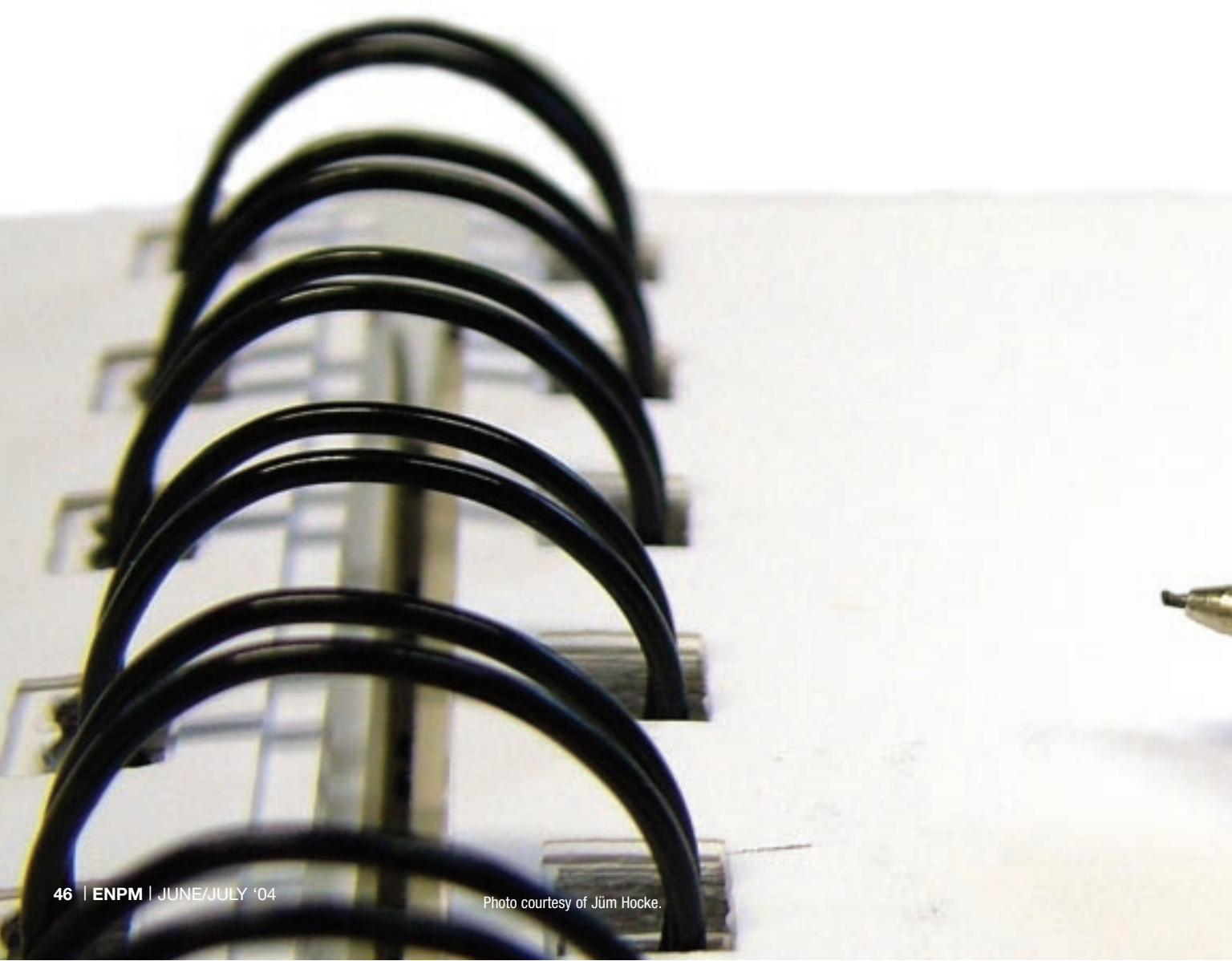


ESTABLISHING TEAM COMMITMENT

To Policy and Procedure

BY ROBERT HODGES, PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND TRAINING COORDINATOR,
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, SEMINOLE COUNTY, FL



CHANGING, UPDATING AND DEVELOPING CALL CENTER POLICY MUST BE A TEAM EFFORT LED BY SOMEONE READY FOR THE CHALLENGE.

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU HEARD, “IT’S NOT in our policy and procedure manual?” Now the big question is, “Why?” People are quick to say that *someone* needs to do it, but no one stands up to take responsibility for updating and/or developing new policies or procedures.

In most agencies it is usually someone other than communications personnel who writes policies and procedures on how a communication center is operated and by which rules. A law enforcement person may be assigned to the communication center for 18 months or so, but how effective can this person be for the overall well-being and focused progression of the center? Imagine the problems that can be avoided by assigning someone permanently to the center with this responsibility. No matter how an agency chooses to manage the communication center, the team approach is necessary for its success.

There is no one more qualified than communications personnel to create and monitor policies and procedures that directly affect or govern the operational issues within any communication center; however, there still needs to be a very strong influence from upper management in terms of review and input on the actions and functions that are vital to an agency’s mission.

One can be assigned the task of writing all the policies and procedures that reflect normal, day-to-day communication center operational situations, but it is very important to be a partner of a law enforcement or fire department operational guidance group. By assisting them in developing directives based upon existing

parameters of the center’s capabilities, their critical missions and the safety of everyone is supported.

If you’re thinking that it’s not your job or that you don’t get paid to do that, you’re wrong—it *is* your job. It’s everyone’s job within a communication center to question, correct, update and advance themselves and the center as a whole.

The Director’s Role

Where do you begin? Any kind of change must be supported by the person responsible for the overall control of the center, be it a manager, director or commander. This person must be the control point for liability reasons and to ensure the entire team is focused in the same direction and thought process. By virtue of being a leader, this person must provide the opportunity to allow the employees to create an atmosphere of ownership for any document that is created or edited. We all can agree that having ownership of a document brings with it the passion to see it done right and complete. Another aspect of the director’s role would be to guide the shape and dynamics of a policy or procedure through periodic review and updates from the design team, which entails making sure the wording, legal compliance and practicality of the document is within the main scope of the subject and in its truest form—the vision of the agency.

When a director allows a team to develop a policy or procedure, the overall pride and professionalism of the center will increase. Our 9-1-1 professionals are much more than individuals who can answer a tele-



phone and punch a button to talk on a radio. They are highly motivated and educated with a deep desire for commitment and drive to do it right. Besides, imagine what else a director could be doing if he or she were not the sole person responsible to design, write, research and publish local policy and procedures.

Build the policy and procedure writing team based upon the known abilities of everyone. Once everyone's abilities have been identified, have a meeting, tell them what needs to be accomplished and ask for their support. As a result of this meeting, the employees now have a *buy in* and will work diligently toward a working and evolving product.

The best example is the Weapons of Mass Destruction Interrogation Cards (see **9-1-1 Callout on opposite page**) that were created by one of the shifts at Seminole County's Department of Public Safety's Emergency Communication Center. Since the cards were conceived, they have mailed or given out more than 300 times worldwide, and untold times electronically. Recently, the Florida APCO chapter requested permission to adopt the cards for statewide distribution and to provide classes on their use.

As you can see, it can be done, provided that the director gives the team the opportunity to grow and excel in what they do best.

The Plan

To begin, start at page one and review, challenge and update as needed. This process should be completed every two years.

DOCUMENT TIPS

Font size and type—Is the typeface easy to read and see? Is the font size set at an appropriate level? 12 point, Times New Roman or Arial are recommended.

Paragraph/line spacing—Avoid page breaks mid-sentence or mid-paragraph by moving the entire section to the next page or rewording the sentence or paragraph.

Boldface type—Avoid boldface type as much as possible. Use it only to emphasize the beginning of a section.

Graphics—Color printing is the best option, but evaluate your use of graphics, as they may increase printing costs.



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Sample Procedure Form For Firefighter Down Notification



**EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS/E9-1-1 DIVISION
OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE
032**

Subject: FIREFIGHTER DOWN NOTIFICATION **Revised: 12/01/03**

Division Manager _____

To establish guidelines for emergency rescue in the event a firefighter becomes disoriented, incapacitated, trapped, or for any other reason requests emergency assistance to exit a structure. While these procedures apply primarily for structure fire incidents, they may be utilized for other types of firefighter rescue. This guideline is not intended to supersede PASS activation procedures or emergency radio alarm procedures, but PASS is intended to provide additional guidance in a true "firefighter down" emergency.

When a firefighter feels they are in need of assistance to exit the structure they shall, on the operating channel, request "emergency radio traffic" and declare "firefighter down." The Emergency Communications Center will immediately adhere to the following on the tactical channel:

The procedure for announcing a "firefighter down" situation will be to activate the warble tones on the radio console by selecting Alert 2 for a period of five (5) seconds and to announce "firefighter down." This procedure will remain in effect until otherwise directed by the field.

Sample Procedure Form For Mechanical Fire Alarm Situation



**EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS/E9-1-1 DIVISION
OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE
008**

Subject: MECHANICAL FIRE ALARMS **Revised: 12/01/03**

Division Manager _____

Upon receipt of a fire alarm from an alarm company, the emergency communications operator will request whether it is a residential or commercial alarm and confirm whether the alarm is indicating a general fire or water flow.

Residential and commercial fire alarms require the following response: two (2) engines, one (1) tower or special unit and one (1) battalion chief.

The only time this procedure will not be followed is during periods of severe weather. The determination to dispatch one (1) engine to a fire alarm (commercial or residential) will be made by the on duty battalion chief or appropriate staff personnel.

When emergency communications personnel receive information from the alarm company, resident or employee that the alarm was accidentally activated or false alarm, the TAC operator will advise the first due responding unit and battalion chief. The battalion chief will advise the operator what units to continue or cancel.

Example: Seminole: E13, per alarm company/resident/employee, alarm accidentally activated (or false alarm) and advise unit reason for activation, examples: cooking, fuming, fogging, etc.

9-1-1 Callout Playing With a FULL DECK

WMD cards allow call center professionals to quickly respond to potentially life-threatening situations with knowledge and certainty.

By Sherry L. Baranek

It's no surprise that in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11th, call center professionals across the country started thinking of worst-case scenarios and how they could properly aid those requiring assistance. In one case, a group of operators from the Seminole County, FL Emergency Communications Center developed a WMD (weapons of mass destruction) set of cards designed to help call center personnel respond to the threat of biological or chemical attacks, air-line emergencies and other incidents.

According to Beverly Gribbin, emergency communications team leader, the concept for the set of cards was initiated by the Seminole County Emergency Communications/E9-1-1 division manager Frank Kirk. He assigned the task of developing the card set to Gribbin's shift, which began establishing guidelines in the event one of these incidents occurred in Seminole County. Five shift crew members worked on the project—including three tactical radio operators with a level of experience from one to five years, an assistant supervisor with 22 years in the public safety arena and Gribbin herself, with 16 years of experience with the Seminole County Department of Public Safety.

Gribbin notes that the project took approximately three months to complete, everything went smoothly and they received "great support" from their peers. "We utilize the cards for any type of situation that would fall under a WMD attack," she states. "Fortunately, they have not been used too often, but are available at every position if the need arises."

For more information contact the Seminole County Department of Public Safety at www.seminolepublicsafety.org.

**CARD 1: Anthrax/Biological Agents
Questions**

- Verify the location of the envelope or package.
- Description of substance contacted?
- Is the substance contained?
- Was the substance inhaled or contacted directly?
- Are you having any symptoms? If yes, what are they?
- How many people have been involved or exposed?
- When was contact made?
- What symptoms, if any, are they presenting?

Instructions

- Wash hands with warm water and soap.
- Attempt to keep the area blocked off; keep everyone out of the area.
- Do not touch the area where the substance is/has been located.
- Turn off any fans, air conditioning/ventilation units, and close doors and windows to room if possible.

BIOLOGICAL AGENT EXPOSURE SYMPTOMS

Cutaneous (skin) anthrax occurs if the spores are in contact with an area of skin that is not intact, such as a cut or sore. It is marked by a boil or lesion that forms an ulcer with a black center. This form responds to antibiotics if treatment is started soon after symptoms appear. Inhaled anthrax occurs when the spores enter the alveoli in the lungs and infect the chest. They produce toxins that cause hemorrhaging and fluid buildup in the lungs. Symptoms develop as soon as two days, and as late as eight weeks after exposure, and appear flu-like, such as fever, coughing, and chest pain. This form usually ends in death after lung damage and possible brain infection.

ANTHRAX / BIOLOGICAL AGENTS

Card courtesy of Seminole County Department of Public Safety Emergency Communications/E9-1-1 Division.

Format

In terms of the proper format, take a look at the following list and place a checkmark next to the one that your agency currently has, then place an “X” next to the one that you would like to develop.

__ Formal

Every paragraph is numbered or lettered in some fashion; a lot of information to effectively use. Depending on the subject it could run on forever, rather than provide specific and pointed information to use or react with.

__ Militaristic

There is no question as to what you are and are not allowed to do. A complete dictatorial way of working, creating an absolute blind obedience to whatever the written word is and absolutely no allowance for thinking and reacting to an ever-changing situation or event.

__ Invalid

Out of date, nonexistent or does not apply. A very libelous situation to be in, one where there is no formal guide or set of procedures to accomplish any agency’s mission except the common theme of “do it my way.” An attitude of if “it isn’t broke, why fix it?”

__ Informal

A guide to the majority of situations, which includes the prerequisite appropriate policies and procedures of the agency; rational, critical thinking is encouraged. A format that allows for the proverbial thinking *outside* of the box.

No matter how an agency chooses to manage the communication center, the team approach is necessary for its success.

If your selection means a change of format, you have to ensure that it is the best choice for the agency. Obtain the proper permission before proceeding, or recreate the current policies and procedures in the new format and then present it to the appropriate authorities, which would ensure that everyone involved has a copy of the actual document. As long as someone is reviewing, updating or creating new policies or

Sample Telecommunicator Training Form

Directive 2-9

Effective Date: 01/01/96 Revision Date: 12/10/03

Telecommunicator Training

1.00 PURPOSE:
All agencies and the Telecommunicator's they employ must comply with the current issue of the Seminole County 9-1-1 Guidelines. Additionally, each agency must implement the following progressive training guidelines as described below.

2.00 DISCUSSION:

2.01 To ensure that every individual is trained in a consistent method and able to interact effectively, A.P.C.O. Standards (Project 30) or equivalent will be used as the minimum for all entry level Telecommunicator education. Should an individual not successfully complete a course, it will be the agency's responsibility for any cost of a retest and to evaluate the continued employment of the individual.

A. 40 Hour Telecommunicator Course:
For new hires, part-time and career employees

B. Communications Training Officer Course:
For individuals that will provide training to others.

C. Communication Supervisor Course:
For individuals that will provide supervision on shift.

3.00 CONTINUING EDUCATION:

3.01 In order to create Continuing Dispatch Educational (CDE) opportunities, it is necessary to establish training guidelines and goals. These guidelines have been reviewed and agreed upon by all P.S.A.P. Managers.

3.02 The Professional Standards and Training Coordinator will provide Continuing Dispatch Educational (CDE) opportunities for every Telecommunicator. As such, most CDE's will be available in a classroom environment.

3.03 It is the agency's responsibility to maintain training records on all Telecommunicators, Communications Training Officers and Supervisors.

3.04 Each agency will provide an annual training report to the Professional Standards and Training Coordinator, in order to compile reports that will provide a complete system wide overview of training accomplishments and establish future goals.

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Sample Instructor Requirement Form

Directive 2-10

Effective Date: 01/01/96 Revision Date: 02/17/04

Instructor Requirements

1.00 PURPOSE:
This guideline will establish the minimum standard for education and teaching requirements for any Instructor working within the Seminole County 9-1-1 system.

2.00 DISCUSSION:

2.01 Each instructor must teach a minimum of two classes per year and at least a total of 24 hours per year.

2.02 Classes may be either an entry level Telecommunicator Course (40 Hour) or Communications Training Officer Course, NCIC training or any of the ancillary classes provided in conjunction with TDD training. These classes will be conducted several times a year, providing sufficient opportunity for all instructors to acquire the minimum teaching requirements.

2.03 Each instructor must attend instructor meetings when scheduled.

2.04 The months when there are no meetings due to the high occurrence of Personal Time Off (P.T.O.) are June, July and August.

2.05 The Instructor Presentation Skills class is provided to maintain consistency and provide updated information in classroom instruction. Only those individuals that have attended the class will be authorized to instruct for Seminole County. Those individuals that do not meet the minimum standards will not be allowed to teach for the Seminole County 9-1-1 system.

2.06 Each instructor is responsible to maintain any and all current instructor certification(s) in order to continue instructing for the Seminole County 9-1-1 System. As such, any instructor that does not maintain certification will not be allowed to teach. The individual's agency will be responsible for any financial burden for any recertification process.

2.07 The Emergency Communications/9-1-1 Division provides funds for each instructor for membership to A.P.C.O. and/or equivalent and subsequent renewals. This benefit will be provided for instructors who meet the obligations previously listed in this document.

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procedures to meet the rapidly changing emergency communication center environment, the method chosen is not important.

The following items should be included in any of these documents:

- Title of document
- Date of issue
- Date of revision
- Revision number (optional, could be kept in the master records)
- Purpose statement
- Discussion/comments
- Procedures
- Page numbers

Appearance

The document produced will be a direct reflection of the agency and design team, so take the time to review the format selected and remember to proofread several times because appearance is key. Giving the document to another party to proofread is recommended (see **Document Tips sidebar, page 48**).

Objective

Here are a few items to consider when developing policies, procedures or guidelines. By following them, it will save a lot of time when determining how to write one. These suggestions are a result of many years of reading, writing and observing other layouts:

1. A document explaining how all information contained in the book will be developed, approved, edited/revised or deleted is necessary.

2. Never discard old policies or procedures. A copy must be kept for record purposes in the event of any litigation or to demonstrate the chain of creation or revision. Additionally, there must be a documented education process—such as classroom training with the appropriate tests to ensure that all employees were trained in the subject in a standardized format. Adherence of this rule also complies with the currently established standards for CALEA.

3. A document explaining who the authoring group is and their responsibilities is highly recommended—not by actual name, but by position name. People come and go, but the position stays.

4. A document that spells out that everything must be reviewed for application and validity every two years (or the timeframe your agency prefers) is recommended. This also will assist with reducing liability exposure.

5. Make sure your agency stays ahead of

emerging technologies, trends and laws so there is no lapse in training or policy/procedure development.

This is a huge responsibility to take on, but the right planning, organization, determination and teamwork will get the job done right for the safety of all involved.

ENPM

Robert Hodges is a professional standards and training coordinator for the Department of Public Safety, Seminole County, FL, Emergency Communications/E9-1-1. He can be reached at (407) 665-5167 or via www.seminolepublicsafety.org.

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