



Public Safety Communications

Incident Handling Process

Candidate APCO ANS 1.113.1-2018

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FOREWORD

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Incident Handling Process Writing Group, in conjunction with APCO's Standards Development Committee, is pleased to present this Public Safety Communications Incident Handling Process.

With over 240 million calls made to 9-1-1 in the United States annually, along with the millions made internationally, this Committee and Writing Group sought to provide agencies with general guidelines that outlined the way an incident is processed from beginning to end in order to be used as a tool for improving performance.

9-1-1 professionals from various areas of the United States and Canada participated as panel members and provided information on the steps and decision-making processes of incident handling.

The result was a process that serves as a tool with which an agency can identify ways to improve performance and processes in service to those calling for assistance. Agencies are not required to adopt this process; any established process would be conducted voluntarily.

The process illustrates effective incident handling but does not dictate how end results will be achieved. This standard defines the recommended minimum steps and decision-making processes for the handling of public safety requests for service.

INTRODUCTION

SCOPE

This standard defines the recommended minimum steps and decision-making processes for the handling of public safety requests for service (referred to as “incident”). It defines the process for handling an incident by the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) from the initial report through the disposition of the incident. The initial report may come from various sources but starts with the delivery mechanism, continues with the triage of the request for service, the documentation and dissemination of information, and point of closure for the incident.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to assist the PSAP with establishing, implementing, and maintaining the method by which an incident is processed in the most efficient manner for the most effective outcomes.

Definitions

Reporting Party (RP) – An individual who reports an incident to a PSAP in anticipation of a public safety response. The reporting mechanism may come from a phone call, walk-in, text-to-9-1-1 application, responder flag-down, ASAP to PSAP, camera systems, or any other means. “Reporting party” is not intended to limit the method or mode in which contact is made.

Chapter Two

AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

SCOPE

This chapter outlines the Agency's responsibilities for establishing the steps involved in receiving and processing incidents.

2.1 General Agency Responsibilities Relative to Incident Handling¹

- 2.1.1 The agency shall provide public safety communications personnel the guidelines, protocols, or written directives for the process of information gathering in the management of incidents.
- 2.1.2 The Agency shall regularly create, review, and update, as appropriate, the guidelines, protocols, or written directives that provide direction to Public Safety Telecommunicators for the processing of incidents.
- 2.1.3 The agency shall provide training and set performance expectations for the Telecommunicator in the application of guidelines, protocols, and written directives related to the processing of incidents.
- 2.1.4 Agency shall have an established performance appraisal process by which the job performance is regularly reviewed and evaluated.
- 2.1.5 The Agency shall provide an environment where the Telecommunicator is encouraged to participate regularly in performance reviews.
- 2.1.6 The Agency shall have an established mechanism by which the job performance of the Telecommunicator is regularly reviewed and evaluated based upon acceptable incident management practices or standards.
- 2.1.7 The Agency shall provide the Telecommunicator with a regular review of performance, documenting and addressing unacceptable performance through remediation or other appropriate means.
- 2.1.8 The Agency shall insure a fair and consistent application of its disciplinary process associated with performance.
- 2.1.9 The Agency shall provide a mechanism during the performance review wherein the Telecommunicator can identify goals and objectives.
- 2.1.10 The Agency shall provide the Telecommunicator applicable training and continuing educational opportunities.

¹ Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators, APCO ANS 3.103.2-2015.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Telecommunicator

SCOPE

This chapter outlines the duties and responsibilities of the public safety Telecommunicator.

3.1 Initial Process Elements/Tasks (Appendix 1 Incident Processing)

The processing of incidents for public safety services begins with the mechanism by which the incident is received (e.g. by telephone, in person, by radio, text-to-9-1-1, automated data).

3.2 Receive Request for Service

The Telecommunicator shall be prepared and ready to process and handle any incident received through the use of technologies provided by the Agency. This includes automated data², specifically technologies which do not allow 2-way communication between the telecommunicator and the source. Some examples of these are fire alarms, water (SCADA) alarms, and gunshot detection systems. When handling these types of notifications, the Telecommunicator shall begin initiating the incident by determining the exact location (3.2.4).

3.2.1 When initiating an incident, the Telecommunicator shall³ :

3.2.1.2 Greet reporting party.

3.2.1.3 Control and maintain the conversation by calmly and professionally asking questions to guide the caller, while also listening to the information the caller is providing.

3.2.1.4 Determine the exact location where assistance is needed including, but not limited to, structure numerical addresses, street names and cross-streets, intersections, directional identifiers, and mile posts. If specifics are not known, the Telecommunicator shall request landmarks or estimated proximity to landmarks.

3.2.1.5 Determine incident type.

3.2.1.6 Initiate incident documentation through a computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system, or other applicable records management systems and/or processes.

3.2.1.7 Identify safety issues for the caller, others involved/on scene, and those responding.

3.2.1.8 Verify Jurisdiction

² Core Competencies, Operational Factors, and Training for Next Generation Technologies in Public Safety Communications.

³ Some of these tasks may and are expected to be handled simultaneously.

The Telecommunicator, through appropriate interrogation and/or interviewing techniques shall determine if their agency/locality will handle the incident and its response; or, if the incident will be transferred to another agency/locality due to jurisdictional boundaries or mutual aid agreements. In cases where it is obvious (after the determination of call type and exact location where assistance is needed) that the call is the responsibility of another jurisdiction, the Telecommunicator shall follow agency policy to hand off the caller and associated data to the appropriate jurisdiction.

Table 1	
<p>If in the agency's jurisdiction or area of responsibility, then:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gather needed information <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Where b. Callback number c. What d. When e. Who f. Why/How g. Other information based on agency protocol 2. Input information 3. Based upon details of the nature of the incident initial priority may be determined 4. May initiate a dual response based upon the type of incident <p>If the incident priority is high (emergent) as determined by Agency protocols then,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Initiate the request for service which will initiate a response (dispatch) by appropriate public safety personnel</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Provide initial information to responders (Initial Dispatch)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Ensure unit acknowledgement</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Gather or relay post-dispatch information</p>	<p>If out of the agency's jurisdiction, then:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirm appropriate information <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Where b. Callback number c. What d. When e. Who f. Why/How g. Other information based on agency protocol 2. Give appropriate instructions to the reporting party 4. Create a record of the incident 5. Transfer to the appropriate jurisdiction 6. Conduct verbal handshake⁴; and verify a connection of the reporting party with the receiving jurisdiction or agency 7. Terminate contact with reporting party 8. Finalize incident documentation 9. Exit process

⁴ Announce the call to the receiving agency including the call type and location, and that the transferring agency has a callback number, if needed.

3.3 Prioritizing Incident

- 3.3.1 In prioritizing incidents, the Telecommunicator shall utilize caller interviewing/interrogation techniques, as identified by the Agency, in determining if an incident is an emergency.
- 3.3.2 The Agency shall provide guidelines for the Telecommunicator in determining and/or clarifying types of incidents as emergency or non-emergency.
- 3.3.3 The Agency shall provide a response plan or matrix to determine and identify the appropriate unit(s) for dispatch.
- 3.3.4 Non-emergency incidents may not require dispatch depending upon agency guidelines.
- 3.3.5 The response plan or matrix should include any mutual aid unit(s) as identified by the Agency.
- 3.3.6 Is the incident prioritized for an emergency response?

Table 2		
If yes, then	If no, then	
	If dispatch <i>is</i> required	If dispatch <i>is not</i> required
1. Dispatch incident to appropriate unit(s) 2. Provide initial information to responders 3. Ensure unit acknowledgement 4. Gather and relay post-dispatch information	1. Dispatch incident to appropriate unit(s) 2. Provide initial information to responders 3. Ensure unit acknowledgement 4. Gather and relay post-dispatch information	1. Provide information/assistance as needed 2. Exit process

3.3.7 Reporting Party Contact

- 3.3.8 The Telecommunicator shall determine, through appropriate interviewing/interrogation techniques, if contact with the reporting party(s) shall be maintained.
- 3.3.8.1 The Agency shall provide protocols by which the Telecommunicator will determine if contact with a reporting party(s) shall be maintained (e.g. unsafe verbal communication, unsafe environment, caller requested to leave telephone off hook even if they cannot maintain verbal contact, etc.).
- 3.3.8.2 Does contact with reporting party need to be maintained?

Table 3	
<p>If <i>yes</i>, then</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gather and document additional information from reporting party 2. Provide instructions to reporting party 3. Provide supplemental information to responders 4. Monitor responder(s) activity 5. Document responder(s) activity <p>When it is determined that contact with reporting party can be terminated, then</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Terminate contact 2. Acknowledge incident termination 3. Record incident disposition 4. Finalize incident documentation 5. End process 	<p>If <i>no</i>, then</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Terminate contact with reporting party 2. Monitor responder activity 3. Document responder activity 4. Acknowledge incident termination 5. Record incident disposition 6. Finalize incident documentation 7. End process

3.3.9 Field-Initiated Incidents

3.3.10 Some incidents received for handling by a PSAP originate from field responders.

3.3.11 The agency shall develop and maintain protocols to identify the handling of field initiated incidents.

3.3.12 The following identifies the tasks associated with field-initiated incidents:

1. Receive request for service
2. Acknowledge unit
3. Initiate incident documentation
4. Establish location and incident type

3.3.13 Additional Resources

3.3.14 The TC shall follow agency policies to identify when additional resources are needed at an incident.

3.3.15 Examples of additional resources may include:

1. Backup unit(s)
2. Other disciplines (local, state, federal or tribal)
3. Fire, Medical, Law Enforcement
4. Utility/Public Works (e.g. power, gas, electric, highway, water/sewer, etc.)
5. Specialty (e.g. bomb squads, hazmat units, search and rescue, air support, animal services, etc.)
6. The agency shall identify known resources to be utilized

3.3.16 The telecommunicator shall be familiar with all resources available from local, state, federal, or tribal resources.

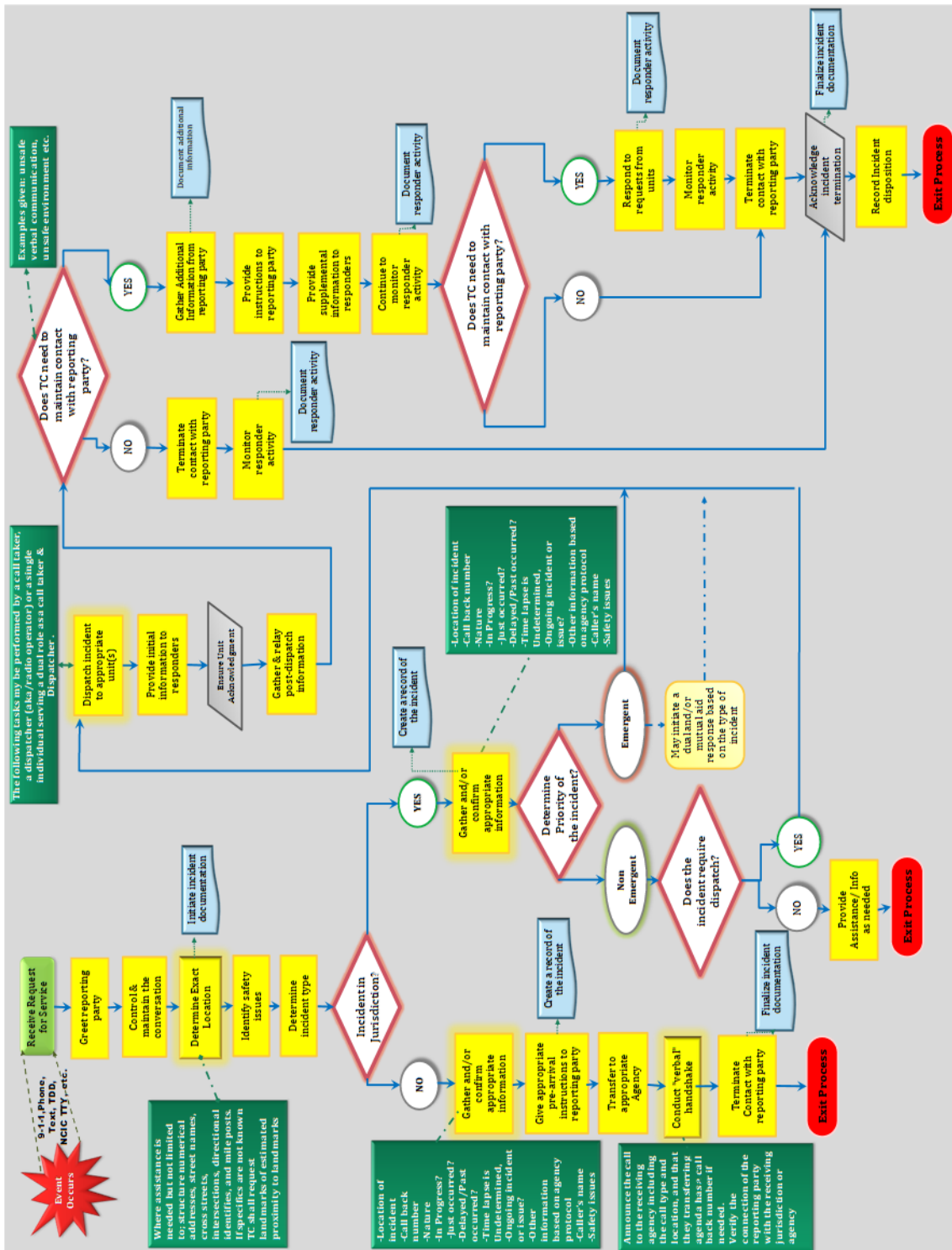
3.3.17 Does the incident require additional resources?

Table 4a	
If yes , then	If no , then
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Notify appropriate unit(s) / resource(s)2. Provide initial information to responders3. Ensure unit acknowledgement4. Acquire additional information5. Update involved unit(s) and agency	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Monitor responder activity2. Document responder activity3. Respond to requests from on-scene unit(s)4. Acknowledge incident termination5. Document incident disposition6. Finalize incident documentation7. End process

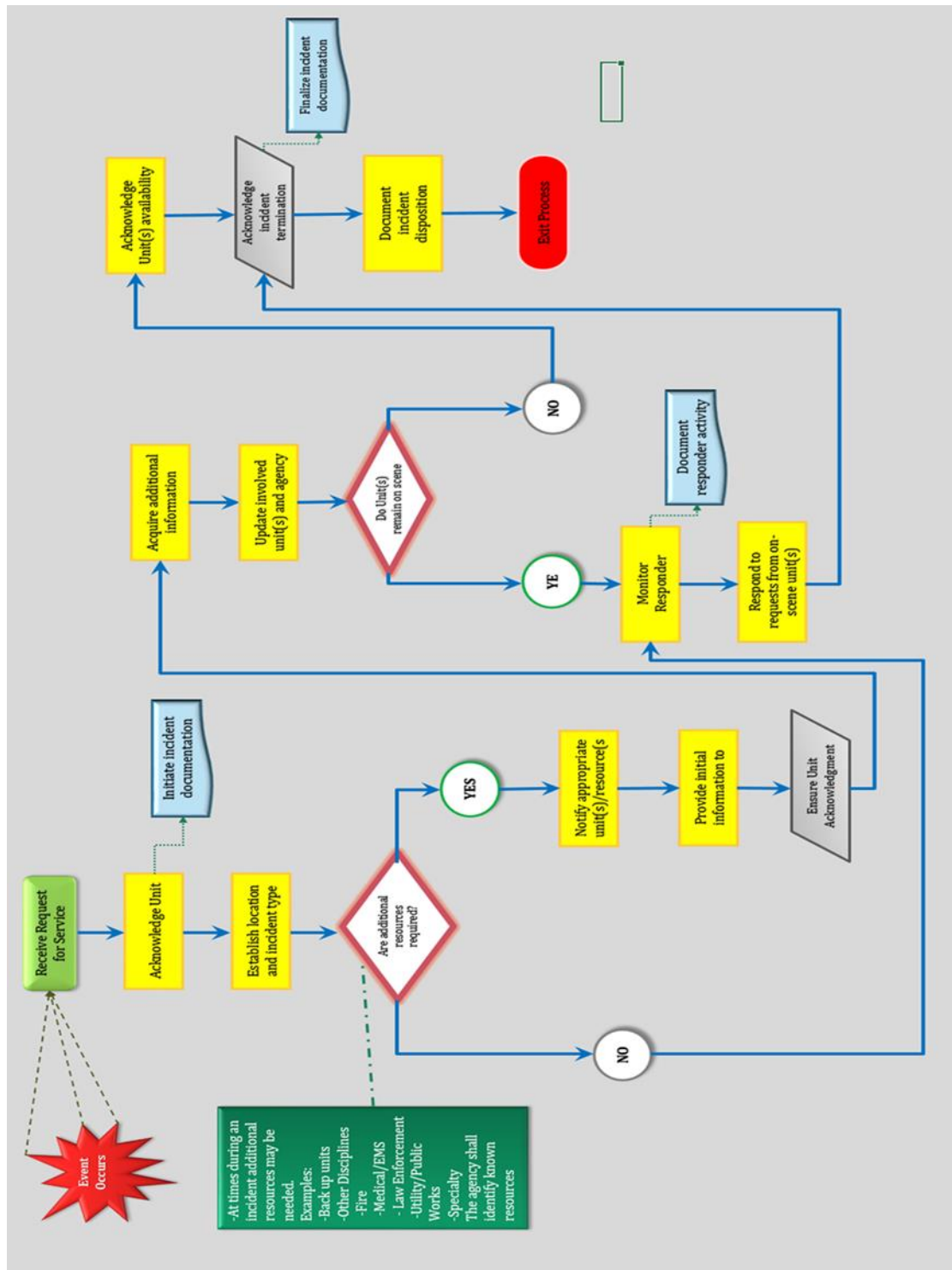
3.3.18 As the incident moves forward, do units remain on scene?

Table 4b	
If <i>yes</i>, then <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Monitor responder activity2. Document responder activity3. Respond to requests from on-scene unit(s)4. Acknowledge incident termination5. Document incident disposition6. Finalize incident documentation7. End process	If <i>no</i>, then <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Acknowledge unit(s) availability2. Acknowledge incident termination3. Document incident disposition4. Finalize incident documentation5. End process

Request for Service Process Analysis



Field Initiated – Process Analysis



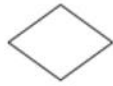
Commonly Used Symbols in Detailed Flowcharts



One step in the process; the step is written inside the box. Usually, only one arrow goes out of the box.



Direction of flow from one step or decision to another.



Decision based on a question. The question is written in the diamond. More than one arrow goes out of the diamond, each one showing the direction the process takes for a given answer to the question. (Often the answers are "yes" and "no.")



Delay or wait



Link to another page or another flowchart. The same symbol on the other page indicates that the flow continues there.



Input or output



Document



Alternate symbols for start and end points

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANS	American National Standards
ANSI	American National Standards Institute
APCO	Association of Public Safety Communications Officials
ASAP to PSAP	Automated Secure Alarm Protocol to Public Safety Answering Point
PSAP	Public Safety Answering Point
RP	Reporting Party
SDC	Standards Development Committee

NOTES



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