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Public Safety Communications
Incident Handling Process

Candidate APCO ANS 1.113.1-201X

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FOREWORD

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125   351 N. Williamson Blvd
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127   standards@apcointl.org
128

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

129

130 On behalf of public safety communications professionals across the nation, and internationally; the Standards
131 Development Committee and the Incident Handling Process Writing Group used the Process Analysis tool to create
132 this Public Safety Incident Handling Process Standard. High performing Telecommunicators from various areas of
133 the United States and Canada participated as panel members and provided information on the steps and decision-
134 making processes of incident handling.

135 The goal of this Committee and Writing Group was to provide agencies with a general guide that outlined the way
136 an incident is processed in order to be used as a tool for improving performance.

137 The Committee and Writing Group thanks all of the individuals who participated in these processes for their
138 expertise, knowledge, and dedication to their profession and thank their agencies for supporting their
139 participation in the creation of this standard.

140 The Committee and Writing Group would like to take this opportunity to thank the APCO Executive Committee
141 whose on-going support of industry standards allows APCO Committees to engage in this vital work. We also
142 thank the members of the Occupational Analysis Subcommittee, which conducts Occupational Analyses and
143 Process Analyses around the U.S. The efforts of these individuals cannot be underestimated. Their work lives
144 within these national standards. We further acknowledge the work of the Standards Development Committee
145 that, with the help of their subcommittees, reviews all APCO standards.

146 We also want to acknowledge the APCO staff members who support these efforts with their dedication and hard
147 work.

148 We highly encourage agencies to review the standard as a tool with which to identify ways to improve agency
149 performance and processes in service to their communities.

INTRODUCTION

151

SCOPE

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

Purpose

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

Definitions

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

AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

167

SCOPE

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

171 **2.1**   General Agency Responsibilities[1]

172   2.1.1   The agency shall provide public safety communications personnel the guidelines, protocols, or
173   written directives for the process of information gathering in the management of incidents.

174   2.1.2   The Agency shall regularly create, review, and update, as appropriate, the guidelines, protocols,
175   or written directives that provide direction to Public Safety Telecommunicators for the processing
176   of incidents.

177   2.1.3   The agency shall provide training and set performance expectations for the Telecommunicator in
178   the application of guidelines, protocols, and written directives related to the processing of
179   incidents.

180   2.1.4   Agency shall have an established performance appraisal process by which the job performance is
181   regularly reviewed and evaluated.

182   2.1.5   The Agency shall provide an environment where the Telecommunicator is encouraged to
183   participate regularly in performance reviews.

184   2.1.6   The Agency shall have an established mechanism by which the job performance of the
185   Telecommunicator is regularly reviewed and evaluated based upon acceptable incident
186   management practices or standards.

187   2.1.7   The Agency shall provide the Telecommunicator with a regular review of performance,
188   documenting and addressing unacceptable performance through remediation or other
189   appropriate means.

190   2.1.8   The Agency shall insure a fair and consistent application of its disciplinary process associated with
191   performance.

192   2.1.9   The Agency shall provide a mechanism during the performance review wherein the
193   Telecommunicator can identify goals and objectives.

194   2.1.10 The Agency shall provide the Telecommunicator applicable training and continuing educational
195   opportunities.

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

Duties and Responsibilities of the
197

Telecommunicator
198

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

201   **3.1**   Initial Process Elements/Tasks (Appendix 1 Incident Processing)

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

204   **3.2**   Receive Request for Service

205   The Telecommunicator shall be prepared and ready to process and handle any incident received through
206   the use of technologies provided by the Agency. This includes automated data[2], specifically technologies
207   which do not allow 2-way communication between the telecommunicator and the source. Some
208   examples of these are fire alarms, water (SCADA) alarms, and gunshot detection systems. When handling
209   these types of notifications, the Telecommunicator shall begin initiating the incident by determining the
210   exact location (3.2.1.3).

211   **3.2.1**   When initiating an incident, the Telecommunicator shall[3] :

212   **3.2.2**   Greet reporting party.

213   **3.2.3**   Control and maintain the conversation by calmly and professionally asking questions to guide the
214   caller, while also listening to the information the caller is providing.

215   **3.2.4**   Determine the exact location where assistance is needed including but not limited to, structure
216   numerical addresses, street names and cross-streets, intersections, directional identifiers, and
217   mile posts. If specifics are not known, the Telecommunicator shall request landmarks or estimated
218   proximity to landmarks.

219   **3.2.5**   Determine incident type.

220   **3.2.6**   Initiate incident documentation through a computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system, or other
221   applicable records management systems and/or processes.

222   **3.2.7**   Identify safety issues for the caller, others involved/on scene, and those responding.

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[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.

223

3.2.8   Verify Jurisdiction

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	
If **in** the agency's jurisdiction or area of responsibility, then:	If **out** of the agency's jurisdiction, then:

1. Gather needed information
  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
 	
If the incident priority is high (***emergent)*** as determined by Agency protocols then,
 	
  Initiate the request for service which will initiate a response (dispatch) by appropriate public safety personnel
 	
  Provide initial information to responders (Initial Dispatch)
 	
  Ensure unit acknowledgement
 	
  Gather or relay post-dispatch information
	1. Confirm appropriate information
	  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 handshake[4]; 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

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[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.

235   3.3   Prioritizing Incident

236   3.3.1   In prioritizing incidents, the Telecommunicator shall utilize caller interviewing/interrogation
237   techniques, as identified by the Agency, in determining if an incident is an emergency.

238   3.3.2   The Agency shall provide guidelines for the Telecommunicator in determining and/or clarifying
239   types of incidents as emergency or non-emergency.

240   3.3.3   The Agency shall provide a response plan or matrix to determine and identify the appropriate
241   unit(s) for dispatch.

242   3.3.4   0Non-emergency incidents may not require dispatch depending upon agency guidelines.

243   3.3.5   The response plan or matrix should include any mutual aid unit(s) as identified by the Agency.

244   3.3.6   Is the incident prioritized for an emergency response?

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

245

246   3.3.7   Reporting Party Contact

247   3.3.8   The Telecommunicator shall determine, through appropriate interviewing/interrogation
248   techniques, if contact with the reporting party(s) shall be maintained.

249   3.3.8.2 The Agency shall provide protocols by which the Telecommunicator will determine if
250   contact with a reporting party(s) shall be maintained (e.g. unsafe verbal communication,
251   unsafe environment, caller requested to leave telephone off hook even if they cannot
252   maintain verbal contact, etc.).

253   3.3.8.3 Does contact with reporting party need to be maintained?

254

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Table 3	
If **yes,** then	If **no,** then
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 When it is determined that contact with reporting party can be terminated, then 1. Terminate contact 2. Acknowledge incident termination 3. Record incident disposition 4. Finalize incident documentation 5. End process	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

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257   3.3.9   Field-Initiated Incidents

258   3.3.10 Some incidents received for handling by a PSAP originate from field responders.

259   3.3.11 The agency shall develop and maintain protocols to identify the handling of field initiated
260   incidents.

261   3.3.12 The following identifies the tasks associated with field-initiated incidents:

262   1. Receive request for service

263   2. Acknowledge unit

264   3. Initiate incident documentation

265   4. Establish location and incident type

266	3.3.13	Additional Resources
267 268	3.3.14	The TC shall follow agency policies to identify when additional resources are needed at an incident.
269	3.3.15	Examples of additional resources may include:

270   1. Backup unit(s)

271   2. Other disciplines (local, state, federal or tribal)

272   3. Fire, Medical, Law Enforcement

273   4. Utility/Public Works (e.g. power, gas, electric, highway, water/sewer, etc.)

274 275   5. Specialty (e.g. bomb squads, hazmat units, search and rescue, air support, animal services, etc.)

276   6. The agency shall identify known resources to be utilized

277 278   3.3.16   The telecommunicator shall be familiar with all resources available from local, state, federal, or tribal resources.

279   3.3.17   Does the incident require additional resources?

Table 4a	
If **yes**, then	If **no**, then
1. Notify appropriate unit(s) / resource(s) 2. Provide initial information to responders 3. Ensure unit acknowledgement 4. Acquire additional information 5. Update involved unit(s) and agency	1. Monitor responder activity 2. Document responder activity 3. Respond to requests from on-scene unit(s) 4. Acknowledge incident termination 5. Document incident disposition 6. Finalize incident documentation 7. End process

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282   3.3.18 As the incident moves forward, do units remain on scene?

Table 4b	
If **yes**, then	If **no**, then
1. Monitor responder activity 2. Document responder activity 3. Respond to requests from on-scene unit(s) 4. Acknowledge incident termination 5. Document incident disposition 6. Finalize incident documentation 7. End process	1. Acknowledge unit(s) availability 2. Acknowledge incident termination 3. Document incident disposition 4. Finalize incident documentation 5. End process

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287 **Request for Service Process Analysis**

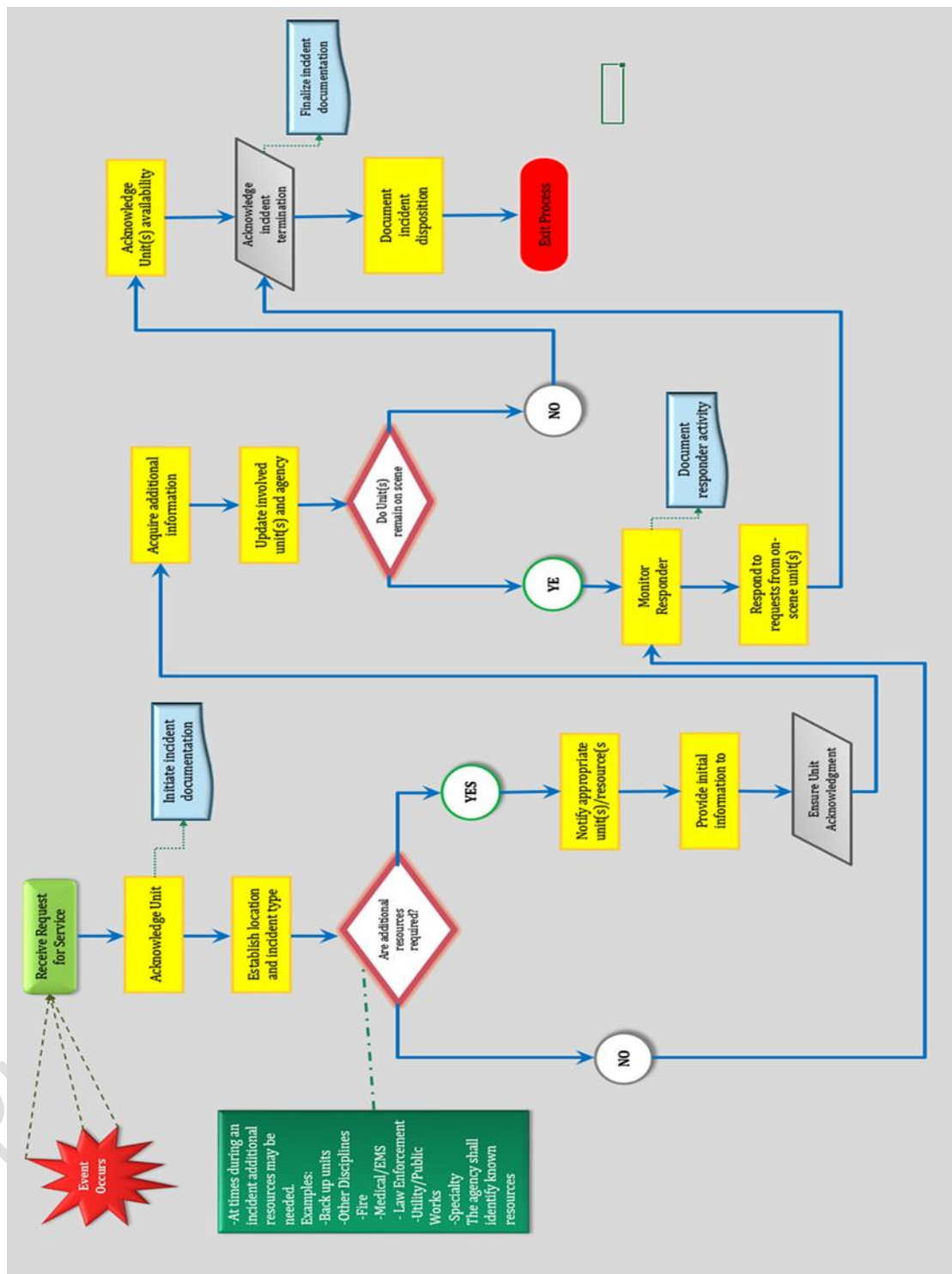A flowchart titled "Request for Service Process Analysis" with the following elements:

Top section:
- Example given: unsafe verbal communication, unsafe environment etc.
- Does TC need to maintain contact with reporting party?
  - YES → Gather Additional Information from reporting party (Document additional information) → Provide instructions to reporting party → Provide supplemental information to responders → Continue to monitor responder activity (Document responder activity) → Does TC need to maintain contact with reporting party?
    - YES → Respond to requests from units → Monitor responder activity (Document responder activity) → Terminate contact with reporting party → Acknowledge incident termination (Finalize incident documentation) → Record Incident disposition → Exit Process
    - NO → (to Acknowledge incident termination)
  - NO → Terminate contact with reporting party → Monitor responder activity (Document responder activity)

Middle section:
- The following tasks may be performed by a call taker, a dispatcher (aka/radio operator) or a single individual serving a dual role as a call taker & Dispatcher.
- Dispatch incident to appropriate unit(s) → Provide initial information to responders → Ensure Unit Acknowledgment → Gather & relay post-dispatch information
- Create a record of the incident
  - Location of incident
  - Call back number
  - Nature
  - In Progress?
  - Just occurred?
  - Delayed/Past occurred?
  - Time lapse is Undetermined, Ongoing incident or issue?
  - Other information based on agency protocol
  - Caller's name
  - Safety issues
- Gather and/or confirm appropriate information → Determine Priority of the incident?
  - Emergent → May initiate a dual and/or mutual aid response based on the type of incident
  - Non Emergent → Does the incident require dispatch?
    - YES → (to dispatch)
    - NO → Provide Assistance/ Info as needed → Exit Process

Left / bottom section:
- 9-1-1, Phone, Text, TDD, NCIC TTY, etc.
- Event Occurs
- Receive Request for Service → Greet reporting party → Control & maintain the conversation → Determine Exact Location → Identify safety issues → Determine incident type
- Initiate incident documentation
- Where assistance is needed but not limited to: structure numerical addresses, street names, cross streets, intersections, directional identifiers, and mile posts. If specifics are not known TC shall request landmarks and marks of estimated proximity to landmarks
- Incident in Jurisdiction?
  - YES → Gather and/or confirm appropriate information
  - NO → Gather and/or confirm appropriate information → Give appropriate pre-arrival instructions to reporting party → Transfer to appropriate Agency → Conduct "verbal" handshake → Terminate Contact with reporting party → Exit Process
- Create a record of the incident (Finalize incident documentation)
  - Location of incident
  - Call back number
  - Nature
  - In Progress?
  - Just occurred?
  - Delayed/Past occurred?
  - Time lapse is Undetermined, Ongoing incident or issue?
  - Other information based on agency protocol
  - Caller's name
  - Safety issues
- Announce the call to the receiving agency including the call type and location, and that they transferring agenda has a call back number if needed. Verify the connection party with the receiving jurisdiction or agency
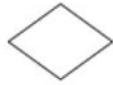
316

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

318

319

320

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

321

322

323   **ANS**   American National Standards

324   **ANSI**   American National Standards Institute

325   **APCO**   Association of Public Safety Communications Officials

326   **ASAP to PSAP**   Automated Secure Alarm Protocol to Public Safety Answering Point

327   **PSAP**   Public Safety Answering Point

328   **RP**   Reporting Party

329   **SDC**   Standards Development Committee

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NOTES

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