several exploring creating one. The nine active chapters reported on their current goals:

1. Arizona – creating consistent statewide training standards.
2. California – (1) Identify factors that influence dispatch center culture and develop suggestions and resources to manage and improve a center’s culture. (2) Research Telecommunicator retirement and benefits. (3) Develop a career development plan for Telecommunicators. (4) Develop a certification course for fire dispatch with the State Fire Marshal’s Office. (5) Develop a radio workload study to incorporate into the next version of Project RETAINS. (6) Develop a TERT initiative for the state.
3. Colorado – has appointed a ProCHRT chair and is working on establishing a committee.
4. Florida – working on legislation to reduce the required years of service in the State Retirement System.
5. Connecticut – providing information about continuing education.
6. Montana – providing mentoring for public safety communication professionals.
7. North Carolina – working with local PSAPs and keeping them informed of APCO ProCHRT activities.
8. Oklahoma – working on state mandated training requirements.
9. Virginia – working on having all VA PSAPs provide EMD.

This is just a small example of the copious amount of information gathered in the APCO International ProCHRT surveys between 2017 and 2019. The full survey results can be found in the APCO ProCHRT Toolbox. The ProCHRT Toolbox can be found on the APCO website, and is available to all, whether you are an APCO member or not.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER SURVEY

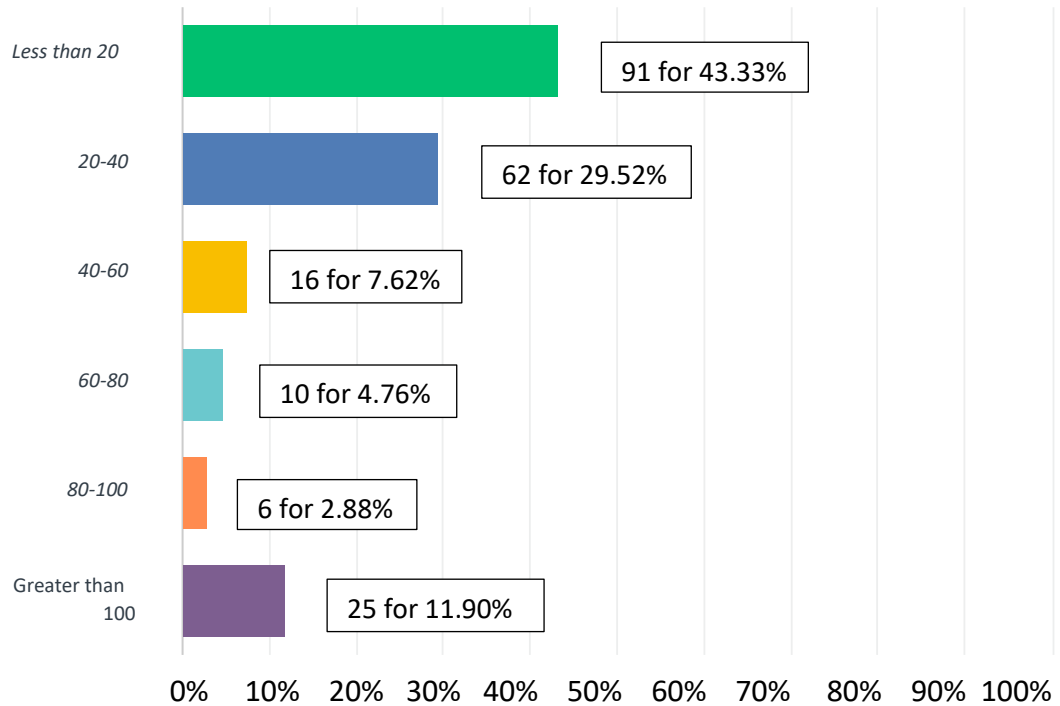
At the 2018 APCO International conference, one of the requests that was asked of the ProCHRT committee was to complete a survey on emergency communications center demographics, career development, protocols, etc. A series of questions were formed by the ProCHRT committee. On March 24, 2019, a survey was sent out and was available for about two months. It was publicized on PSConnect in several forums and through several APCO chapters. 211 responses were received from 43 different states, Canada, Grand Cayman, and 4 responses that did not list a location.

A summary of the details follows, and all data is available in the ProCHRT Toolbox.

- 1) What is the name, agency name, city, state, and a contact email or phone number of the person completing this survey? 207 answered and 4 skipped.

211 responses were received from 43 different states, Canada, Grand Cayman, and 4 responses that did not list a location.

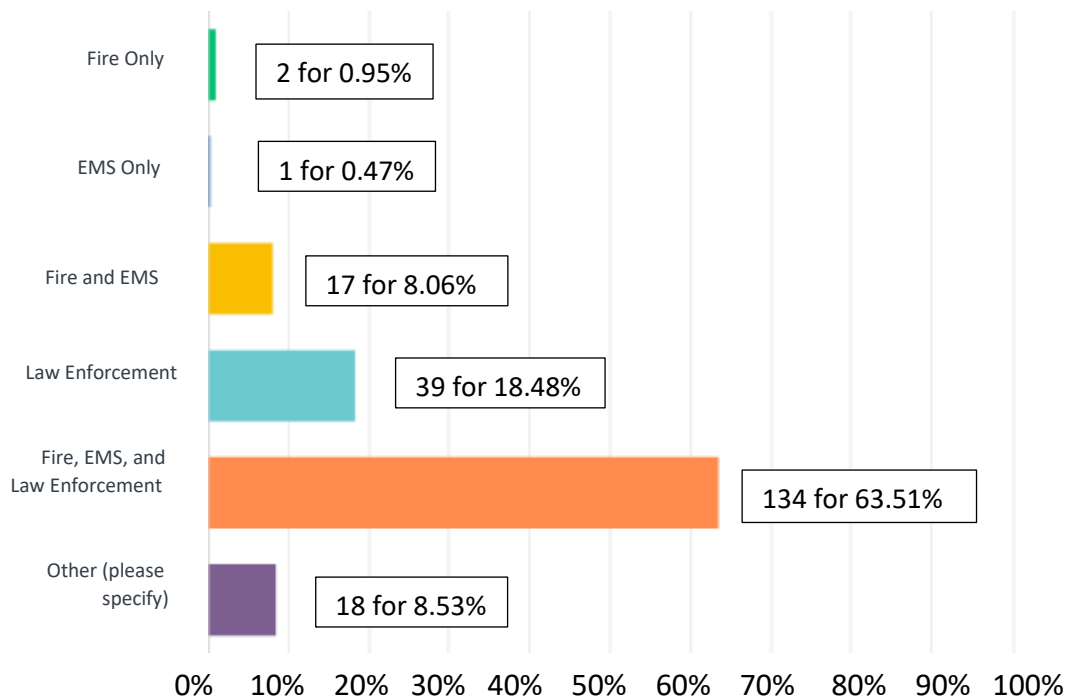
- 2) How many employees does your communications center have? (210 Answered, 1 skipped)



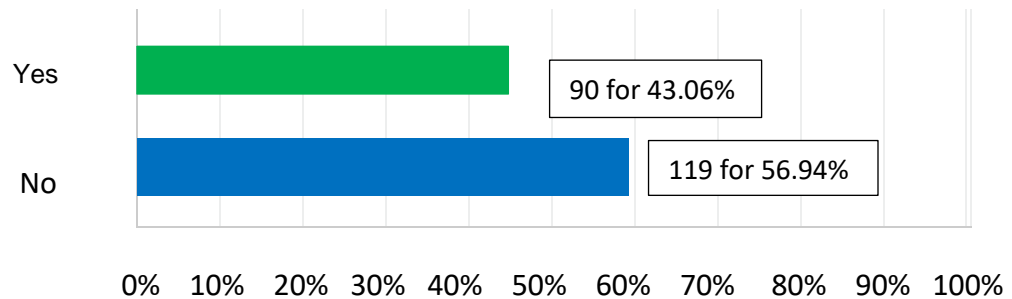
3) How many public safety telecommunicators are on duty at one time? (211 Answered)

Answers ranged from one to fifty-two. Eighteen responses advised their minimum staffing is one telecommunicator; overwhelmingly thirty-six reported two telecommunicators as minimum staffing, with an additional nine reporting from one to two. Three and four followed close behind with twenty and twenty-four responses. Two-three, five, seven, and eight all had ten responses, while numerous others had one to five responses. With forty-eight to fifty-two being the most on duty at one time. Several where ranges based on time of day.

4) What are the disciplines your emergency communications center dispatches for (Fire, EMS, LE, etc.)? (211 Answered)



5) Is your center considered a consolidated center? (209 Answered, 2 skipped)



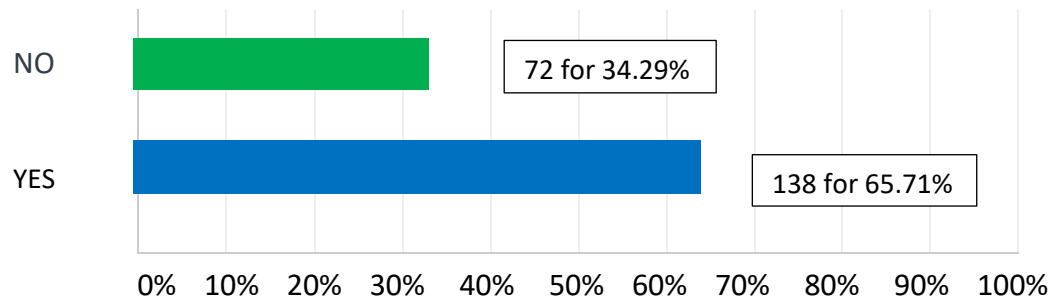
- 6) Do you have positions for public safety telecommunicators; steps within the center, career ladder, and/or career development like steps? (I.e. Dispatcher I-IV, Advanced, Senior, Master, etc.)? Please Explain (210 Answered, 1 skipped)

Overwhelmingly 155 of the 210 responses advised they do have some type of career steps within their center. These varied drastically, listing levels like Dispatcher I, II, III, IV, Senior Dispatcher, Advanced Dispatcher, Dispatcher, Mentor, Trainer, CTO, Supervisor, etc. See the full survey responses in the toolbox for further information.

- 7) Do these levels have different pay grades or raises associated with them? Please Explain (201 Answered, 10 skipped)

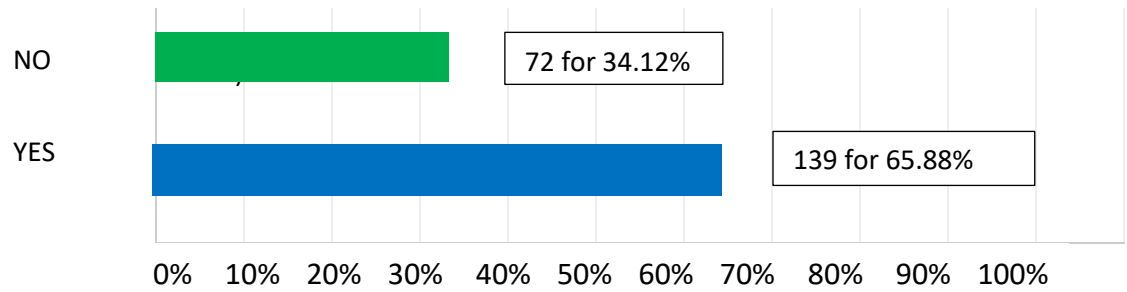
Some of these levels were associated with different pay scales and different pay grades. Again, this differed drastically, and the full results can be found in the Toolbox.

- 8) Does your emergency communications center use EMD protocols? (210 Answered, 1 skipped)
Special note for this question, at the very beginning this question was worded differently, then corrected, so this data may be slightly skewed. (When the responses prior to the change were removed the percentages are No: 21.55% and Yes: 78.45%)



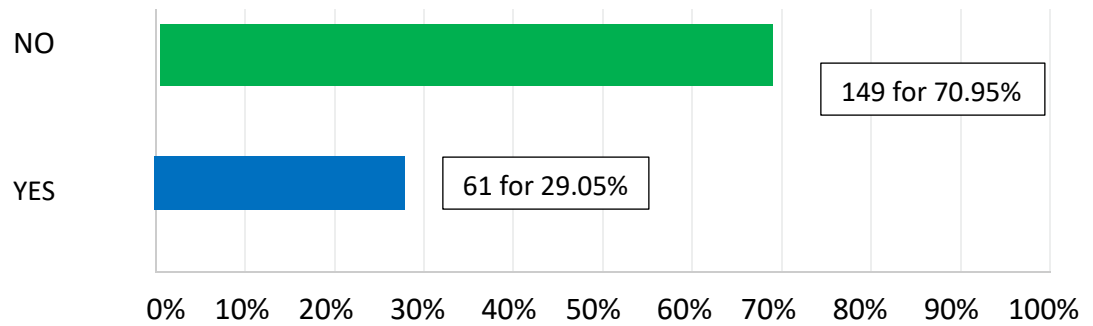
Some of the EMD Protocols noted that are used: APCO, Priority/ProQA, IAED/NAED, Power Phone, Homegrown, State Provided, Premier Responder, and no type noted.

9) Does your emergency communications center use fire protocols? (211 Answered)



Some of the fire protocols noted that are used: Homegrown, Priority EFD, IAED/NAED, Power Phone, APCO, Premier Responder, and Westnet.

10) Does your emergency communications center use law enforcement protocols? (210 answered, 1 skipped)



Some of the law enforcement protocols noted that are used: Homegrown, Priority EFD, IAED/NAED, Power Phone, APCO, Premier Responder, Smart Horizons, State, and no type noted.