



EENA Operations Document

## Training of 112 call takers

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This document was written with contributions of members of EENA Operations Committee.:

<b>Members</b>	<b>Country / Organisation</b>
Rut Erdelyiova	EENA
Cristina Lumbreras	EENA
László GÖNDÖR	Hungarian Governmental Information Technology Development Agency
Andy Heward	London Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Natàlia Clop Agustí	Centre d'Atenció i Gestió de Trucades d'Urgència 112 Catalunya
Carlos Vidal	Centre d'Atenció i Gestió de Trucades d'Urgència 112 Catalunya
Pernille Ravnskov	SOS Alarm AB
Kaili Tamm	Estonian 112

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## Introduction

Today, emergency response is facing a rich variety of social, technological, economic and even global challenges, requiring adaptation and evolution. As threats are more systematically analysed and new solutions are being tested and presented, many service providers including emergency response centers are being reorganised to adapt to the demand for progress and flexible, pragmatic integration of their activities in the context of emergencies with other institutions. The demand for change is being driven by various sectors and all levels of society, at national and international level.

The objective of this Operations document is to describe the main issues related to the training of 112 call takers whilst assembling the relevant, currently available information about this issue, outlining some of the general principles and objectives. 'Best practices' examples and programmes, which inspire further improvements in the systematic educational support of call takers, whose preparation and performance pre-determines the quality and ultimate effectiveness of the potentially life saving 112 services, are also used.

## Abbreviations and Glossary<sup>1</sup>

PSAP – Public Service Answering Point

### 3 The role of the call taker

#### Tasks and factors shaping education related needs

The call taker will fulfill a number of critical functions<sup>2</sup> evolving around the complex task of emergency call management and related processes, as defined in the [112 Service Chain Description EENA Operations Document](#). The roles may differ from one 112 model to other, yet the core tasks evolving around the management of emergency calls form the frameworks of educational needs in all settings.

The call taker tasks, which are complex by nature, require analytical skills, multi-tasking, interpersonal and crisis management skills. Numerous factors and barriers can affect the realisation of these tasks; including decision-making under time constraints, quality of available support in the management of resources and decision-making, effective communication, coordination, cooperation and mutual awareness within a broader team of involved specialists. Psychological factors at individual level like personal skills, adaptive behavior and coping strategies play an important role in shaping the performance of call takers as well<sup>3</sup>.

One of the key tools available to equip the 112 call takers for these challenges is education, which reflects and incorporates all of the above mentioned issues. Education also integrates the work of researchers as well as the experiences gathered in the course of service provision and is continuous and flexibly adapted to the changing environment and processes in the PSAPs and also provides the call takers with the necessary knowledge, skills and support in their role.

### 4 Profile of call takers

In general, the profile of the 112 call taker is defined on the basis of the task and individual characteristics, required for the call taker role and these should be incorporated into the process of evaluating individual applications for call taker training and enrollment. The specific attributes of emergency call taking require a closer analyses and integration of psychological aspects of this job into profiling and educational strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> All definitions of terms and acronyms related to 112 are available in the 112 Terminology EENA Operations Document is available at <http://www.eena.org/view/en/Committees/112operations/index/generalframework.html>

<sup>2</sup> Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emergency\\_medical\\_dispatcher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emergency_medical_dispatcher)

<sup>3</sup> Source: Julie Dudgele, Bernard Pavard, Jean Luc Soubie, The Ergonomic Analyses of an emergency call centre and the subsequent design of a computer based simulation



## **Psychological aspects of emergency call taking and their role in education**

The tasks of the 112 call takers consist of interconnected processes, administered in a cooperative work situation, with an awareness of dealing with clients in potentially life threatening situations, which ultimately results in an increased sense of responsibility and higher pressure to perform. Processing of an emergency call requires a sequence of complex cognitive, emotional and behavioral reactions by the call taker collecting key information about the emergency, often in an emotionally and socially challenging situation. The situation analyses requires a process of synthesis, abstraction, specification and prioritization of acquired information in the context of a decision-making process.

In addition to the internal processes and individual knowledge base, the performance and well-being of call takers is also determined by the dynamics of cooperation and communication under various environmental factors and by the impact of work settings. Literature on occupational stress among emergency personnel emphasizes the direct contact with distress, injury, violence and death as central causes of stress.<sup>4</sup> The tension between competing needs of call takers (dispatchers) to act instantaneously while simultaneously not overstepping decision-making power, combined with inadequate resources contribute to escalating powerlessness and cumulative stress levels.<sup>5</sup> The sense of responsibility is complicated by their role as intermediaries between the distressed, frequently panicked and incoherent public and paramedics.

In order to avoid unwanted impact on human resources and institutional capacities, these identified stress factors require systematic attention at a personal level and comprehensive actions at the institutional level of PSAPs and should be reflected in the educational and in-service training context. In an ideal setting, they should translate to the development, implementation, evaluation and maintenance of stress management programmes in work settings (of the PSAPs), with a clearly defined purpose of the programme, delineated individual and organizational goals and defined mechanisms of organisational support to the programmes, which are to be integrated into existing occupational health and safety strategies.

Stress management methods at individual level can include methods like muscle relaxation, meditation, biofeedback and cognitive strategies, taught to employees as a means of reducing psycho-physiological and subjective distress, providing the individual with skills for recognizing and coping with work related stress.<sup>6</sup> For more reference on related topics please consult the EENA Operations Document on Psychological support to 112 call takers.

## **5 Content**

### **General principles of training emergency call takers**

The 112 call takers answer and process emergency calls that may relate to an acute illness or injury, traffic accidents, crimes, incidents that threaten law and order, fires, or social emergency situations. The call taker finds out what has happened and where, gives the assignment a risk classification and then alarms the help needed to the accident scene. The operator also has to assess the health risk of the patient with the help of information given of the situation and the incident. The demanding work of 112 call takers includes interaction with people in crisis, providing advice about first aid, fire extinguishing or other instructions services if needed and also supporting the alarmed medical, police or fire & rescue units in their work on the scene.

An expert call taker should be able to work independently, make decisions logically, act ethically and interact with other professional groups. A customer service orientation, combined with sound knowledge of state-of-the-art emergency management procedures, skills for effective team work as well as an ability to operate demanding computer systems are essential to be successful in this profession.<sup>7</sup>

It is also of the utmost importance that staff from the different emergency services and the other agencies who respond to emergencies are trained, made aware of and sensitised to the psycho-social aspects. This not

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<sup>4</sup> Source: Jenkins 1997

<sup>5</sup> Source: Frontline stress behind the scenes: Emergency medical dispatchers [www.tema.ca/Dispatcher\\_Stress.pdf](http://www.tema.ca/Dispatcher_Stress.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Source: Job related stress, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/pdfs/87-111.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Source:

<http://www.pelastusopisto.fi/pelastus/home.nsf/pages/6C163320294D67C8C22571D900793504?Opendocument>



only relates to the psychological impact that an event like this might have on themselves (e.g. vicarious trauma), but also in terms of developing an appropriate attitude and response with people involved in emergencies<sup>8</sup> and thus they should be included in the general principles of call takers training.

As the service and PSAP environment constantly develops, it's also crucial to ensure continuous training

## 5.1 General principles

- For basic and ongoing training, as well as for the quality control of such training, standards should be developed emphasising the scientific base (where it exists) and generally accepted good practice. Training of a professional quality standard which is recognised and evaluated by peers should be established.
- Training should not only be based on theoretical presentations and prescriptions but should also include extensive theory/practice links and be based on learning from experience and further developing the resources of the participants. Training should be formed to encourage a gradual development of skills (based on gathering experience of responding to accidents, critical incidents and mass emergencies). Skills and ability to effectively respond should be increased by real-time exercises.
- Training should improve personal skills, attitudes, experience and also group capability for providing emergency management support in a cooperative work situation. Training needs to be adapted according to the specific roles and tasks that staff will be expected to fulfill, and this should add to and complement the training of the general models of emergency management.
- Taking into account the multidisciplinary nature of the tasks, a basic knowledge and common language should be developed in relevant fields of expertise.
- Methods, procedures and protocols for the emergency response should be explained, discussed and included in training. Examples of this include: communicating in an unobtrusive way with those affected by the emergency and providing adequate information in a sensitive manner. Discussion of values and of general principles is essential for the development of appropriate attitudes towards people affected by emergencies. Training should also therefore include and recognise the human potential that takes account of the autonomy, survival skills and creativity of "victims" as its starting point. Attention to democratic rights and personal liberties and developing sensitivity towards cultural diversity, age and gender aspects is also very important.
- Joint training with first responders encourages mutual understanding and support effective future cooperation.
- Training with peers, and the use of methods of active learning can help PSAP staff to recognise their own personal limits (self-awareness) and the limits of interventions in crisis situations (emergencies) in general, so as to reduce the risk of burn-out and traumatisation. Stress management methods should be included in the educational process and at an individual level can include methods like muscle relaxation, meditation, biofeedback and cognitive strategies, taught to employees as a means of reducing psycho-physiological and subjective distress and thus providing the individual with the skills for recognising and coping with work related stress.
- Call centers have a unique working environment characterised by working practices that can present hazards and systems of work that differ from those of other computer-based office jobs. Call centre ergonomics and the environment should be included in the training course including the provision of necessary skills on working with all basic PSAP equipment and training call takers in recognising such ergonomic risk factors (i.e. awkward postures, repetitive and sustained movements and forces) associated generally with Occupational Overuse Syndrome).
- Financial aspects and plans for continuous in-service educational support, evaluation of the effectiveness and outcome of training also need to be considered.

## 5.2 Basic prerequisites of effective and sustainable training programmes

The most basic precondition of realisation of effective training programmes in general is the availability of sufficient administrative, technical and financial resources. Basic principles related to quality of programmes include:

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<sup>8</sup> Source: Psycho-Social Support in Situations of Mass Emergency.

A European policy paper concerning different aspects of psycho-social support for people involved in major accidents and disasters.



- an analyses of needs and content tailored to these needs and harmonized with educational and occupational profiles of the target group (112 call takers),
- formal accrediting of educational programmes as a prerequisite for their replication, quality management and sustainability of the defined educational system from a long-term perspective,
- continual education using modern technologies, the use of a balanced combination of in-class and distance learning, theory and practice and active interaction between trainees and trainers,
- accessibility of education at national and regional level, ideally with an established network of experienced trainers/instructors,
- legislative and institutional motivation schemes, encouraging further education (life-long learning) for call takers, for example through a system of financial or other incentives related to achieving higher levels of relevant formal education.

### 5.3 Objectives

Some of the greatest challenges in the context of 112 call taker education is the implementation of new concepts, incorporation of new technological advances (tools) into the call taking procedures and preparing them for their role in the constantly evolving systems of emergency management, ranging from assisting individuals with specific problems to managing the demand for service in the context of response to complex large-scale natural or man-made disasters. Complex education, integrating agendas across the service chain and emergency management lines (roles) of all key personnel participating on the fulfillment of related tasks is a key to effectively equipping all professionals whose performance and participation determines the quality of service provided to those, facing an emergency.

One of the most difficult and critical educational tasks is to train a new 112 call taker. Besides trying to insure the success of the future PSAP employee, the trainers must impart knowledge about many different topics, including philosophy of emergency medical services, law enforcement and firefighting, legal frameworks, technical topics (radio, telephony, computers, computer-aided dispatch systems), management of stress, handling difficult callers, active listening and assertive speaking skills. The general objectives of a training programme evolve around the nature of the tasks required of a 112 call taker and should cover all aspects of emergency management at operational and strategic level and equip the trainee with skills covering the entire 112 service chain (thus ranging from information analytics, risk evaluation to coaching callers through a specific type of emergency).

#### 5.3.1 Possible training-related objectives at institutional (PSAP) level

To make sure that training is done thoroughly, completely and in a standardized manner and to ensure further in-service support, every PSAP should ideally have a training manual for call takers, that can be issued to each new employee or easily accessed in online (e-book) form. The manual sets out in clear, printed form what tasks are to be performed, what behavior is to be expected, and how each task can be successfully performed. The document then becomes a point of reference for every employee if a question arises about a particular policy, procedure or method.<sup>9</sup>

##### *Examples of short-term objectives*

Objectives defined, based ideally on an annual analyses of staff educational needs, while reflecting upon the strategic goals of the institution (PSAP) and implemented based on a predefined schedule integrated into the organization's human resources management (or development) planning scheme.

##### *Examples of midterm objectives*

To standardise the quality of collected information/data (for ex. in medical emergencies context) and/ or the quality of communication strategies in the call taking context.

To standardise the system, process and quality of educational support provided within the organisation (at PSAP level), by providing high quality and relevant input (e.g. through online educational platforms/programs, co-shaped by call takers and their trainers/supervisors) and providing motivation towards continual learning, while encouraging stability in the working environment of call takers to avoid unwanted and costly turnover of staff..

<sup>9</sup> Source: <http://editor5.securesites.net/training/>



### *Examples of long-term objectives*

To standardise operational procedures (either at regional or national level), to harmonise procedures in different geographic and cultural settings and with relevant internationally accepted standards:

- building and strengthening the PSAPs corporate culture, trustworthiness and credibility,
- systematically utilising professional and personal skills of call takers, encouraging and actively supporting life-long learning, application of experience, exchange of best practices and implementation of research results into training and operation procedures,
- introducing call-taking support mechanisms (like CAD), encouraging active caller support and effective coaching skills acquisition, introducing call takers to mass emergencies management strategies.

## **5.4 Guidelines**

### 5.4.1 Basic frameworks

The main goal of an educational strategy should be to ensure adequate information, instruction, training and supervision is provided for all 112 call takers. Basic frameworks for the educational requirements of emergency call takers are most commonly defined at national level and in some cases provided by the national legal frameworks (such as Occupational Health and Safety Acts, Acts on professional preparation, educational criteria and continual education of health workers and other rescue services staff etc.) setting out the legal requirements for employees involved in emergency call taking at PSAP level. The PSAP employment strategies and human resources management standards of individual organizations also shape the professional (educational) profiles of 112 call takers, setting out institutional requirements for their required educational background and continuous in-service training.<sup>10</sup>

Examples of the regulations include the obligation of employers to ensure that:

- Providing training and information to employees about safe working practices, for example correct work methods and postures and the correct use of tools, machinery and other equipment;

In relation to employees:

- Adequate information, instruction, training and supervision to be provided for all PSAP workers,
- An institutionalized process for consultation with employees,
- Institutionalized process for identifying educational needs and support mechanisms meeting them put in place at PSAP level.

### 5.4.2 Main areas to be addressed in call taker education

The role and competence profiles of the 112 call taker, combined with the institutional framework and ongoing reform/evolution of the PSAP's role and mandate and the wider context of legislative and other frameworks shaping the 112 services present a set of requirements that have to be transformed into the educational curriculum of call taker training programmes. The centre of focus, at all times, are and should be the needs of the citizen facing an emergency and in need of effective and timely assistance and the preparation of call takers to address these in a competent manner within their mandate.

- Addressing aspects of all key components of the 112 service chain, including location of the caller, classification procedures, dispatch schemes, use of technical equipment, specific procedures in large-scale emergencies and others.
- Complex preparation for emergency call taking addressing among else effective communication with callers, legal and other frameworks for service provision, processing of emergency calls, risk analyses and integrated management of emergencies, telemedicine (including basic life support, advanced life support and other forms of assistance that can be provided via telephone in medical emergencies), ethical and psycho-social aspects of call taking, stress management methods and other relevant topics equipping call takers with necessary knowledge, skills and preparing them for effective team work as well as coordination role.
- Emergency management in all relevant contexts, including coordination of rescue services intervention in emergencies at operational, tactical and strategic levels.
- Language education (in the context of multilingual services, communication and interoperability with other national and international emergency management systems).

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<sup>10</sup> More information at <http://unionsafe.labor.net.au/hazards/109106749528582.html#Heading28>



- Utilisation of communication and information technologies, including applications used for processing calls and data, as a precondition of effective realization of call taking related tasks, as well as ensuring data flow throughout the system, ensuring coordinated management of emergencies.
- Personal development in the context of the call taker role and required competencies.
- Function related education and development of supervision/leadership skills of staff in management positions at all levels, in the context of coordination of emergency management, institutional development, human resources, process and project management.
- Preparation and training of key staff for their roles in the context of management of large-scale (national/international) emergencies, disaster risk reduction & management and national (public) security related events.

#### 5.4.3 Ethics in call taking

For an emergency call taker the issue of ethics can arise at almost every turn. And when it does arise, there is unlikely to be a unanimous opinion on the "right" path to take. But honesty, integrity and reliability are a cornerstone of the public safety profession and making the correct choice is a critical component. That is why ethics should be a part of a new call taker's training, and part of their continuing in-service education as well as a basic component of a culture of "organisational accountability" at PSAP level.

In an international context, disaster and emergency management personnel have a responsibility to become aware of, include and whenever possible help others recognize basic human rights, generally referring to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>11</sup> and reflect on the special needs of women and children in emergencies. All women, men and children have the right to be free from violence including: verbal and physical assault, rape and sex tourism as well as discrimination in health care, employment, social, economic, and political opportunities. While the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights is understood to include women, violence and the abuse of women have been minimized or even dismissed as common practice. Men who perpetuate patterns of violence against women sometimes claim that these patterns should not be subject to public or international jurisdiction. The right of an individual to receive equitable support in emergencies that is culturally and gender-appropriate should be an inalienable right and not subject to negotiation. If there is a duty to provide assistance to people facing emergencies, then that duty must include non-discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, class, and political affiliation.<sup>12</sup> In general it is strongly recommended to include the issue of ethics into training and supervision mechanisms.

## 6 Training Procedures

The systemic approach of training for 112 call takers varies both at institutional and national levels. In Finland, it is a university level programme, while in some other countries a brief training course. Some PSAPs organise their own continual on-job training programmes, while others rely on education services of other institutions. What also varies significantly is the training methodology used – in some cases including a combination of theoretical and practical training, complemented by experienced peer support (on-job guidance), hi-tech simulation-based and online training through webinars and other tools and sometimes joint training with rescue services staff (often focused on integrated management of large-scale emergencies).

The level of educational support, supervision, testing and continual support made available to 112 call takers varies significantly. There is great potential in fostering closer cooperation of involved educational institutions, 112 PSAPs/service providers and other key stake-holders which should be all focused on the definition of educational standards, development of educational programmes and tools fostering the provision of necessary information, tools and skills to the 112 call takers and sharing best practices in the relevant areas.

## 7 Challenges and issues for 112 services

### 7.1 Economic context

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<sup>11</sup> Source: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

<sup>12</sup> Source: <http://iaemeuropa.terapad.com/resources/8959/assets/documents/UN%20DMTP%20-%20Ethics.pdf>



Given the individual and organizational costs related to the pre-job and on-job training of emergency call takers and their relation to performance and job satisfaction, there is a constant need to explore educational needs and upgrade programmes from empirical and theoretical, as well as institutional and intervention related perspectives. The organizational structure of PSAPs and educational support can be a powerful conduit for change in reducing distress and improving employee morale and performance. Thus they represent an important factor of institutional and economic sustainability of the 112 systems. It is highly advisable to actively participate on the development of educational programmes and in-house education strategies at the level of service providers.<sup>13</sup>

## 7.2 Embedding progress in the educational systems

As support systems develop and are being introduced into the PSAP environment alongside new services and procedures, it is of crucial importance to ensure that the training systems adapt and develop alongside these changes. One of the aspects that should be considered in this context is the systematic inclusion of technological training tools in the training portfolio.

### **Potentially helpful technology that can be included in training process**

- Software, guiding through emergency calls and recording calls for future analyses of data and processes
- Databases (on hazardous materials, institutional support networks etc.)
- Electronic guides for specific issues (SOPs, CPR, Airway control, Childbirth instructions etc.)
- Computer aided dispatch systems
- PSAP training simulators
- E-learning tools, web seminars, online courses and video training tools
- Guidecards providing information in the context of specific decision-making processes

### Potential Benefits of Training Software:

- empowering call takers/dispatchers to proactively improve their performance,
- delivering multimedia training sessions to call taker/dispatcher desktops including training flashes, in compliance with bulletins and with pre-shift announcements,
- rules driven or scheduled training can be sent to desktops at any time and completed when call takers/dispatchers are not on duty,
- Author and embed quizzes are delivered easily and quickly,
- Continuous real-time performance updates,
- Enable view of test scores in real-time.

## 7.3 Continuous training

Emergency call takers have to adjust to the developing standard operation procedures in the context of emergency management and new services integrated into the 112 service chain based on technological developments (such as eCALL) and addition of new services addressing special needs of specific caller groups (such as eSMS). Continuous training is thus a necessary component of institutional sustainability of PSAPs and their services.

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<sup>13</sup>

Source: Frontline stress behind the scenes: Emergency medical dispatchers  
[www.tema.ca/Dispatcher\\_Stress.pdf](http://www.tema.ca/Dispatcher_Stress.pdf)



## 8 EENA Recommendations

A wider discussion is yet to form on the potential benefits of supra-national training programmes and the role of European Institutions in 112 call taker educational support, but we believe it could potentially lead to new initiatives in support of more systematic support and preparation of this key target group of service providers.

Stakeholder	Recommended action
Competent Authorities of Emergency Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide/enable systematic educational support for emergency call takers</li> <li>• Support close cooperation of PSAPs with education and training providers</li> <li>• Enable participatory definition of training needs and performance targets for call takers</li> <li>• Establish risk management plans and critical incidents management support and their inclusion into training programmes</li> <li>• Create joint training opportunities that involve staff of rescue service providers</li> </ul>
Call takers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively participating on training</li> <li>• Participate on the definition of training needs and performance targets</li> <li>• Provide training-related feedback to management</li> <li>• Share best practices and experiences</li> </ul>
EENA	Present best practices in education of 112 call takers to the European public and encourage discussion about improvements in the provided educational support
European authorities	Support creation of public-private partnerships and centers of excellence addressing educational needs of emergency call takers

## 9 EENA Requirements

Requirements		
Availability of training	Availability of a complex, continuous training programme	Compulsory
Training quality	Clear training evaluation procedure and defined standards of training programmes	Compulsory
Annual exercises	Realised to practise risk management plans and critical incidents, procedures for complex emergencies, black out etc.	Compulsory



## **ANNEX - relevant best practices and potentially helpful resources**

### **1. Sweden**

#### **1 The training and education of 112 call takers at SOS Alarm**

People who have passed through the needles eye of being thoroughly screened and tested for the role as 112 call takers and emergency dispatchers, are usually very highly motivated to learn the job; their greatest fear being making mistakes that may cause fatal outcome to others.

The greatest challenge then is not to train them initially – though that is certainly a complex task – but to keep that motivation for constant continuous learning and to never lose focus from that important task, year after year, and after hundreds of hours of crisis management.

#### **Purpose of training**

From day one of training it must be integrated into the system that responsibility for competence lays not only with management but with every single individual and as a team at the call centre every day and every hour. Continuous learning and training must be easily available at all time, not only during job introduction.

#### **Method**

In an effort to achieve this at SOS Alarm, a mix of “blended learning” (i.e. classroom as well as e-learning), supervised on-the-job training, simulation and tests are used. Details in chapter 3.

#### **Challenges**

The method involves challenges to traditional training (where teachers are information-givers more than facilitators and trainers) and sub sequential supervising. This issue cannot be neglected but needs to be addressed in order for the method to fully function.

#### **Time- and quality efficiency**

Initial efficiency in training may or may not be improved – depending on the amount of technical training involved (Technical training is the major benefactor from simulation or simulated e-learning in regard to time elapsed from start to self sufficient work being done). The major performance gain lies in attitude and responsibilities taken by the individual in the long run, in the continuous training being achieved without planning or time being scheduled for training!

### **2 Before hiring – screening of call takers**

SOS Alarm practices an extensive scanning, training and trial before hiring on a permanent basis. Applicants are tested and interviewed on ability to make decisions as well as multi tasking capacity in duress and under critical conditions. The extensive training is then followed by another 3 month period of probation before management as well as training supervisors finally gives the go-ahead based on performance as well as various test results after training.

### **3 Details of the training**

Basic layout of the training during the first seven weeks:

**Management introduction, individual e-learning blended with co-worker job participation on a self directed level.** The student is given a set of e-learning modules to go through before the week is over in preparation for the following weeks. Areas involve technical as well as psychological aspects of the job. Emphasis is put on presence with veteran colleagues to recognize and experience real calls – to motivate and understand skills needed.

**Technical simulation and call taking training.** The students are learning and training in a classroom with special training software that simulates the technical system they will later use. Veteran operators with training skills are used as teachers. The exercises used simulate technical issues as well as preferred behavior in call taking situations, skills, knowledge and attitude.



**Interviewing techniques and crisis psychology.** In a classroom setting students are discussing and training a variation of interviewing techniques. The basis of crisis psychology, ethics, personal development and key factors in defusing as a call taker where all part of the self conducted e-learning modules in the first week of preparation. Stress management and how personal attitudes and experience affects the calls, are now being discussed in depth with skilled professionals of these subjects.

**Self studies and on-the-job training with peers.** Another week of reading up through e-learning, mixed with practicing recently acquired skills in cooperation with veteran peers and supervisors at your designated work station. Preparation for the following weeks in classroom.

**Telemedicine.** Anatomy and symptoms of deficient vital parameters and consequences. Theoretical as well as practical training in giving instructions for BLS and ALS (Basic and Advanced life support). Further studies in medical aspects continue after this week as well, the extent partially depending on previous training in health care.

**The 112-organisation and Rescue services.** The services provided through several instances of service providers (municipal, regional and state resources), national emergency cooperation authorities, legal and media aspects of incidents and situations. Combined with practical training in fire fighting.

**Security services.** Optional for some stations and PSAP.

After this seven-week program of Blended learning the students are subject to another four to six weeks of on-the-job training, working side by side with skilled supervisors. At the end of that period they perform a series of certification tests to prove their acquired knowledge and skills.

A probation period of another three months, supervised and evaluated finally by management is then conducted and the student needs approval before final hiring.

The certification tests are later required to retake every 12 months (or if away from work for any reason, on a time period lasting longer than 3 months). During training there are exercises and minor tests available to the students in order for the individual to check his or her understanding and progress.

The certification tests are a requirement for staying on the job and can – if failed – lead to termination of the job at any time in their career. In order to not fail the tests the operators need to read up on new e-learning material and/or attend training provided during the year.

Further follow-up is also conducted by the use of individual screening of calls – in groups of with the PSAP manager.

#### **4 Teachers and supervisors**

For this concept of blended learning to work, teachers, managers and supervisors need to be involved and understand the purpose and function of the training. Classroom methods differ from traditional training in the sense that teachers and trainers main purpose is to secure the students understanding of the previously distributed e-learning as well as teaching and discuss new material.

If the teachers are only used to traditional training they may feel threatened and/or reject the e-learning parts. Students (depending on previous experience and sometimes generation issues) may feel abandoned when all training is not done under supervision of a teacher in a classroom.

Properly addressed this need not be an issue but a positive enhancement in their role as trainers: tedious repetitive tasks can be eliminated as they are handled differently and through the use of software, technical monitoring and follow ups. The teachers are definitely needed as a resource of deeper understanding and for discussions.

## **2. Spain - Call Takers Education in the 112 Catalanian PSAP**



The 112 service model implanted in the Catalonia community, awards the management of the emergency number to the public company CAT112. Through a public bidding, this company designates the management of the PSAP to a BSC (Borrowing Service Company). This company takes on based on this agreement, the accountability for call takers education. On a monthly basis, the CAT112 supervises and validates the subject matter and the planning proposed by the BSC.

The call takers education in 112 Catalonia is structured in two different areas:

- **Operational education:** addressed to the call takers. Within this scope, the BSC delivers different education processes adapted to the needs of each call taker. Personalized tutoring to call takers with critical difficulties is also performed upon demand. This sort of education could be targeting several call takers work areas, such as: communication, empathy, territory knowledge, high stress work levels, etc.

The 112 training includes sessions related to theoretical knowledge on the issues related to emergency calls management: providing among else territory-related knowledge and an awareness of the computer work programs and the necessary skills in working with them.

The 112 also provides an education set addressing stress management and personal motivation.

In order to improve the 112 call takers performance, CAT112 intensively cooperates with the BSC in the creation of the training sessions.

The PSAP in Catalonia processes information to be transferred to police, medical services and fire departments. The call taker doesn't join in operation crews activation.

For this reason call takers education is addressed to strengthen communication skills in order to optimize the quality of information that later on shall be forwarded to the operational emergency crews.

Education courses currently taught include:

**Communication skills:**

Three hours long sessions are held for each basic call taker task. Linguistic and communicative resources are provided to improve the call takers skills in order to maximize their performance.

**Emotional management:**

Training workshops are performed (groups of 5 to 10 call takers), triggered by the service coordinators. Over the long term call takers learn to express and share concerns and difficulties, that generally makes them feel powerless and also learn to take control of their emotional and behavioural reactions.

**Specific communication skills:**

In the Catalonia PSAP, there is a telematic communication system transferring information to all individuals involved in the provision of service. This required a specific set of skills related among else to timely and accurate synthesis, as they process emergency related information in a written form for the system and the allocation and dispatch of adequate resources depend on their efficiency.

**Initial training:**

The 112 PSAP in Catalonia has a training dossier designed by CAT112 for newly employed call takers, that is delivered by the Borrowing Service Company as an introduction into the complex training process. This dossier includes all basic procedures, related to emergency call management, necessary to equip to call takers for the correct performance of their tasks.

This training and selection process includes several types of testing areas, also addressing several kinds of skills of the applicants. This training stage lasts 15 days and includes listening-based roll plays with real emergency calls.

The content of this education process is structured, divided into three different categories:

- Knowledge of the common service chain.
- Education in operational management of every basic emergency type.
- Role-play based practices and exercises.

**Quality Management in PSAP Catalonia:**

Another key in call takers education is controlling the quality of calls management. The PSAP in Catalonia maintains a system of constant analysis of emergency calls, served by its call takers.



The coordination team has an interactive tool, called ECO. This tool is used to analyze and evaluate the call management quality by each call taker. This evaluation is made in a random manner to ensure that the scores are a real reflection of the quality of provided service.

Every call taker has a coordinator assigned that is responsible for monthly evaluation of 3 randomly picked emergency calls. This exercise is designed to motivate call takers to explore their tasks and progress in their call taking skills.

Later on, 3 more calls for each call taker are evaluated. In this case, the coordinator chooses the calls based on different kinds of code calls (medical assistance, traffic accidents, forest fires, etc). This exercise helps to identify different areas of potential improvements in the call takers performance.

A 400 hours training programme is made available to emergency call takers in the Region of Madrid.

### 3. Finland

<http://www.pelastusopisto.fi/pelastus/home.nsf/pages/6C163320294D67C8C22571D900793504?opendocument>

#### **Emergency Response Centre Operator training programme**

Training includes both theoretical and practical studies. The training focuses on the holistic handling of emergency calls, handing the assignment over to the appropriate units and providing callers with advice.

ERC Operator Examination will be completed in 1,5 years. The studies are arranged in cooperation with the Police College. Targets of the examination are to train the students for comprehensive handling of the emergency calls from receiving a call to instructing the client. Studies include a great deal of training in the college's simulator and a practical training period at the Emergency response centre (PSAP).

The basic entrance requirements for the (ERC) call taker course are:

- 18 years of age as training starts by the end of the application period,
- completion of upper secondary school syllabus or matriculation examination or vocational upper secondary qualification or a corresponding previous qualification or, by the end of the application period, further vocational qualification or vocational qualification as referred to in the Act on Vocational Adult Education (631/1998), or a corresponding previous qualification
- good health and mental and physical fitness for ERC Operators duties passing of the entrance examination
- Previous work experience and good language skills entitle the candidate to additional points in the entrance process. A Diploma in Police Studies qualifies the holder to work as an ERC Operator.

#### **Entrance examination**

- The applicant's aptitude for becoming an ERC Operator is tested in the entrance examination. The entrance examination comprises a psychological test, a written test and a language test.
- Of the applicants meeting the basic entrance requirements, approximately double the number of those eventually admitted will be invited to take the entrance examination. If the applicant has taken the psychological test for the ERC Operator course during the past two years, he or she need not retake it, but all applicants must pass a language test each time they apply.
- 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 matriculation examination and the other for those with a college level vocational qualification.

**Additional provided training** includes:

- Approximately 6 training days annually for each operator, in addition to that special courses and seminars



### **Themes covered:**

- Risk analysis in police tasks etc.
- IT systems
- Crisis management, ICT security
- Co-operation with authorities

#### **4. Estonia**

Call takers are being trained in the Välke-Maarja Rescue College - Academy of Security Sciences. Studies include the module of general subjects (organizational culture, psychology, professional Russian and principles of law), medical, rescue and police training (rescue service legislation, rescue work, police and border guard legislation, police work, medicine and internship in medical service), language skills (Russian, English), computer studies, call handling skills and practical training at PSAP. The base for the 40 weeks curriculum (1 year training) is a pre-defined vocational standard for call-takers, followed by continuous training at the PSAP.

#### **5. Germany**

The school Landesrettungsschule Brandenburg provides a 2 year training programme for emergency call takers.

#### **6. Lithuania**

Call takers are being trained at special courses (3 month long theory followed by 2 month practical training)

#### **7. Romania**

Call takers have a 2 month theoretical course in a special training centre plus one month training with supervisor at the PSAP. Training covers standard operating procedures and protocols.

#### **8. Turkey**

Emergency call takers follow a 2 year training programme, covering communication and language skills, computer skills, introduction into psychology and practical training at PSAPs.

#### **9. Portugal**

Emergency call takers are recruited from the National Police and National Guard, receive 4 weeks of theoretical training, 2 weeks of practical training followed by 2 month of supervised probation period at the PSAP.

#### **10. Croatia**

A permanent training programme including evaluation is being provided, including communication skills, stress management skills, simulation exercises and standard operation procedures.

#### **11. USA**

APCO emergency dispatch training  
<http://www.apco911.org/institute/>

911 Dispatcher Training Manual  
[http://www.911dispatch.com/training/train\\_call.html](http://www.911dispatch.com/training/train_call.html)

911 Advisor programme