

# **PST Responsibilities and Key Job Skills and Tasks**

## **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.

### **IN-HOUSE TRAINING PROCESS**

A PST must undergo appropriate training to develop the necessary skills to be able to react and meet the expectations of any caller. Our training process begins as a 12-week hands-on process divided up into 3-week sections on each position, an evaluation every 3 weeks will be conducted to ensure the PST is ready to move onto the next portion of the training, once the 12 or weeks of training is completed, the trainee will then be released from the training programs and placed on their permanent shift, where the training officer will work with them 2 more shifts to help them adjust to the changes and ways of that specific shift.

### **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, social media, fire/police alarms, gunshot detection systems, and even automated data.

### **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.

## 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, VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol), 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. 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.

## 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 prior call history. (prior domestic violence, weapons being present, history of violent offenders etc..). Conducting health and safety status checks of responders and using other available technology to ensure on-scene responders' safety.

## 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. Keeping everyone safe and reducing further injury or harm is a main goal.

## DOCUMENT INFORMATION ACCURATELY

Using a CAD system or other applicable records management system (RMS), a PST should ensure that incident information is recorded accurately and in a timely manner so that you will have a documented time stamp for reference.

## MANAGE CALLERS:

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

Callers can be:

- Highly emotional, angry, frightened, hysterical
- Children
- Elderly

- Language barrier
- Suicidal
- Chronic callers
- Demanding “social status” callers
- Intoxicated
- Hearing- or speech-impaired
- Disoriented
- Special needs

Examples: Hearing- Speech impaired caller would typically use TDD/TTY, video chat with a translation company that will then call the PSAP and the translator will word for word tell the PST what the caller is saying in sign language via video chat.

Language barrier would require a different type of assistance for instance our PSAP has what is called a “language line” where the PST would transfer the caller on the 9-1-1 line to the language line service number, where you would then be prompted to enter a code (4-6 digits that links the account to the service for billing purposes) that will then put you on the line with a person they ask what language you need translated and they provide that specific language translator.

### 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) uses of pre-arrival instructions has been the standard recommendation for the National Association of Emergency Medical Services Physicians (NAEMSP). 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, Once certified the PSTs routinely provide pre-arrival instructions for law enforcement and fire incidents when necessary.

### PARTICIPATE IN FIELD OPERATIONS

The PST can be responsible to assist with field communications, such as major events or JSOG/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.

## 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. Police, Fire departments, Ambulance, Life flights, Power, phone and/or gas companies, DHR workers, on-call workers, ATF, and many other resources if needed depending on the situation.

### 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. Once again, the PST should ensure that incident information is recorded accurately and in a timely manner so that you will have a documented time stamp for reference.

### INITIATE INCIDENT RESPONSE

Upon analyzing the call for service, a PST assigns the appropriate units to the incident to mitigate the request for service. Our CAD system has a system called "Active 9-1-1", meaning once you assign the department to the incident in the CAD it will send all members that are registered with active 9-1-1 a text from details of the call including the address, complaint, and short summary detailing what is going on.

### 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.

### CONTROL RADIO TRAFFIC

A PST must remain aware and always be prepared for unexpected radio transmissions from any unit at any time. (Multi-tasking) 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.

### PARTICIPATE IN POST-INCIDENT ACTIVITIES

Depending on the severity of an incident, a PST may need to participate in post-dispatch activities. Meaning after remediating and incident, the organization will take steps to identify and implement any lessons learned from the even, and to pursue or fulfill any legal action or requirements necessary. Example: Getting the telecommunicator/s the proper therapy after handling a traumatic call. Group discussion on how/if the call could have been handled differently.

### 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, our center has between five and six monitors per console. Operating emergency, administrative, and backup telephone/radio communications systems effectively when needed. Doing routine testing to ensure it is working properly at all times.

### 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.

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

- 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

- National Crime Information Center (NCIC)

- Certification in CPR

## 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**

- 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
- Incident command

### **Skills**

- Keyboarding/Typing
- Multitasking
- Decision-making
- Critical thinking
- Verbal and written communications skills

- Ability to work on a team
- Active listening/hearing
- Customer service
- Computer
- Telephone
- Call control
- Conflict resolution
- Problem solving
- Analytical
- Troubleshooting
- Text messaging
- Data Analytics

#### **Abilities**

- Quick decision-making
- Empathy
- Respect
- Patience
- Maturity
- Even-tempered
- Integrity
- Ethical
- Life-long learner
- Dependable
- Flexible
- Efficient
- Tolerant
- Analytical

- Detail orientated

### 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.

### 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 pass a drug screening.
- Must pass a typing test at 25 WPM.
- 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.



## 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 starting salary for this position is \$12.31 per hour before training and certifications are obtained. Benefits include BCBS of AL health insurance, dental insurance (single is paid through the company and Family is 20%), personal leave (20 hours every 3 months from DOH), annual vacation leave (after one year of employment on DOH), double pay for holidays worked, a state retirement plan (company will match your contributions up to 5%), group term life insurance, and long-term/short-term disability insurance.

## ATTENDANCE

During training if you call out 3 times without documentation you will be let go (reminder you are still under a probationary period).

If you are late 3 times you will receive a tardy slip each time (strictly enforced), the 4th time being late you will be written up, if there is a 5th time you will have 3 days off without pay (you may use your time if you have any available).

4-hour notice when calling out. After you call out 3 times with no documentation you can NOT return to work without proper documentation.

All attendance policies apply the same for EVERYONE and will be STRICTLY ENFORCED. All tardy and write-up forms are good for 90 days, they will still be kept for future references.

*(ONLY EXECPTION IS FOR THE PART-TIME EMPLOYEES THAT ARE COMING FROM ANOTHER JOB)*

### SHIFTS, HOURS, AND BREAKS

Day Shift/Full Time (12hrs) - 5:00AM-17:00PM

Night Shift/Full Time (12hrs) - 17:00PM-5:00AM

Split Shift/Full Time (12hrs) - 11:00AM-23:00PM

Day Shift/Part Time (6hrs) 5:00AM-11:00AM

Day Shift/Part Time (6hrs) 11:00AM-17:00PM

Night Shift/Part Time (6hrs) 17:00PM-23:00PM

Night Shift/Part Time (6hrs) 23:00PM-5:00AM

**Breaks:** 18hrs Shift gets (1) 1 hour and (3) 15-minute breaks.

12hrs Shift gets (1) 1 hour and (2) 15-minute breaks.

6hrs Shift gets (1) 15-minute break.

### POSITION DUTIES PER CONSOLE

**Primary** - is the position where you do all the communicating over the radio with the officers for 911 and alarm calls, traffic stops, traffic safety, road blocks, give out BOLO, ETC... run anything they ask you to run via NCIC (name/DOB, SSN, TAG, VIN, ETC...) check subjects in the local records computer for local warrants. If your partner that is working secondary is busy on a 911 call or helping out elsewhere in the room you are solely responsible for making sure all the information is logged in the correct call. Information that is required to be logged is ANYTHING ran in NCIC, anything that the officer said that needs to be noted for future references. Also, if a wrecker is needed or you are asked to contact an on-call worker (DHR, Investigator, Animal Control, ETC...) your secondary "normally" gets that unless they are busy handling something else you again are responsible for getting that done and others enroute in a timely manner. You are required to watch the CAD and know when a call is for you to give out to the correct department/officer. Departments we are currently dispatching for are Etowah Co Sheriffs, Sardis, Altoona, And Walnut Grove.

**Secondary** - is the position you are required to do a little of everything that is going on in the room, and that consist of, logging information for the primary dispatcher, getting their wreckers enroute, calling on-call to inform them on the situation at hand and/or if the officer needs them to contact that said officer. Checking and identifying medications described to you from the officers. You must also still go in on ALL 911 calls to assist that dispatcher getting the fire department toned out, getting the ambulance enroute (only if the dispatcher isn't able to transfer the caller on the 911 line), getting a state trooper enroute to a wreck, getting a life flight enroute if needed, calling the power company and or Phone/Cable companies, gas company, and road department in certain circumstances. If all the 911 dispatchers are busy you must be the one to answer the 911 call coming in. If the admin phone line is ringing in you answer that as well. You will also cover for the dispatcher working Primary and Glencoe/ Hokes Bluff radios while they are away from their console (restroom, breaks, fixing food, ETC...).

**Glencoe/Hokes Bluff Police** - is the position where you give out all 911 and alarm calls to the police officers, you work for the officers doing their traffic stops, traffic safety, and medical calls (police respond to), logging information, checking for local warrants, running in NCIC, getting wreckers if needed, calling animal control, calling the water department if there is a water issue. Departments dispatching for at this console are Glencoe and Hokes Bluff police departments.

**9-1-1 Console** - is the call taker console that consist of answering all incoming calls within the first two rings (9-1-1 and business lines), making outgoing calls (9 1-1 hang up calls, transferring to ambulance services, state troopers, surrounding agencies if the persons emergency is out of our jurisdiction and the call was not transferred to the appropriate agency). Following the protocol when you have an alarm call that is police, fire or medical. You have to tone out fire departments (20+ FD) when needed, get ambulances enroute, state troopers, life flights, street department, traffic light service company, power company, phone/cable companies, gas company, EMA, the railroad and any other persons needed that are on call. Transfer calls when they need to go to other agencies. Preform Pre arrival EMD protocol when necessary, on medic calls, keeping those callers on the line until responders make it on scene. Call takers must stay on the line with all callers that have been involved in a domestic or a fight of any kind until police arrive on the scene, ESPECIALLY if a weapon is involved. If a call comes into the 9 1-1 center on admin line or emergency line and you can tell there is someone that needs help but you are not able to get their location you are required to pull the cell phone subscriber information from the cell phone provider to help locate them. Make weather reports during severe weather, updating EMA on down trees, damage and flooding throughout Etowah County. Included duties delegated between all the dispatchers are cleaning chores for the kitchen, restrooms, laundry (towels/rags), and consoles. Supervisors are also responsible for calling the appropriate company when equipment goes down. They also have to pull calls for subpoena request and email them. All supervisors must ensure that the shifts are covered when someone is out, if they can't get the shift covered, they have to stay to work that shift

given, they are not pasted the hours they are legally able to work. Supervisors are on call at all times. When there is a malfunction in the equipment that needs tending to right then the supervisor must pull their attention away to asses the problem and see if it is a simple fix or if maintenance professional is needed to fix the issue. Also, when there is a new employee in the room the person training them (training officer) is responsible for making sure that person handles the call or radio traffic the correct way.

This 9-1-1 center receives ALL cell phone calls in the county and some out of the county that still hit off our cell towers, and all county land line calls. We take Gadsden city calls as well that we have to transfer to their dispatch after getting the basic information (address, phone number, and name). Dispatchers must keep up with the dates of expiration on their certifications. Attending classes and doing recertifications are required to keep their EMD, CPR, and NCIC certifications valid.

**ETOWAH COUNTY 9-1-1 DISTRICT IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

**ETOWAH COUNTY 9-1-1 DISTRICT PARTICIPATES IN E-VERIFY**

**NOTICE:**

**FEDERAL LAW REQUIRES ALL EMPLOYERS TO VERIFY THE IDENTITY AND  
EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY OF ALL PERSONS HIRED TO WORK IN THE UNITED  
STATES**