

Emergency Response Centre Operator Training in Finland

In the present form of the Emergency Response Centre Administration, the operations of the municipal emergency response centres of rescue services and the emergency centres of the police are combined in 15 emergency response centres where those in need of help can obtain all the services in one telephone number of 112. The emergency response services of social welfare and health care authorities are included in the multi-authority emergency response centres. More information from website <http://www.112.fi> includes also sites in English and Swedish.

The ERC operators that work in emergency response centres answer the calls for help to the emergency number 112. The calls may relate to an acute illness or injury, traffic accidents, crimes, incidents that threaten law and order, fires or social services emergencies. The demanding work includes interaction with people in crisis. The operator gives advice about first aid, fire extinguishing or other instructions if needed and also supports the alarmed units in their work on the scene. An expert operator should be able to work independently, make decisions logically, act ethically and interact with other professional groups. A wide knowledge of customer service and team work skills as well as the ability to operate demanding computer systems is essential to be successful in this profession.

The applicant's aptitude for becoming an ERC Operator is tested in the entrance examination. The applicants will be invited to the examination in the order determined by the points awarded for their applications, and in two basic training groups, one for applicants with a baccalaureate and the other for those with a college-level vocational qualification. In the entrance examination the applicant has to pass the psychological test and language test in English and Swedish/Finnish (depending on which is applicant's native language). To each ERC operator course there are around 200 applicants and 24 vacant student places.

The Emergency Services College and the National Police School collaborate in providing ERC operator training. The training consists of 60 study weeks (1 study week = 40 hours), lasting one and a half year. Course - contextual and structural basic unit of the studies and teaching with the objectives defined in the curriculum. A course may consist of many types of studies: lessons, lectures, learning and practising exercises, Internet studies, formal and applied practises with the emergency response centre simulator, practical learning periods, excursions, and exams. Here is the shortened content of studies:

- Basic studies, 12 study weeks, contains for example Swedish, English, administrative theory, and information technology
- ERC work, 23 study weeks, contains also practical learning periods in Emergency Response Centres and simulated exercises in the ERC simulator
- Professional studies, 25 study weeks, contains rescue services, emergency medical services, social services, police services and risk assessment in these services. This part includes field training in which the student get to know the work at above authorities.

The training programme of the ERC operator is a study entity designed by the Emergency Response Centre Administration, the Emergency Services College and the National Police School of Finland leading to the degree of Emergency Response Centre Operator. The degree programme is built for controlling the professional skills required in working as an operator. At least till today after the graduation it has been easy to get employed. According to the Emergency Response Centres Act also a Diploma in Police Studies qualifies the holder to work as an ERC Operator.

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More information from website <http://www.pelastusopisto.fi> includes also sites in English and Swedish.