

RECOMMENDED MINIMUM TRAINING GUIDELINES FOR TELECOMMUNICATORS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: WHAT IS THE INTENT OF THE GUIDELINES?

A: The *Recommended Minimum Training Guidelines for Telecommunicators Project* is a 9-1-1 community-wide effort to identify nationally recognized, universally accepted minimum training topics that can be used to train aspiring and current 9-1-1 telecommunicators—call-takers and dispatchers—and to provide the foundation for their ongoing professional development. The effort is driven by the belief that it is vital that Americans receive a consistent level of 9-1-1 service, no matter where they live or where they travel.

Q: HOW DID THE PROJECT GET STARTED?

A: Following a keynote address delivered by Nathan Lee, of the Denise Amber Lee Foundation (DAL), at the 2009 CalNENA Conference, dialogue with DAL representatives and others began centered on the need for a national training guideline. A second meeting was arranged at Navigator Conference in April, 2010, to continue discussing support toward the goal of a national training guideline. Another meeting was held in Ft. Worth that same year when representatives of most of the parties in the current workgroup and all pledged support for getting the initiative started. A workgroup was formed, monthly call were held, and after substantial work on the document was complete and ready to start the ANSI process, the workgroup to lost focus and momentum. Coincident with these discussions, the National 9-1-1 Program had received requests to consider fostering the resurrection of the work that had begun several years earlier. The National 9-1-1 Program invited interested parties to meet in Washington, D.C., to discuss the continuing need and how to build momentum again.

The result of this more than three-year effort is the *Recommended Minimum Training Guidelines for Telecommunicators*. 9-1-1 Authorities, training coordinators, standards organizations and industry training professionals came together to identify baseline minimum topics that can be used to train 9-1-1 telecommunicators and which provide the foundation for their ongoing professional development and supports existing training standards.

Q: WHO WAS INVOLVED IN DEVELOPMENT OF THE GUIDELINES?

A: Representatives of the following organizations, aka the Working Group, participated in the Project:

- Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO)
- Connecticut Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection
- Denise Amber Lee Foundation
- Fairfax County (Virginia) Department of Public Safety
- Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network
- Hamilton County (Indiana) Public Safety Communications
- International Academies of Emergency Dispatch (IAED)
- National Association of State 9-1-1 Administrators (NASNA)
- National Emergency Number Association (NENA)
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)
- North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG)

- PowerPhone
- Priority Dispatch
- RedSky Technologies
- Rochester/Monroe County (New York) Emergency Communications Department
- Stafford County (Virginia) Sheriff's Office
- Vail (Colorado) Public Safety Communications Center
- Weakley County (Tenn.) Emergency 9-1-1

Numerous other individuals who comments and made suggestions during the public review period.

Q: WHAT ROLE DID THE NATIONAL 9-1-1 PROGRAM PLAY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GUIDELINES?

A: While the National 9-1-1 Program has facilitated the Project by providing a forum for discussion and development, the Guidelines are not federally owned or mandated—rather, they are the joint product of members of the agencies participating in their development.

Q: WAS THE 911 COMMUNITY ASKED FOR INPUT ON THE GUIDELINES?

A: The Working Group and the National 9-1-1 Program both felt that it was vital to provide the 9-1-1 community with an opportunity to offer input into the Guidelines. The first phase of this initiative was to invite the leadership of the aforementioned organizations to vet the Working Document. Their comments were fully vetted and resolved by an adjudication subcommittee that was formed specifically for this purpose; the subcommittee was comprised of Working Group members who had volunteered for the task.

The second phase was to enable the 9-1-1 community at large to do the same, which was accomplished via the NENA Workspace platform. The result of this collaborative effort is Recommended Minimum Training Guidelines that truly represent a consensus amongst the participating organizations and the 9-1-1 community at large.

Q: WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

A:

- Establish nationally recognized, recommended minimum training for our nation's *telecommunicators* that will cover core competencies and establish the foundation for ongoing professional development
- Provide the framework for state legislation that establishes the requirements for such training and a funding mechanism

Q: WHAT ARE THE MINIMUM TRAINING TOPICS SUGGESTED BY THE GUIDELINES?

A:

- Telecommunicator roles and responsibilities
- 9-1-1 call processing
- Radio communications
- Emergency management

- Emergency communications technology
- Legal concepts
- Interpersonal communications
- Stress management
- Quality assurance
- On-the-job training guidelines

Q: HOW CAN THE GUIDELINES BE USED?

A: These Guidelines are intended to enable Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs)/9-1-1 Centers and Emergency Service Providers to do the following:

- Establish training programs where none previously existed
- Build upon previously established training programs
- Assess outside training programs that currently are being utilized

It is important to note that how each 9-1-1 Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) carries out the specifics of its training program—including how agency-specific protocols will be implemented and/or integrated and the amount of time that is spent on each topic—is solely a decision of that AHJ. The Guidelines represent the *minimum* level of training that should be provided to any 9-1-1 Authority’s telecommunicators.

Q: IS THIS ALL THE TRAINING THAT WILL BE NEEDED?

A: The training topics provide minimum-level understanding. In order to field emergency calls in a live environment, telecommunicators must receive supplemental training that will enable them to process the emergency calls that are specific to their respective PSAP/9-1-1 Center or Emergency Services Provider.

Q: WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF MY AGENCY DOES NOT FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES?

A: Individual states or agencies may have, or may enact, rules, regulations or statutes to specify training requirements. The Guidelines are not mandated or legislated, but it is hoped that the 9-1-1 public safety community will use the Guidelines to assess their own training initiatives so that uniform and consistent training is conducted in all 9-1-1 agencies.

Q: ARE THERE OTHER TRAINING STANDARDS OR BEST PRACTICES THAT I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT AND HOW DO THEY DIFFER FROM THE GUIDELINES?

A: Agencies should familiarize themselves with all available standards and best practices related to the 9-1-1 profession. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) and the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), and others all have applicable standards related to training. Some of these standards are specific on how to train, offer behavioral objectives of the desired outcome of the training, describe for the 9-1-1 Authority what their responsibilities are related to training of their professional 9-1-1 staff. The Guidelines are intended to identify nationally recognized, universally accepted, minimum topics and subtopics that can be used to train aspiring and current telecommunicators—call-takers and dispatchers—and which provide the foundation for their ongoing professional development. How this is accomplished is the responsibility of the AHJ or local statute to define.

Q: WHAT IS THE “MODEL” LEGISLATION?

A: As a corollary to the Guidelines, the Working Group also developed Model Legislation and a supporting advocacy packet that can be used by 9-1-1 Authorities, APCO and NENA chapters, and other professional associations. The intention was to provide a toolbox that such entities can use to pursue legislation in states that currently do not have statutes that ensure minimum training for telecommunicators. In those states that do have such statutes, the Model Legislation package can be used as a baseline to ensure that the recommended minimum training topics are being covered.

Specifically, the Model Legislation provides an example model that can be used as the starting point for crafting individual state legislation.

Q: WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I WANT MORE INFORMATION?

A: Questions regarding the Recommended Minimum Training Guidelines or the Model Legislation Advocacy Packet can be sent to questions@911minimumtraining.com.