



Guidelines for Developing a
Public Safety Telecommunicator Job Description
February 2020

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1 Call to Action

As a leader in an Emergency Communications Center (ECC)¹, it is most likely part of your responsibility to ensure the job descriptions that are released during the hiring process accurately reflect the roles and responsibilities of the telecommunicators you're looking to hire. This is an awesome and sometimes daunting responsibility as the job, we know, is ever changing. With the migration to Next Generation 911 and the introduction of a multitude of technology that is present in an ECC, it seems nearly impossible to keep up.

However, because of the 2018 decision by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) not to reclassify the 911 Telecommunicator/Dispatcher we know it is essential to keep up with these job descriptions. During the last process, the industry banded together and made an emotional appeal for reclassification; however, the one thing that was not provided to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), was the required data that provides the necessary evidence to reclassify Telecommunicators in the BLS as a federal statistical survey.

This document is a call to action to evaluate, update and maintain your center's job descriptions to ensure it accurately reflects the current roles and responsibilities of the public safety telecommunicator (PST).

Understand your job requirement

- Review your job duties and tasks
- Identify key component
- Align job descriptions with current ECC operations

Engage your hiring authority

- Understand hiring roles
- Get to know specific requirements
- Develop a process to keep job descriptions current and updated
- Learn which platforms your hiring authority uses to recruit

Seek advice from other ECC's

- Be creative, make your job description more appealing
- Review neighboring jurisdictions' job descriptions
- Conduct a pay scale and benefit comparison

Review often and make changes

- Review the job description each time you are hiring
- Have current PSTs review the job descriptions
- Make changes as often as necessary to ensure accuracy

¹ There is a trend across the United States that Public Safety Answering Points are being referred to as Emergency Communications Centers (ECC). This document recognizes that both PSAPs and ECCs are committed to the same responsibility of answering and processing 911 calls for service.

2 Background

Each year millions of calls are made to 911. The estimated 98,300² dedicated men and women who answer those calls are facing a time of great change as their careers, roles, and responsibilities move from a legacy environment to a Next Generation 911 (NG911) environment. Their roles in providing care include such tasks as:

- Helping to calm a terrified teenager hiding in a closet during a home invasion, while simultaneously providing information about the incident to first responders while they rush to the scene
- Directing a frightened caller on how to safely escape a burning building or take protective actions if they are trapped
- Providing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) instructions to a panicked parent holding a lifeless child

These dedicated professionals are trained to stay on the line with callers during emergent situations and provide a sense of calm in the worst times of callers' lives. However, these positions are in a clerical/administrative job category for classification and reporting purposes. Job descriptions for these professionals woefully lack capturing what telecommunicators do daily. In order to hire and retain those best suited for this increasingly complex career, the industry must regularly review and update job descriptions to better reflect the complexity of the position. Job descriptions should show a true acknowledgment and understanding of the current roles and responsibilities of a PST. This way during the next review of classifications, auditors will be able to apply a process that will recognize that the classification for PSTs must be modified.

2.1 Classification

The United States (U.S.) Bureau of Labor Statistics, under the Department of Labor, is responsible for the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) of workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating, and disseminating data.³ The SOC is first and foremost a federal statistical survey. "The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the U.S. Census Bureau (USCB) are charged with collecting and reporting data on total U.S. employment across the full spectrum of SOC Major Groups. Thus, for a detailed occupation to be included in the SOC, either the BLS or the USCB must be able to collect and report data on that occupation."⁴ "Occupations are classified based on work performed and, in some cases, on the skills, education and/or training needed to perform the work."⁵

The SOC is organized into a tiered system with four levels, ranging from major groups to detailed occupations. In the 2018 SOC, there were 23 major groups, 98 minor groups, 459 broad occupations, and 867 detailed occupations. The full 2018 SOC Manual can be found online at the [SOC website](#).

As part of its required regular review and revision, in 2014, the OMB created a committee to review revisions to the 2018 SOC. The Public Notice was met with requests from the Association of Public-Safety

² Police, Fire, and Ambulance Dispatchers. Occupational Outlook Handbook. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/office-and-administrative-support/police-fire-and-ambulance-dispatchers.htm#tab-1>. Last accessed 01/09/2020.

³ Standard Occupational Classification. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/soc/>. Last accessed 01/09/2020.

⁴ <https://www.apcointl.org/government-relations/topics/soc-revision/>

⁵ "Classification principles." Classification Principles and Coding Guidelines. 2018 SOC User Guide. Number 2. https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/soc_2018_class_prin_cod_guide.pdf

Communications Officials-International (APCO), the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), and others to change the SOC for PSTs from the current 43-5031 (Office and Administrative Support Occupation – Police, Fire, and Ambulance Dispatchers) to 33-nnnn (Protective Services – Public Safety Telecommunicators). Many groups and individuals within the 911 community have argued that association with “office and administrative support” occupations are inappropriate and disrespects the work 911 telecommunicators do every day; it was seen as a slight in the industry.

2.2 The Decision to Not Reclassify

In July 2014, OMB issued an interim decision stating: “*The work performed is that of a dispatcher, not a first responder. Most dispatchers are precluded from administering actual care, talking someone through procedures, or providing advice. Moving the occupation to the Protective Services major group is not appropriate and separating them from the other dispatchers would be confusing. Also, dispatchers are often located in a separate area from first responders and have a different supervisory chain.*”⁶

The SOC does not denote importance of any specific occupation, only categorizing like occupations based on job tasks and functions. While numerous comments and emotional appeals were made to change the categorization of 911 dispatchers to “33-0000 Protective Service Occupations,” the comments did not sway⁷ the Standard Occupational Classification Policy Committee (SOCPC), a Federal interagency technical working group). Ultimately, the SOCPC stated that making a change to a protective service occupation did not meet its classification principles or coding guidelines. The classification of occupations is not influenced by the number of comments received or by the statement of opinion. It is a federal statistical survey, and classification is based upon a prescribed process of objective data collection.

This decision was a blow to the industry and a campaign to increase visibility of PSTs and their roles and responsibilities was quickly underway. While a reconsideration was made, ultimately the 911 telecommunicator remains classified as a position under the Office and Administrative Support Occupation.

A career categorization by BLS impacts not only classification but can also affect services employees are entitled to and pay. The BLS produces vital information about jobs and unemployment, wages, working conditions, and inflation indicators (Consumer Price Index and Producer Price Index).⁸ The result of the OMB decision showed the 911 community that PST jobs are not adequately understood or defined. Thus, private citizens using BLS employment projection data will not be able to make accurate career or educational decisions concerning this occupation and businesses will be unable to use the occupational employment statistics data to determine fair wages, manage turnover rates, aid collective bargaining negotiations, or compare rates of injuries and illnesses to Survey of Occupational Injury and Illness (SOII) industry averages for mitigation efforts or applications for grants or contracts.

BLS data is used by state and local governments, advocacy groups, policymakers and researchers, and by the federal government’s Federal Reserve, Social Security Administration, Internal Revenue Service, Department of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, Department of Defense, and Department of

⁶ “OMB’s Interim Decision.” SOC Revision. APCO International. <https://www.apcointl.org/government-relations/topics/soc-revision/>

⁷ https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/soc_responses_July_2016.htm, specifically Docket Number 2-0867

⁸ “Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).” Investopedia. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/bls.asp>

Labor.⁹ To misclassify an occupation may jeopardize the decision-making processes of organizations that depend on accurate BLS data.

2.3 Moving Forward

It is in the best interest of the 911 community to build the case for the reclassification of the PST by updating job descriptions to accurately depict the job duties and responsibilities, as well as the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the modern PST. A few states have already embarked on this such path such as MD and TX, however, while the 911 community understands the evolution of the telecommunicator position over the past decade, many current job descriptions do not adequately describe this changing environment, expectations, and requirements of today's PST. It is imperative that 911 directors, human resources and personnel departments, and decision-makers update job descriptions to reflect the responsibilities of the PST in today's technical and complex emergency communications environment. Without updates and revisions to detail what a telecommunicator truly does, recruitment, candidate selection, hiring practices, training, and retention may not align with expectations, compromising emergency communications effectiveness.

3 The Expanded Role of a 911 Telecommunicator

Since the inception of 911 over 50 years ago, the roles and responsibilities have changed and continue to do so as technology and public expectation increase. The tremendous growth in technology has forced the 911 industry to make great strides over the past several years to improve capabilities, including the communications centers in which PSTs operate. Historically, 911 centers were in police or fire departments. Today, across the nation, communications centers are highly secure, often standalone facilities, operating in support of public safety allies, with their own management, training, and quality assurance (QA) divisions, and even technology divisions.

While once commonly known as public safety answering points (PSAPs), 911 organizations such as NENA and APCO now identify these centers as emergency communications centers or ECCs. This naming convention reflects the increased types of information ECCs and staff receive and process. ECCs across the country, if so equipped, now can receive requests for service via text message; some ECCs are preparing to receive streaming data and video to analyze situations first-hand versus "voice" requests for which 911 traditionally is known. There is a new ecosystem in emergency communications and job descriptions need to be more detailed to acknowledge the shift from capturing information in a "form" to an integrated and engaged member of the response team. Telecommunicators have long been referred to as the *first* first responder.

⁹ Groshen, E.L. Bus Econ (2018) 53: 86. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11369-018-0073-5>

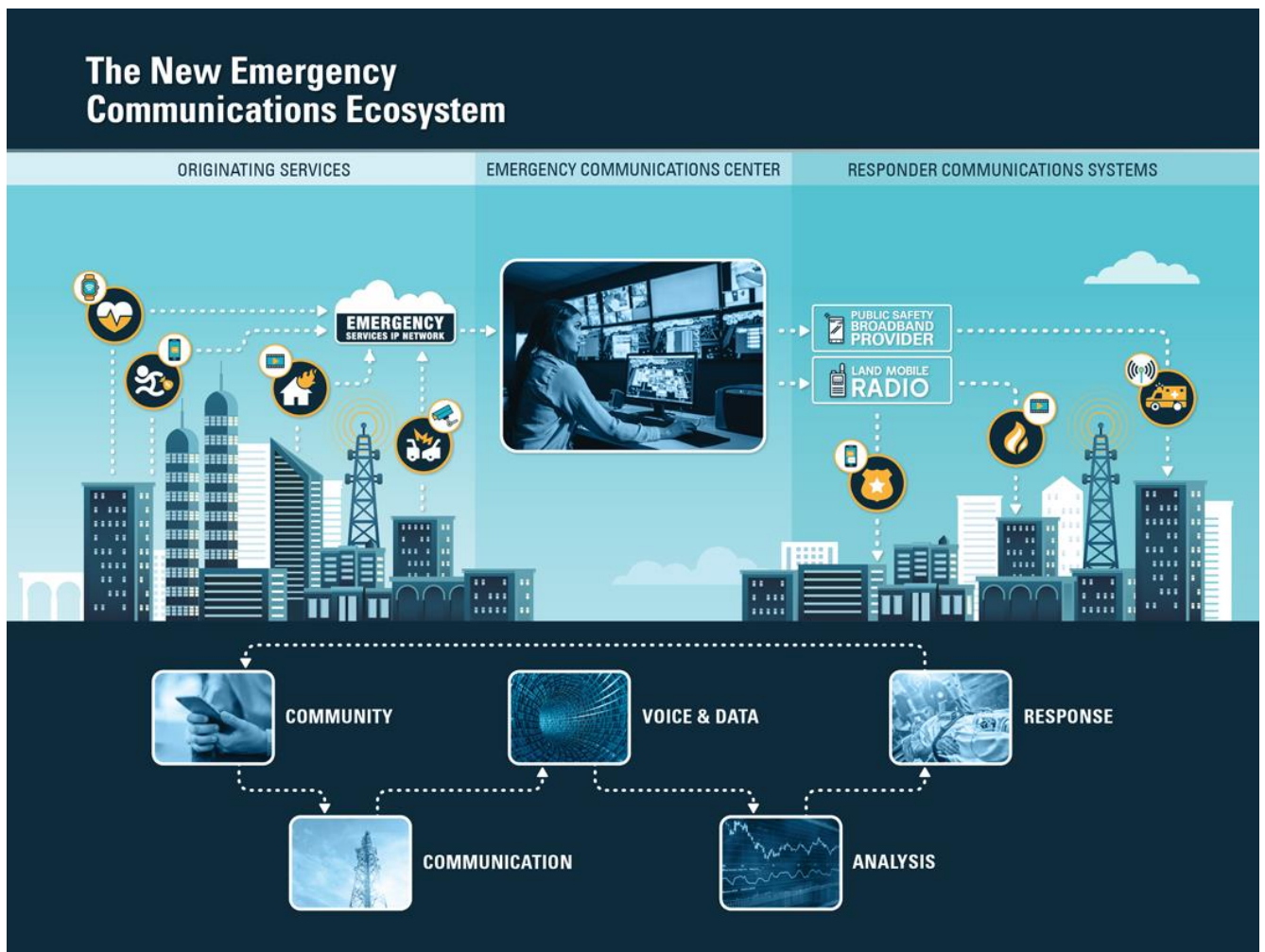


Figure 1: The New Emergency Communications Ecosystem

3.1 Development of the Position

Since the first 911 call in 1968, the duties of the PST have changed along with the changes to public safety technology and response requirements. At that time, 911 was just an abbreviated number to call, where calling for help meant using a wireline phone, inside a house or business or a public pay phone. The receiving side was the same—a plain old telephone service (POTS) device—generally at a desk at the police station or an alarm desk at the firehouse. Secretaries, jailers, or someone close to the police desk would answer the telephone at the station, write brief notes on a card to keep a record of the call, and pass the notes to police officers, firefighters and Emergency Medical Technicians via a one-way amplitude modulation (AM) radio broadcast or community fire horns that used codes to tell the general location of the fire. There was limited capability to communicate with responders in the field directly, let alone provide any additional data or information with the voice transmission of the call, and each jurisdiction was an independent agency.

The requirements of the job slowly transitioned when 911 calls began to include a call back number, and then more specific location information, and the communications system between the telecommunicator/dispatcher and the emergency responders also improved.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, industry leaders heavily discussed the 911 functionality expanding beyond the clerical function of an agency and becoming more a professional part of the response team and a critical conduit of information to the emergency field responder. The knowledge and abilities to operate the new complex technologies required new skills for staff and different means to recruit and test. One of the first technologies requiring more advanced skills was the computer-aided dispatch (CAD)¹⁰ system. Lacking enough description of the importance and critical nature of the use of the technology, the major skills needed were identified as typing ability and data entry, which led to job descriptions that were similar to clerk typists.

According to Census Bureau data, in 1970, 13 percent of citizens had no access to a telephone.¹¹ Now, wireless subscriptions have increased by nearly 300 million since 2000.¹² The evolution of technology has revolutionized our society including emergency communications. Prior to the introduction of tools such as CAD, calls for services were written on paper; tools and methods used by the PST changed the job from simple to complex, requiring multi-tasking and highly skilled technology usage. The job is now more like an air traffic controller as both PSTs and air traffic controllers require highly evolved skills and aptitude for the increased responsibility and a successful outcome of the incident and the safety of field responders. Just like air traffic controllers who are responsible for the people and field personnel in the airplanes they direct and control, PSTs must direct and control the safety of the people who call 911 and the responders the PST dispatches to an incident. Both occupations require the use of multiple data sources as well as highly evolved technology to remotely guide, monitor, and execute their mission of managing aircraft and people or managing public safety requestors and responders.

The *Occupational Outlook Handbook*¹³ published by the BLS lists the following as similar occupations to the current work demanded of PSTs:

- Air Traffic Controller
- Customer Service Representatives
- EMTs and Paramedics
- Power Plant Operators, Distributors, and Dispatchers
- Security Guards and Gaming Surveillance Officers

¹⁰ CAD typically consists of a suite of software packages used to initiate public safety calls for service, dispatch, and maintain the status of responding resources in the field. It is generally used by emergency communications dispatchers, call-takers, and 911 operators in centralized, public-safety call centers, as well as by field personnel utilizing mobile data terminals (MDTs) or mobile data computers (MDCs).

¹¹ "Telephones." Historical Census of Housing Tables. Census of Housing. United States Census Bureau.

¹² CTIA. <https://www.ctia.org/the-wireless-industry/infographics-library/>

¹³ Occupational Outlook Handbook. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/office-and-administrative-support/police-fire-and-ambulance-dispatchers.htm#tab-8>. Last accessed 01/09/2020.

3.2 Transitioning Expectations



Figure 2: Expectations of the Public Safety Telecommunicator

While the expectations of the PST have changed, as seen in Figure 2, job descriptions do not reflect those changes accurately. Job descriptions, in some cases, were found to be older than people in the positions. The influx of information is not accounted for or reflected in the description of the position, which creates a two-pronged problem—it does not accurately describe the requirements of the position and the wrong candidates are applying for the position because the expectations and needed knowledge, skills, and abilities often do not align.

The role of the PST is an intersection of critical intervention of lifesaving instructions for the caller and a conduit of essential communications for the field responder to improve outcomes. If a patient is not breathing and must wait two to three minutes, or longer, for an ambulance to arrive before initial treatment begins, for example, the outcome can be fatal. The initial intervention by a PST to triage and provide life-safety instructions over the phone is clearly necessary to preserve lives. Rendering direct care to callers has necessitated additional initial and continued training and certification for PSTs.

4 Developing Job Descriptions

Over the last 50 years, 911 work has transformed from a clerical role to the lifesaving and increasingly complex tasks required of PSTs. These skills are critical to protecting the public and emergency field personnel. A PST's ability to direct callers to take action for their protection while rapidly gathering the right information to protect responders is a critical transformation. Unfortunately, 911 job descriptions have not kept pace with many of the job tasks that now are considered "routine."

The primary responsibility of a PST is to protect both citizens and field responders during the emergency incident. As of January 2020, forty-one sample job descriptions from 17 states were examined for this document; represented states can be seen in Figure 3. In addition, standards from APCO, NENA, and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) were researched to define the job duties and tasks of a PST.

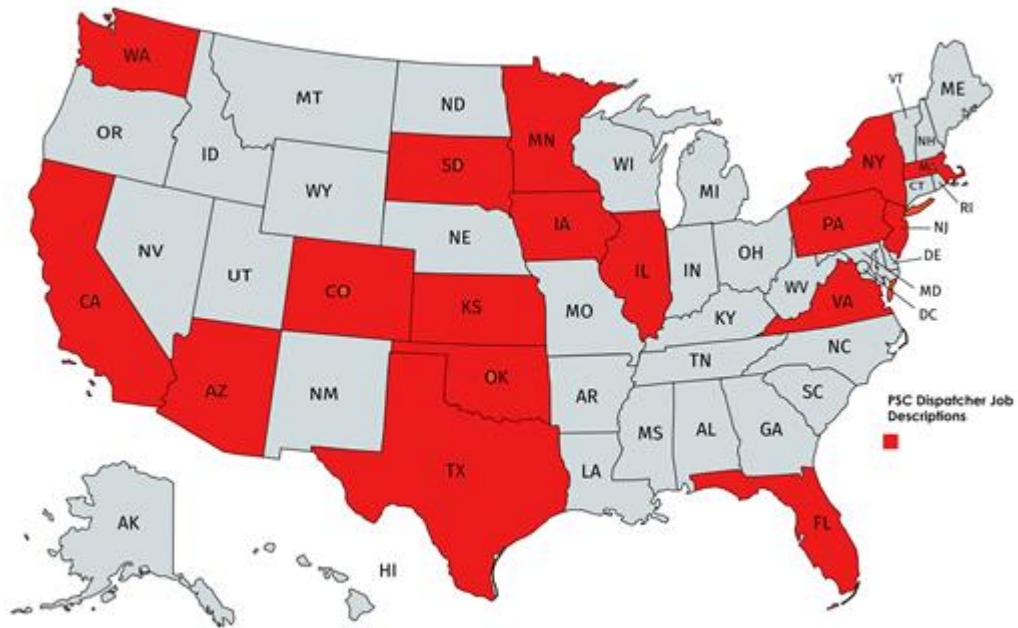


Figure 3: Job Descriptions Reviewed by State

4.1 PST Tasks

There are multiple tasks a PST should be able to complete individually or in tandem with other tasks after successful completion of training, which includes the ability to assess a situation, dispatch the correct responses and provide lifesaving instructions while help is in route to the emergency. A comprehensive list can be found below, and a complete guide can be found in Appendix A—PST Responsibilities and Key Job Skills and Tasks.

4.1.1 Screen Initial Calls

Understanding the delivery mechanism of an incident is a vital step in screening an initial call. The origination of requests for service are no longer just traditional two-way communication voice calls via landline or wireless devices. Requests for service now originate from various sources such as text messages, visual data (video or images), social media, fire alarms, gunshot detection systems, and even automated data.

4.1.2 Demonstrate Clear and Effective Communications

As soon as a request for service is made, a PST must control the conversation using their training in the communications cycle, ensuring information received is accurately reflected in the incident record.

4.1.3 Ascertain Incident Information

PSTs must determine the location of the emergency, as exactly as possible. This includes ascertaining the numerical address of the structure (if applicable), street name(s), intersections, landmarks, etc. and/or interpreting global positioning system (GPS) coordinates relayed from emergency assistance applications such as third-party alarm systems and other technology such as push-to-call, more commonly being found in schools, rideshare apps, and other applications on various operating systems.

Additionally, PSTs must define the type of incident to ensure the proper resources are deployed. PSTs often use vehicular accident information provided by bystanders and vehicle telematics to determine the need for advanced life support resources and/or specialized fire extraction equipment. Callers now can send images to an ECC (if capable of receiving), creating an enhanced view of what occurred or is occurring.

It is key changes in technology that have given rise to new job tasks, which necessitates modernistic skills in today's 911 environment. Data analytics becomes a key component of screening the initial call.

4.1.4 Determine Scene and Responder Safety

The PST is a vital link between callers and response units. As a PST interrogates a caller, they may become aware of circumstances that could affect response unit safety, such as the location's historical information

4.1.5 Identify and Mitigate Caller Safety

Taking steps to protect the caller is paramount to de-escalating an incident. This key job task is fundamental to preventing someone from suffering injury or harm.

4.1.6 Document Information Accurately

Using a CAD system or other applicable records management system (RMS), a PST should ensure that incident information is recorded accurately.

4.1.7 Manage Callers

Callers seeking assistance vary. Some may prove more challenging than others. Callers can be:

- Highly emotional, angry, frightened, hysterical
- Children
- Elderly
- Non-English-speaking
- Suicidal
- Chronic callers
- Demanding "social status" callers
- Intoxicated
- Hearing- or speech-impaired

- Disoriented
- Special needs

A PST must undergo appropriate training to develop the necessary skills to be able to react and meet the expectations of any caller.

4.1.8 Take Appropriate Action

Once the call has been initially screened, categorized, prioritized, and all relevant information gathered, the PST should initiate complete the initial incident, forwarding to the appropriate resource for dispatch of public safety personnel, if required.

4.1.9 Provide Pre-arrival Instructions

Providing direct care via the use of pre-arrival instructions allows the PST to apply lifesaving and hands-on interventions when necessary. As of 1998, emergency medical dispatch (EMD) use of pre-arrival instructions has been the standard recommendation for the National Association of Emergency Medical Services Physicians (NAEMSP).¹⁴ On October 18, 2017, the American Heart Association sent a letter of support to OMB pointing out how PSTs are a critical link in the cardiac arrest chain of survival. This alone is a differentiator; as it can mean the difference of survival when CPR instructions need to be given to a caller.

While pre-arrival instructions are more often thought of as for medical guidance only, PSTs routinely provide pre-arrival instructions for law enforcement and fire incidents.

4.1.10 Participate in field operations

The PST can be responsible to assist with field communications, such as major events or SWAT callouts. Most ECCs have trained tactical dispatchers who help to pre-plan tactical communications responses for both pre-planned events and spontaneous major events.

4.1.11 Process Request for Service for Law Enforcement, Fire, and Medical Personnel

Once the PST has completed caller interrogation, the duty of the PST shifts to processing the request for service and associated responsibilities. The job tasks below have been identified as critical elements of the dispatch process of a PST.

4.1.11.1 Record Data Regarding the Incident

A PST needs to manage the call for service by ensuring additional data is captured in real time using the CAD system.

¹⁴ Wise, Stephanie L. and Edemekong, Peter F. "EMS, Pre-Arrival Instructions." NCBI. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK470543/>

4.1.11.2 Initiate Incident Response

Upon analyzing the call for service, a PST assigns the appropriate units to the incident to mitigate the request for service.

4.1.11.3 Coordinate During Events

A PST is the coordinator of events, in most cases, ensuring proper resources are aware of and are appropriately responding to incidents.

4.1.11.4 Control Radio Traffic

A PST must remain aware and always be prepared for unexpected radio transmissions from any unit at any time. For example, an officer may be on a traffic stop when suddenly they are ambushed. Or a firefighter may become trapped in a burning building and issue a MAYDAY call. EMS providers may find themselves in a hostile situation that requires them to seek police assistance—which happens through the use of a radio transmission to telecommunicators. Whatever the circumstance, a PST must project an image of professionalism and remain calm and in control. A PST must be vigilant, perceptive, aware of changing dynamics, nimble, and possess the ability to rapidly adjust to changing scenarios. Being able to control radio traffic often means learning the field specific languages often used in police, fire and EMS scenarios.

4.1.11.5 Participate in Post-incident Activities

Depending on the severity of an incident, a PST may need to participate in post-dispatch activities.

4.1.12 Operate Agency Equipment

A PST must be able to operate agency equipment. Many PSTs are responsible for operating multiple computer programs in order to perform their job tasks. This includes looking at and keeping track of activities on multiple screens. While there is no average, many centers have between five and eight monitors.

4.2 Enhance Professional Competence

In order to perform the job tasks in a rapidly evolving technological environment, a PST must actively seek to enhance their professional competence. Attending training classes, workshops, and conferences and obtaining certifications are paramount for a PST to succeed in the public safety environment.

5 Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

The knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) of a PST are vast. To acquire the knowledge and skills needed to function in the position of a PST requires a significant amount of training. Below is a comprehensive list of traits that are sought after in an ideal candidate.

Knowledge	Skills	Abilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Geography •Phone/Computer basics •Stress management •Chain of command •Liability •Terminology •Roles and responsibilities •Agency •Performance standards •Laws, statutes, and codes •Incident management •Governmental standards •Technology •Risk assessment •Social media •Automated data •Video messaging •Incident command 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Keyboarding/Typing •Multitasking •Decision-making •Critical thinking •Verbal and written communications skills •Ability to work on a team •Active listening/hearing •Customer service •Computer •Telephony •Call control •Conflict resolution •Problem solving •Analytical •Troubleshooting •Text messaging •Data Analytics •Social Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Quick decision-making •Empathy •Respect •Patience •Maturity •Even-tempered •Integrity •Ethical •Life-long learner •Dependable •Flexible •Efficient •Tolerant •Analytical •Detail orientated

Figure 4: KSAs

5.1 Certifications

While there are various certifications and licensure requirements across the nation, the most common in the industry include the following:

- Basic Telecommunicator
- Emergency Medical Dispatch
- Emergency Fire Dispatch (EFD)
- Emergency Police Dispatch (EPD)
- CPR for Healthcare Providers
- National Incident Management System (NIMS) 100, 200, 700, and 800; advanced courses are 300 and 400
- Emergency Number Professional (ENP)
- Registered Public Safety Leader (RPL)

6 Next Steps

It is well recognized throughout the 911 community that the current position descriptions for the PST are often not reflective of the present-day requirements and the expected skills of the role telecommunicators play in the chain of public safety response. Their critical impact on improving patient, responder, and victim safety outcomes is frequently recognized in practice but not effectively documented in job descriptions. This needs to change if the 911 community wants to establish the appropriate recognition for the position

and attract individuals with the needed skills to do the job that it is today. This document has attempted to make the case for acting now to update and evolve the telecommunicator job description to be reflective of the necessary abilities required of the telecommunicators' roles and responsibilities.

911 authorities should review their current job descriptions for the telecommunicator positions in their operation and use the documents provided in Appendix B—Guidance on Creating a Job Description and Appendix C—Model Job Description. The model is reflective of current expectations and requirements and is forward-looking to NG911 requirements as well. It is provided to make the job of position description revision easier and to urge action to begin this process within respective organizations.

Consideration should also be given to sharing this document with human resources personnel to assist with the job description update process. The background and arguments advanced in this effort are provided to explain and inform on how the position has changed over the years, that the previous job descriptions are no longer valid for the job that is expected, and that NG911 will continue to evolve the PST position even more.

Appendix A – PST Responsibilities and Key Job Skills and Tasks

Responsibility	Key Job Skills and Tasks
Screen initial calls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying call delivery method (phone, text, video, picture, automated data) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Callers may use traditional methods such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dialing 911 ▪ Using a 10-digit phone line – Callers may also use multiple technological platforms to contact the ECC such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Text-to-911 ▪ Video-to-911 ▪ Video relay services ▪ Social media – While other calls may be delivered without human intervention such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Automated alarms ▪ Telematics ▪ Artificial Intelligence (gunshot detection) • Prioritizing call answering • Greeting caller • Projecting a professional demeanor • Providing calming instructions to obtain information
Demonstrate clear and effective communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively listening • Conveying respect and empathy • Enunciating clearly while avoiding jargon with the caller • Controlling the call • Using appropriate terminology, codes, signals with field responders
Ascertain incident information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining and verifying incident location • Interpreting geographic information system (GIS) coordinate information and knowledge of mapping systems • Obtaining and verifying contact information • Rapidly determining the nature of the incident • Establishing when the incident happened • Identifying who is involved in the incident • Analyzing information that could include automated data feeds such as cameras, sensors, telematics • Using social media to investigate incident details (i.e., suicide message, images of suspects)

Responsibility	Key Job Skills and Tasks
Determine scene and responder safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interrogating the caller to learn the circumstances of the emergency • Using multiple resources to determine situational awareness of a scene (i.e., hazardous materials or high occupancy locations) • Using tools and data such as video from mobile devices, body cameras, traffic cameras, drones, and real-time location tracking to improve situational awareness and assist incident commanders on scene • Determining additional risks such as weapons present, medical conditions, or mobility issues of victims that complicate or threaten the health and safety of the scene
Identify and mitigate caller safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking that the reporting party not get involved in the situation, keep a safe distance, and remove themselves from the incident if it is an unsafe situation • Staying in contact with the caller to ensure their safety until responders are on scene • Interpreting audio cues, such as emotion and background noise • Recognizing indicators of psychological distress
Document information accurately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documenting incident details quickly and accurately • Establishing incident priority based on written directives
Caller management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using call control techniques and tactics to elicit information quickly and accurately from challenged callers • Using calming techniques such as persistent repetition; the use of “I” statements to break through hysterical threshold • Deploying language services to assist foreign-speaking callers • Providing counsel to suicidal persons, domestic violence victims, or serving as the primary contact with a hostage taker • Utilizing mental health resources
Take appropriate action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascertaining if public safety resource dispatch is required and relaying information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – If yes, coordinating dispatch of the appropriate emergency services – If no, providing caller with the appropriate information • Reviewing request for service details • Informing caller of actions and advising of appropriate updates • Determining the need for outside agency resources such as traffic management, roadway clearance, towing services, power and utility services, hostage negotiators, social services, etc. • Using internal and external agency control devices (weather notification systems, air warnings, emergency management warning system activation, etc.) • Using social media to inform public

Responsibility	Key Job Skills and Tasks
Provide pre-arrival instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing pre-arrival instructions for law enforcement events, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Suicidal persons – Active shooter events – Deescalating persons in crisis (post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD], mental illness) – Separating domestic violence victim from abuser – Protecting children at the scene – Serving as a hostage negotiator – Preliminary clearance of roadway obstructions to prevent further injury or secondary accidents – Advice to crash victims to prevent further injury • Providing pre-arrival instructions for fire events, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Escaping a structure fire – Protection for persons trapped in a fire – Wildland fire evacuation – Avalanche disasters – Accelerator stuck – Sinking vehicle • Providing lifesaving instructions for medical events, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bleeding control – Choking/airway clearance – CPR – Respiratory arrest – Cardiac arrest – Drowning – Childbirth
Process requests for service for law enforcement, fire and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making notifications • Using federal and state databases to inquire about driver license statuses, registrations, and wanted checks, etc.
Record data regarding the incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a CAD incident • Documenting important and necessary call details for response awareness and responder protection • Updating the CAD incident • Additional data collection from same or other callers reporting incident

Responsibility	Key Job Skills and Tasks
Initiate incident response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigning units to incident • Relaying pertinent incident information • Obtaining unit acknowledgment • Coordinating available resources • Relaying updates to units • Broadcasting be on the lookouts (BOLOs) or attempt to locate (ATL) messages • Disseminating information to other resources • Anticipating potential escalation • Performing status checks
Coordinate during events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notifying supervisors • Notifying appropriate resources • Corresponding with other agencies • Activating mutual aid, when applicable • Disseminating interdepartmental intelligence • Providing shift briefings
Control radio traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring radio channel(s) • Active listening and awareness techniques • Acknowledging radio traffic • Complying with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations
Participate in post-incident activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing testimony • Testifying in court proceedings • Participating in call critique and QA review sessions • Providing or requesting peer support and debriefings • Participating in critical incident stress management (CISM) debriefings • Participating in after-action report meetings
Operate agency equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating telephony system effectively <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Answering incoming calls – Placing outgoing calls – Performing conference calls – Placing calls on hold if appropriate – Performing appropriate transfers

Responsibility

Key Job Skills and Tasks

- Utilizing text-to-911 programs
- Rapidly identifying and recognizing service interruptions such as equipment failures, cybersecurity breaches, swatting, slamming or spamming incidents, or denial of service (DOS) attacks
- Operating teletypewriter (TTY)/telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD)
- Responding to multimedia sessions/short message sessions (MMS/SMS)
- Responding to video-relayed information
- Operating technology systems such as CAD, call-handling equipment (CHE), logging recorder systems, traffic cameras, traffic lights, perimeter cameras, radio technology, alarms, etc.
 - Accessing incident data
 - Updating incident data
 - Assigning appropriate units
 - Interpreting other sensor data such as automatic emergency notification from law enforcement vehicles or body sensors, biometric alarms and notifications
 - Interpreting smart building data and sensors including video feeds, hazmat
- Utilizing map/GIS programs
 - Identifying the location of the incident
 - Interpreting automatic number identification/automatic location identification (ANI/ALI) to locate emergencies
 - Plotting GPS coordinates
 - Providing directions
 - Using automatic vehicle location (AVL) data to track units
- Operating radio systems
 - Dispatching calls
 - Relaying information
 - Providing updated information
 - Maintaining current status of units
- Operating RMS
 - Accessing records
 - Updating records
- Maintaining equipment functionality
 - Testing equipment
 - Troubleshooting equipment
 - Reporting problems

Responsibility	Key Job Skills and Tasks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Applying contingency plans • Operating computer systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Successful passing of required background checks and clearances to operate sensitive databases. – Accessing database information (National Crime Information Center [NCIC], local/state crime network, Integrated Public Alert and Warning System [IPAWS]) – Operating mass notification software – Using social media platforms – Conducting inquiries – Updating/Modifying/Maintaining systems – Following regulations – Maintaining systems
Enhance profession competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively seek additional training • Completing training and certifications required for assigned PST position • Completing continuing education and career development • Following established ECC policies and procedures • Adhering to federal disclosure and privacy laws • Using debriefing tools, stress management techniques, and critical incident response models

Appendix B – Guidance on Creating a Job Description

What is a job description?

A job description is a document that is intended to communicate to potential applicants the main duties and responsibilities of a job. It can be used in various manners such as:

- To define the job duties and tasks
- A mechanism for recruitment
- For employee training and development
- To establish performance standards
- Organizational development
- Establishing legal defensibility
- As a tool to benchmark to other emergency communications centers (ECCs) in a salary survey or classification efforts

It's for these reasons why it is paramount to keep job descriptions up-to-date and current.

How to use this guidance document

While this guidance document is relevant to the entire 911 community, its use is specifically geared towards those responsible for creating and updating job descriptions.

Each job description topic area contains two major components (see figure below). For each topic area, sample language has been provided as well as further “advice and tips” to take into consideration. ECCs are encouraged to work with their hiring authorities as they develop, update, or implement job descriptions.

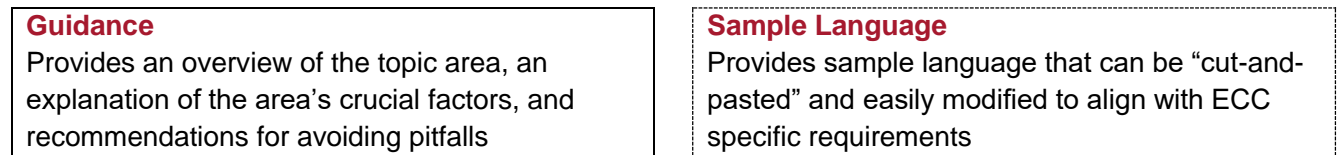


Figure 5: Components

Before you get started ... a checklist

✓ Understand your job requirements

ECCs should review their job duties and tasks and create a specific list of what a public safety telecommunicator (PST) does. Identifying key components of the job responsibilities will help ensure job descriptions are in alignment with current ECC operations. Ensure you're also capturing the "soft" requirements such as decision-making and critical thinking skills.

✓ Engage your hiring authority

Make sure you know any rules set forth for hiring. Get to know and understand any specific requirements as well as the process to keep job descriptions updated. Learn which platforms your hiring authority uses to recruit job applicants.

✓ Seek advice from other ECCs

Review your neighbors' job descriptions. Find out how you can set yourself apart from others and be more appealing. Determine if you can conduct a pay scale and benefit comparison.

Job Description Guidance, Sample Language, and Examples

Job Title

Guidance

Assure your job title as specific as possible. The job title should accurately reflect the position.

Tips and Advice

Stay away from slang or jargon.

Sample Language

Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST)

Job Summary

Guidance

A job summary should be concise and include an overview of the responsibilities. It should be engaging to the reader and catch their attention.

Tips and Advice

Chose a writing style that matches your ECC. Wording that is too casual or too technical could provide the wrong perception of the culture of your ECC.

Sample Language

This critical role serves as the vital communications link between the public needing help and emergency services response. This entails a candidate to be able to work independently in a high-stress environment while receiving and evaluating incoming emergency and administrative requests for emergency services including but not limited to law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS), triaging those requests for service, providing guidance and assistance to the public in life-safety situations and coordinating appropriate responses to high-risk, high-stress operations, with the objective of keeping all participants safe.

Job Responsibilities

Guidance

Be transparent about the responsibilities. List the essential tasks using bullet points to make it easier for the reader to understand. Try to “paint a picture” of what a typical day in the ECC is like.

Tips and Advice

Start each sentence with a verb in present tense.

Stay away from nonspecific descriptions, such as “once in a while.”

Sample Language

Call Taker

- *Using training and policies to screen requests for emergency services; answering them professionally, recognizing if a call is received from telephone, text, video, or an automated data feed.*
- *Providing pre-arrival and post-dispatch instructions to those requiring assistance during high-stress situations, such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), childbirth, hemorrhaging, active shooter and entrapments.*
- *Ascertaining incident information by obtaining and verifying caller information and location, determining the nature of the incident, and all available data including but not limited to automated data, social media information, text message, images or video and providing information to emergency services either verbally and/or digitally.*

Dispatcher (Law, Fire, and/or EMS)

- *Using training and operational protocols to take appropriate action such as: relaying critical information, dispatching/initiating emergency response services.*
- *Conducting health and safety status checks of responders and using other available technology to ensure on-scene responders' safety.*
- *Documenting thoroughly and accurately all incident activities while maintaining awareness of scene activities.*

Minimum Requirements

Guidance

Specify the mandatory qualifications needed for the position. Explain if any licenses, certificates are required.

Sample Language

- *A high school diploma or GED*
- *Must have never committed, been involved in, or been convicted of, a felony or serious misdemeanor*
- *Must be able to work on a rotating schedule including nights, weekends, and holidays to ensure 24/7 coverage*
- *Subject to call back and hold over to maintain minimum staffing 24/7*
- *Certification in CPR*

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Guidance

Be clear about the knowledge and skills that you seek in a candidate. Additionally, describe the traits or attributes you would expect a candidate to display in that role.

Tips and Advice

Remember knowledge and skills can be learned, whereas a trait is an innate ability. Take care with traits as they can be subjective in nature.

Sample Language

Knowledge

- *Working knowledge of Windows-based software and various other computerized electronic, telecommunications equipment*

Skills

- *Communicate clearly, concisely, and effectively; relay details accurately; listen actively; think and act quickly*
- *Compile and analyze operational data and prepare and maintain accurate records*
- *Effectively interact with people of different social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds*

Abilities

- *Dependable, self-motivated and team-oriented*
- *Relentless problem solver*
- *Friendly and tactful personality*
- *Patient and resilient*
- *Stress tolerance and adaptability*

Your ECC

Guidance

Take time to describe your work environment. Assume the candidate knows nothing about emergency communications. Be specific. Explain if this a full-time or part-time position. Include information on the location, the nature of shift work, and any essential elements related to employment.

Tips and Advice

Including an address will help with your candidate pool and not target people who do not want to relocate.

Being clear about shift work can help discourage those unable to meet the demands of the schedule.

Include any links to videos or social media where a person can learn more about the agency.

Sample Language

Work Environment

- *Work is performed in an emergency communications center. The work level can fluctuate from minimal to fast-paced and high volume. The employee deals with crisis situations that require them to quickly make major decisions involving people, resources, and property with frequently limited direction.*
- *The PST may be asked to work scheduled shifts at any time of the day and on holidays.*
- *Must be able to cope in a safe manner with stressful situations, emotional callers, irate responders and unprofessional contacts.*
- *Under unusual circumstances, the PST may be required to perform duties at or near the scene of any emergency.*

Physical Requirements

- *This work is sedentary and requires little to no exertion of force.*

Salary and Benefits

Guidance

Provide information on salaries and benefits. This should include paid vacation days, medical insurance, retirement plans, etc.

Tips and Advice

Include a salary range if you do not have a specific amount.

Sample Language

Salary

- *\$47,987 – \$98,521 a year*
- *Applicants with less experience (2-3 years) may be considered at a lower classification with a salary range of \$40,622 – \$58,012*

Benefits

- *Holiday pay*
- *\$2 an hour night shift differential*

Appendix C – Model Job Description

The following model is intended only as an illustration of the various types of work performed. The omission of specific duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related, or a logical assignment to the position. Emergency communication centers (ECCs) are encouraged to “cut and paste” language from this document while working closely with their hiring authority.

JOB TITLE: Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST)

SUMMARY

This critical role serves as the vital communications link between the public needing help and emergency services response. As members of the public safety ecosystem, PSTs are typically the first point of contact when a person reaches out for help. This entails a candidate to be able to work independently in a high-stress environment while receiving and evaluating incoming emergency and administrative requests for emergency services including but not limited to law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS), triaging those requests for service, providing guidance and assistance to the public in life-safety situations and coordinating appropriate responses to high-risk, high-stress operations, with the objective of keeping all participants safe.

ESSENTIAL JOB DUTIES AND TASKS¹⁵

The primary responsibility of the PST is to protect citizens and emergency responders during the emergency incident. These include:

- Using training and policies to screen requests for emergency services; answering them professionally, recognizing if a call is received from telephone, text, video, or an automated data feed.
- Using appropriate technology to communicate with callers.
- Interpreting sensor data to triage, prioritize, properly categorize, and initiate the correct emergency response.
- Using knowledge of law enforcement, fire, and EMS protocols to prioritize and sequence calls promptly in limited time with limited or no supervision.
- Demonstrating clear and effective communications with active listening, call control, judgment, respect, and empathy with callers that range from calm to panicked.
- Providing pre-arrival and post-dispatch instructions to those that are requiring assistance during high-stress situations, such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), childbirth, hemorrhaging, active shooter, and entrapments.

¹⁵ The job duties and tasks are an all-inclusive list based on current capabilities of ECCs.

- Managing challenging callers using appropriate handling of distressed, autistic, hearing-impaired, elderly, angry, and foreign-language-speaking callers.
- Providing direct counseling to suicidal persons, domestic violence victims, and children.
- Ascertaining incident information by obtaining and verifying caller information and location, determining the nature of the incident, and all available data including but not limited to automated data, social media information, text message, images or video, and providing information to emergency services either verbally and/or digitally.
- Ability to prioritize multiple events based on available resources—critical thinking.
- Using TDD and relay services to comply with standards for handling calls from hearing-impaired callers.
- Utilizing language interpretation services and coordinating with mental health resources for appropriate contacts with callers who have mental health or language barriers to receiving help.
- Using text-to-911 to communicate effectively with callers.
- Interpreting caller location by using geographic knowledge, tools, and location tracking capabilities when available.
- Interpreting automatic number and automatic location data provided by the emergency communications phone system and verifying data using mapping software for accuracy and reliability.
- Maintaining communications during life-threatening emergencies, providing safety/lifesaving instructions, and maintaining control of the conversation until field units arrive on scene.
- Using available vehicular, bystander, and/or law enforcement information for the purpose of protecting the public at the scene as well as on-scene responders by identifying the need for advanced life support resources or specialized fire extraction equipment.
- Utilizing training and reference resources when determining the nature and priority of emergency incidents that have live-streaming videos, graphic images, and text.
- Using training and operational protocols to take appropriate action such as: relaying critical information, dispatching/initiating emergency response services, or referring callers to other agencies.
- Documenting incident details quickly and accurately to establish incident urgency, categorizing the incident type, and obtaining the proper help for the caller.
- Demonstrating clear and effective communications and active listening with public safety responders using appropriate terminology, codes, and signals.
- Relaying initial information for dispatch accurately, reviewing the call for service details, and assuming incident command until first responders arrive.
- Conducting health and safety status checks of responders and using other available technology to ensure on-scene responders' safety.
- Documenting thoroughly and accurately all incident activities while maintaining awareness of scene activities.
- Operating emergency, administrative, and backup telephone communications systems effectively.
- Facilitating the transferring of calls to the appropriate resources and performing conference calls with entities, such as but not limited to poison control centers or helicopter dispatch.
- Interpreting and understanding local and regional geography to quickly and accurately identify the location of the emergency to improve response times of field responders.
- Operating a sophisticated workstation comprised of multiple computer systems, computer-aided dispatch (CAD) software and geographical information systems (GIS), state and federal clearinghouses, call handling including teletypewriter (TTY) and text-to-911 sessions, as well as communications systems such as radio dispatch consoles and recording systems.
- Operating multiple systems and conversations simultaneously without mistake.

- Notifying key personnel of critical incidents, using judgment to determine the need to contact other law enforcement and public safety agencies for additional information and resources as needed, or relaying information regarding incidents and situational awareness.
- Using mass notification software, including social media platforms, to keep the public informed of emergency incidents.
- Activating mass community warning and notification software programs to inform the public of impending critical information related to such things as severe weather impacts, potential injury or life-safety events.
- Managing chain of custody for records and documentation used in court proceedings and legal discovery.
- Maintaining a calm demeanor under chaotic and stressful circumstances, multiple conversations, and frequently noisy environments.
- Completing training, certifications, and competencies as needed by actively seeking training, completing the training and certifications required for assigned PST positions, and completing continuing education and career development as necessary.
- Following established agency policies and procedures, being aware of liability to the agency, and adhering to federal disclosure and privacy laws.
- Using debriefing tools, stress management techniques, and critical incident response models to deal with mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

A high school diploma or GED.

- Dependable, self-motivated and team-oriented, with a desire to provide a service to the community.
- Working knowledge of Windows-based software and various other computerized electronic, telecommunications equipment.
- Flexibility to adapt to changes.
- Has great attention to detail and empathy towards the customers' needs and concerns.
- Must be able to adapt and function, without reservation, in high-stress situations.
- Must pass a background investigation that meets all local, state, and federal requirements as well as be without felony convictions.
- Must be able to perform essential job functions (reasonable accommodation may be made on a case-by-case basis).
- Must have never committed, been involved in, or been convicted of, a felony or serious misdemeanor.
- Must be able to work on a rotating schedule including nights, weekends, and holidays to ensure 24/7 coverage.
- Subject to call back and hold over to maintain minimum staffing 24/7.
- This position is designated as essential and must report to work during times when the government/agency is closed.

Must be able to obtain and maintain the following licenses and certifications within a given time frame:

- Basic Telecommunications Course that includes:
 - Telecommunicator roles and responsibilities
 - 911 call processing

- Radio communications
- Emergency management
- Emergency communications technology
- Legal concepts
- Interpersonal communications
- Stress management
- Quality assurance
- Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) Security Training
- Certification in CPR

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

- By the end of the probationary period, thorough knowledge of the policies, procedures, processes, laws, ordinances, and regulations affecting public safety call taking, and the ability to apply them appropriately.
- Able to use logic, critical thinking, and reasoning to reach conclusions and solve problems.
- Adhere to policy and procedure requirements that are stringent, rigorous, and unwavering, including confidentiality of information and trustworthiness while dealing with sensitive information.
- Communicate clearly, concisely, and effectively; relay details accurately; listen actively; think and act quickly.
- Compile and analyze operational data and prepare and maintain accurate records.
- Effectively interact with people of different social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds.
- Establish and maintain cooperative and professional working relationships with co-workers, supervisors, representatives from other departments, and other emergency services agencies.
- Follow instructions, spell correctly, and write clearly.
- Handle multiple tasks simultaneously, under pressure, and in emergency and stressful situations.
- Learn quickly and retain public safety and technology training material.
- Maintain regular, reliable, and punctual attendance.
- Obtain information from hostile, confusing, and emotional callers.
- Provide effective customer service and deal tactfully and courteously with a demanding public.
- Able to handle complaints and difficult situations, remaining calm under pressure.
- Remember names, numbers, and locations accurately.
- Read and interpret geographical spatial data and maps quickly and accurately.
- Resilient and resourceful while coordinating high-risk, high-stress operations, with the objective of keeping all participants safe.
- Operate computer systems with specialized software and enter data via keyboard and software with speed and accuracy.
- Organize and prioritize work to meet deadlines and accomplish tasks.
- Use judgment and decision-making skills to rapidly evaluate situations, establish priorities, resolve matters, and pass on information, as needed.
- Relentless problem solver.
- Friendly and tactful personality.
- Patient and resilient.
- Stress tolerance and adaptability.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Work is performed in an emergency communications center. The work level can fluctuate from minimal to fast-paced and high volume. The employee deals with crisis situations that require them to quickly make major decisions involving people, resources, and property with frequently limited direction.

The PST may be asked to work scheduled shifts at any time of the day and on weekends and holidays. Must be able to cope in a safe manner with stressful situations, emotional callers, irate responders and unprofessional contacts. Under unusual circumstances, the PST may be required to perform duties at or near the scene of any emergency.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

This work is sedentary and requires little to no exertion of force. Work regularly requires speaking or hearing and frequently sitting, using hands to finger, handle, or feel, reaching with hands and arms and repetitive motions. Work requires close vision, distance vision, ability to adjust focus, depth perception, and peripheral vision. Vocal communication is required for expressing or exchanging ideas by means of the spoken word and conveying detailed or important instructions to others accurately, loudly or quickly. Hearing is required to perceive information at normal spoken word levels and to receive detailed information through oral communications and/or to make fine distinctions in sound. Work requires preparing and analyzing written or computer data. Work requires exposure to loud noises, extreme emotion, and stressful environments. Work is generally indoors and in a moderately noisy location surrounded by others talking on the phone or radio.

COMPENSATION

The non-negotiable starting salary for this position is \$20.24 per hour.

Benefits include health insurance, dental insurance, a vision plan, annual leave, sick leave, paid holidays, a contributory retirement plan, group term life insurance, flexible spending accounts (HSA/FSA), and long-term disability insurance.