



USING THIS GUIDE

This Companion Learner's Guide is intended to assist in the delivery of the video material in an interactive and thought-provoking manner. It provides suggestions to help facilitate most sections of the video. The goal is for the learner to engage in consideration of the topic and how it relates to them and to their agency. The guide may be used by persons of all experience levels to help them get the most out of the material.

VIEW THE VIDEO

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

ABOUT THIS VIDEO

This training program is designed to enhance the ability of California's Public Safety Dispatchers and their supervisors in recognizing common issues affecting dispatchers' well-being while identifying meaningful steps toward continued personal and professional wellness.

Program segments include a general introduction and definition of wellness, recognizing trauma, the role of personal and organizational leadership in dispatcher wellness, coping and resources, and a special section highlighting a simple, yet effective, breathing exercise useful to those in high-stress professions.

The program uses video scenarios with storylines that dispatchers will find familiar, including a case study of a significant event. Several segments utilize sensitive and very direct scenarios to expose the difficult challenges dispatchers often face when their personal and professional lives seem to run parallel. These combined with subject matter expert commentaries provide dispatchers and their supervisors with valuable information and resources useful in achieving and maintaining overall health and wellness.

GUIDE CONTENTS

The learner should review all video and guide materials in this course. This guide may be used for additional resources and information. At the conclusion of the facilitated discussions, learners should focus on resources available for affected personnel and any specific agency policies related to the subject.

Program Overview

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

Chapters

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



VIDEO VIEWING OPTIONS AND FEATURES

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

INDIVIDUAL VIEWING

The **Individual Viewing** option should be selected when a participant is viewing the video alone. 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 personal enrichment. The segment order is preset, knowledge checks will occur in each section, and the viewer will be guided through the video without live facilitator interaction.

The Individual Viewing mode will receive CPT credit for viewing this video upon completion of the program. To receive credit, the individual watches the video, completes each section knowledge check, and completes the final review assessment. Credit will be awarded via EDI upon successful completion.

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.



CHAPTER 1 PRE-INCIDENT RECOGNITION

KEY LEARNING POINTS

While arriving at work, a Supervising Dispatcher hears news reports on the radio of a shooting in a nearby jurisdiction which causes her to reflect on her preparedness and that of her team.

Agency critical incident preparation should occur regularly and requires regular review and training:

- Review Policies & Procedures frequently
- Provide uniform understanding among staff
- Ensure preparation and knowing it's "not if but when"
- Learning from rehearsals and past incidents

Individual preparation is critical:

- Daily shift preparation, including preparatory mental exercises
- Dealing with anxiety and the "when vs what if" mentality
- Having a family plan and individual supplies

Leadership's responsibilities never cease:

- Be proactive with in-service training and
- Operational planning
- Policy reviews
- Benefits internal communication

Knowing your organization is vital:

- Agency size, resources, structure affects individual responsibilities
- Don't get stuck in the "this is how WE do it box"
- Find ways to apply new/different skills; be proactive
- Look for the needs and meet them
- Value of rehearsing our roles in significant events
- Relationships have changed and may need attention

Looking beyond the usual resources before and during incidents greatly enhances response effectiveness:

- Mutual aid is becoming a norm, everything is on the table (mass shootings, ransomware, fires),
- Media perspectives affect our internal view of profession
- Recognizing potential risks and taking proactive steps



SUGGESTED
FACILITATION
QUESTIONS AND
COMMON RESPONSES

CHAPTER 1 PRE-INCIDENT RECOGNITION

What resources would you expect to have in advance of a critical incident (e.g., a mass shooting)?

- Clear policies known by staff
- Effective interagency communication channels pre-established
- Local/state/fed entities contact information readily available to staff
- Current contact information for staff

What typical resources exist to assist with mutual aid? What might we be lacking?

- Answers will be agency/region specific.

Who should recognize when resources are outdated and how might they correct the issues?

- Supervision/leadership: regular multi-level reviews to ensure resources and processes are current; conduct drills both agency and inter-agency to verify preparation and accuracy of procedures/policy/resource availability.
- Line staff: take initiative to review/suggest changes when needed.
- Training managers: ensure regular review/training on procedures occurs and is documented; enable and encourage feedback loop for updates/corrections.

Describe what would likely happen if you arrived at work after hearing news of a potential flood or fire approaching your jurisdiction?

- Verify who's aware of the event
- Recognition of known/available resources--are you prepared now?
- Quickly recognize the value of training, practice, and preparation.
- The need to involve others--both within the communications center and without--is evident.

How well prepared are you for dealing with a critical incident that occurs when you next shift begins?

- What can you do to feel more confident/ready?
- What training do you think would help?
- Can you ever be perfectly trained for everything?
- Moral injury – "I should have..."
- Not limited to significant or critical incidents could be any incident

What are your alert and warning procedures and how often do you practice?

- What steps have you done to prepare your family in the event of a critical incident?



CHAPTER 2 – INCIDENT RECOGNITION

KEY LEARNING POINTS

A dispatcher receives a call from "a regular," begins recognizing it's not a "normal" call, and then makes additional inquiries, gives directions, and initiates a response.

Critical Incidents escalate quickly:

- Listen for key words and audio cues
- Identify evolving situations early
- May be different for everyone
- Recognized only in hindsight

Addressing complacency and compassion fatigue:

- Avoiding complacency toward chronic callers is required with every encounter.
- Treating each call as important and preventing complacency from affecting performance is a must for first responders.

Considering safety admonishments and geography:

- Providing caller safety admonishments and the timeliness of disconnects
 - Includes risk and should be considered in advance.
 - Knowing jurisdictional boundaries is key for timely and effective agency and multi-agency responses.
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SUGGESTED
FACILITATION
QUESTIONS AND
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CHAPTER 2 – INCIDENT RECOGNITION

Describe an incident you experienced that seemed to start out innocuously but quickly escalated.

- Responses will be individualized. Instructor should highlight commendable actions taken.

What facts and observations could you have that may cause you to believe a call is more serious than what appears at face value?

- Caller's tone, volume, demeanor, word choice, or emotions
- Background voices, vehicles, sounds
- Caller/location history
- Current events/social issues

Describe conditions and considerations related to safety admonishments.

- Policy (specific to jurisdictions)
- Generally: when someone is in danger if they do nothing; when risk seems reasonably likely, and directives could prevent injury/loss; documentation of dispatcher's advisal

How does complacency develop and then affect communications center staff and their performance?

- Affects individual, and thus overall services being provided at any level or breadth it
- Impacts the internal culture personal and/or professional events, failure for self-care, or to mitigate the profession's stressors, or specific events can develop into compassion fatigue and complacency

How does the truth behind the statement, "sometimes critical incidents aren't recognized until after they've occurred" influence our reactions and recovery to/from critical incidents?

- A critical incident can be defined individually (i.e., what's critical for one may not be to another).
 - The effects of critical incidents aid in identifying them. Preparing for, preventing, and mitigating these effects are key for individuals and agencies.
 - When an incident causes a significantly higher stress level it can be considered a critical incident
 - The roles of coworkers, supervisors, and leadership in recognizing and addressing the effects of critical incidents on staff is paramount to individual health and safety, and to workplace culture and performance.
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CHAPTER 3 – INCIDENT RESPONSE

After broadcasting information of an area shooting suspect, dispatchers recognize they have an emerging incident with the same suspect.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Self-regulation and awareness are key to mitigating stress:

- The personal and performance value of self-awareness and stress mitigation is high
 - Self-regulation techniques can be infused into daily routines and the work environment.
 - "Controlling the Chaos," including the internal, must be recognized, practiced, and implemented.
 - "The power of relationships" pays dividends.
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Agency Interoperability:

- Accessible resources and inter-agency relationships directly affect available courses of action.
 - Pre-set lines of questions aid in information gathering but may need adjustment at times.
 - Geographic awareness directly affects performance.
 - Work to mitigate common causes of miscommunication, for instance unique nomenclature between agencies
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SUGGESTED
FACILITATION
QUESTIONS AND
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CHAPTER 3 – INCIDENT RESPONSE

What can dispatchers do to be better prepared for quickly transitioning in emerging critical incidents?

- Be prepared to shift to multi-agency
- Leverage colleagues' expertise
- Reach out to others not on site
- Practice wellness techniques

What challenges did you see with gathering the relevant information needed for this call?

- Remaining neutral and on-task with emotional caller
- Additionally managing normal traffic
- Opportunities missed with co-workers to ensure awareness of BOLO/related info

Describe the interoperability capabilities and resources available to you in your Comm Center.

- Answers specific to students

Would you have done anything differently with either of the two callers in this video?

- Answers specific to students

What are some available options for finding assistance and forwarding information when situations are rapidly developing?

- Supervisor involvement
- Collaborating with other dispatchers (you are not alone, use people in the room)
- Backing each other up (team approach)
- Verify receipt and understanding of important information

When communicating with reporting parties in critical situations, what are some ways of speaking that are more effective?

- Remaining self-aware and focused on tasks at hand
 - Using calm and professional approaches to communicating with the public, staff, and other agencies
 - Recognizing our own limits, and prioritizing tasks accordingly
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KEY LEARNING POINTS

CHAPTER 4 – LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISION

A supervisor's actions during an emerging critical incident reveal several supervisory and leadership traits affecting both staff well-being and communications center performance.

Leadership and Supervision have many challenges in preparing and protecting staff:

- Providing support, advocating, demonstrating empathy
 - Policy should address staff wellness, including circumstances for the use of emergency leave
 - Supervisory responsibilities should be readily understood and undertaken by another when no supervisor is available
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Supervisor training for critical incidents:

- Aids in enhancing communication
 - Aids in anticipating the team's needs
 - Knowing and abiding to role during significant incidents
 - Recognizing when a team member needs help
 - Reinforces practicing tasks associated with exceptional events
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SUGGESTED
FACILITATION
QUESTIONS AND
COMMON RESPONSES

CHAPTER 4 – LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISION

What can supervisors do to prepare personnel for extended shifts during critical incidents?

- Encourage planning at home (e.g., babysitter extended/other care)
- Encourage maintaining "go bags" and provide storage/materials/water as warranted
- Build their own skills and preparation to convey competence in the ability and confidence of staff

Identify way supervisors can mitigate the effects of events that involve staff's personal lives intersecting with the work environment.

- Check on their status; show concern
- Provide updated information to those affected by incidents

How is this supervisor acting in a way that is beneficial to the mission?

- Anticipate needs
- Identify where issues will occur

What concerns could your dispatchers have if they are being affected personally by an incident?

- Personal/family safety
- After-effects (e.g., unwanted notoriety, gossip, relatives being prosecuted, victimization, loss of normal)
- Will there be supervisory/agency support?

Describe ways supervisors can convey support during and after critical incidents.

- Be empathetic to the difficulties of the job
- Offer assistance without belittling
- Effectively communicating across generational and experience barriers
- Offering to listen
- Finding ways to make some aspects of their jobs easier
- Enable staff attendance in debriefs
- Convey to the team what you're doing and why



KEY LEARNING POINTS

CHAPTER 5 – POST INCIDENT AND SELF CARE

A review of an early-career event of a veteran dispatcher reveals many critical and beneficial dispatcher traits.

The rapidly evolving critical Incident:

- Evolves extremely quickly, which can significantly affect the performance of the unprepared.
- Does not consider or recognize the dispatcher's age or experience.
- Frequently creates often-erroneous worst-case scenarios in the dispatcher's mind -- should not be left unaddressed.

Post-Incident Self-Care:

- Is a priority and vital to the individual for not only themselves, but also their co-workers and family.
- Benefits of formal debriefings can also occur through less-formal relationships.

Leadership's role:

- Understanding of, and alertness to, employee wellness is both required and extremely valuable.
 - Debriefs (Tactical, Defusing, CISD) focus staff, address issues, and should be a priority
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<p>SUGGESTED FACILITATION QUESTIONS AND COMMON RESPONSES</p>	<p>CHAPTER 5 – POST INCIDENT AND SELF CARE</p> <hr/> <p>What can supervisors do to assist after a critical incident?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognize when to initiate contact and how to approach staff• Build their own skills and preparation to convey competence in the ability and confidence of staff• Provide updated information to those affected by incidents <hr/> <p>Identify way supervisors can mitigate the effects of events that involve potential critical incidents in the work environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check on their status; show concern• Provide updated information to those affected by incidents <hr/> <p>How can staff work on self-care following a critical incident like the one depicted?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speak what they are feeling• Seek resources• Take time for self-care like time off, counseling, etc. <hr/> <p>Describe ways supervisors can convey support during and after critical incidents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• be empathetic to the difficulties of the job• effectively communicating across generational and experience barriers• offering to listen• enable staff attendance in debriefs <hr/>
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**CONCLUSION**

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

After completing this course, learners should better understand:

- How first responders in various positions within communications centers can regularly prepare both themselves and their teams for inevitable critical incidents
- The role of leadership and supervisors in preparing staff through training, effective communication, contemporary policy and procedures, and meaningful relationships.
- Looking past the routine and known resources is beneficial to providing high-quality public safety services.
- Knowledge of resources, including those provided through mutual aid, at times are critical to successful incident resolutions.
- Complacency, compassion fatigue, and other factors can adversely affect dispatchers, and they should be regularly confronted and/or addressed.
- There are many considerations governing the appropriate times to give safety admonishments, and each dispatcher should be keenly aware of them.
- Stress mitigation can be managed through many avenues and dispatchers should regularly seek and practice effective ways to reduce the effects of the profession's significant stress.
- Critical incidents can occur any time with anyone regardless of preparedness, experience, or readiness.
- The profession has taken positive steps to provide meaningful jobsite assistance in dealing with stressors and a proactive environment with involved leadership and co-worker concern is becoming the norm.
- The role of supervisors in employee incident-preparation and stress mitigation is of paramount importance to both employee wellness and performance.

