



USING THIS GUIDE

This Participant's Guide is intended to assist individual viewers of the video material outside of a facilitated group or classroom setting. The scenarios presented do not necessarily depict a correct or incorrect way to handle a situation. The goal is to prepare participants to later engage in discussion of the scenarios and topic and how it relates to them and to their agency policy and procedures. See the explanation for "Informational/Individual Viewing" on next page.

VIEW THE VIDEO

To access this video online, visit the [POST Learning Portal](#).

ABOUT THIS VIDEO

This training program provides an in-depth look into what it means to be a public safety dispatcher today and into the future. The video addresses several key topics, including the importance of connecting, the role of critical thinking, cultivating the dispatch culture, the challenge of changing technologies, and staying consistent with a work/life balance.

Upon completion of the program, communications personnel will have a greater understanding of the technologies being used to enhance their abilities to protect law enforcement personnel and the public at large, and to deliver professional services to the communities where they live. Communications personnel will also recognize their important role as first responders and their value to the law enforcement mission.

GUIDE CONTENTS

Video Viewing Options and Features

Describes how the training video is formatted and organized on screen and provides navigation instructions for facilitators or individual viewers. The video may be viewed in a single training session or broken up into shorter segments.

Program Overview

Lists the main teaching points and provides general information that is examined in greater detail within each scenario.

Scenarios

Each scenario features a brief overview and *Key Learning Points* to assist with quick review of the material during the presentation.

Participant's Self-Assessment

A self-assessment is provided at the end of this guide and must be reviewed with the designated training manager or supervisor for the participant to receive training credit.



VIDEO VIEWING OPTIONS AND FEATURES

Two different viewing options are offered with this training video: FACILITATED GROUP COURSE or INFORMATIONAL/INDIVIDUAL VIEWING.

FACILITATED GROUP COURSE

The **Facilitated Group Course** option should be selected when the video is being used in a classroom or briefing setting. The material may be delivered in a single session or broken up over several days, such as delivery during briefing or roll call. The material is divided into tabbed sections that the facilitator may play in whatever order they feel best meets the training need (see Navigating the Video section below). Once the material has been covered in its entirety, the instructor, supervisor, or training manager (as designated by the department) may [submit a completed training roster](#) via POST EDI for CPT credit for participants.

INFORMATIONAL / INDIVIDUAL VIEWING

The **Informational/Individual Viewing** option should be selected when a participant is viewing the video alone or without an instructor or supervisor present to facilitate the delivery of the material. This option should not be used in a group training session. This option is intended for participants who work in a remote location, for a smaller agency that cannot readily access group training, or for an officer who is simply interested in viewing the video for informational purposes. The segment order is preset, and the viewer will be guided through the video without live facilitator interaction.

At the discretion of the department-designated training manager or supervisor, participants of the Informational/Individual Viewing mode may receive CPT credit for viewing this video. To receive credit, individual viewers must be provided with the Participant's Guide (pdf). The individual watches the video and reviews and completes the Participant's Guide assessment as they follow along. The training manager or supervisor then facilitates a discussion of the video and assesses the participant's responses using the Participant Assessment Answer Key provided at the end of this guide. If the facilitator is satisfied that the participant has demonstrated an understanding of the concepts of the video, they may [submit a completed POST Course Roster](#) via EDI for CPT credit.

Facilitators should contact POST's [Training Delivery and Compliance Bureau](#) at (916) 227-7748 or their POST [Regional Consultant](#) for questions about completing and submitting POST Course Rosters via POST EDI for training video completion.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- This training will provide participants with an in-depth look at dispatching today and into the future.
- The first “over-the-air” dispatch transmission occurred in 1928 in Detroit. They had one radio-equipped car, Car #5. Prior to that, officers had to call in to Dispatch to get their assignments.
- An increase in public safety means an increase in public scrutiny.
- There are approximately 300,000 public safety dispatchers nationwide.
- As the years have passed, technology has provided us with better, faster, and more accurate information.
- Effective communication and the successful resolution of a call starts with the connection between the call-taker and the reporting party (RP).
- Public safety dispatcher training is intense. It is impossible to anticipate everything that could happen on a call. Dispatchers must have the ability to think critically.
- You are joining a profession with a culture that only you, and few others, can understand. Dispatchers, like police officers and deputies, are held to a higher standard.
- Technology is constantly changing. There are new and improved:
 - Phone systems
 - Radio platforms
 - Mapping technologies
 - Crime prevention strategies
 - Camera systems
- It is your job to manage the constant march of technology.
- Ironically, the increase and reliance on technology has affected our most basic form of communication: Talking to people.
- One agreed-upon and studied result of public safety dispatching is “burn-out.” A 2019 U.C. Berkeley study discovered that 40% of 9-1-1 dispatchers suffer from burn-out, twice as much as any other industry. Stress is a constant companion.
- Work/life balance should put the focus on you, which improves your physical, mental, and emotional health.



SCENARIO 1 – THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTING

We see a veteran dispatcher preparing to start her shift while another dispatcher is preparing to start his career. As the dispatchers settle in, another dispatcher is working a felony hit-and-run, which eventually becomes a failure to yield and then a pursuit.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Notice the demeanor of each dispatcher in the room: The veteran dispatcher, the new dispatcher, and the working dispatcher.

At what point does the disinterested dispatcher become interested?

How many dispatchers are working this call and what are they doing?

- Primary dispatcher is handling the pursuit
- Veteran dispatcher is notifying fire and air support
- Third dispatcher is notifying neighboring agencies (River City PD, Railroad PD)

Even seasoned dispatchers can learn new things, as evidenced by the “Pursuit” pop-up window on the primary dispatcher’s screen.

As a dispatcher, everything you do reflects on you, your agency and your profession. Be mindful of what you do and say:

- On social media
- When wearing:
 - your uniform
 - your agency polo shirt
 - any agency gear (baseball cap, photo ID, patches, etc.)
- When around people who know you and know what you do

Be mindful of why you do this job. Remember your first day. You do this, and continue to do this, to help people. Not just the public or community, but your agency and officers as well.

If you don’t know whom to call, you need to know where to find that information.

You have many roles as a dispatcher:

- Securing medical aid
- Working with other agencies
- Working with detectives
- As a primary dispatcher
- As support personnel
- As a call-taker

It is important to connect with other agencies:

- Fire
- Other law enforcement
- Your peers/co-workers
- Supervisors
- Command staff



SCENARIO 2 – THE ROLE OF CRITICAL THINKING

The scene opens in the communications center where a dispatcher is trying to contact a patrol unit. After a couple of attempts, she asks another dispatcher to try to contact the unit as well. Again, there is no answer. The dispatchers recognize that the communications system is down. The question is: How far-reaching is the problem?

KEY LEARNING POINTS

When you realize that communications might be down, what are your options?

- Check the availability of back-up frequencies
- Contact the watch commander
- Contact your supervisor
- Check to see if the MDCs are working
- Are there other options?
- Are regional mutual aid channels available?
- Using mobile phones

Periodically, complete a mental personnel checklist. Take a moment and try to mentally identify or remember where every unit on your channel is located.

Dispatchers are part of the investigative process. They can provide vital information when:

- Remembering a prior call
- Remembering a prior address
- Remembering a prior or partial license plate

Shift scheduling is difficult. Different agencies have different ways of assigning shifts, personnel, hours, days off, etc. When given an opportunity:

- Be involved
- Encourage participation
- Take part on a policy review/committee

You, as a dispatcher, have to be able to work your way toward an answer, even if you have no idea where to find it.

Complacency is a detriment to successful customer service.



SCENARIO 3 – CULTIVATING THE DISPATCH CULTURE

The scenario opens at a neighborhood café. As a new dispatcher and her CTO enter the café, the dispatcher unknowingly cuts in front of another customer. She is reprimanded by her CTO. The dispatchers are wearing polo shirts that identify their department.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Training is difficult but it becomes second nature. There is always responsibility and scrutiny, even on the “food run.”

You might spend more time with dispatchers than you own family.

You are no longer just a “voice on the other end of the line.” With more attention being paid to the activity of law enforcement officers, a brighter light is now shined on the actions of dispatchers and call takers as well.

There are expectations when the public sees you.

- People ask you for help, even in your personal life.
- You are expected to be a model citizen.
- If you have a bad day or lose your temper, people think, “That’s who’s taking my call?”

Your actions locally will influence perceptions elsewhere.

- There is a standard of customer service by which we are all measured.
- Just like officers, dispatchers are affected by what happens elsewhere in the country.
- At some point, you will experience being understaffed.
 - Requires working more shifts
 - Requires working longer hours
 - Takes a toll on dispatchers and call-takers

Veteran dispatchers should value newer employees who know so much more about using technology.

- The younger generation knows more about technology.
- The older generation knows more about dispatching.
 - In the event of a systems failure, older dispatchers are more likely to excel when technology is unavailable.

The public expects more from us, on and off duty.

- However you got here, the dispatcher life-style is a choice.
- Scheduling can be difficult – be innovative.
- For most, this is a career; for some, just a job. Even so, take pride in your work.

There is a need to connect with the community. Like officers, dispatchers should consider taking part in community meetings and special events.

Dispatchers are the lifeline of any department. When citizens call for help, dispatchers are the first people they talk to. The contact between a dispatcher and a RP might well determine the outcome of the contact between a police officer and that same RP.



SCENARIO 4 – THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGING TECHNOLOGY

Several conference attendees are on a break and gather at a table in the conference room. One dispatcher is listening to a pursuit on her smartphone. She says that her agency posts pursuits online, which then starts a discussion about communications technology and programs.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Technology is changing faster than ever before.

Dispatchers can now post updates on:

- Road closures
- Updates of law enforcement event
- Text to 9-1-1 software
- Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs)
- Money tracker apps
- First aid apps

Technology makes your job harder when it should be making it easier. It is often described as a blessing and a curse.

One of the drawbacks to the use of technology is less attention to radio traffic and more reliance on GPS systems.

There are many more systems in use than ever before:

- Do you dispatch for one agency or multiple agencies?
- Do you monitor 5 ALPRs or 35 ALPRs?
- There are upgrades in:
 - phone systems
 - communications systems
 - camera systems
- Which all make more work for dispatchers.

Communication comes in many forms:

- Verbal
- Written
- Body language

An over-reliance on technology results in:

- "Lazy" dispatching
 - The CAD system makes decisions for you
 - What happens when CAD goes down?
 - Our smartphones are always in hand (or certainly nearby)
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SCENARIO 5 – STAYING CONSISTENT WITH A WORK/LIFE BALANCE

A group of dispatchers is attending a conference. Their discussion touches on the excitement to learn, the desire to promote, and the chance to bring fresh ideas back to their agency. It is also a good opportunity to network, to enhance or continue their college education. They learn that some agencies offer tuition reimbursement, gym memberships, and training incentives.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

You can improve your work skills and chances for success by:

- Taking a Supervisor’s course
- Improving your writing ability
- Networking with others
- Working with other shifts
- Helping others deal with burnout

You can always learn something from someone else.

It is your job to comfort people, if that is what is required. Use your life experiences.

People are having a bad day. That’s why they call you. You have to be ready to go when your shift starts, which is why it is important to take care of yourself. In fact, you have to be ready to go every time you answer the phone.

Employees are happier when they are progressing, when they are improving their skills. Make sure that they are offered additional training to enhance career satisfaction and excel at multi-tasking.

Peer support:

- Say something nice once a day.
 - Dispatch is a family.
 - Reach out:
 - Are you OK?
 - Do you need a break?
-



CONCLUSION

This facilitation guide provides information needed to assist the instructor in delivering an interactive and goal-oriented training session.

After completing this course, participants should better understand:

- Becoming a dispatcher or remaining a dispatcher is a choice. It will mean time away from your family as you serve your community and work with a great team.
- Keep learning. Keep improving. Keep moving forward. If you don't, people hired after you will pass you by.
- Help people who need your help, including your officers.
- There are positive aspects of the job. There are negative aspects of the job. Dwell on the positives, but don't ignore the negatives.
 - Forced Overtime,
 - Shiftwork,
 - Working holidays,
 - Missing family events
- It is a great career with great benefits.
- Your customer service often determines how the public perceives the officers who respond to help them.
- You can make this a career. Don't just hang around.
- Dispatchers are hidden for the most part, but not as much as in years past. Don't let the media coverage get to you.
- Dispatchers are the heartbeat of every department.



ASSESS WHAT YOU LEARNED

The Participant's Guide Assessment is a separate document for individual viewers who wish to view the video outside a group or classroom setting and later work with the agency designated trainer or supervisor for POST CPT credit. This is not a formal testing tool. All answers should be evaluated by the trainer. The answers match the video content and are listed for general guidance.

NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____

As you watch the training video in the Informational/Individual Viewing mode, follow along and answer the questions below. You may pause the video and view a section again if needed. The goal is for you to complete this assessment and then discuss the material with your designated agency training manager or facilitator.

There are approximately how many public safety dispatchers nationwide? (circle one)

- A. 200,000
- B. 300,000
- C. 400,000
- D. 500,000

Technology is constantly changing. There are new and improved _____? (circle one)

- A. Phone systems
- B. Radio platforms
- C. Camera systems
- D. All of the above

One agreed-upon and studied result of public safety dispatching is "burn-out." A 2019 _____ (1) study discovered that _____ (2) of 9-1-1 dispatchers suffer from burn-out, twice as much as any other industry. Stress is a constant companion. (circle one for 1 and 2)

- (1)
- A. UCLA
 - B. Stanford
 - C. Harvard
 - D. UC Berkeley

- (2)
- A. 20%
 - B. 30%
 - C. 40%
 - D. 50%

Effective communication and the successful resolution of a call starts with the connection between the _____ and the _____. (circle one)

- A. Officer and the RP
- B. Dispatcher and the officer
- C. Call-taker and the RP
- D. Call-taker and the dispatcher



ASSESS WHAT YOU LEARNED
CONTINUED

As a dispatcher, everything you do reflects on you, your agency, and your profession. Be mindful of what you do and say when wearing:

- A. Your uniform
- B. Your agency polo shirt
- C. Any agency gear (baseball cap, photo ID, patches, etc.)
- D. All of the above

How can you intervene when you see that a co-worker is having issues at work? (circle one)

- E. Pull them off the channel/phones to reset
- F. Pull them aside and talk to them
- G. Talk to a supervisor, if necessary
- H. All of the above

Dispatchers are the lifeline of any department. When citizens call for help, dispatchers are the first people they talk to. The contact between a dispatcher and a RP/victim might well determine the outcome of the contact between a police officer and that same victim. (circle one)

- A. True
- B. False

In the training video, a group of dispatchers is attending a conference. Their discussion touches on the excitement to learn, the desire to promote, and the chance to bring fresh ideas back to their agency. (circle one)

- A. True
- B. False

There are positive aspects of the job. There are negative aspects of the job. Dwell on the positives, but don't ignore the negatives, which may include: (circle one)

- A. Forced overtime
- B. Working on holidays
- C. Missing family events
- D. All of the above

