



Position Statement

IPSA Supports Public Safety Telecommunicators Being Properly Classified as a ‘Protective’ Occupation

The International Public Safety Association (IPSA) supports the recommendation to properly classify the Public Safety Telecommunicator as a “Protective Service Occupation” in the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) under the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The SOC is one of several classification systems established by the OMB to ensure coordination of federal statistical activities.

The Standard Occupational Classification Committee (SOCPC), made up of representatives from nine different federal agencies, was established in 2014 to review public comments and make recommendations to the OMB for the revised 2018 SOC. The SOCPC, going against comments from the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials International (APCO), the public, and the Congressional Next Gen 9-1-1 Caucus Co-Chairs, recommended to maintain the current classification of the Telecommunicator as an “Office and Administrative Support Occupation”.

The role of the Public Safety Telecommunicator has greatly evolved over the last several years and is a critical component of emergency response. As the FIRST, first responder, some examples of their capabilities include:

1. Within seconds of answering the call, they can begin offering lifesaving instructions over the phone such as CPR, child birth, safe evacuation routes, etc.; minutes before anyone arrives on scene
2. Act as the first line of defense for responders and maintain overall situational awareness by gathering, evaluating and communicating pertinent information or suspicious activity
3. Obtain, organize and distribute resources for major events such as an Active Shooter, Hostage Situation, Natural Disasters, Tactical Operations, etc.

Furthermore, the nature of this position allows for little to no closure. What was once considered to be only a “stressful” job, has now proven to be a traumatic one. Telecommunicators do not get to witness with their eyes, they hear the chaos and can only imagine what has occurred on scene. Because of this, Public Safety Telecommunicators are highly susceptible to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). They are remote from the scene, but carry heavy levels of responsibility with minimal ability to influence the outcome. They experience the same psychological impacts as all other first responders; helplessness, fear, horror, just from a different perspective.

The International Public Safety Association stands with APCO, NENA, the Congressional Next Gen 9-1-1 Caucus Co-Chairs and members of the public who have passionately advocated for this change and are very disappointed in the recommendation of the Policy Committee.

The IPSA will continue to monitor this situation and post any updated information or instruction on how to encourage this correction from the OMB.

Adopted July 30, 2016