



# **Flathead Emergency Communications Center**

## **Operational Assessment**

**Submitted to:  
Flathead County, Montana  
Emergency Communications Center**

By

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## Executive Summary

The Flathead Emergency Communications Center (FECC), located in Kalispell, Montana, commissioned APCO Consulting Services (ACS) to conduct an operational assessment of the emergency communications center, from now on referred to as the “FECC.” In addition, throughout this report, the term “ECC” will be used instead of Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). “ECC” is the term predominantly used in the industry today as it encompasses all public safety communications center functions.

The FECC operational assessment consisted of a comprehensive review in the following areas: current ECC operations, compliance with standard operating procedures (SOP), alignment with industry standards and best practices, recruitment and retention, new hire and veteran training programs, staffing, and scheduling practices. The goals were to identify current and future needs and assess potential innovative and sustainable options that would enable FECC to realize its stated mission of commitment to excellence through integrity, compassion, fairness, and professionalism.

ACS recognizes that sustaining an ECC while hiring, training, and retaining staff is a constant battle and presents many challenges for agencies nationwide. This report aims to provide FECC leadership with the considerations necessary to address these challenges. Moreover, this report will also delve into other areas of the ECC, including operational practices and workloads, the technology used to support workflows for ECC operations, and leadership and supervision. The objective is to identify gaps and any causal factors that may be impacting retention and operational effectiveness.

Based on the analysis contained in this document, the review team concludes that even with improved processes and technological changes, the ECC’s focus should be on filling vacant positions (as soon as reasonably possible) and updating systems (e.g., training program, Collective Bargaining Agreement, and the written directives). ACS suggests FECC leadership collaborate with the Human Resources Department to develop long-range staffing and succession plans that will enable them to identify and prioritize the department's staffing levels and other needs, such as promotional opportunities, updating job descriptions and post orders, and onboarding practices. Immediate efforts should be directed toward identifying related goals, objectives, and other potential impacts. Proper long-range planning is a crucial aspect that should not be overlooked. The ACS review team offers our report to FECC to assist with planning, continuous improvement, and sustainability efforts.

The Considerations section that follows the main content of the report summarizes the high-level items that should garner the most attention in the opinion of the ACS review team. Other considerations should be explored, accepted, prioritized, and implemented when possible. A roadmap for change is suggested throughout the report.

The review team found FECC personnel to be friendly and helpful. They are eager to have their concerns legitimized and to move from the current best-efforts operations to a more sustainable and robust model.

## **Acknowledgments**

APCO International acknowledges and appreciates the following personnel for their contributions to this report:

- Elizabeth Brooks – 9-1-1 Center Director, FECC
- Pete Melnick – County Administrator, Flathead County
- Tammy Skramovsky – Human Resources Director, Flathead County
- Brian Heino – Sheriff, Flathead County Sheriff’s Office
- Nic Salois - Under Sheriff, Flathead County Sheriff’s Office
- Clint Peters – Chief, Columbia Falls Police Department
- Dan Pearce – Chief, Kalispell Fire/EMS Department
- Chad Fetveit – Captain, Kalispell Police Department
- Brian Struble – Sergeant, Kalispell Police Department
- Gary Mahugh – Chief, Creston Fire Department
- Jeremy Patton – Chief, Big Fork Fire Department
- Bridger Kelch – Chief, Whitefish Police Department
- Various Staff – Flathead Emergency Communications Center

## **Program Goals**

ACS builds on APCO International’s commitment to member services. The focus of this review is to provide the findings and considerations from the specifics of the pre-defined statement of work to key officials.

While constructing this report, all aspects of the ECC related to operations were taken into consideration. The development of this report includes an assessment of the current operations, service delivery, written directives, training program adequacy, recruitment and retention practices, and FECC technology reliability and resiliency, including continuity and disaster recovery, security, and interoperability.

## **Peer-to-Peer Reviews**

Experienced communications officials and APCO members who have successfully managed ECCs were selected to perform these reviews. As peers in the public safety and public service realms, the review team’s skill set was matched with the jurisdiction’s needs and the scope of work desired.



## **APCO Review Team**

The ACS team (hereafter referred to as the “review team”) consisted of three members with a notable amount of ECC operational and technical experience:

- Cathy Wix, Consulting Services Program Manager for APCO International, Florida
- Daniel Morelos, ACE, Director of Safety Programs for Tucson Airport Authority, Arizona (retired)
- Margie Moulin, Director of Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon (retired)

## **Statement of Work Summary**

The statement of work identifies the following components for review and analysis by the APCO review team:

### **I. Assessment of Current Operations**

- Organizational overview
- Call processing and workload
  - Primary and ancillary duties of PSTs
  - Call taker and radio dispatcher duties as they relate to ECC operations
- Written Directive System
- Compliance and standard operating procedures
- Workflows

### **II. Assessment of Current Training Program**

- Provide feedback on department-wide in-service training
  - New hire training
  - Remedial training
  - Continuing education
- Provide direction on mandatory training hours and policies
- Report on overall strengths and weaknesses of the training program

### **III. Staffing Assessment**

- Review current staffing
- Examine turnover/retention for the previous five years
- Recommend staffing levels based on coverage positions
- APCO Project RETAINS Employee Satisfaction Survey Administration
- Provide scheduling options

### **IV. Recruitment and Retention**

- Assess the hiring process
- Report on overall strengths and weaknesses

## Methodology

The APCO review team used several processes to solicit feedback on the issues and the challenges facing FECC to better understand the current workplace environment. This feedback helped determine the current needs and ascertain what improvements would provide the best level of service for all stakeholders. The following methods were used:

**Document Review:** Essential data and information were gathered before the site visit and throughout this project to develop an understanding of the ECC operation, including but not limited to staffing, policies and procedures, workflows, level of service delivery, compliance with standards and best practices, and existing workplace conditions.

**Interviews:** The review team interviewed stakeholders and staff to determine service levels, operational factors, potential risk areas, and prioritized goals.

**Observations:** During the site visit, informal interviews with staff members were conducted in addition to an observation of the ECC operation. The time spent in the ECC focuses on gaining the perspective of the dispatch staff and supervisors, specifically focusing on facets of the operation directly related to the scope of work for this project.

**Report Development:** The review team will develop a comprehensive written report and present the findings to staff and stakeholders as specified in the scope of work. The analysis, findings, and considerations in this report are based on industry best practices, standards, and feedback from staff, stakeholders, and first responders.

## Overview

The Flathead Emergency Communications Center (FECC), with approval from the Flathead County Commissioners, commissioned ACS to conduct an operations and staffing assessment of the ECC. This study focuses on the following core issues:

1. Current state of ECC operations
2. Current state of the training program
3. Assessment of the Written Directive System
4. Assessment of call processing and workload/workflows
5. Staffing analysis for optimal staffing levels
6. Assessment of scheduling practices
7. Recruitment and retention practices

The report includes observations, analysis, findings, and considerations related to ECC operations and supporting mission-critical technology utilized. Additionally, hyperlinks have been added throughout the report for quick resource and reference purposes.

# Section 1: Operations

## Introduction

This section contains an overview of the current operational environment with the considerations from an assessment conducted on the operational readiness of FECC. It is important to note many definitions exist for the term “operational readiness.” For this section, the following definition is appropriate and serves as the basis for the information provided.

*“Operational readiness means the capability of an organization, an asset, a system, or equipment to perform the missions or functions for which it is organized or designed.”<sup>1</sup>*

With this understanding, the review team’s objective was to determine if FECC is operationally ready to provide service that:

- Has the most effective organizational structure in place.
- Exists in a stable and sustainable environment.
- Uses proper equipment and technology following the applicable policies and procedures. (Note: A technology assessment was not part of this scope of work; however, references will be made to some of the technology used for ECC operational purposes.)
- Is measured by stakeholder satisfaction, industry standards, quality of service, and operational sustainability.
- Has the correct number of staff in place.
- Is aligned with its mission and core values (i.e., Integrity, Compassion, Professionalism, and Fairness).

## CURRENT OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

### GEOGRAPHIC SERVICE AREA

Flathead County, Montana, is comprised of three incorporated cities, 21 census-designated places, and two unincorporated communities. Kalispell is the largest of the three incorporated cities in the county, followed by Whitefish and Columbia Falls.<sup>2</sup> Many of the entities within the county have their own police, fire, and EMS departments. FECC provides public safety communications and coordination services to many of the entities shown



Figure 1: Area Map of Flathead County, Montana

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Code § 741 – Definitions. (8) Operational Readiness. Cornell Law School. Legal Information Institute. Available at [www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/6/741](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/6/741). Accessed 05/29/2024.

<sup>2</sup> Flathead County, Montana. “About Flathead County.” Available at <https://flathead.mt.gov/about-flathead-county>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

in Figure 1. An explanation of these services is explained in greater detail in the Assessment of ECC Operations section.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county consists of a total area of 5,256 square miles, which ranks second in the state.<sup>3</sup> Of the total square miles listed for Flathead County, 5,087 square miles are land-based and ranked third in the state, and 169 square miles are inland water-based (i.e., lake, lagoon, pond, etc.), which is ranked third in the state.

### ADJACENT JURISDICTIONS

Flathead County is bordered by Lincoln, Sanders, Lake, Missoula, Powell, Lewis and Clark, Teton, Pondera, and Glacier counties (not identified in the area map, Figure 1). Table 1 lists the incorporated cities, census-designated places, and unincorporated cities and towns within Flathead County.

FLATHEAD COUNTY, MONTANA			
Incorporated Cities	Census-Designated Places		Unincorporated Cities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kalispell</li> <li>• Whitefish</li> <li>• Columbia Falls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Batavia</li> <li>• Bigfork</li> <li>• Coram</li> <li>• Essex</li> <li>• Evergreen</li> <li>• Forest Hill Village</li> <li>• Helena Flats</li> <li>• Hungry Horse</li> <li>• Kila</li> <li>• Lakeside</li> <li>• Little Bitterroot Lake</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marion</li> <li>• Martin City</li> <li>• Niarada</li> <li>• Oleny</li> <li>• Pinnacle</li> <li>• Polebridge</li> <li>• Rhodes</li> <li>• Snowslip</li> <li>• Somers</li> <li>• West Glacier</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apgar Village</li> <li>• Lake McDonald</li> </ul>

Table 1: Flathead County, Montana, Cities and Towns

### TRANSPORTATION

Transportation systems are the lifeblood of any region. These systems support and facilitate the movement of people and everyday necessities in the communities served. Transportation modes consist of infrastructure that supports the following systems:<sup>4</sup>

- Air systems – Airports, heliports, landing strips, air traffic control, aircraft (manned and unmanned), and support services
- Surface systems – Roads, bridges, pipelines, rail, mass transit, and shipping
- Maritime systems – Ports, waterways, and landside connection points

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. Gazetteer Files. 2023. Counties. "Flathead County." Available at [https://www2.census.gov/geo/docs/maps-data/data/gazetteer/2023\\_Gazetteer/2023\\_gaz\\_counties\\_30.txt](https://www2.census.gov/geo/docs/maps-data/data/gazetteer/2023_Gazetteer/2023_gaz_counties_30.txt). Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>4</sup> Rodrigue, Jean-Paul. The Geography of Transport Systems. "Chapter 5 – Transportation Modes." 5 Ed. 2020

Flathead County has a transportation system common to any suburban locality strategically located near major population areas. Table 2 gives an illustration of the transportation system found in the County.

Roadways	Rail/Bus	Aviation	Martime
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•US Rt. 2</li> <li>•US Rt. 93</li> <li>•SR 28</li> <li>•SR 35</li> <li>•SR 40</li> <li>•SR 82</li> <li>•SR 83</li> <li>•S 206</li> <li>•S 209</li> <li>•S 317</li> <li>•S 424</li> <li>•S 486</li> <li>•S 487</li> <li>•S 503</li> <li>•S 548</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Flathead County Eagle Transit</li> <li>•Mountain Climber</li> <li>•West Glacier Station</li> <li>•Whitefish Station</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Glacier Park International</li> <li>•Kalispell City Airport</li> <li>•Ferndale Airfield</li> <li>•Meadow Creek-USFS Airport</li> <li>•Schafer-USFS Airport</li> <li>•Spotted Bear-USFS Airport</li> <li>•Whitefish Airport</li> <li>•23 listed private airport and/or heliports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•DeSmet</li> <li>•Flathead Lake Marina</li> <li>•406 docks</li> </ul>

Table 2: Main Transportation Networks in Flathead County, Montana

### Analysis

FEMA defines a critical incident<sup>5</sup> as, “Any natural or man-made event, civil disturbance, or any other occurrence of unusual or severe nature that threatens to cause or causes the loss of life or injury to citizens and/or severe damage to property.” Critical incidents can and will occur in any one of these transportation outlets and federal agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), stress that threats or hazards that could cause injury, property damage, business disruption, or environmental impact should be addressed.<sup>6</sup> The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) encourages jurisdictions to be ready to face emergency threats and advocates this is done through effective planning by taking an all-hazards approach.<sup>7</sup>

It’s important to note that critical incidents to the Flathead County transportation system could potentially affect the workload in FECC. FECC should be operationally ready and prepared to meet these challenges head-on. To ensure operational readiness, effective plans should be in place and all members of the FECC should be trained in them.

<sup>5</sup> FEMA. The Incident Command System. Available at [https://emilms.fema.gov/is\\_0111a/groups/173.html](https://emilms.fema.gov/is_0111a/groups/173.html). Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>6</sup> DHS. Disasters. Available at <https://www.dhs.gov/topics/disasters>. Accessed on 04/16/2024.

<sup>7</sup> FEMA. SLG 101: Guide for All-Hazard Emergency Operations Planning. “Chapter 1: Preliminary Considerations.” Available at <https://www.fema.gov/pdf/plan/slg101.pdf>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

## **Finding**

Critical incidents occurring on the transportation systems in Flathead County are handled by multiple agencies. The lead agency in this effort is the Montana Disaster and Emergency Services (MT DES). MT DES is situated within the Montana Department of Military Affairs and is tasked with developing functional and hazard-specific plans for the state and works closely with federal, local, and tribal government and public safety agencies in this effort. The MT DES has developed a comprehensive emergency response framework (MERF) that includes 15 Emergency Support Function Annexes.<sup>8</sup> Other plans developed by MT DES include:

- State of Montana Hazardous Material Plan
- Montana Disaster and Emergency Services Division State Training Program
- Montana Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan Statewide Hazard Assessment

The review team noted the following SOP listed in Table 3 that would be used by FECC public safety telecommunicators (PSTs) for the processing and dispatching of critical incident calls and notification requirements that may involve the transportation systems in Flathead County. Also noted, several SOPs have not been updated since 2017.

Eff. Date	Title	Last Update
2017	Aircraft Emergencies	01/05/2024
2017	Avalanche	01/05/2024
2017	Biological Threats	--
2017	Bomb Threats	01/17/2024
2017	Bridge Damage	01/17/2024
2017	Earthquake	--
2017	Equine Ambulance	--
2017	Explosion	--
2017	Flathead County Fire Investigation Team	02/07/2024
2017	Flooding	02/07/2024
2017	Found Bomb	02/07/2024
2017	Fuel Spills	--
2017	Glacier Park International Airport (GPIA) Alerts	02/14/2024
2017	Hazmat Response	--
2017	Mass Casualty Incident	--
2017	Railroad Incident	--
2017	Water Rescue	--
2017	Wildland Fire	--

*Table 3: FECC SOPs Related to the Transportation System*

## **Consideration**

As soon as reasonably possible, FECC leadership should consider updating the SOPs that have not been updated since 2017 (Table 3). In addition, if not already achieved, FECC

<sup>8</sup> Montana Emergency Response Framework (MERF). Emergency Support Functions. "Individual ESFs." Available at <https://des.mt.gov/Preparedness/MERF-ESF>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

leadership should consider developing criteria-based call guides from the SOPs listed in Table 3 and make them available to the PSTs at their workstations. Each call guide should offer guidance and direction for these incidents that FECC PSTs will be expected to perform successfully. This should enhance operational readiness when working on calls of these types.

ECC leadership should consider developing an Emergency Operations folder in PowerDMS and house all SOPs relating to critical incidents involving the transportation system. Moreover, to ensure operational readiness, FECC leadership should consider instituting proactive measures, such as scheduling periodic readiness assessments, training, tabletop exercises, and after-action processes. Doing so would align with best practices and industry standards.

APCO maintains the following industry standards that offer insight, guidance, and direction to ECCs to help aid in developing the proactive measures mentioned.

- APCO ANS 1.121.1-2022 Managing Operational Overload in the Emergency Communications Center
- APCO ANS 1.115.1-2018 Core Competencies, Operational Factors, and Training for Next-Generation Technologies in Public Safety Communications
- APCO ANS 1.119.1-2021 Public Safety Telecommunicator Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Program
- APCO ANS 3.111.1-2022 Detecting Early Warning Symptoms of Stress in Public Safety Telecommunicators
- APCO ANS 3.103.2-2015 Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators

In addition, FECC leadership should consider reaching out to the Flathead County Office of Emergency Services (FC-OES) for assistance in this process. The review team learned that the FC-OES is currently in the process of updating its Western Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan. The plan is in draft form and available on the FC-OES website.<sup>9</sup> For critical incident planning purposes and SOP development, pages 4-2 through 4-7 contain a list of significant hazards identified for the western region of Montana. Applicable SOPs, criteria-based call taking and dispatch guidelines, and training lesson plans should be developed for each. From an operational readiness perspective, this guidance and direction is vital for FECC PSTs to be efficient and effective when working on critical incidents involving the transportation system.

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<sup>9</sup> Flathead County, Montana. Emergency Management. Western Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan Draft. Available at <https://flathead.mt.gov/department-directory/oes/emergency-management>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.



## POPULATION

According to 2020 decennial U.S. census data, the estimated 2024 population for Flathead County, Montana, is 115,473 with a growth rate of 1.58% over the previous year (Table 4). Flathead County is the fourth largest county in the state of Montana and has seen a growth in population of 27.08% since 2010.<sup>10</sup> The population of Flathead County has been growing at an average rate of 2.14% annually since 2020. For FECC, any increase in population could bring an increase in call volume.

Year	Population <sup>11</sup>	Growth	Growth Rate
2024	115,473	1,794	1.58%
2023	113,679	1,794	1.6%
2022	111,885	3,116	2.86%
2021	108,769	3,893	3.71%
2020	104,876	996	0.96%

Table 4: Projected Growth Rates for Flathead County, Montana

It should be noted, the data shown in Table 4 does not reflect the transient population rates for Flathead County. A transient population includes those individuals who do not normally reside in Flathead County but frequent the area. Transient populations are most likely to be found in areas where there may be an influx in population, such as train stations, places of work, office buildings, shopping areas, beaches, colleges, restaurants, resorts, and airports.

According to a study published in 2023 by the University of Montana Institute of Tourism & Recreation Research, it identified Flathead County as one of many popular domestic and international tourist destinations in the state. For statistical purposes, Flathead County lies in the Glacier Country Region of the study. Research in the study revealed \$1.2 billion was spent in this region between 2019 and 2021. An estimated \$618,120 in nonresident traveler expenditures was realized by Flathead County at that time.

For many localities, transient population data is hard to collect and reflect for reporting and planning purposes; however, that is not the case for Flathead County. In addition to the data presented by the University of Montana Institute of Tourism & Recreation Research, the cities of Kalispell, Whitefish, and Columbia Falls each have their own Chamber of Commerce Convention and Visitors Bureau and provide tourism data that can be found through their websites.

### **Consideration**

FECC leadership should consider taking advantage of the trending data provided by the entities mentioned. The data may provide insight into surges in population experienced by the county. Comparisons can be made in the call data trends collected by FECC with

<sup>10</sup> World Population Review. U.S. Census data. Flathead County, Montana, Estimated Population 2024. Available at <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/mt/flathead-county-population>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>11</sup> Note: data after 2020 is projected by World Population Review based on recent changes.



that which is provided by each Chamber of Commerce. Focus should be on the number of calls received by location(s), time of day, and calls received by hour (if available). This may show consistent call surges in areas where transient populations dwell the most and may be beneficial for operations planning and workforce scheduling in FECC.

## **ORGANIZATION**

The details in this section reflect the organizational and administrative aspects of FECC as it relates to the application of basic organizational principles linked to the operations component. The review team was careful not to propose specific organizational structures, titles, or designations for other organizational components. Such matters are best left to the agency. However, we do provide some best practices, industry standards, and thoughts for consideration commonly found in the Public Safety Communications (PSC) industry.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

A valuable component in employee engagement is ensuring they have and serve a purpose in the organization. One key element to this is the mission statement. A mission statement, typically communicated in written form, is a method used by successful organizations to communicate an organization's reason for existing and how it will serve its stakeholders.<sup>12</sup>

In a 2005 article posted by Rich Horwath of the Strategic Thinking Institute, he states, that the benefits of a mission statement are one of the key elements in the strategic thinking process. Without a current sense of purpose, decision-making within the organization has no objective basis from which it can be measured. It's the mission statement that provides a baseline that guides and unifies decision-making by all in the organization.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Analysis***

For ECC leaders, developing a mission statement is a fundamental exercise that provides significant returns. In its simplest form, the mission statement defines the ECC, who it serves, what it does, and its approach to reaching those objectives.<sup>14</sup> Mission statements serve as a valuable resource that ECC leaders can use both internally and externally. Table 5 provides awareness of how the mission statement can be used.

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<sup>12</sup> University of Minnesota Libraries. Principles of Management. 4.3 The Role of Mission, Vision, and Values. Available at <https://open.lib.umn.edu/principlesmanagement/chapter/4-3-the-roles-of-mission-vision-and-values/>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>13</sup> Strategic Thinking Institute. Horwath, Rich. Discovering Purpose: Developing Mission, Vision, & Values (2005). "Benefits of a Mission Statement." Available at [https://www.strategyskills.com/Articles/Documents/Discovering\\_Purpose-STI.pdf](https://www.strategyskills.com/Articles/Documents/Discovering_Purpose-STI.pdf). Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>14</sup> MindTools. Mission Statements and Vision Statements. Available at <https://www.mindtools.com/aqzfi79/mission-statements-and-vision-statements>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

Mission Statement	
Internal Use	External Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps guide ECC management’s thinking on strategic issues</li> <li>• Helps to inspire staff to work more productively</li> <li>• Helps define performance values</li> <li>• Provides focus and common goals</li> <li>• Helps guide employee decision-making</li> <li>• Helps drive ethical behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serves as a public relations tool</li> <li>• Helps enlist external support</li> <li>• Creates better communication with stakeholders and the community served</li> <li>• Helps establish closer relationships with stakeholders</li> </ul>

Table 5: Mission Statements – Internal/External Use

**Finding**

The review team did not find a written mission statement for FECC; however, we did find a vision statement and set of core values in its Written Directive System, which is shown in Figures 2 and 3. This is not to say one does not exist; we did not see one.

**Vision Statement**

*We will be the gold standard for professionalism in public safety communications.  
Our positive attitudes toward accomplishing our mission will be second to none.  
Our teamwork will be the pride of the valley.*

Figure 2: FECC – Vision Statement

**Core Values**

**Integrity**

*We will do our jobs honestly.*

*We will take responsibility for our mistakes and share them with others to make us all stronger.*

*We will honor our commitment to the public we serve.*

*We will serve our emergency responders with the utmost honesty.*

**Respect**

*We will respect our teammates.*

*We will respect the public we serve.*

*We will respect the emergency responders who receive our services.*

Figure 3: FECC – Core Values

The vision statement and established core values are contained in the SOP listed in Table 6. The vision and values statements are clear and concise and articulate an ideal

state of the desired culture for FECC. The vision and values statement SOP is approximately 11 years old and in need of review and revision, where applicable.

Eff. Date	Title	Last Update
2013	Vision Statement	--

Table 6: FECC Vision Statement SOP

FECC achieves its stated visions and values by making a commitment to providing the highest quality service possible to its citizens and partner agencies. FECC's practice is to respond to the needs of the community and its partner agencies by being progressive with its approach to services rendered and its continued development of programs aimed at achieving excellence in public safety communications.

One program within Flathead County that underscores the visions and values statements (Figures 2 and 3) and aids in achieving them is the ECC. FECC maintains and operates an ECC capable of supplying communications coordination services as expected by the citizens, FECC, and client agencies of Flathead County.<sup>15</sup> This represents both the responsibility of Flathead County and FECC with its commitment to provide superior public safety services through a centralized, coordinated emergency call handling and emergency services dispatching center.

### **Consideration**

As mentioned, one crucial aspect of employee engagement and retention is ensuring employees have a sense of purpose and can understand how they are contributing to the success of the organization. FECC leadership should consider developing a mission to complement its vision and core values statement. The mission statement must be unique and specific to FECC, while complementing and aligning with the Flathead County objective shown on its website.<sup>16</sup> This is a perfect opportunity for FECC leadership to establish an action item for creating its mission statement along with updating the vision and core values statement.

The department's mission statement should be in the form of a written directive and made available to all staff and stakeholders. In addition, the mission statement should be proudly displayed for all to see. The added value in terms of esprit de corps, will improve identity and create a sense of belonging.

Developing a mission statement for FECC doesn't need to be complicated; however, it's important to get buy-in from the entire team. This will require total team involvement.

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<sup>15</sup> Flathead County, Montana. Flathead Emergency Communications Center. Available at <https://flathead.mt.gov/department-directory/fecc>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>16</sup> Flathead County Montana. Departments. "Our Mission:" Available at <https://flathead.mt.gov/department-directory>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

When writing and updating FECC's mission, vision, and core values statements, the goal should be to remain clear and concise, focus on long-term plans, and ensure they align with the overall Flathead County's stated objectives.<sup>17</sup> ECC leadership should include the County Administrator in this process to ensure FECC's mission, vision, and core values are aligned with the county.

Note: It is not uncommon for an ECC's mission, vision, and values statement to be unique and not align perfectly with the overarching goals of the county. Conversely, it may contain more specific details about the goals and objectives of the ECC. This aspect allows for a more tailored and focused approach to realizing the success of both FECC and the county. In Appendix C, there are two informational resource documents to aid in the development of FECC mission statement, How to Create an Effective Department Mission Statement and Examples – ECC Mission Statements.

## FLATHEAD EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER (FECC)

### EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER SIZE

As a reference, ECCs in the United States are classified by the number of employees and then assembled into three groups using a model developed by the Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) for its public safety communications accreditation program (Figure 4).

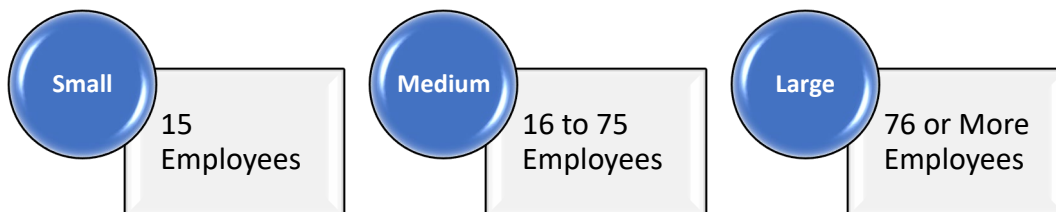


Figure 4: CALEA Model for ECC Size

### **Finding**

As of 2024, the total number of authorized employees for FECC sits at 22 full-time equivalents (FTEs).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, there are three part-time equivalents (PTE) currently employed. Based on the CALEA model (Figure 4) and the total allotment of FTEs, FECC would be classified as a medium-sized agency.

As of the site visit, the breakdown of FTEs and PTEs for FECC is listed below:

- 9-1-1 Center Director (1)

<sup>17</sup> Indeed. How to Write an Effective Mission Statement. "Tips for writing a mission statement." Available at <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/how-to-write-mission-statement>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>18</sup> The numbers listed do not include the IT staff or the Administrative Finance Support Specialist positions. The ECC operational aspects is the focus of this report.

- 9-1-1 Training & QA Coordinator (1)
- 9-1-1 Dispatch Supervisors (2)
- 9-1-1 Dispatch Leads (2)
- 9-1-1 Dispatchers (11)<sup>19</sup>
- 9-1-1 Dispatchers – Part-Time (4)
- Non-Emergency Phone Operators (0)

Based on our findings, FECC is narrowly meeting the threshold of a medium-sized ECC and is close to functioning as a small-sized ECC. FECC has been experiencing high turnover with many positions unfilled.

Serving as a consolidated ECC for Flathead County, the current FTE count is not conducive to the operation, its function, and its responsibilities. The staffing situation brings an element of risk to FECC, the county, and its customer base. This factor weakens the readiness of the operation as extensive pressure is placed on the remaining ECC staff.

During the site visit, the review team learned that progressive steps have been taken by the county to address this issue. A recent increase in starting wages for FECC has induced an increase in job applications. This move may soon help address the staffing shortage; time will tell.

Today's labor market has produced many challenges for ECCs across the country. These are extraordinary times and creative measures must be taken by ECC leaders to maintain staffing levels and succession within the ECC. Past practices used for employee retention may not work with today's labor force.

Note: Further analysis and findings regarding optimal staffing levels and succession planning are discussed in detail in the Staffing section of this report.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The organizational structure synchronizes parts of the organization and provides the methodology for how work flows through the organization.<sup>20</sup> The goal is to achieve maximum performance. This section will cover the organizational structure of FECC and measure it against industry standards and best practices.

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<sup>19</sup> Of the 11 FTEs, 5 were new hires in the training process.

<sup>20</sup> SHRM. Understanding Organizational Structures. Available at <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/tools/toolkits/understanding-organizational-structures>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

## ***Analysis***

According to industry standards established by CALEA, the organizational structure is a management system used to define a hierarchy within the organization. CALEA promotes the following minimum requirement for PSC agencies vying for accreditation: *“An ECC’s structure and functions must be defined in a written directive and made available to all personnel.”* This requirement intends to ensure that functional responsibility for individual positions is described and communicated to anyone affiliated with the organization.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, APCO advocates that agencies shall have a defined organizational structure that provides the PST with a clear chain of command.<sup>22</sup>

## ***Finding – Organizational Chart***

The review team noted that FECC has an established hierarchy for the ECC, and Figure 5 offers a representation of the organizational structure in place, as noted by information gathered by the review team. The organizational chart shown reflects filled positions only.

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<sup>21</sup> CALEA Standards for Public Safety Communications Agencies. 1 Organization. 1.1 Organizational Structure. 2020 Version 2.29

<sup>22</sup> APCO ANS 1.118.1-2020. Key Performance Indicators for Public Safety Communications Personnel. Chapter 2 Agency Responsibilities. 2.1 General Agency Responsibilities relative to all PST job functions. “2.1.10.” available at <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/11181-2020-kpi-personnel/?layout=default>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

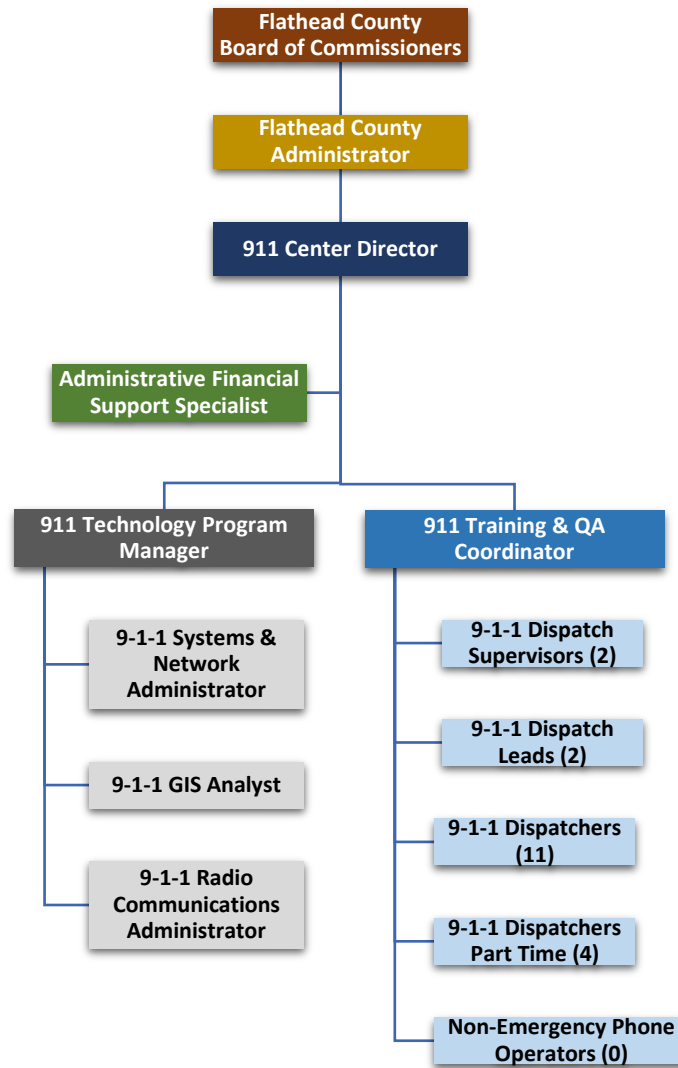


Figure 5: FECC Organizational Structure

A comprehensive illustration of the entire Flathead County organization is provided in Appendix C —Flathead County Departments and specific information relating to each department can be found on the Flathead County website.<sup>23</sup> As shown in the Flathead County organizational chart, FECC is a standalone department within the county’s organizational structure.

FECC's organizational structure shown in Figure 5, identifies clear lines of authority through its established chain of command. This organizational structure establishes a logical division of labor, accountability, and responsibility for decision-making within FECC.

<sup>23</sup> Flathead County Montana. Departments. Available at <https://flathead.mt.gov/department-directory>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

**Reporting Requirements:** The reporting requirements within the FECC organizational structure are shown in Figure 5. FECC 9-1-1 Center Director provides administrative oversight and has overall responsibility for the department. The 9-1-1 Center Director has reporting responsibilities to the Flathead County Administrator.

Within the FECC organizational structure, there are two separate functional units, and are shown below with the job positions responsible for managerial oversight:

- 9-1-1 Technology Unit
  - Unit oversight is provided by the 9-1-1 Technology Program Manager
- 9-1-1 Operations Unit
  - Unit oversight is provided by the 9-1-1 Training and QA Program Coordinator, Dispatch Supervisors, and Dispatch Leads.

In addition to the functional units listed, FECC has an Administrative Financial Support Specialist position. This is a part-time position designed to provide administrative support in financial and personnel affairs to the FECC 9-1-1 Center Director. Those with responsibility for the two functional units and the administrative financial support specialist report directly to the FECC 9-1-1 Center Director.

#### ***Consideration – Organizational Chart***

To align more with industry standards and best practices for ECCs, FECC leadership should consider using an organizational chart like the one displayed in Figure 5 for use in the center. The organizational chart should be visible within the center for staff and visitors. Moreover, steps should be taken to ensure the chart is included in the Written Directive System for FECC and any correspondence where the chart will benefit the reader. For administrative purposes, consideration should be given to developing an organizational chart baring funded FTE positions. The chart should be on hand and ready for presentation purposes, as applicable.

#### ***Finding – Functional Roles***

The review team noted the following details as they relate to functional roles in FECC. The functional roles for FECC employees are listed in one document, the *Job Description*. An explanation of the job description as it relates to the functional role is as follows:

**Job Descriptions:** Formal job descriptions are available for each functional job position in the ECC. Each job description contains a department overview, outlines the job code, job summary or nature of work, lists essential functions, provides examples of the work being performed, explains non-essential functions, physical demands, work conditions, supervision exercised, knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA), selection factors, education and experience, and general recruitment indicators.



The review team noted there were two different job description formats available for FECC (see Figures 6 and 7). Although the formats are different, they still convey some of the functional roles necessary for each job position. The job descriptions show adopted and revised dates and a reference made to FECC Board meeting minutes where approval was made. The newer format contains a reference line for the county commissioner’s approval date.

The review team did not find any written directives outlining the development, review, update, and approval process for FECC job descriptions. However, we did note on page 7 of the Flathead County Policy Manual (effective 2022) that direction and guidance do exist when addressing the job descriptions.<sup>24</sup>

The Flathead County Human Resources Department maintains copies of all job descriptions. A mandate is listed requiring all department heads to conduct periodic reviews of each job description and submit any necessary revisions. The HR department evaluates changes and presents them to the Flathead County Commissioners with a recommendation of approval or denial. In turn, the county commissioners will either adopt, reject, and or revise the job description.

**Consideration: Job Descriptions**

The processes HR has in place for the revision of job descriptions are simple and achievable. FECC leadership is encouraged to work closely with HR to bring all FECC job descriptions up to date.

*Flathead County is an equal opportunity employer. Flathead County shall, upon request, provide reasonable accommodations to otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities.*

*This job description is intended to reflect core areas of responsibility and an incumbent employees’ knowledge and skill set needed to complete those functions. This document is not intended to catalog each individual duty; employees are routinely called upon to address emerging employer requirements in alignment with individual work units and assignments of jobs. The job description does not constitute an employment agreement between the employer and employee and is subject to change by the employer as the needs of the employer change.*

<b>Job Title:</b>	911 Calltaker	<b>Job Code:</b>	14451
<b>Department:</b>	Flathead Emergency Communication Center (FECC)	<b>Pay Grade:</b>	
<b>Reports to:</b>	911 Center Director	<b>FLSA Status:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Exempt <input type="checkbox"/> Exempt

**Department Overview:** Flathead Emergency Communication Center (FECC) is the umbrella organization over 911 Dispatch, 911 IT/GIS, and the Public Safety Radio Communications Department. FECC serves as the public safety answering point for 911 calls, dispatches needed assistance, and provides a public safety radio communication system in Flathead County, Montana.

**Job Summary:** A 911 Calltaker is responsible for answering calls for service from 911 and 7-digit telephone lines, performing caller interrogation, coding and prioritizing calls for service, providing emergency medical dispatch telephone procedures, creating and maintaining Computer Aided Dispatch Records.

Figure 6: FECC Job Description Format (Newer Version)

<sup>24</sup> Personnel Policies and Procedures of Flathead County. Resolution Number 2487 (July 2019). “Position Descriptions.” Page 7.

**9-1-1 Dispatcher I****NATURE OF WORK**

A 9-1-1 Dispatcher I is a position which is responsible for answering calls for service from 9-1-1 and 7-digit telephone lines, performing caller interrogation, coding and prioritizing calls for service, providing emergency medical dispatch telephone procedures, creating and maintaining Computer Aided Dispatch Records. Records, and transmits appropriate call information via the public safety radio system. This position has a very high level of responsibility in relation to its impact on the safety of the community served, its citizens, businesses, and visitors.

**REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES OF WORK:** (Only major tasks are indentified):

- Receives telephone calls to 9-1-1 and administrative lines from citizens seeking assistance.
- Process and prioritize incoming calls for police, fire and EMS assistance.
- Operate very complex and a multiplicity of technology systems including:
  - Multi-line 911 and non-emergency telephone system
  - Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system
  - Geographical/Mapping Information system (GIS)
  - Records Management system (RMS) interfaced with state and federal records

*Figure 7: FECC Job Description Format (Older Version)*

**Executive Leadership:** The review team noted the span of control and administrative oversight for FECC is delineated in the job description for the 9-1-1 Center Director. The functional roles of this job position are to provide direction and managerial oversight for the department and to ensure operational readiness.

***Finding***

The job description for the 9-1-1 Center Director position is clear and concise. The essential functions for this position align well with those found in the general knowledge and skills, and professional competence chapters found in APCO ANS 3.109.3.2022 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Requirements for PSC Manager/Director. The review team noted that the job description is awaiting formal approval and has been in a pending status since 2019.

For the director to be successful in the leadership role, the agency is responsible for supporting the director with appropriate training (e.g., position-specific training, ongoing professional development, including benchmarks and timelines, and mentorship).

***Consideration***

Consideration should be given to the development of a mentorship path that will help in the development of management and leadership skills warranted for such a position. In Appendix C, information is provided on Establishing a Successful Mentoring Program. The emphasis behind such programs cannot be overstated; they are the gateway to confidence and connection building, which is extremely important, not just to the

success of individuals but ultimately the agency and the communities served. In addition, there are programs available that may also help in supporting this effort.

- APCO – Certified Public-Safety Executive (CPE) Program
  - This initiative is designed to help leaders develop skill sets that lend to elevating their professionalism and enhancing individual performance.
- APCO – Registered Public-Safety Leader (RPL) Program
  - This initiative is designed to help leaders build a solid foundation of management and leadership skills.
- NENA – Transformative Empowerment and Mentoring (TEAM) Program
  - This initiative is garnered toward helping leaders achieve their full potential through personalized guidance, support, and inspiration.

To help improve the visibility of this position, the review team encourages FECC executive leadership to adhere to the official hours of work as set by the county, which is Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.<sup>25</sup> We believe this step should offer significant quality time in handling official internal and external duties and aid in removing the perception of not being available during normal business hours.

FECC executive leadership should consider obtaining and utilizing the following essential industry standards, best practices, and training resources to quickly establish a pathway that ensures success. The resources in question are listed below:

- APCO ANS 3.109.3-2022 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Requirements for Public Safety Communications Center Manager/Director
- CSRIC. Working Group 1A. Key Findings and Effective Practices for Public Safety Consolidation. Final Report (October 2010).

**9-1-1 Training & Quality Assurance Coordinator:** The functional roles of this job position are to assist the 9-1-1 Center Director in the supervision of staff and oversee the functions of FECC.

### ***Analysis***

The functional duties listed in the job description for this position align more with the roles and responsibilities of an assistant and/or deputy director. Typically, such a position is responsible for providing administrative support and assisting the director in

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<sup>25</sup> Personnel Policies and Procedures of Flathead County. Resolution Number 2487 (July 2019). Page 13. “Hours of Work, Meal Breaks, and Rest Breaks.”

the development and implementation of departmental plans and goals.<sup>26</sup> An assistant and/or deputy director works closely with the director to coordinate shift operations, ensure compliance with SOP, manage PST staffing, monitor objectives, and provide strong leadership, communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.<sup>27</sup>

### ***Finding***

This position serves on the leadership team and bears many responsibilities. The duties shown above for the assistant or deputy director job position are aligned with the current job description for FECC's 9-1-1 Training & Quality Assurance Coordinator position. The coordinator was observed filling multiple roles in the center, such as answering and dispatching 9-1-1 calls while working with a trainee who was answering calls. It was apparent that the coordinator's job duties were suffering as she was not able to break away to handle the administrative side of her duties, such as documentation and quality assurance checks. The current staffing shortages FECC is dealing with are affecting each job position in the center.

### ***Consideration***

The review team recognizes an opportunity for potential succession planning for FECC. Consideration should be given to reassessing the 9-1-1 Training & Quality Assurance Coordinator's job position and potentially aligning it with that of an assistant or deputy director's position. Since the term "deputy" is used within Flathead County, FECC may want to consider using this title.

FECC leadership can use this change as an opportunity to groom a potential successor for the director position when the time presents itself. The exercise may be as simple as requesting a job title and FLSA status change (exempt or non-exempt) and any wage adjustments, as applicable.

Consideration should be given to developing a long-term plan for this position. For instance, one strategic objective should include learning all aspects of FECC enterprise, including the information technology (IT) component. Other areas for planning purposes should revolve around general areas of knowledge and skill development relating to strategic planning, operations, and maintenance (OES) budgeting, and capital improvement plan (CIP) development.

As noted in the considerations section for executive leadership, using APCO's Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standard for PSC Manager/Director can help in

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<sup>26</sup> SHRM. "Assistant Director." Available at <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/tools/job-descriptions/assistant-director>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>27</sup> Betterteam. "Assistant Director Job Description." Available at <https://www.betterteam.com/assistant-director-job-description>. Accessed 05/29/2024.

designing a viable long-term plan for this position. The value add is succession planning, leadership development, and this position being postured to better serve the director and the department.

Consideration should be given to training for this position. There are several supervisory courses available for these positions. APCO's Communications Center Supervisor course and Registered Public-Safety Leader (RPL) Program are examples of such courses. For long-term planning purposes, factoring in the APCO Certified Public Safety Executive Program (CPE) for this position is another point for consideration.

**9-1-1 Communications Shift Supervisor:** The functional role of this job position, as described in the job description, is to provide supervision to, and perform the functions of a 9-1-1 Emergency Dispatcher. This job position is identified as a first-line working supervisor who, during their assigned tour of duty, supervises staff and operations of the work shift.

### ***Analysis***

The first-line supervisor is a crucial part of the leadership team and is the nucleus of any successful ECC. They play a critical role but are often under-recognized in impacting change and system implementation. First-line supervisors serve as a two-way channel of information between line staff and management ensuring the ECC is meeting its established goals and objectives. Fundamentally, management develops and maintains the policy, procedure, and processes while first-line supervisors enforce them. Problems occur when first-line supervisors do not behave like supervisors and are not supported by upper management.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Finding***

The review team noted that the job description for the 9-1-1 Communications Shift Supervisor position contains details regarding the supervisory capacity and authority they have.

### ***Consideration***

FECC leadership is encouraged to reassess and apply some critical thought to the 9-1-1 Communications Shift Supervisor position and those serving in the role. This exercise is necessary for developing action items that are essential to aligning this group, encouraging consistency, and building successful professional development. A good

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<sup>28</sup> Graham, Gordon. "The Importance of the First-line Supervisor in Public Safety Agencies." Available at <https://www.lexipol.com/resources/blog/importance-of-first-line-supervisor-in-public-safety-agencies/>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

starting point is to conduct a review of the job description and update it accordingly since it has not been updated since 2013.

To develop a pathway for success and sustainability of the leadership team, consideration should be made to obtain the following essential standards and best practices and begin using elements of each that make the most sense for FECC:

- APCO ANS 1.122.1-2023 Career Progression Within the Public Safety Emergency Communications Center
- APCO ANS 3.102.2-2017 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for PSC Supervisor
- NFPA 1225. Standard for Emergency Services Communications (2022). Specifically, Chapter 8 Public Safety Communications Supervisor

### ***Analysis – 9-1-1 Communications Shift Supervisor (Span of Control)***

FEMA ICS-100 training has a section dedicated to a span of control for supervision within the incident command structure.<sup>29</sup> In this section, FEMA provides the following definition for span of control as, “*the number of individuals or resources that one supervisor can manage effectively during an incident.*” Through this training, FEMA provides an optimal span of control described as “*one supervisor to five subordinates (1:5).*” FEMA conveys that effective incident management may require ratios significantly different from this and the ratio given is a simple guideline. Incident personnel should use their best judgment to determine the appropriate ratio for supervisors under the ICS umbrella. The concepts listed by FEMA can be applied to determining a span of control for supervisors in the ECC.

### ***Consideration – 9-1-1 Communications Shift Supervisor (Span of Control)***

FECC leadership should consider conducting a span of control analysis for the 9-1-1 Communications Shift Supervisor position to identify a reasonable span of control. On the surface, it appears that FECC might have enough supervisor positions. However, there were enough drivers identified during the assessment that warrant such an effort (e.g., needed improvement in communication, rise in employee turnover, needed increase in empowerment, improving consistency and accountability, and helping reduce costs).

There are many ways to calculate an adequate span of control. One of the most common methods is to divide the number of line employees by the number of

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<sup>29</sup> FEMA. ICS-100. Manageable Span of Control. Available at [https://emilms.fema.gov/is\\_0100c/groups/28.html](https://emilms.fema.gov/is_0100c/groups/28.html). Accessed on 05/30/2024.

supervisors.<sup>30</sup> With this understanding and the data accumulated by the review team, we can calculate a span of control for the 9-1-1 Communications Shift Supervisor position:

- (20) FTEs divided by (2) 9-1-1 Communications Shift Supervisors = 10:1 ratio

In this calculation, the number count for FTEs included the 9-1-1 Call Taker, 9-1-1 Dispatcher, and Lead Dispatcher positions. With the calculation complete, a 10-to-1 ratio is established (10 FTEs to 1 Shift Supervisor). This number exceeds the 5-to-1 ratio established by FEMA for supervisors filling assigned roles under the ICS. The data provided presents two perspectives for consideration when establishing a span of control for FECC shift supervisors.

FECC leadership is urged to determine if the current allocation of shift supervisors is sufficient to meet the department's operational needs, both today and in the future. When conducting such an exercise, it's important to understand that no one-size-fits-all composition. FECC leadership should go into this exercise with an open mind and consider whether the 9-1-1 Communications Shift Supervisors are meeting the expectations as listed in their job description and that of management. Are they supervising effectively, efficiently, and satisfactorily among the line staff? Answers to these questions may help in determining if the current allotment of supervisors is sufficient or not.

**Line Staff:** FECC has two positions deployed in the ECC: they are the 9-1-1 Call Taker and the 9-1-1 Dispatcher. Both positions are line-staff in nature and filled by non-sworn, full-time equivalent (FTE), civilian employees. The functional roles of both positions are to process emergency and non-emergency calls for service based on current protocols and standards, using the technology available in FECC.

FECC currently maintains three positions filled by part-time equivalent (PTE) civilian employees. The functional role of this position, depending on their training and level of experience, will perform either call taking and or dispatching duties. The three line staff PTE positions have reporting responsibility to the 9-1-1 Communications Shift Supervisor.

### ***Finding – Written Directives Associated with Organizational Structure***

The review team was unable to find any written directives in PowerDMS specifically related to the organizational structure for FECC.

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<sup>30</sup> Knoetic. Miller, Tim. Span of Control Benchmarks. Available at <https://www.knoetic.com/blog/span-of-control-benchmarks>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.



### ***Consideration - Written Directives Associated with Organizational Structure***

To better align with industry standards and best practices, FECC leadership should consider developing a written directive that specifically describes the ECC's organizational structure and reflects the structure of authority, responsibility, and accountability.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, the written directive should include policy guidance relating to commensurate authority and delegation of authority.<sup>32</sup> The intent is to ensure that functional responsibility for individual positions in FECC is identified, defined, and made available to all ECC personnel or anyone affiliated with FECC.

## **FECC WRITTEN DIRECTIVE SYSTEM**

A Written Directive System includes agency policies and procedures, which are essential tools for the ECC. They establish the basis on which the ECC operates. This section contains an assessment of the written directive system in place for FECC and measures it against public safety communications industry standards and best practices.

### ***Analysis***

The Written Directive System is an essential component of an ECC's operation. Well-written directives help safeguard public trust, ensure confidence and compliance with laws and regulations, and guide decision-making thus reducing human error, streamlining internal processes, and enhancing customer service.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Finding***

The Written Directive System for FECC is administered by the office of FECC 9-1-1 Center Director. The director has implemented PowerDMS to electronically store all written directives specific to FECC. PowerDMS is a powerful policy management software platform that offers a paperless solution giving ECCs the ability to update SOPs faster, communicate with them more effectively, ensure compliance, and save money on printing costs. FECC staff can access the system through the use of an assigned username and password. The system is designed to promote accountability ensuring PSTs have read new and updated SOPs. There is a signature tracking capability in PowerDMS that makes this possible. The review team noted there is a hardcopy paper manual available if needed.

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<sup>31</sup> CALEA. Standards for Public Safety Communications Agencies. Chapter 1 Organization. 1.1 Organizational Structure. 2020 Version 2.29

<sup>32</sup> CALEA. Standards for Public Safety Communications Agencies. Chapter 1 Organization. 1.1 Organizational Structure. 1.1.5 Authority and Responsibility. (2020) Version 2.29

<sup>33</sup> Kenyon, Matt. "How To Write The Rules: Developing Your Own SOPs." PSC Magazine, May/June 2019. Available at [https://www.pscmagazinedigital.com/pscs/0319\\_may\\_june\\_2019/MobilePagedArticle.action?articleId=1481729#articleId1481729](https://www.pscmagazinedigital.com/pscs/0319_may_june_2019/MobilePagedArticle.action?articleId=1481729#articleId1481729). Accessed on 05/29/2024.



The review team was given controlled access to PowerDMS so we could review their SOPs at any time of the day. While using the system, we noted that FECC leadership may not be taking full advantage of some of the features PowerDMS provides, including:

- *PowerReady*: Used to manage the communications training program by streamlining the elements of the training program such as documentation, DORs, etc.
- *PowerTime*: Used to manage the scheduling process for the ECC.

The review team noted that FECC did not have written guidance for the Written Directive System, which does not align with industry standards and best practices. Such guidance is necessary to instill confidence in FECC employees by ensuring all directives are up-to-date, consistent, clear, concise, and easily understood. As a matter of importance, policies and procedures are needed that address the following aspects below to ensure the integrity and sustainability of the written directive system:<sup>34</sup>

- A policy statement that vests in FECC 9-1-1 Center Director the authority to issue, modify, or approve department written directives.
- A description of the Written Directive System format.
- Procedures for indexing, purging, updating, and revising directives.
- Procedures addressing the use of PowerDMS;
  - How ECC staff is notified of new or updated SOPs.
  - Upon notification, the process for “review” and “sign off” acknowledging they have fully read and understood the procedure/policy.
- Policy statement indicating ECC staff are required to maintain a reasonable level of familiarization and understanding of all pertinent policies and procedures.
- As a quality assurance measure, the 9-1-1 Center Director or designee will provide an annual list of policies and procedures and a schedule in which ECC staff must complete their reviews.

***FECC SOP Template:*** In FECC’s Written Directive System, there is one distinct SOP format in place. An example of the SOP template is shown in Figure 8 and structured with the following components in place:

#### **Header**

- ***SOP Name:*** Contains the name of the SOP.
- ***Revision Number:*** Contains the current revision number. When the SOP is revised, this number is updated.

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<sup>34</sup> CALEA. Standards for Public Safety Communications Agencies. Chapter 2 Direction and Supervision. 2.1 Direction. 2.1.5 Written Directive System. (2020) Version 2.29

- **Implementation Date:** Contains the year the SOP was created and implemented.
- **Last Updated Date:** Contains the full date the SOP was put into effect.

**Body**

- **Purpose:** The only difference between the structure of the two is in the first talking point. FECC policy and procedure starts with a policy statement, whereas FECC Communications Center's standard operating procedure starts with a lead-in statement.
- **Scope:** This section lists what FECC management expects from its employees. A boilerplate statement is listed requiring the employee to read and abide by the SOP. This was evident in almost all SOPs read by the review team.
- **Procedure:** The section lists the step-by-step instructions for specific routine tasks. It lists who is responsible for each task, the steps to be taken, and who is responsible.


	SOP Name	Ambulances
	Revision#	2
	Implementation Date	2017
	Last Updated Date	1/5/2024
<p><b>1. Purpose</b></p> <hr/> <p>To provide information on ground ambulance and quick response units (QRU) as well as provide instruction for handling their calls for service.</p>		
<p><b>2. Scope</b></p> <hr/> <p>All employees of FECC are required to read and abide by the standards outline in this instruction.</p>		
<p><b>3. Procedure</b></p> <hr/> <p>1) <b>Ground Ambulances</b></p> <p>a) All EMS calls received will be dispatched per protocol as provided by the Criteria Based Dispatch Guideline (CBD) program.</p>		

Figure 8: Example – FECC Policy and Procedure Template

The review team identified an area in the SOP template that is not aligned with industry standards or best practices for written directive systems. A signature block in the header signifying the approving authority(s) is missing. Figure 9 offers an example of an industry-standard signature block.



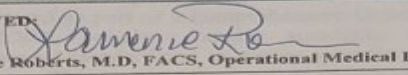
	<b>STAFFORD COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE DEPARTMENT</b>	
	DEPARTMENT REGULATION	
	SUBJECT: <b>COMPREHENSIVE EMS OPERATIONAL RESPONSE PLAN</b>	FRD CFC-3001
APPROVED: 	J. Robert Brown, Jr., CFO, County Fire Chief	INITIATED 07/01/09
APPROVED: 	Lawrence Roberts, M.D., FACS, Operational Medical Director	REVISED 00/00/00
<u>Designated Emergency Response Agency</u> Emergency Medical Services in Stafford County is provided by the Stafford County Fire and Rescue Department through a combined force of career and volunteer personnel. In accordance with STAFFORD COUNTY CODE ARTICLE VI, DEPARTMENT OF FIRE, RESCUE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES, the Stafford County Fire and Rescue Department is the Designated Emergency Response Agency.		

Figure 9: Example of Approval Signature Block

FECC leadership has developed the basis for achieving a quality written directive system applicable to the ECC. The review team recognized that FECC leadership is to be commended for the system in place and is encouraged to build upon it.

**Consideration: Benchmarking the Written Directive System**

FECC leadership should consider implementing processes for the benchmarking of its Written Directive System. This step is necessary to ensure its directive aligns with current industry best practices and standards. APCO, the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) are standards development organizations (SDOs) through the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) that have published operational, training, and technical public safety communications standards and best practices. Consideration should be given to acquiring available resources for developing benchmarks for the system. In support of references made throughout this report, a complete list of APCO standards and best practices is included in Appendix B.

The review team advocates ensuring FECC is following, meeting, or exceeding current PSC industry, local, state, and federal standards when updating existing SOPs. Part of the revision process should include no less than the following industry standards and best practices for ECCs:<sup>35</sup>

- Contains the ECC’s vision, values, and mission statement.
- A policy statement that vests in the ECC chief the authority to issue, modify, or approve ECC written directives.

<sup>35</sup> CALEA Standards for Public Safety Communications Agencies. 2 Direction and Authority. 2.1 Direction (Specifically, 2.1.5). 2020 Version 2.29

- Identification of persons or positions other than the ECC chief authorized to issue written directives about the ECC.
- Signature block in the header signifying the approving authority(s) and effective date.
- A description of the written directive format.
- Procedures for indexing, purging, updating, and revising standard operating procedures.
- Procedures for review of proposed policies, procedures, rules, and regulations before their dissemination.

In addition to the above, the review team encourages the use of a multi-agency approach, which involves using shift supervisors and tenured PSTs to review and make contributions to written directives.

***Analysis: Stakeholder Involvement with Written Directives***

Taking necessary steps to ensure all stakeholders are directly involved in developing the policies, procedures, directives, and workflows is paramount to the success of FECC and its partner agencies. It will lead to more consistent and efficient levels of service, improved retention of institutional knowledge, efficiency, and improved service, provide possible court-defensible documentation, and have employees take ownership while investing in FECC.

Further validating this analysis comes from the Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council (CSRIC) II Report, which identifies another approach for improving effective practices in the ECC. It states formal SOPs must be developed, reviewed, and vetted by operations personnel (i.e., partner agency field personnel and ECC staff) to ensure consistency.<sup>36</sup> In the case of FECC, inconsistent and/or lack of SOPs will lead to operational and training challenges and an increased chance of errors during times of high call volume or emergency operational periods. SOPs that have been produced through a coordinated and collaborative effort will help mitigate risk and lead to success.

***Finding: Stakeholder Involvement with Written Directives***

In 2010, public safety agencies within Flathead County decided to consolidate their ECCs, ultimately forming FECC, which was to be governed by the 9-1-1 Administrative Board made up of representatives of each agency involved in the consolidation. The Board, through its established bylaws and working with the 9-1-1 Center Director, established and set policy and procedure for FECC.

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<sup>36</sup> The Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council (CSRIC). "Finding #14." Working Group #1A. Key Findings and Effective Practices for Public Safety Consolidation - October 2010. Available at <https://transition.fcc.gov/pshs/docs/csric/CSRIC-1A-Report.pdf>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

In 2021, FECC became a county agency, and the 9-1-1 Administrative Board was dissolved. The formation of the new FECC Operations Board took place with a new set of bylaws. The role of the Board, as established in the bylaws, is to provide advice and evaluation to the Flathead Board of Commissioners and FECC 9-1-1 Center Director on the following matters:

- Call taking and dispatch policies and procedures
- Continuous quality improvement monitoring and review of FECC performance
- Priorities, policies, and procedures for Emergency 9-1-1 system enhancement, programming, implementation, resource and equipment usage
- New equipment proposals
- Any other matters on which the FECC Director or Board of Commissioners may request advice or evaluation

FECC Operations Board meetings are held monthly with a meeting agenda prepared by the FECC 9-1-1 Center Director in concert with the Board Chair.

### ***Consideration – Stakeholder Involvement with Written Directives***

The review team noted the mechanisms are in place to ensure stakeholder involvement in the FECC Written Directive System. For the FECC 9-1-1 Center Director, consideration should be given to understanding the importance of their role as a member of the Board. Relating specifically to this subject matter, the director’s ultimate objective is to ensure the quality and integrity of FECC written directives. To be successful in this effort, the director must exercise leadership by:<sup>37</sup>

- Ensuring there is effective collaboration and communication with board members.
- Ensure meeting minutes are taken that include any takeaways from the meeting.
- Establishing action items that are assigned to those in attendance to complete and/or report on at the next meeting.
- Track and keep an account of all action items created.
- Develop a summary report of all action items at the end of each quarter.
- Distribute the summary report to all applicable parties.
- Remember to celebrate your successes.

There are a host of resources available that the director can take advantage of; one such resource is available from the Krisp Team. They have produced an informational [Step-by-Step Guide to Conducting a Successful Board Meeting](#). The information contained is basic but effective.

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<sup>37</sup> Boardable. How to Run a Board Meeting that’s Engaging and Productive. Available at <https://boardable.com/resources/run-a-board-meeting/>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

### ***Consideration – Long-Term Planning***

Another way to ensure the integrity of FECC’s written directives is to achieve PSC agency accreditation through CALEA. CALEA has an accreditation program specifically tailored for ECCs.<sup>38</sup> It serves as the business plan for managing the ECC. ECCs vying for accreditation must develop policies and procedures aligned with 208 established compliance standards.

The approach is rigorous and takes a commitment from the agency to be successful in this process. Because of the dedication and commitment required in this process, the review team recommends that CALEA accreditation be planned out for three to five years. In the end, the ECC will have a seal of approval verifying their policies and procedures have been vetted, are compliant, and have been implemented, which brings immediate credibility and builds confidence in those served by the ECC.

CALEA requires, at a minimum, that accredited agencies have a written directive system in place with the following conditions, many of which are already in place for FECC:

- A statement of agency policy
- Procedures for carrying out agency activities
- Rules and regulations
- Procedures for reviewing, maintaining, and revising written directives
- Identification of the person or positions that have the authority to issue, modify, or approve agency written directives

As operations within the ECC become more complex due to new personnel being hired and the introduction of new technology, it will be increasingly important to identify, define, and produce written policies, procedures, and directives consistent with training and actual operational realities. Improvement of the written policies, procedures, and directives is possible.

## **CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS (CONOPS)**

The CONOPS is a document containing a high-level view of a system from the user’s perspective that describes key concepts, capabilities, context, and characteristics for the operation of the system.<sup>39</sup> The CONOPS is intended to communicate the operational needs, requirements, and expectations of stakeholders without being too technical. The CONOPS serves as an excellent

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<sup>38</sup> CALEA Standards for Public Safety Communications Agencies. <https://www.calea.org/standards-titles>

<sup>39</sup> Engineering for Humans. The Operations Concept: Developing and Using an OpsCon. “Concept of Operations.” Available at <https://www.engineeringforhumans.com/systems-engineering/the-operations-concept-developing-and-using-an-opscon/>. Accessed 04/21/2024.

communication tool between leadership and staff and becomes a living document of institutional knowledge that will evolve with the ECC over time.

### ***Analysis***

The CONOPS is an element of the written directive system, but it's much more than a written directive. A CONOPS is used to convey the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the ECC operation to all stakeholders. It's a standalone document that serves as the basis for program development within the ECC.

The CONOPS helps solidify the real purpose and function of the ECC and the services provided, serving as an instrument to bring about sustainability and continuous improvement, which is an expectation of all departments within Flathead County and its partner agencies.

### ***Finding***

FECC does not have a true CONOPS plan. The review team recognized that enough informational material is available to FECC leadership that can serve as a good starting point for developing the CONOPS (e.g., operational concepts, capabilities, and characteristics found in FECC SOPs and training materials).

The review team noticed the stakeholder mechanism is in place, via the FECC Operations Board and County Administrator, to assist with CONOPS development. This presents a perfect opportunity for FECC leadership to begin collaborating more effectively with the Operations Board and County Administrator.

The mandates for the board and FECC Center Director have already been established,<sup>40</sup> and it will take effective leadership, cooperation, and communication from the entire team to achieve success in this process. In the end, the goal of this effort is the development of a readable and relevant document that is available to all stakeholders associated with FECC operations system.

### ***Consideration***

Developing a CONOPS should be part of the strategic planning effort for FECC leadership. The review team encourages FECC leadership to develop a basic CONOPS plan in concert with the FECC Operations Board and applicable mutual aid partners. Moreover, assistance from internal resources from Flathead County Departments (e.g., finance, human resources, office of emergency services, IT staff, radio technicians, contracted vendors, etc.) will be needed.

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<sup>40</sup> Flathead Emergency Communications Center Operations Board. BY-LAWS. "Article II Purpose and Powers." May 2021



To start the process, the review team recommends scheduling an inaugural cross-disciplinary team meeting consisting of all internal stakeholders (i.e., FECC, FCSO, FCFD, and EMS). The goal of this meeting is to provide information on the concept, plan development, and how each stakeholder will add value to the process. In addition, a formal process should be instituted, such as developing a meeting structure with a meeting agenda, minutes, and processes for action plan development and assignment.

Developers of the CONOPS plan must be mindful of the fact that this plan does not have to be overly complicated, long, or complex. It should be tailored to meet the needs of Flathead County and its partner agencies. At a minimum, the CONOPS plan should describe the following:

- FECC system and how it should operate from the stakeholder’s perspectives.
- Details on the operational environment to give stakeholders an understanding of the assumptions, constraints, job complexity, numbers, capacity, and technology of FECCs operational capability (see the section on Key Performance Indicators).
- Aspects of the physical environment, safety, and security that influence FECCs operation and operational environment.

To ensure compliance with industry standards and the best practices of CONOPS plan development, it should include details specific to the operational duties of FECC regarding normal operating conditions, unusual occurrences, and special operations.<sup>41</sup>

The effect of the CONOPS plan is multi-fold. First, the CONOPS plan will serve as an institutional knowledge resource document necessary to maintain the continuity of FECC when leadership changes. Second, it will serve as a resource for strategic planning, capital outlay, and operations and maintenance budget development. Third, it will serve as a quality resource for developing written directives and operational procedures. And fourth, it will serve as a resource for training curriculum development. The framework of a basic CONOPS plan should exhibit the following sections:<sup>42</sup>

- Executive Summary: Summarizes the purpose of the document.
- Mission Description: An overview of ECC goals and objectives.
- Operational Context and Structure: Includes a command relationship chart detailing the command, control, and coordination of all organizational components in the ECC.
- Organizational Constraints: These are the constraints that may impact the entire ECC.

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<sup>41</sup> CISA. National Emergency Communications Plan (Sept. 2019), available at [https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/19\\_0924\\_CISA\\_ECD-NECP-2019\\_1\\_0.pdf](https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/19_0924_CISA_ECD-NECP-2019_1_0.pdf). Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>42</sup> Intelligent Transportation Systems. Concept of Operations – NG 9-1-1 System Initiatives. Available at [https://www.911.gov/assets/USDOT\\_NG911\\_Concept\\_of\\_Operations.pdf](https://www.911.gov/assets/USDOT_NG911_Concept_of_Operations.pdf). Access on 05/29/2024.



- ECC Functions: Detailed description of the ECC functions.
- Operational Scenarios: List any major scenarios that affect the ECC in its entirety.
- Implementation Concepts and Rationale: Describe how the ECC was developed, and the rationale used to justify its development.
- ECC Operational Architecture: Describe the ECC in a graphical representation, depicting all the information flows, systems, and inputs and outputs.; include the interface to non-ECC systems where relevant.
- Organizational and Business Impact: Describe the view of management on the expectations it has of the ECC on the business of FECC and its stakeholders.
- Risks and Technology Readiness Assessment: Include either the initial risk assessment developed for the ECC or the most current one.

The cooperation, communication, and planning efforts that the development of a CONOPS requires may be the sort of team-building exercise between internal and external agencies that the review team felt would be beneficial for FECC leadership and FECC Operations Board. The time and effort necessary for developing the CONOPS plan will reap significant benefits for FECC, its public safety stakeholders, and the communities served.

## Workflows

Many definitions exist to define the term “workflow.” For this section, we use the following definition: “A workflow is a set of steps performed in sequential order over a period of time that uses both people and systems to attain a target in a seamless manner.”<sup>43</sup> In essence, the workflow is the structure of work within organizations, in this case, within FECC. This section encompasses an assessment of the workflow processes in use and quantifies them in contrast with PSC’s industry standards and best practices.

### ***Analysis***

Basic workflows can be comprised of a set of processes needed to accomplish a task, the set of people, or other resources available to perform those processes, and the interactions among them. When finding the need to optimize processes in the ECC to achieve better results, it’s the workflow that aids in this process.

Workflows are an essential part of the development of many systems in the ECC. When done correctly, a workflow will show the flow of work from start to finish, affirm all activities, and identify who is responsible for them.

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<sup>43</sup> PeopleSpheres – The People Platform. Diard, Alexandre. “What Is a Workflow?” Definition and Examples. Available at <https://peoplespheres.com/what-is-a-workflow-definition-and-examples/>. Accessed 05/29/2024.

Workflows are necessary tools, and will:

- Ensure work is done predictably, as intended.
- Improve the decision-making processes.
- Streamline and optimize work activities.
- Monitor risk potential.
- Promote accountability.
- Reduce time and cost.

### ***Finding***

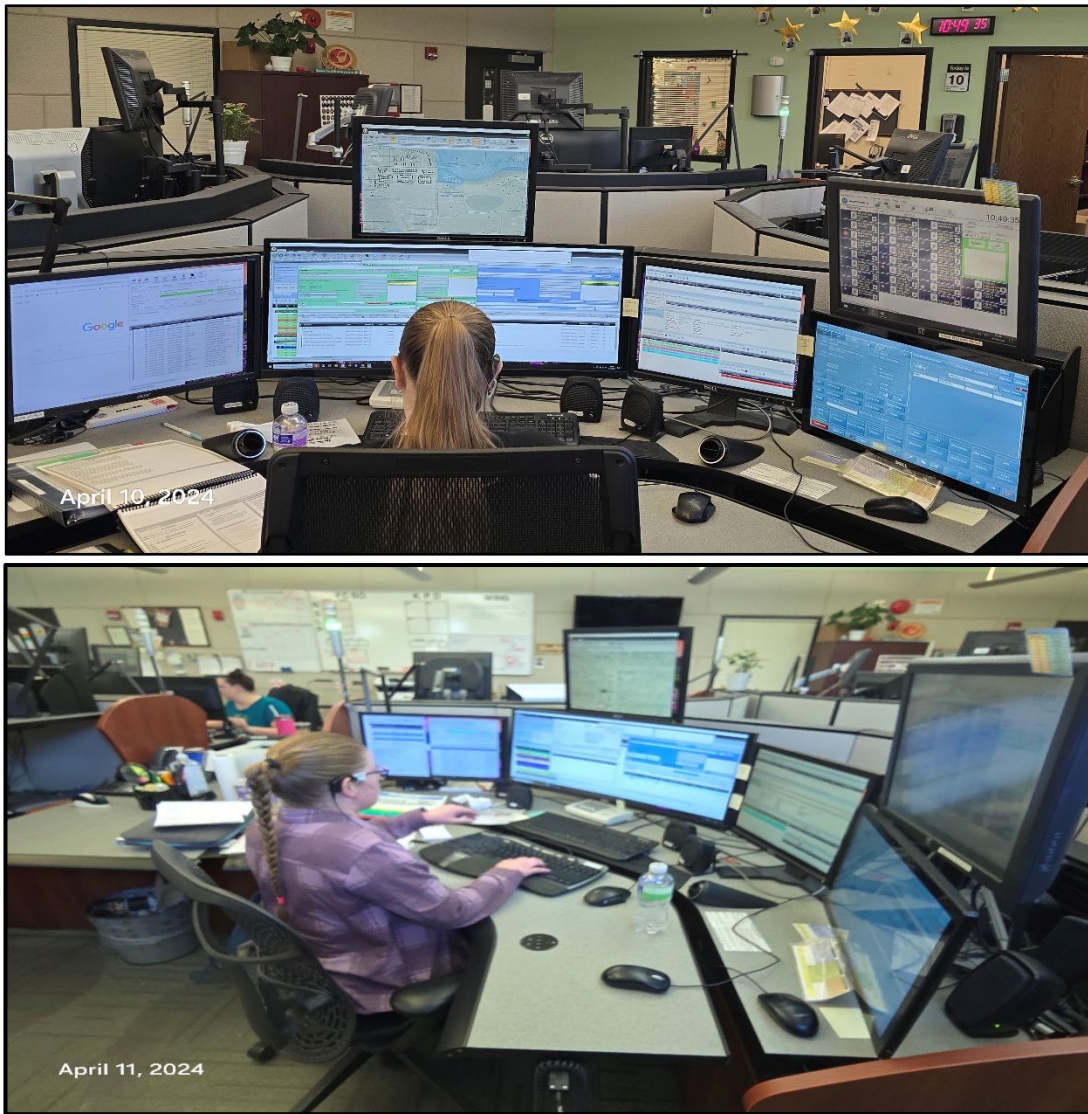
The review team noted there are ample workflow documents available in the FECC SOPs and training manual. Many documents found in both resources contain the necessary elements for workflow development, but what's missing is a visual aid or flowchart. Studies have shown that most of the population, roughly 65%, are visual learners.<sup>44</sup> Visual aids are a necessary part of workflow management as they allow the developer to create a visible story of the content that is being analyzed. People often prefer visual aids as they can be developed to convey complex information in a simplified manner.<sup>45</sup>

***PST Workstations:*** Concerning the PST workstations, the workflow seemed to be hampered by the configuration of the workstation monitors at each position. Figure 10 gives a view of two different PST workstation positions. The review team noted the viewing angles of the lower monitors require turning of the neck which may bring imbalance and discomfort to the PST. Additionally, paper call guide systems are being used at each position, which takes up needed space on the workstation desk and causes the call taker to remove attention from the CAD workstation monitor. This could potentially lead to errors in the call process effort.

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<sup>44</sup> Bradford, William C., Reaching the Visual Learner: Teaching Property Through Art (September 1, 2011). The Law Teacher Vol. 11, 2004, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=587201>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>45</sup> Piktochart. Sanchez, Gonzalo. "Why People Love Great Visuals, Based on Science (September 2023)." Available at <https://piktochart.com/blog/why-people-love-great-visuals-science/>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.



*Figure 10: Two Different FECC Work Position Views*

### **Consideration**

FECC leadership should consider the development of workflow documents when updating their written directives and training documents to ensure the accuracy, predictability, thoroughness, and completeness of tasks performed. Current and complete workflow documents will help maximize the ECC's operational effectiveness. The workflow documents should include details of what system or equipment is used in the job task that is being analyzed. Ideally, the workflow document is helpful when found to be in a workflow diagram or decision tree format. These graphical treatments are often easier to interpret.

FECC leadership should consider using the onboarding process to get this started. The overall goal is to develop a workflow that will aid in streamlining the hiring process, improve employee retention, and reduce the cost of replacing employees. The workflow should give a picture of all the steps in the onboarding process and the supporting details that would make the process more successful. This workflow development

should be a collaborative effort with all stakeholders that FECC leadership relies on to get the job done. The review team encourages the addition of visual diagrams, where appropriate, to written directives and the training manual.

**PST Workstations:** An ergonomic assessment was conducted in December 2023. The review team didn't request this information for review but encourages ECC leadership to thoroughly vet any recommendations from the report and implement them, as reasonably applicable. ECC leadership should continue its practice of having ergonomic assessments<sup>46</sup> conducted at the center. An area of focus is the PST workstations, specifically monitor placement. Such assessments are essential to workplace safety and health, especially in work environments where there are repetitive motions, awkward postures, and prolonged periods of activity and inactivity.<sup>47</sup> FECC leadership is encouraged to work with HR on this matter as they may have access to resources that may help in this effort. Another avenue is to reach out to the worker's compensation provider for Flathead County. They may have resources available at no cost that may help with this effort.

FECC leadership should consider performing their own analysis of the workflow and interfaces between the PST and all assets used at each console work position. Determination should be made on the effectiveness of each asset used in the performance of the job. One area for consideration is the call guide system. Focus on what system makes the PSTs more efficient and effective: an electronic call guide system or the desktop hard copy version? Many of today's systems are cloud-based and can interface with most CAD systems, which puts the criteria-based guidecards in front of the PST processing the call. Important to this effort is continuous feedback from the PSTs without repercussion. This will bring added value to the process.

**Note:** Any change brought into the center should be done using change management principles found in any of the [change management models](#) listed in Appendix C. This is necessary to ensure changes are implemented successfully without issue.

## ASSESSMENT OF ECC OPERATIONS

ECCs are complex systems that have a significant impact on the local area and region served. The ECC is the cornerstone of an agency's ability to respond to emergencies requiring the dispatch of police, fire, and emergency medical services. In the case of Flathead County, FECC

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<sup>46</sup> FECC leadership would have to determine the frequency of such assessments. Such assessments should be part of the strategic plan and factored into the budget.

<sup>47</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). "Ergonomics and Musculoskeletal Disorders." Available at: [https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/ergonomics/?CDC\\_AAref\\_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ergonomics/default.html](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/ergonomics/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ergonomics/default.html). Accessed on 05/29/2024.

serves as the communications coordination system responsible for all emergency and non-emergency requests for service.

The FECC operations system is the mechanism that conveys information from the public to the FCSO, public safety agencies, and other jurisdictions. The speed and accuracy in which information flows are the measures of FECC's ability to respond to the needs of the community served and its allied agencies. To be successful in this effort, the ECC must be well-organized and efficient. This section contains a review of the FECC operations system.

## **FECC OPERATIONS SYSTEM**

FECC operations system is planned and organized to provide day-to-day communications coordination services necessary in fulfillment of its responsibilities as listed below, and to the citizens of Flathead County (refer to FECC Service Map in Appendix C).

- Serve as a state-certified primary 9-1-1 answering point for the county.<sup>48</sup>
- Serve as a consolidated emergency services dispatch center for the county.
- Serve as the dispatch center for four law enforcement agencies in the county.
- Serve as the dispatch center for four fire department agencies in the county.
- Serve as the dispatch center for 13 volunteer fire department agencies in the county.
- Serve as the dispatch center for two emergency medical service providers in the county.

For FECC to successfully fulfill its duties, it must ensure that an effective, efficient, and sustainable operational ecosystem is in place. This section contains an assessment of the FECC operations ecosystem and results as discovered by the review team.

### ***Analysis – FECC Operations Framework***

The basic function of the ECC operations system is to satisfy the immediate information needs of the stakeholder during his or her normal daily activities and emergencies. The ECC accomplishes this by serving as the first layer of any response and by establishing a sophisticated operations framework that the PSTs work within to accomplish its duties and core objectives as listed:

- Provide a method for stakeholders to access services provided by the agency.
- Process requests and assign appropriate resources and personnel to take care of them.
- Maintain contact with personnel in the field, thus allowing field personnel to carry out their responsibilities of protecting and saving lives and property.

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<sup>48</sup> Department of Justice Montana. Montana Certified Primary PSAPs. Available at [https://dojmt.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024\\_FEB\\_mt\\_psap\\_managers\\_list-2.pdf](https://dojmt.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024_FEB_mt_psap_managers_list-2.pdf). Accessed on 05/29/2024.



### **Finding – FECC Operations Framework**

The heart of FECC rests within the framework of its operations, which is configured in the following manner (Figure 11):

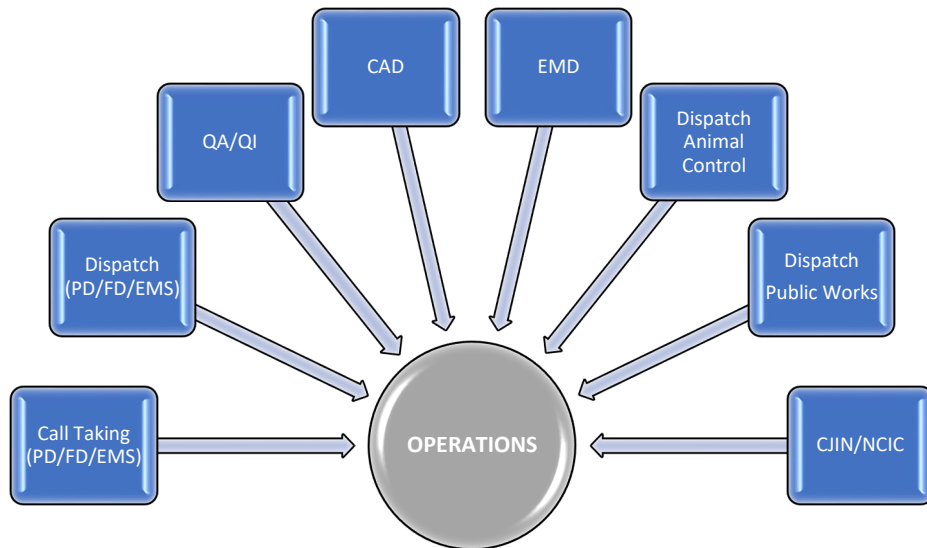


Figure 11: FECC Operations Framework

### **Analysis – FECC Operations Board**

For most consolidated ECCs, governance bodies are formed to provide structure and guidance for strategic planning and decision-making, ensuring balanced representation, and addressing fiscal, technological, and policy-driven emergency communications needs for the overall sustainment of the operations ecosystem.<sup>49</sup>

### **Finding – FECC Operations Board**

FECC is a consolidated ECC with a governance structure established by the Flathead County Board of Commissioners in 2021. The entity created is the FECC Operations Board. The goal of the Operations Board is to provide advice and evaluation of the FECC operations framework to the Board of Commissioners and FECC Director.

The Operations Board consists of seven members – six are appointed by the Board of Commissioners and the other member is the FECC Director. A Chair and Vice Chair are elected at the beginning of each calendar year. Operations Board meetings are held once a month with the option of scheduling special meetings when needed. Parliamentary meeting principles and procedures are used for each meeting and meeting agendas are constructed by the FECC Director in conjunction with the Chair.

<sup>49</sup> SAFECOM/NCSWIC. Emergency Communications Governance Guide for State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Officials. Establish Formal Governance Structures. Available at <https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2018%2520Emergency%2520Communications%2520Governance%2520Guide%2520for%2520State%252C%2520Local%252C%2520Tribal%2520and%2520Territorial%2520Officials.pdf>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

Interviews with members of the Operations Board indicated the board functions more like an informational committee (i.e., a sounding board) instead of an advisory or tactical operations committee. Some interviewed felt that issues important to them were not being addressed.

### ***Consideration – FECC Operations Board***

The FECC Director should consider looking for ways to engage the Operations Board to enhance its productivity. The first step in this process is to re-examine the bylaws set for the Operations Board, specifically Article II – Purpose and Powers. This section contains the mandate for the board and includes subject matter important to FECC. Second, the FECC Director must work to re-establish relationships with members of the Board. This step is necessary for rebuilding culture, trust, and credibility.

Consideration should be given to working with the Chair to periodically meet with each board member individually to allow for conversations that may be difficult in a group setting. This may help in getting those who feel their issues aren't being addressed more engaged.

The FECC Director should consider refining their approach to board meeting management by taking a best practices approach for better board meetings. Below are a few best practices for running effective meetings.<sup>50</sup>

- Create focused agendas that set board meetings up to be productive.
- Manage expectations and conflicts.
- Work toward understanding the needs, perspectives, and interests of all participants.
- Work hard at finding common ground and solutions that benefit both parties.
- Establish a parking lot for the agenda. Get agreement from the group to put items in the parking lot for discussion later in the meeting.
- Advanced planning and consistency is critical.
- Keep meetings organized and on track. Do not let conversations go on for too long.
- Ensure meeting minutes are taken with next steps established for follow-up and action items.

Applying the concepts listed may help in making these meetings more effective for all parties involved. It will be up to the FECC Director to provide effective leadership in this regard.

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<sup>50</sup> Harvard Business Review. Jay, Antony. "How to Run a Meeting." Available at <https://hbr.org/1976/03/how-to-run-a-meeting>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

## FECC OPERATIONAL PRACTICES

When a citizen places a call to 9-1-1, a PST answers the call, and a course of action takes place that may have significant consequences for the person calling. The actions taken by the PST within the operations framework, as shown in Figure 11, are determined by several important factors:

- How well the PST has been trained.
- Effectiveness of ECC leadership and their planning efforts (short and long term).
- Effectiveness of ECC policies, procedures, and quality assurance program.
- How calls are processed (e.g., what information is gathered, how to assess the situation, determining the level of urgency and risk, whether to resolve the call on their own or transfer it to another agency or dispatcher, etc.).
- How calls are dispatched to responders in the field.
- The effectiveness of the technology and the equipment used.

The above items listed are basic elements of the operational practices in the ECC. This section will cover the review team findings on the operational practices in place for FECC, including how the ECC is organized and operating, capacity and security measures in place, assignment of employee tasks, and how it interrelates with other elements of the operations ecosystem.

### ***Analysis – Location***

The ECC is a central physical location created, staffed, and operated to meet the needs of the agency and the community it serves. The ECC may be in a standalone hardened facility or inside a bigger complex, such as a police station, fire department, or municipal office complex. Many key factors go into determining the location of an ECC, one being the accessibility to the site. In this assessment, factors such as those listed below are considered:<sup>51</sup>

- Impact on employee base (existing and new)
- Proximity to housing
- Reliable road access (multi-road)
- Access and availability of public transportation
- Timeliness of vendors and support

### ***Finding – Location***

FECC is located at 625 Timberwolf Parkway in the town of Kalispell, Montana. FECC began operations in this facility in 2010. The facility is county-owned with FECC sharing this facility with the Office of Emergency Services (OES).

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<sup>51</sup> LISC National. Determining Criteria for Site Selection. Site Selection Criteria. Available at <https://www.lisc.org/charter-schools/understanding-your-needs/site-selection/determine-criteria-site-selection/>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.



### ***Analysis – Configuration***

When it comes to the physical makeup of the ECC, each will have its purpose, design, and character. The configuration of the ECC will vary based on the operational concept developed for the ECC, the size of the facility, and the funding available for technology used by the PST in support of the mission.

### ***Finding – Configuration***

During the site visit, the review team observed that within this shared facility, FECC is arranged into three distinct areas: operations, training support, and administration. The review team did not find a written directive describing the configuration, organizational components, or functions for each area listed. However, we noted that training in these areas, in the form of tours, is conducted during new employee orientation training.<sup>52</sup>

### ***Consideration – Configuration***

Industry standards suggest providing PSTs with information regarding agency resources, including the location of public safety service buildings, offices, and equipment.<sup>53</sup> FECC leadership should make it a priority to develop a written directive that gives a full description of each organizational component and function for each area of FECC. The written directive will serve several purposes, including offering content for the training program, an informational resource, and an institutional knowledge-based document that allows key information to be passed on to everyone internal and external to FECC.

### ***Analysis – Security***

ECCs are considered limited access areas due to the sensitive nature of the work performed in the center, and controlling access to the ECC is an important task for ECC leadership. Many ECCs can be found behind locked gates, and security access doors, and may have a law enforcement presence onsite. Leading industry associations such as APCO, CALEA, and the NFPA suggest that security measures be implemented to protect personnel, facilities, and equipment from hazards.<sup>54</sup>

### ***Finding – Security***

During the facility site tour, the review team noted two different entrance points leading into the ECC (Figure 12). Both entrance doors are card-access controlled with card readers located on the wall adjacent to the door handle (see yellow circled area). Both entry doors were always closed.

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<sup>52</sup> FECC CTO Orientation Checklist. Revised 09/2023.

<sup>53</sup> APCO ANS 3.103.2-201 Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators. Chapter 2 Agency Responsibilities. 2.2 General Agency Responsibilities. Available at <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/31032-2015-public-safety-telecommunicator/?layout=default>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>54</sup> APCO ANS 2.106.1-2019; NFPA 1225 Standard for Emergency Services Communications; and CALEA Chapter 6 Operations. 6.4 Facilities and Equipment, 6.4.1 Security for Communications Center. 2020 Version 2.29



Figure 12: Door Entrance Points Leading into the ECC

Industry standards and best practices suggest that strong security measures be in place to limit access to the ECC to authorized personnel only.<sup>55</sup> Secure and non-secured areas within the ECC should be prominently posted and separated by physical controls so that ECC personnel may verify individuals before allowing access. Risk is minimized when the ECC has an active list of authorized and credentialed personnel or deploys escorted access within the facility.<sup>56</sup> Such measures were found to be in place.

### **Consideration – Security**

FECC leadership should consider performing a security audit of the ECC to determine if additional access points leading into the facility should also be access controlled. The review team agrees with industry standards and best practices that suggest access to the ECC be controlled due to the nature of the work performed. Doing so would offer an additional layer of security and an accounting system for all individuals who enter the ECC by day and time. A security audit can be conducted using APCO ANS 2.106.1-2019's Public Safety Grade Site Hardening Requirements and the APCO/NENA ANS 1.102.3-2020 Emergency Communications Center (ECC) Service Capability Criteria Rating Scale.

<sup>55</sup> CALEA Standards for Public Safety Communications Agencies. Chapter 6 Operations. 6.4 Facilities and Equipment. Specifically, 6.4.1. Security for Communications Center. 2020 Version 2.29

<sup>56</sup> APCO. Definitive Guide to NG9-1-1. Chapter 7 Security Considerations. "Improving Physical Security." Available at <https://www.apcointl.org/ext/pages/APCDefinitiveGuidetoNG911/APCDefinitiveGuideToNG911.html>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

Since FECC is an authorized FBI NCIC terminal agency, CJIN/NCIC physical security requirements can also be used for audit purposes. FECC leadership may want to engage the FECC Operations Board in the effort. The goal is to assess current practices and compare them against industry standards and best practices.<sup>57</sup> Such a venture will bring another layer of security to the ECC.

### ***Analysis – Capacity***

The term capacity has many different meanings. For this section, we use the following definition for capacity, which refers to the ability to hold or contain people or things.<sup>58</sup> For instance, the capacity of a building or place is the number of people or things that it can hold. According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)<sup>59</sup> and FEMA,<sup>60</sup> facilities such as an ECC should be designed with services that support their needs and that provide comfort to staff.

### ***Finding – Capacity***

During the site visit tour of the FECC operations floor, the review team immediately noted the operations floor appears to be at maximum capacity with little to no room for future growth without significant construction modification.

The operations area consisted of eight PST console work positions, each strategically positioned throughout the operations floor. The dispatch consoles were procured from Evans in 2010 when the center was built. Each console position has been configured for combined call-taking and dispatching duties. As it relates to FECC operations, each console work position:

- Has its duty assignment and responsibilities.
- Can acclimate to the operational framework shown in Figure 11.<sup>61</sup>
- Is set up with the same computer hardware equipment and software.
- Can be structured for one-stage or two-stage emergency and non-emergency call taking and dispatching duties as needed.
- Are completely redundant from each other minimizing a single point of failure.

Figure 13 offers a simple illustration of each console work position on the operations floor and its configuration.

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<sup>57</sup> U.S. Department of Justice. Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Security Policy. Available at <https://le.fbi.gov/cjis-division/cjis-security-policy-resource-center>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>58</sup> Britannica Dictionary. 'Capacity.' Available at <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/capacity>. Accessed on 04/29/2024.

<sup>59</sup> IACP. Police Facilities Planning Guidelines. Available at [https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/Police\\_Facilities\\_Planning\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/Police_Facilities_Planning_Guidelines.pdf). Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>60</sup> FEMA. Mitigation Case Studies Hardened First Responder Facility. 911 Communications and Emergency Operations Center Smith County, Texas (2003). Available at <https://www.fema.gov/pdf/plan/prevent/bestpractices/hardened.pdf>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>61</sup> The only exception is the CJIN/NCIC computer system, which is a stand-alone system not integrated at each console position.

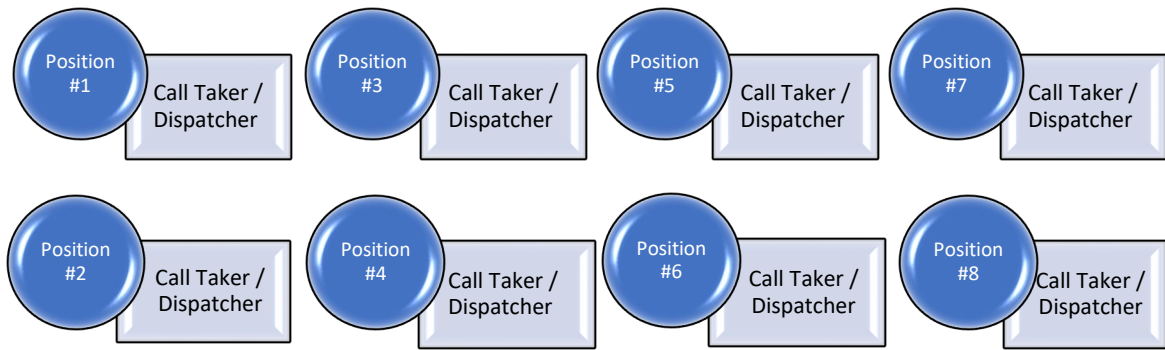
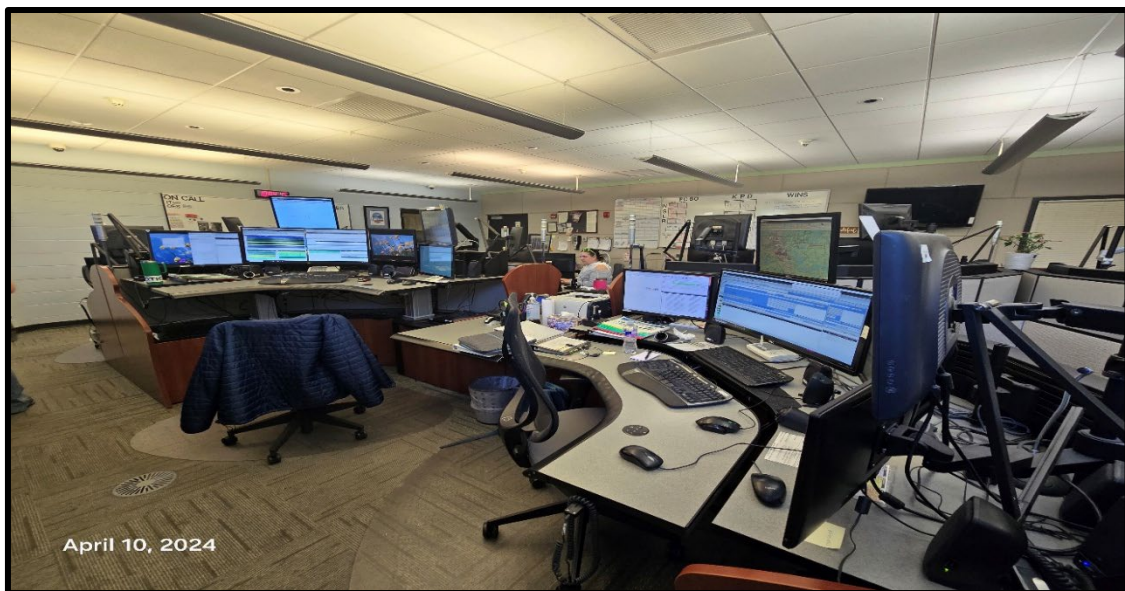


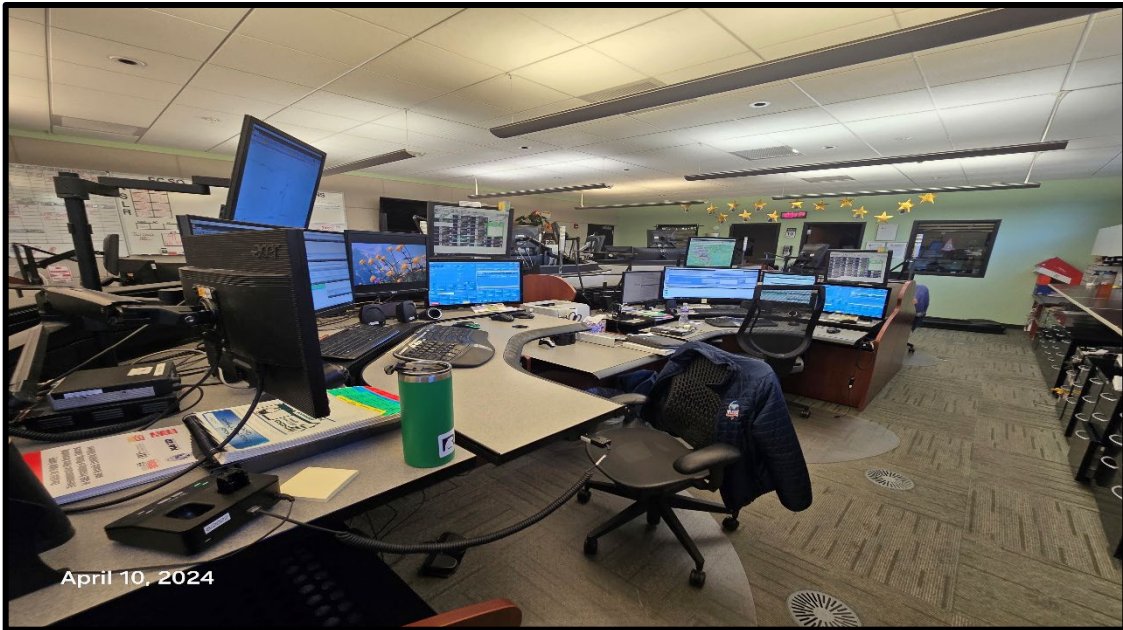
Figure 13: FECC Console Work Positions

Figure 14 offers two distinct views of the console work positions. The field of view is from one side of the FECC operations floor (away from the entry doors that lead into the center) and from one end of the room to the other. The work areas are close-quartered and amenable to open collaboration among the PSTs. The review team observed this collaborative effort taking place during observation time spent in FECC. Each console position is adjustable (can raise or lower) offering the PST with the option of sitting or standing while working.

To get to a console work position, ECC staff must walk around the console work positions until they reach their respective work position. The console work positions were installed close together, and there is no separation or walkway path through them. The review team noted that some of the walking areas around the console work positions have narrow walkways and should be evaluated to ensure ADA compliance.







*Figure 14: FECC Operations Floor*

The review team observed a new hire trainee in one of the working positions on the operations floor (Figure 15). The workspace shown is conducive to accommodating a trainer and one or two trainees. Also noticeable were the additional headset jacks that allowed the trainer to plug in their headset to listen in on the trainee when they were either taking or dispatching calls. Each console work position had an additional headset jack for training purposes.

The number of console work positions on the ECC operations floor could be problematic in the future because there isn't room for additional work positions. On a positive note, the review team was advised that each position is set up with the same computer hardware equipment and software, so adjustments in assigned duties can be made as needed.

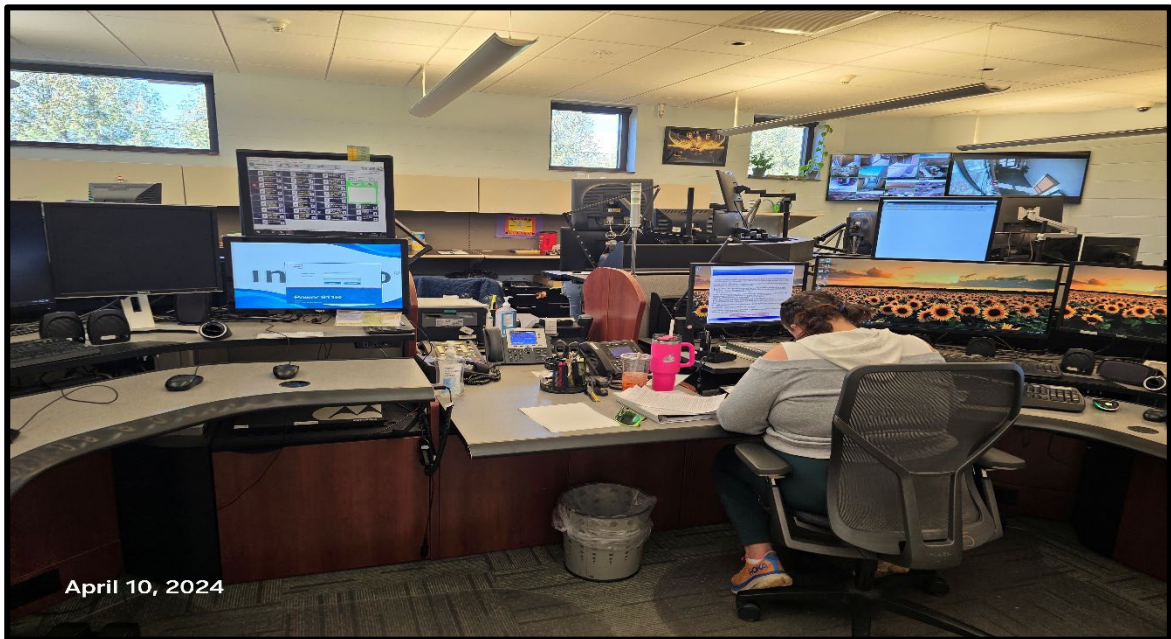


Figure 15: New Hire Training at Console Work Position

### **Consideration – Capacity**

For future planning purposes, consideration should be given to aligning any projects involving upgrades and or modifications of the FECC facility and/or ECC operations area with the following industry standards and best practices:

- Montana state and certified city, county, and town building codes
- APCO Definitive Guide to Next Generation 9-1-1
- APCO Sample RFP Template for NG9-1-1 Capabilities
- APCO/NENA ANS 1.102.3.2020 ECC Service Capability Rating Scale
- APCO ANS 2.106.1-2019 Public Safety Grade Site Hardening Requirements
- NENA-INF-039.2-2018 Public Safety Answering Point Site Selection Criteria Information Document
- NFPA 1225 Standard for Emergency Services Communications
- IACP Police Facilities Planning Guidelines
- SAFECOM/NCSWIC Emergency Communications Systems Value Analysis Guide
- UFC 4-141-04 Emergency Operations Center Planning and Design, with Change 1
- DHS Emergency Communications System Life Cycle Planning Guide
- International Code Council (ICC) Standard 500 (ICC 500)

## ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT WORKLOADS

In the public safety communications industry, ECCs are typically operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days per year. Essentially, there will always be a PST in the ECC to answer the call.

There are lots of misconceptions as to what PSTs do, and it is difficult for those who do not know or understand to gain a full appreciation for the types of work involved. One thing is certain: The work is challenging and comes with a lot of stress. This section highlights what the PSTs in FECC do on a routine and regular basis and lists any issues that might affect the harmony and cohesiveness of the operations function.

Before proceeding, it's important to describe some of the influences and demands placed on PST workloads. Figure 16 gives a representation of some of the factors PSTs face daily.<sup>62</sup> The PSTs have no control over the influences they face daily, and it is incumbent upon ECC leadership to have a full understanding and appreciation of this fact.

As stated in many of the core competency and training standards developed by APCO, the agency has a responsibility to ensure the ECC and PSTs are set up for success. Many of the findings and considerations throughout this section are in alignment with this concept.

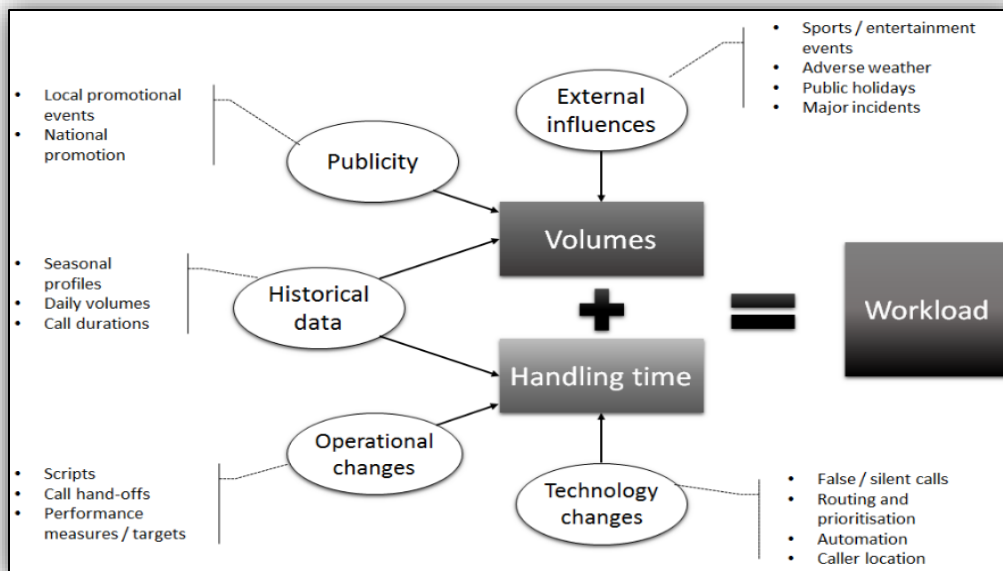


Figure 16: Example of Factors that Affect ECC Workloads (Source: EENA)

### **Analysis – Essential Services**

In the PSC industry, no two ECCs are the same, and the operational functions performed will vary based on the agency and/or agencies they serve, as well as the geographical

<sup>62</sup> EENA Operations Document. Workforce Management in PSAP Operations. "Figure 2. Influences on Workload." Available at <https://eena.org/knowledge-hub/documents/workforce-management/>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

characteristics and reach of the jurisdiction. Nevertheless, ECCs through their established operations frameworks, perform the following essential services:<sup>63</sup>

- Answer emergency and non-emergency calls for service, which include wireline and wireless phone calls, text messages, social media, video, and alarm systems.
- Determine emergency types and locations.
- Dispatch law enforcement, fire department, and EMS field units and coordinate responses.
- Adhere to SOPs.
- Use a wide array of technologies and information services, criteria-based triage systems, and personnel.
- Keep detailed information.
- Provide exceptional customer service.

In many ECCs with suitable staffing allocation, multiple PSTs share in the essential services listed above.

**Findings – Essential Services**

Within the FECC operations framework (shown in Figure 11), FECC performs the same essential services as listed above. The review team noted the essential services provided by FECC PSTs are backed by many FECC SOPs. A small sampling is shown in Table 7.

Eff. Date	Title	Last Update
2013	Standards of Conduct	--
2019	Personnel Policies and Procedures of Flathead County	03/30/2022
2013	Vision Statement	--
2017	Call Taking Operations	--
2017	Fire/EMS Dispatch	--
2017	Law Dispatch	--
2017	Quality Assurance	--
2020	Records	--
2017	Emergency Medical Dispatch	01/22/2024
2017	CAD Operations	--
2017	Field Personnel Safety	--

*Table 7: Sampling of FECC Essential Services SOPs*

The SOPs align with industry standards and best practices and complement the operations framework in Figure 11. In addition to FECC SOPs, FECC PSTs are trained to perform all aspects shown in the operations framework and the SOPs shown in Table 7. Additional details on the training for all positions are covered in the Training section.

<sup>63</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational Outlook Handbook. Public Safety Telecommunicators. “What Public Safety Telecommunicators Do.” Available at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/office-and-administrative-support/police-fire-and-ambulance-dispatchers.htm#tab-2>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.



### ***Consideration – Essential Services***

As detailed in the Written Directive System section, many FECC SOPs have not been updated, some as far back as 2013. This is not in alignment with industry standards and best practices. To align better with industry standards, consideration should be given to developing an SOP that offers guidance on the indexing, purging, updating, and revising FECC SOPs.<sup>64</sup> Typically, ECC leadership will conduct its review of all SOPs on an annual basis. An area requiring immediate attention is the Governing Authority SOP dated 2013. Since FECC is now under the authority of Flathead County, this SOP should be revised to reflect the current state.

### ***Findings – Primary Duties***

In support of its operational framework, FECC provides call taking and dispatch services for the county and its partner agencies through established interagency agreements. The primary duties performed by FECC PSTs involve but are not limited to:

- Receiving and processing non-emergency and emergency calls, in addition to receiving forwarded 9-1-1 calls from neighboring agencies.
- Guiding callers through EMD using a criteria-based system.
- Dispatching services for four law enforcement agencies (Flathead, Kalispell, Whitefish, and Columbia Falls).
- Dispatching services for eight (paid or combination) fire departments (Kalispell, Evergreen, Whitefish, Smith Valley, Bigfork, Big Mountain, Columbia Falls and Glacier Park International Airport).
- Dispatching services for 12 (volunteer) fire departments in Flathead County.
- Dispatching services for two EMS departments (Three Rivers EMS and Lakeside Quick Response Unit [QRU]).
- Dispatching services for two animal control departments (Flathead County and Kalispell).
- After normal business hours, performing dispatching services for two public works departments (Kalispell and Columbia Falls).
- Performing CJIN/NCIC checks for law enforcement.
- Operating various technological systems provided by FECC.
- Maintaining required certifications.

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<sup>64</sup> CALEA Standards for Public Safety Communications Agencies. Chapter 2 Direction and Supervision. 2.1. Direction. Specifically, 2.1.5 Written Directive System. 2020 Version 2.29

### ***Findings – Ancillary Duties***

In addition to the primary duties performed by FECC PSTs, the following ancillary duties are performed and were observed and documented during the site visit:

- Answering non-emergency administrative calls during and after regular business hours (e.g., barking dogs, lost/found animal calls, civil matters, officer sick callouts, etc.).
- Serving as the main switchboard operator for the four law enforcement agencies during and after regular business hours.
  - In the course of their duties, LEOs from their respective agencies will have citizens call FECC to get a hold of them. For the PST, this process often takes several attempts before getting a hold of the respective LEO.
- Performing investigative duties for the four law enforcement agencies during and after regular business hours (e.g., running driver's history checks, VIN checks, criminal history inquiries, stolen vehicle, and gun checks through CJIN/NCIC).
  - The review team noted that each law enforcement agency has its own records department that could easily perform these functions if they have CJIN/NCIC computer terminals at their respective agencies.
- Performing duties involving cautionary alerts on global jackets.
- After normal business hours (and sometimes during the day, holidays, when they take breaks, lunches, attending training, time off, etc.), serving as the backup records department for three of the four agencies served.
  - PSTs perform warrant locates, confirmations, removals, and NCIC entries for stolen vehicles, property, missing persons, etc.
  - The review team noted the biggest challenge for FECC is the Sheriff's Office, which is the busiest of the four. The FCSO records department only works Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Contacting towing companies for accidents and/or abandoned vehicles.
  - The review team learned that abandoned vehicle tow calls are especially time-consuming because tow companies don't want to respond, and it takes multiple calls by the PST to get one.
- Contacting the jail.
  - PSTs are used by LEOs to notify the jail of an incoming suspect for processing.
- Contacting the hospital communications centers.

- PSTs are used to notify the hospital of an incoming mental health hold/evaluation or blood draw.
  - Serving as the main switchboard operator for after-hours public works calls.
    - The review team learned the city of Whitefish adjusted to remove this task from FECC.
  - Monitoring security cameras located at the main entrance points to the facility.

On the surface, it appears the ancillary duties may have been an add-on as a result of the consolidation effort in 2010, or are a matter of convenience, proximity of FECC, and its 24-hour availability. Regardless, the ancillary duties required of and performed by FECC PSTs appear to be sizeable and taxing on established workloads. This is magnified exponentially due to staffing issues presented and the newness of the staff.

The review team noted it did not appear any of the ancillary duties were adjusted or removed to help offset the pressures placed on FECC PSTs due to its staffing deficiencies.

Some of the challenges associated with ancillary duties are as follows. FECC PSTs:

- Can be distracted from their essential duties when handling ancillary responsibilities.
- Are not giving full attention to some of the ancillary duties due to the responsibilities of handling emergency calls.
- Generally are paid at a higher rate than would be necessary to fill the skillset needed for performing ancillary duties.
- Require additional training to support the ancillary duties.

Adding additional ancillary duties that increase PST workloads, especially with their current staffing situation, should be avoided as any increase will detract the focus from their mission-critical work.

### ***Consideration – Primary/Ancillary Duties***

FECC leadership, as part of its strategic planning efforts, should consider making a routine action item requiring an audit of all ancillary duties performed by the PSTs. Important in this effort is the involvement of the FECC Operations Board. This is an opportunity for the FECC Director to engage the board and collaborate closely with them to brainstorm and come up with workable solutions to enhance productivity and improve operational efficiency. The goal in this effort is to identify and agree upon primary mission-critical duties and identify ancillary duties for removal, electronic

automation, and or consolidation. Leadership should determine and agree on tasks that are considered as a value-add for a potential service fee and those better handled by the applicable agency.

FECC leadership must convey to the FECC Operations Board that priority must be given to the primary duties performed by the PST. Any additional work levied on PSTs that takes the focus away from their primary duties must be examined carefully and planned accordingly. Critical thought is paramount in this process. One area for assessment consideration is the matter of FECC serving as the backup records department for three of the four agencies, which is taxing to FECC operations. The review team noted the hours of operations for the FCSO records department are Monday through Friday, from 8 am. to 5 pm. In contrast, Kalispell PD's records department hours of operation is 7 days per week (minus holidays) from 7 am. to 3 am. FECC leadership is encouraged to bring this matter up to the FECC Operations Board for additional assessment with consideration given to developing a workable change, as reasonably possible. One approach may be adjusting the FCSO's records department hours of operations to align with Kalispell PD records department (or something close to it), such change may add value beneficial to the operational components of the FCSO and FECC.

For this assessment to be effective and successful, the workflow process and input from the entire team (internal and external) will be vital. Adjustments can be made based on agreed-upon outcomes. For the planning effort, short- and long-term goals can be established, and action plans can be developed. Ultimately, any agreed-upon change must be for the greater good of the ECC, its staff, and the services provided to its customers. Likewise, SOPs and training materials should be updated to reflect any changes in the primary and ancillary duties performed by the PSTs and any changes made should continually be performance measured to ensure quality.

To aid in this effort, the review team has provided a template for use, which can be found in Appendix C, titled Ancillary Duty Assessment Template. Table 8 contains a small snapshot of the template and outlines some areas for immediate consideration, based on best practices, by FECC leadership, the County Administrator, and the FECC Operations Board.

Ancillary Duty to Withdraw	Consideration
Answering non-emergency administrative calls during and after regular business hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This task should be managed by each partnering agency and should not be transitioned to FECC</li> <li>• A technological solution, such as an auto attendant that provides instructions to callers about who/when to contact and also states if this is an emergency to call 9-1-1</li> </ul>
After-hours public works call handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This should be considered in staffing totals since it's outside of mission-critical services</li> </ul>
PSTs are used by LEOs to call the jail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the situation isn't routine or there is an officer safety factor involved, then FECC PST should be the one calling.</li> <li>• At times, most of these situations are routine and a task best managed by each partner agency</li> </ul>

Table 8: Ancillary Duties Assessment Potential for Withdrawal

### **Analysis – Operational Concept**

For this section, we use the following to define an operational concept. In its simplest form, an operational concept is designed to give an overall picture of an organization's intent regarding an operation or series of operations of a particular system, component, or unit to execute the normal mission under which it has been assigned.<sup>65</sup>

Based on our experiences, an ECC's operational construct will vary based on the needs of the agency's jurisdictional responsibilities and geographical reach. Ultimately, ECCs will be configured and responsible to answer and coordinate responses to calls requesting public safety services. In this regard, NFPA 1225 presents two ECC operational concepts: the vertical center and the horizontal center.<sup>66</sup> For this report, we will view this from an operational context.

- **Vertical Operation:** The PST performs both the call taking and dispatching functions.
  - In this setting, the PSTs engage in multitasking, which can inhibit their ability to perform assigned job functions

<sup>65</sup> AIAA. ANSI/AIAA G-043B-2018. Guide for the Preparation of Operational Concept Documents. Available at <https://webstore.ansi.org/standards/aiaa/ansiaiaa043b2018>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>66</sup> NFPA 1225. Standard for Emergency Services Communications (2022). Annex A. Explanatory Material. Chapter 15. Specifically, "15.3.1.1." available at <https://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/nfpa-1225-standard-development/1225>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

- *Horizontal Operation:* Different PSTs perform the call taking and or dispatching function.

**Note:** The ECC operational concept offered in NFPA 1225 is also referred to in the industry as one-stage or two-stage operations. In a one-stage operation, the PST functions the same as the vertical operation; in a two-stage operation, the PST functions the same as the horizontal operation.

In this section, we examine the operational concepts currently in place in FECC.

### ***Finding – Operational Concept***

FECC leadership has implemented a horizontal operational format for the answer and coordination of responses to calls for service (CFS). As such, the development of separate job positions has been established with employees hired and trained exclusively to perform the duties of call taker or dispatcher. In this regard, FECC leadership has created a true call taker and dispatcher system granting separation between the call taking and dispatching functions. These positions are augmented by the shift supervisor and lead position(s).

A benefit of the horizontal operational format is that it gives the call taker some flexibility in the delivery of emergency calls to the dispatcher for early dispatching purposes before they are done talking with the caller on the phone. If an urgent response is needed, the dispatcher can dispatch emergency responders to the scene as quickly as possible before the call taker has gathered all pertinent information.

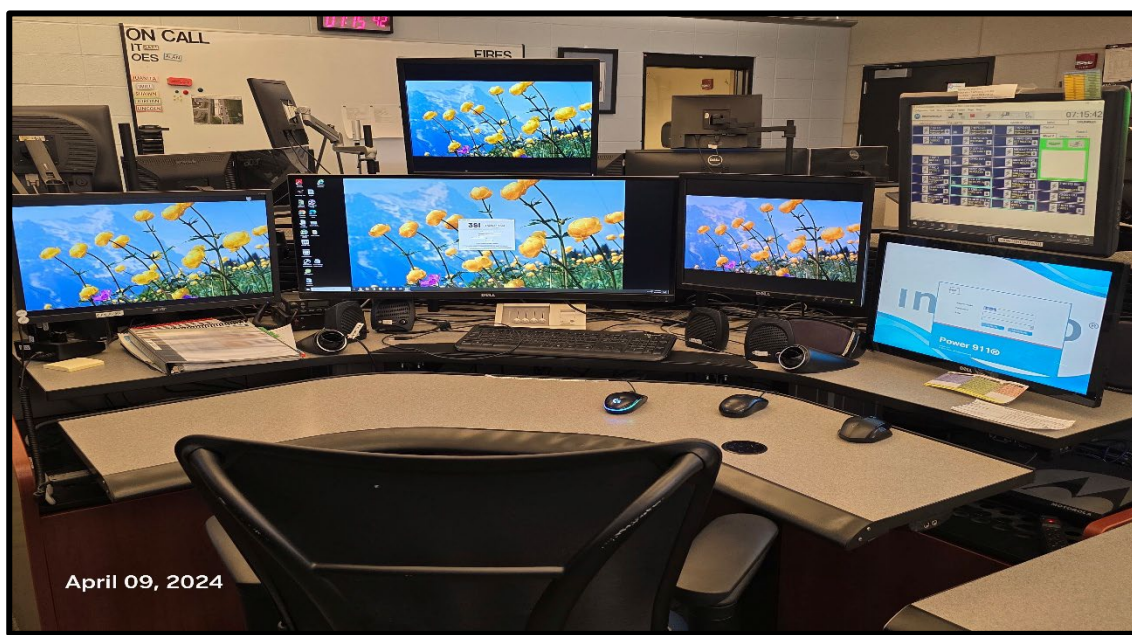


Figure 17: Typical FECC Console Work Position Layout



The review team was advised by FECC leadership that all console work positions in the ECC can be configured for vertical or horizontal operations, as all eight dispatch console positions are configured the same and have the same hardware and software (see Figure 17).

**Vertical Operations:** Out of necessity and due to staffing shortages, FECC is currently challenged and has had to switch to the vertical operations format. This method is commonly used in smaller ECCs, as they are not large enough and do not have the personnel to split the call taker and dispatcher duties. In a vertical operations setting, incoming calls are received, processed, and dispatched by the same PST. This process was observed during the site visit.

**Work Shift Duty Assignments:** The late-night shift supervisor bears the responsibility for creating the duty assignments for each work shift. The supervisor uses a magnetic whiteboard for this purpose. The PSTs' names are positioned on the board along with the duty assignments shown in column form. The supervisor uses a red marker to notate in each column the duties assigned for each PST. Duties assignments range from call taking to PD and FD dispatcher assignments.

NAME	PHONE	FCSO	KPD	F&M	F&F	ROVER
ANITA		7-17				
SHAY			X			Max
HEATHER				X	17-19 <sup>th</sup>	
CHLOE					X	
KARLEA		17-19			14-17	
ON CALL	KATE					
TRINITY	X					
BANKS		X				
CHAD				X <sup>th</sup>	X <sup>th</sup>	ANNA
CHEYENNE			X			
ON CALL	MCKENNA					

NAME	PHONE	FCSO	KPD	F&M	F&F	ROVER
ANITA						X
SHAY		5-17				430-05 Max
HEATHER			X			
CHLOE					X	
MCKENNA					X	
ON CALL	KATE					
TRINITY	X					
BANKS					X <sup>th</sup>	X <sup>th</sup>
CHAD			17-19	19-05		
CHEYENNE			X			
ON CALL	KARLEA					

Figure 18: FECC Duty Assignment Board (Two Days Shown)

As observed by the review team, the details shown in [Figure 13](#) give a modest representation of each console work position.<sup>67</sup> Since the assignments are unique to the PST, no console positions are assigned. The review team noted no SOPs were available

<sup>67</sup> Note: the graphic shown (Figure 13) does not represent the current positioning of each dispatch console in FECC.

that spoke to or offered guidance on the essential service, primary/ancillary duties, operational concept, duty assignments, and console work position designation.

During the site visit, the review team noted the console positions in use were in a vertical operations capacity. The review hypothesizes this is mainly due to the staffing shortages in the center. Currently, there are not enough PSTs to sustain a true horizontal operational format.

### ***Consideration – Operational Concept***

The review team encourages FECC leadership to develop SOPs that address the essential services provided by FECC. Moreover, developing SOPs addressing the primary/ancillary duties, operational concepts, duty assignments, and console work position designation are also needed. Doing so will align well with industry standards and best practices and add to the knowledge base for FECC, as well as provide detailed information for training purposes.

There is an opportunity for optimization of the operational model currently in place for FECC. As part of FECC leadership's strategic planning efforts, the review team advocates for a reassessment of all operational components in the ECC in terms of their production, value add, and return on investment (ROI). This will involve garnering a true understanding of where each component in the ECC operation currently stands. It will mean developing a detailed description of all ECC components and functions and presenting a tactical and strategic view of FECC leadership's intent regarding each operational component to execute the normal mission under which it has been assigned. This exercise should be done holistically in collaboration with ECC staff, the County Administrator, and the FECC operations board. Refer to the Concept of Operations section in this report for additional information on plan development.

Points for immediate consideration are each functional component on the operations floor:

- Fully staffed? If not, why? How do we mitigate the shortfalls?
- Sustainable and positioned for success? If not, why?
- Functioning in accordance with SOP, state mandates, CBA requirements, and workflow design? If not, why?
- Is each component being used on the operations floor meeting expectations? If not, why?
- Is FECC meeting performance, service, and quality assurance expectations? If not, why?
- Ancillary duties: What can partnering agencies do to help streamline FECC duties so the primary focus is on mission-critical duties
- Are there areas of potential streamlining and/or consolidation of duties?



Taking a serious, open-minded, and candid look at each operational characteristic of FECC, determining the pros and cons and where the most value lies, may help make the planning and decision-making process easier.

### ***Analysis – Job Complexity***

According to the APCO RETAINS *Effective Practices Guide* (EPG), job complexity is defined as the number of tasks that are a regular part of a job (i.e., the number of services each employee provides for citizens). For the PST, when the ECC is not fully staffed and adjustments aren't made to the number of non-critical tasks to help offset the increases in workloads short staffing will bring, job complexity increases. Research shows there are higher employee retention rates and increases in job satisfaction when employees see the distribution of work as fair and the tasks as manageable.<sup>68</sup> In addition, job complexity is also relational to the number of client agencies served, technology used, and employee satisfaction.

### ***Finding – Job Complexity***

What was immediately noticeable during the site visit was the can-do spirit of the FECC team. These are some remarkable people who have endured a lot due to staffing, employee turnover, scheduling woes, and issues with outdated technology. The review team noted that many of the PSTs and supervisors interviewed indicated they were close to reaching their breaking point. They added that forced overtime is leading to stress, burnout, an unhappy workforce, and frequent employee turnover. In contrast, many expressed they were happy with the director and felt she was doing everything she could for them.

### ***Consideration – Job Complexity***

The review team noted that steps are being taken by FECC leadership to address some of the concerns mentioned. Top priority should be given to the following areas:

- Filling vacant positions as soon as reasonably possible. This will be covered in greater detail in the [Staffing](#) section.
- Negativity in the center. FECC leadership must take immediate steps to address this issue. It is affecting most of the team, including newly hired PSTs. This issue has been one of the main reasons employees have left the department. Addressing this matter may help make some immediate improvements in staff morale and lessen employee turnover.<sup>69</sup>
- Take steps to address outdated technology.

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<sup>68</sup> APCO RETAINS. Staffing and Retention in Public Safety Communications Centers. "Job Complexity." Available at [https://retains.apcointl.org/pdf/Effective\\_Practices\\_Guide.pdf](https://retains.apcointl.org/pdf/Effective_Practices_Guide.pdf). Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>69</sup> HSI. 7 Tips for Managing Negativity. Available at <https://hsi.com/blog/7-tips-for-managing-negativity>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

FECC leadership should also consider evaluating the job duties and complexity of the job requirements for all positions in the ECC. Enough data is available for this effort, and all duties should be factored into visual workflows for analysis purposes. For instance, the review team has provided a workflow model in Appendix C – FECC - Call Processing/Incident Handling Workflow. FECC leadership can use this template for developing workflows. Developing workflows will be extremely helpful when determining appropriate staffing needs, modifications in job responsibilities, and balancing workloads.

Another area requiring immediate consideration is the Non-Emergency Call Taker position. The review team found a number of these positions were asked for and approved but never filled. Unclear was the need for such a position. What was evident was the immediate need for call takers and dispatchers. The roles and responsibilities of this position are worthy of a thorough review to reassess the need for this position and its benefit to FECC. The outcome of such efforts may lead to the possibility of combining the duties of this position with others in the center or potentially seeing a need for more call takers and dispatchers to fill vacancies that exist and bring staffing where it needs to be. The effect may help improve efficiency and effectiveness in the center and employee morale.

Another part of this effort is to identify non-mission critical tasks that can be performed by other partnering agency staff. This stop-gap measure may help alleviate the pressures currently faced by the PSTs due to staff shortages. When staffing and training have normalized FECC, then the issue of non-mission critical tasks can be reassessed by FECC leadership in concert with the County Administrator and FECC Operations Board.

The Staffing section will present more data and analysis that will inform FECC leadership on possible staffing changes to consider. Also in Appendix C is a reference sheet on the Effective Practices Related to Job Complexity.

### ***Finding – Issues Affecting Operations***

The review team identified multiple risk factors currently affecting the effectiveness of ECC operations.

- **Staffing:** Current staffing shortages are causing FECC to struggle. This problem is not unique to FECC; there is a current nationwide staffing crisis affecting the best ECCs. There's a whole host of contributing internal and external factors that will require new and creative approaches to overcome this issue. Refer to the Staffing section for additional information that may help.

- **Working Supervisors:** The shift supervisors should not be working the console positions or serving as the break relief position for PSTs on break. This current practice denies the entire shift of leadership oversight.
- **Workload:** Population growth, staffing shortages, and ancillary duties are just some of the contributing factors to increased workloads for PSTs. Flathead County, Montana, is a popular tourist destination, and workloads in the ECC increased considerably during this time. Off-peak, the workload diminishes somewhat to a manageable level.
- **Mandatory Overtime:** Due to staffing shortages, FECC PSTs must work mandatory overtime, which can and will lead to burnout and employee turnover. Refer to the Staffing section for additional information.
- **Shift Schedule:** The shift schedule is static as the PSTs are on permanent shifts. This has led to cliques forming in the ECC and creates an “us versus them” environment. If not dealt with, this can lead to a toxic and hostile workplace environment. Refer to the Staffing section for additional information.
- **Training:** Covered in greater detail in the Training section.
- **Leadership:** During the onsite interviews, concerns were raised about upper management and supervision. Some of the common themes ranged from inconsistency in carrying out policy and procedure to a lack of fairness, lack of accountability, lack of professionalism, and favoritism. If not dealt with, this can lead to a toxic work environment and an increase in employee turnover.
- **Written Directive System:** The Written Directive System is solid; however, many SOPs need revision. Likewise, concerns were raised about the leadership team’s lack of consistency in implementing and enforcing SOPs. A consistent theme was that supervisors are not always on the same page. For instance, one group of supervisors interrupts, implements, and enforces SOPs one way, while another group of supervisors are doing things a different way. This is a morale breaker as the PSTs are left stressed and confused.
- **Law Enforcement/Fire Dispatch Triage System:** The review team noted that FECC is not using a criteria-based system specific to law enforcement and fire dispatch. More detail is covered in the Call Interrogation System section of this report.

### ***Consideration – Issues Affecting Operations***

Immediate consideration should be given to addressing the issues listed. While some may be simple to fix others will require some creativity, innovation, empathy, and time. Each should be factored into the strategic planning process, as applicable, with action

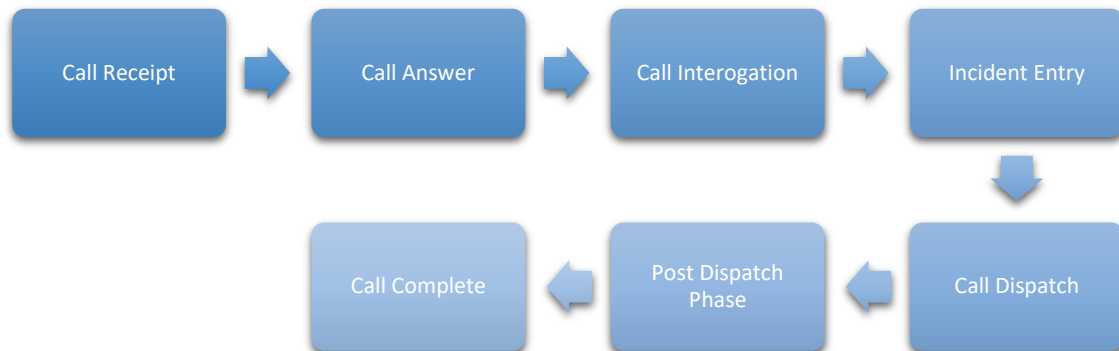
items created and assigned with deadlines to ensure attention is brought to each issue and closure is attained.

Aligning FECC programs with industry standards and best practices may aid in mitigating many of these issues and expedite program development. Also, implementing considerations made throughout this report may aid as well. The review team has provided two resource documents that may help in this effort in [Appendix C: Effective Practices Relating to Job Complexity](#) [Effective Practices: Creating Good Working Conditions](#).

## CALL PROCESSING AND INCIDENT HANDLING

The ECC serves as the primary point of contact for residents, visitors, and those working in the community. The ECC is responsible for answering 9-1-1 telephone calls and/or directly answering 10-digit emergency and non-emergency telephone calls. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the agency to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of this process.

When an emergency call is answered by the PST, a series of actions are performed (Figure 19). The first action is the call processing phase, followed second by the incident handling phase.



*Figure 19: Call Processing and Incident Handling Steps*

This section will detail both phases and the methodology used in FECC to accomplish each one.

### CALL PROCESSING PHASE

The term “call processing” is widely used in the emergency communications industry and embodies different meanings. From an ECC operations perspective, it implies a course of action performed by the PST. This section will convey the findings regarding the call processing phase in place and the processes used to complete this crucial task.

#### ***Analysis***

In the call processing phase, there is a technical and human interface. Each interface varies from start to finish, has a time element associated, and is dependent on ECC size

and operational structure. The call processing phase involves actions taken by the PST such as call answer, call interrogation, and initiating incident documentation.<sup>70</sup>

In the call answer phase, the PST will perform actions such as call interrogation and ascertaining, at a minimum, the following information:

- Caller's name, address, and callback number
- Nature of the call (incident type)
- Specific information for law, fire, and medical calls (nature, life status, etc.)
- Descriptions of suspects/victims
- Potential hazards
- Presence of any weapons (if applicable)

In concert with these steps, the PST will have initiated incident documentation using manual or automated methods to document the call.

### ***Findings***

9-1-1 calls occurring in Flathead County are received directly by FECC. FECC serves as the primary ECC for Flathead County and cities within the county.

***Call Delivery:*** For FECC, a typical emergency call for service originates when a citizen dials 9-1-1 or uses a 10-digit emergency number to reach the ECC.<sup>71</sup> Based on location, 9-1-1 calls made within the FECC service area are routed to FECC, where trained 9-1-1 call takers, 9-1-1 dispatchers, and or 9-1-1 shift supervisors or leads are ready to answer the call. In the FECC – Call Processing/Incident Handling Workflow in Appendix C, column “C-1 Call Answer” gives an accounting of how a call may be delivered to FECC.

***Call Receipt/Answer:*** During the site visit, the 9-1-1 call takers, 9-1-1 dispatchers, and or 9-1-1 shift supervisors or leads were observed at different working positions using Intrados’ Power 9-1-1 Call Handling Solutions software (version 6.4 KB-010253 – 6.4.0.190) to answer emergency 9-1-1 calls (see Figure 20). The Intrado Power 9-1-1 system provides a host of features for the call processing effort and is text-to-9-1-1 capable. During interviews, the review team was advised by many that the current system was old and needed to be updated. We also learned during the site visit that the 9-1-1 system is scheduled to be upgraded in May 2024.

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<sup>70</sup> APCO ANS 1.113.2 – 2024 Public Safety Communications Incident Handling Process. Available at <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/11132-2024-psc-incident-handling-process>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

<sup>71</sup> Flathead Emergency Communications Center. SOP. “Calltaking Operations. (2017). “Emergency calls.”

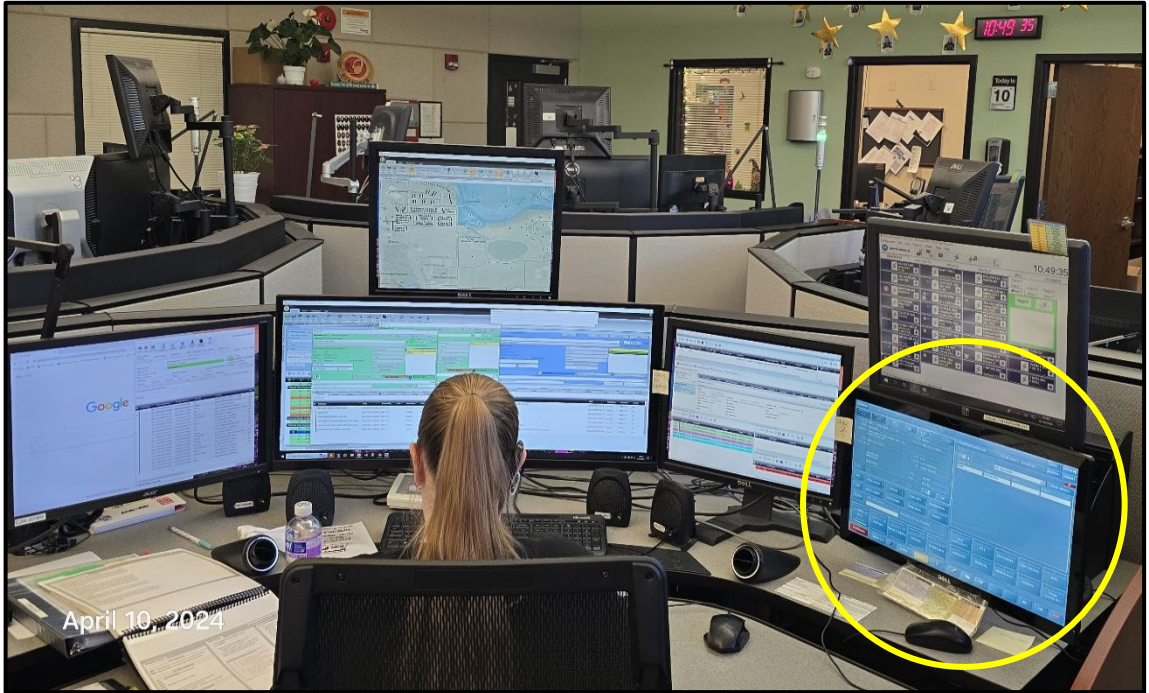


Figure 20: Graphic User Interface (GUI) for the Intrado Power 9-1-1

Supporting SOPs for the call processing effort were identified and listed below the workflow provided in FECC – Call Processing/Incident Handling Workflow in Appendix C. The observed actions performed by the PST followed the supporting SOP requirements. In addition, the supporting documents and call processing steps as they relate to the call taker position align with the most current version of APCO ANS 1.113.2-2024 Public Safety Communications Incident Handling Process and with CALEA PSC established mandatory accreditation standards found in Chapter 6: Operations, 6.5 Telephone (the entire section). The exception is many SOPs have not been reviewed or revised since 2017.

### **Consideration**

FECC leadership should schedule all SOPs involving the call processing effort for review and update as soon as reasonably possible. Likewise, consideration should be given to developing workflows for all call-processing SOPs. The benefits of such efforts will support tactical planning, enhance situational awareness, identify inefficiencies, and provide data for effective training materials.

### **Analysis – 9-1-1 Call Transfers**

A call transfer is an action taken by the PST to redirect a call (emergency or non-emergency) to another ECC or specialized service. For example, a call received may be transferred to another ECC, emergency services agency, or to a non-emergency service provider that may be more appropriate to assist the caller's needs (e.g., utility company,



9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, mental health services, animal control, poison control, 3-1-1, etc.). In these circumstances, the PST may not need additional information and may disconnect once the transfer has been verified as completed.

### ***Finding – 9-1-1 Call Transfers***

The review team noted that FECC, on occasion, will receive and/or make 9-1-1 call transfers to and from the surrounding agencies shown in [Figure 1](#). Call transfers did not appear to be an issue for FECC, and the review team did not observe any call transfers during the onsite visit. Procedural guidance is available to the PSTs on the call transfer process and is addressed in the SOP titled Call Taking Operations. The actions to be taken by the PST are listed in detail and include instructions to stay on the line until the transfer is complete. This step is necessary to avoid making blind transfers. One of the best definitions to describe a blind transfer call comes from the State of New Jersey Office of Emergency Telecommunications Services. They define a blind transfer as a means of failing to advise the calling party that the call is being transferred and failing to remain on the line until there is confirmation that the appropriate transfer has been made.<sup>72</sup>

### ***Consideration – 9-1-1 Call Transfers***

ECC leadership should be aware of the risks involved in the call transfer process and ensure up-to-date policy, procedure, and workflows are aligned with industry standards and best practices and that PSTs are trained in the process. FECC leadership is encouraged to audit the 9-1-1 call transfer process and include guidance regarding blind transferred calls, the PSTs need to know how to process them effectively when received and that blind transfers are not allowed.

### ***Findings – Administrative/Non-Emergency Calls***

The review team observed that administrative and non-emergency calls for service are received and processed in FECC. These calls come in one of two ways. First is through the Intrado customer premises equipment (CPE); these calls are processed similarly to 9-1-1 calls but at a lower priority. The second is through Cisco IP phone desk sets, which serve as back-up to the Intrado CPE. According to FECC leadership, there are enough IP phone sets for each call taker, and there are multiple layers of backups within dispatch. For instance, cell phones are available in the ECC for use if all the CPE and internal phone systems fail.

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<sup>72</sup> N.J. Administrative Code 17:24-1.2. – Definitions. “Blind Transfer.” Current through Register Vol. 54, No. 43, October 2, 2023. Available at <https://casetext.com/regulation/new-jersey-administrative-code/title-17-treasury-general/chapter-24-9-1-1-emergency-telephone-system/subchapter-1-general-provisions/section-1724-12-definitions>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

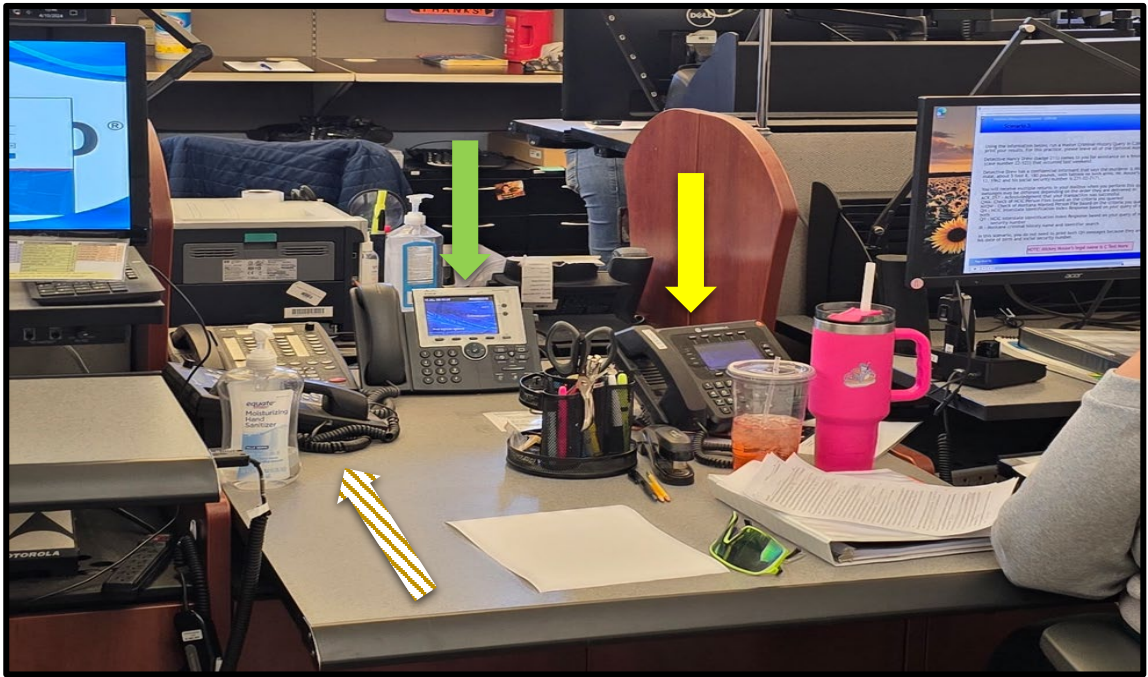


Figure 21: FECC Desktop Phone and Radio Console

During the onsite visit, there were eight desktop sets observed located centrally (back-to-back) in the ECC. Figure 21 gives an idea of the desk placement. Of the four units, two were being used. The yellow arrow points to the Motorola MCD 5000 APX All Band radio console, which is used as a backup to the radio software interface at each workstation. The green arrow points to the Cisco Unified (7945) IP desktop phone set, which is used for opening the gate to the secure parking lot and is used as a backup for administrative non-emergency phone lines or anything else FECC leadership has them programmed for. The two phones on the desk indicated by the white and brown striped arrow are not in use and are to be removed from the desk space.

The review team noted that SOPs were not available governing the use of the Motorola MCD 5000 or Cisco Unified 7945 IP desktop systems; however, FECC SOP Call Taking Operations provides call-taking procedures for the answering of emergency and non-emergency telephone calls received through the Intrado CPE and Cisco Unified telephone systems.

There is documented training material for call taking operations; however, there is no training documentation available on either desktop set.

### ***Consideration – Administrative/Non-Emergency Calls***

To close these identified gaps, FECC leadership should develop an action plan to address the development of an SOP and training materials to ensure the PST has the necessary guidance to successfully use this equipment.



## CALL INTERROGATION SYSTEM

This section contains an assessment of the call interrogation system in place for FECC and measures it against public safety communications industry standards and best practices.

### *Analysis*

Call interrogation systems are either standardized protocols or criteria-based systems and when properly used, are an effective method of handling 9-1-1 calls, reducing error, and managing performance. This approach provides clear standards and expectations that can be objectively measured to determine compliance and mitigate risk. The use of these systems ensures calls are neither over-processed (unnecessary use of agency responder assets) nor under-processed (underestimating the extent and risk of the incident). Using standardized protocol and criteria-based systems provides guidance and consistency in a time-sensitive, critical decision-making environment.

Industry standards and best practices advocate that agencies with a designated ECC under their jurisdiction have, at a minimum, adopted or established call taking protocols for the services rendered (e.g., police, fire, and EMS). Industry-leading associations such as APCO, NENA, CALEA, NFPA, and ASTM have established standardized call taking guidelines or protocols to assist in the development of an agency's written procedures and protocols. The following resources are available:

- [APCO ANS 1.113.2-2024 Public Safety Communications Incident Handling Process](#)
- [APCO ANS 1.114.1-2017 Best Practices for PSAPs When Processing Vehicle Telematics Calls from Telematics Service Providers](#)
- [APCO ANS 1.120.1-2021 Crisis Intervention Techniques and Call Handling Procedures for Public Safety Telecommunicators](#)
- [NENA-STA-020.1-2020 NENA Standard for 9-1-1 Call Processing](#)
- [NFPA 1225 Standards for Emergency Services Communications 2022](#)
- [ASTM F 1258 - 00 Standard Practice for Emergency Medical Dispatch](#)
- [NHTSA Emergency Medical Dispatch National Standard Curriculum 1995](#)
- [AHA Telecommunicator CPR Recommendations and Performance Measures](#)

Several vendor protocol systems on the market can be purchased directly from vendors and/or customized in-house. These systems provide PSTs with the tools they need to properly prioritize the response level of a call and to provide pre-arrival instructions to the caller.

**Findings – Call Interrogation:**

In support of the call processing effort, the review team noted that FECC PSTs are using a criteria-based system procured from the King County Emergency Medical Services Division based in Seattle, Washington, in 2010. The system in place is referred to as the Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) Guidelines. The version in use is the 8<sup>th</sup> Edition, approved in 2016 (Figure 22). While EMD is not mandated in the state of Montana, it is encouraged.

The EMD criteria-based dispatch system is used exclusively by FECC PSTs for EMD call interrogation purposes. Strict requirements are in effect by the vendor governing the use of the EMD guidecards. The EMD guidecards are only available to agencies implementing the King County EMD program and cannot be purchased without going through the implementation process. The implementation process includes the medically approved emergency medical dispatch triage guidelines for PSTs, a comprehensive EMD training program, quality improvement measures, and ongoing research.<sup>73</sup> Noted by the review team, on the King County EMD program website, it mentions the EMD guidelines are no longer available for licensing to outside King County agencies due to demand.<sup>72</sup>

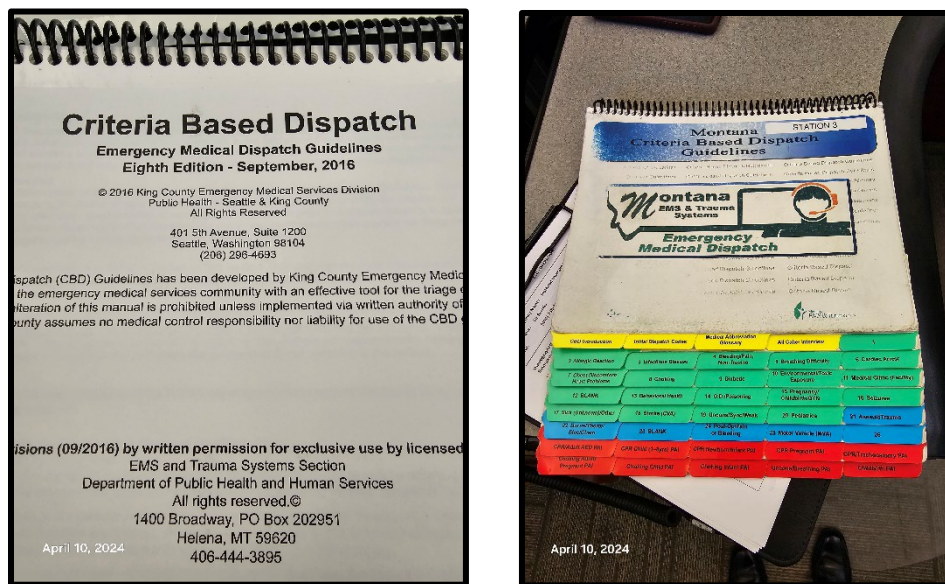


Figure 22: FECC EMD Criteria-Based Dispatch System (Manual Card Set)

In addition to the EMD guidelines, FECC maintains the following written directives in relation to the emergency medical dispatch system shown in Table 9; these written directives were recently updated. Both should be scheduled for review at the beginning of 2025.

<sup>73</sup> King County Emergency Medical Services. Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) Program. Available at <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dph/health-safety/health-centers-programs-services/emergency-medical-services/emergency-medical-dispatch>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

Eff. Date	Title	Last Update
2017	EMD	01/22/2024
2017	Ambulances	01/05/2024

Table 9: FECC Emergency Medical Dispatch System Procedure

The review team noted that the EMD guidelines were available to PSTs operating a console and EMD is performed on all medical calls, as needed. The EMD guidelines were in manual flip card form and not in electronic format (see Figures 22 and 23). During our time in the center, the EMD guidelines were being used by ECC PSTs (Figure 23).

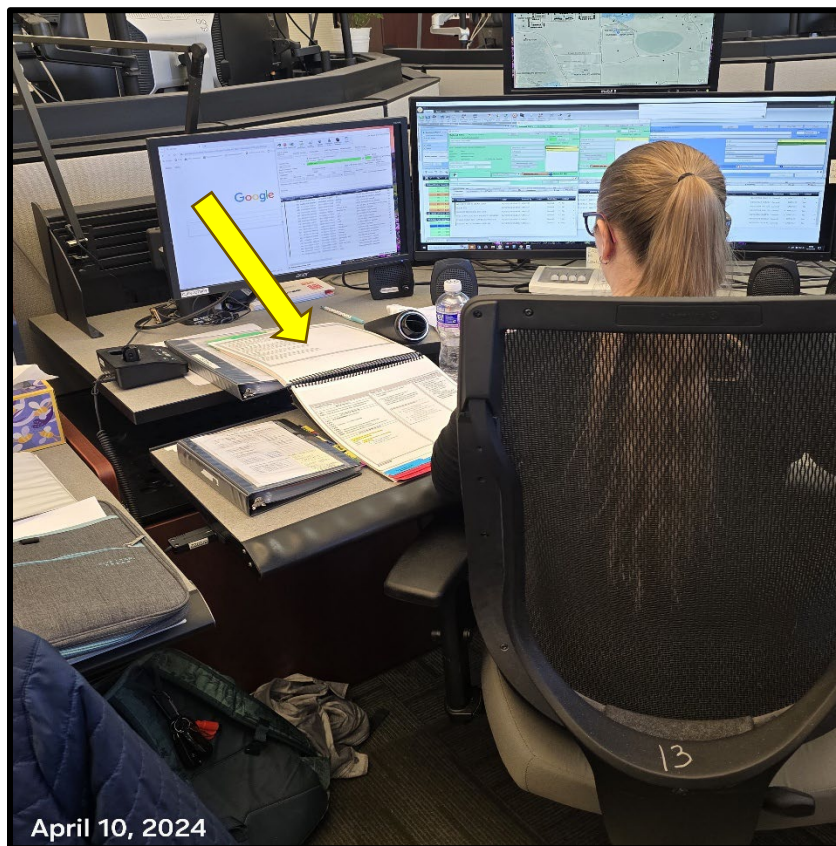


Figure 23: Location of EMD Guidecards (Observed)

During interviews, a few concerns arose relating to the protocol system:

- Many felt the protocol system would be enhanced if they were available electronically from their console workstation.
- EMD training used to be taught at the state training academy.
- The EMS Program Manager is an available resource for training PSTs on the EMD guidecard system but they mentioned that they have not been asked for assistance. The FECC Director would like to keep this task in-house for quality control purposes.

The EMS Program Manager we spoke to shared that they have asked the FECC Director to attend their meetings but feel that she has yet to attend. The FECC

Director states that she attends any time that she is on the agenda or asked specifically to attend, but after following guidance from the County Administrator she isn't required to attend every meeting.

### ***Consideration – Call interrogation***

There are pros and cons in every criteria-based system brought into the ECC. FECC leadership is encouraged to conduct a risk assessment of the criteria-based system in place to find and address the root causes of the issues raised. The challenge is to find the causal factors for the concerns raised and mitigate them to the lowest level possible. To do this, FECC leadership must know where they currently are (the findings section above has provided some insight). This is a necessary exercise to help find where gaps exist so the focus can be on closing them. In the end, if the gaps identified are insurmountable, then it becomes a matter of risk tolerance. In other words, how much risk is FECC willing to take before considering making a change in systems?

Until staffing in the ECC normalizes, consideration should be given to using the EMS Board for training on the EMD guidecard system. Close collaboration and planning will be necessary to ensure the needs of FECC are met. This venture may take some pressure off the trainer(s) allowing them to focus on other areas of the training program. Likewise, FECC leadership should consider sending representatives to the EMS Board meetings. There may be vital information relevant to the FECC's EMD program that is missed, thus causing an element of risk to the FECC's EMD mission.

## **INCIDENT HANDLING PHASE**

In the ECC, "incident handling" involves tasks performed by the PST, including incident data entry, determination of jurisdiction, call transfer, determining priority, and determining dispatch requirements. This section considers the incident handling phase for FECC.

### ***Analysis***

In most cases, the incident handling phase occurs concurrently with the call processing phase. This is dependent on the concept of operations established for the ECC. For example, in ECCs where the PST performs both the call taking and dispatch functions, the PST will perform most of the call processing and incident-handling activities simultaneously. In essence, they receive the call, interrogate it, perform data entry, and dispatch the call for an appropriate response.

In medium to large ECCs where the call taking and dispatching functions are typically separate, once the call taker has determined the address/location, callback number, and nature of the incident (police, fire, or EMS), the call taker may transfer the incident to an appropriate radio dispatcher for further call processing, incident handling, and dispatch.



## Findings

FECC is a medium-sized agency providing essential call taking and dispatch services for its geographical service area, the FCSO, and client law, fire, and EMS agencies within Flathead County. The call and incident handling processes are multistep and completed fastidiously by the PSTs. Currently, FECC is configured for horizontal dispatch operations, but it is operating in a vertical operational format, managing all call processing and incident handling activities as shown in [Figure 19](#) and in Appendix C – [FECC – Call Processing/Incident Handling Workflow](#) simultaneously. As noted, this is out of necessity due to staffing shortages.

**Incident Documentation:** Incidents are managed and documented using a computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system. The CAD system software is from New World Systems, which became part of Tyler Technologies, Inc. in 2015.<sup>74</sup> The CAD system software is installed at each console work position and supports law enforcement, fire, and EMS call management (see Figure 24). \*Photo blurred for censorship. The current software version is 2019.2 Build 7.1.94.

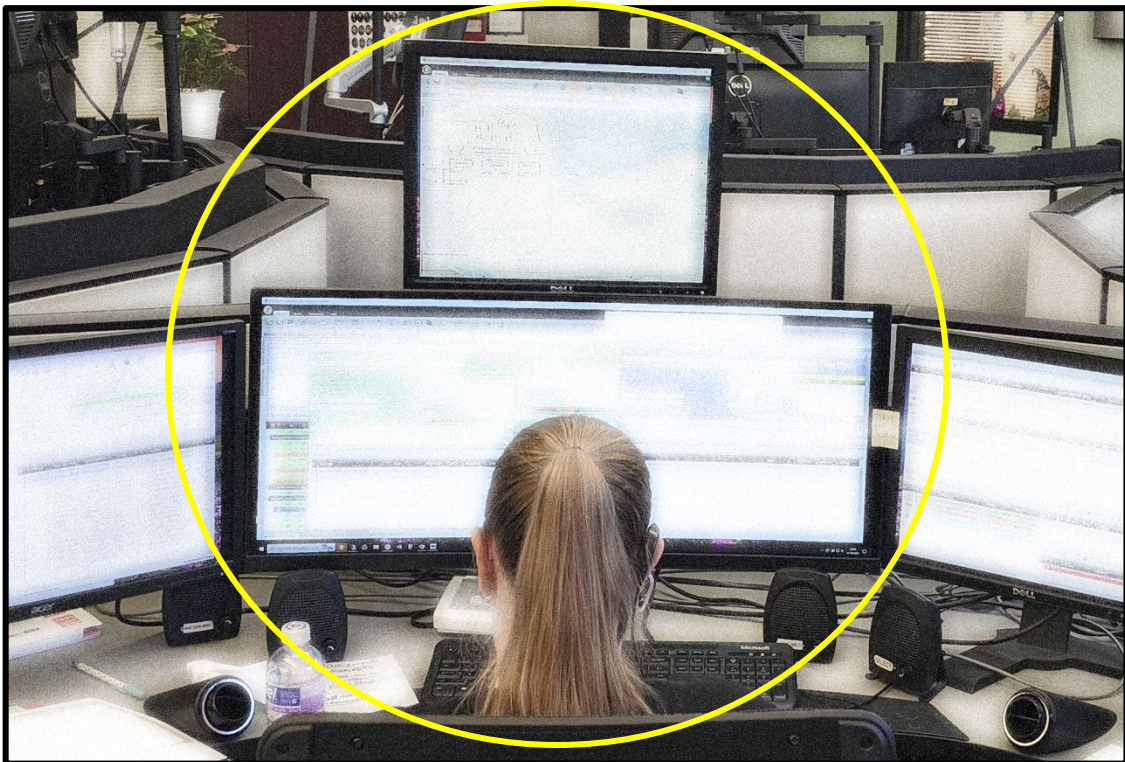


Figure 24: New World CAD System with GIS Mapping

The review team noted several SOPs were governing the use of the CAD system (Table 10). SOP guidance covers everything from normal operations to what the PSTs are to do

<sup>74</sup> Firehouse. Tech & Comm. Tyler Technologies to Acquire New World Systems Corporation. Available at <https://www.firehouse.com/tech-comm/press-release/12124789/new-world-systems-tyler-technologies-to-acquire-new-world-systems-corporation>. Accessed on 05/25/2024.

in the event of CAD system failure and the use of manual dispatch methods. Likewise, there is guidance to the PSTs on what to do when the CAD system is back online (e.g., CAD catch-up program and methods for manual documentation). Where the SOPs fall short is in the notification process when the system goes down.

Eff. Date	Title	Last Update
2017	CAD Operations	--
2017	CAD Messaging	12/12/2023
2017	CAD System Failure	--
2017	Call Taking Operations	--

Table 10: FECC SOPs Related to the CAD System

**Incident Dispatch:** In the dispatch phase, incidents are dispatched by the 9-1-1 Dispatchers to the FCSO Deputies, client law enforcement officers, fire and EMS agencies through its land mobile radio (LMR) network using Motorola MCC 7500 Elite Dispatch software installed at each console work position (Figure 25).

FECC is on the Montana Public Safety Communications System (MPSCS) Statewide APCO Project 25 Phase I Trunked Radio System with separate and specific radio channels and an array of talk groups for FCSO, client law enforcement, fire, and EMS primary and tactical operations radio operations.<sup>75</sup> In FECC, these talk groups are programmed and accessible through the Motorola MCC 7500 Elite Dispatch software (Elite and MCC 7500 version: 22.5.1) refer to Figure 25. \*Photo blurred for censorship.

<sup>75</sup> RadioReference. Flathead County, Montana, Frequencies. "Flathead County." Available at <https://www.radioreference.com/db/browse/ctid/1608>. Accessed on 05/05/2024.

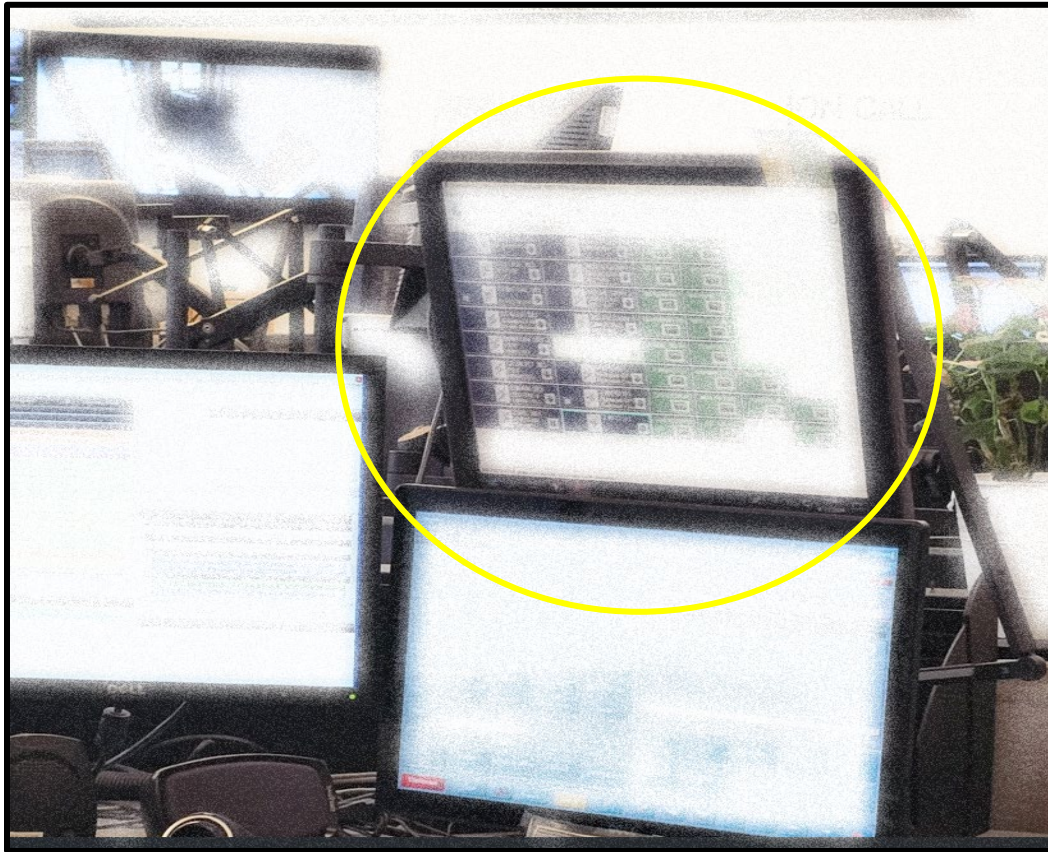


Figure 25: GUI for the Motorola MCC 7500 Elite Dispatch Software

**Law Enforcement Dispatch:** FECC provides law enforcement radio dispatch services utilizing five radio channels assigned for the following purposes:

Channel	# of Channels	Purpose
FECC Dispatch	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial dispatch and unit tracking</li> <li>• Emergency incident in progress</li> <li>• Alert tone activation to restrict radio use to emergency traffic only</li> </ul>
Operations	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interagency multi-unit response incidents</li> <li>• Overflow channel</li> </ul>
Tactical Incident	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used for multi-agency response</li> <li>• Used for lengthy incidents</li> </ul>

Table 11: FECC Law Enforcement Radio Channel Usage

Table 12 shows the law enforcement agencies served by FECC and the average number of field units on their respective radio channel during the busiest shift of a typical day. The review team noted that Whitefish and Columbia Falls police departments share one patched radio channel and will have between four and eight officers on the radio channel during the busiest shift of a typical day.



Agency	Number of Field Units
Flathead County Sheriff's Office	8
Kalispell Police Department	4 and 6
Whitefish Police Department	4 and 8
Columbia Falls Police Department	

Table 12: Law Enforcement Agencies Served/Maximum Units On-Duty

FECC PSTs are assigned to an applicable law enforcement radio channel (as shown in [Figure 18](#)) for their work shift and will select the appropriate law channel on the Motorola MCC 7500 Elite Dispatch software at their respective work console (Figure 25). The review team noted the lack of a criteria-based guideline system for law enforcement calls. Such calls are dispatched by the PSTs in accordance with policy and priority.

During interview sessions with client agency law enforcement department leaders, concerns were raised (shown in Table 13). The issues listed were viewed as those requiring immediate attention. Problem statements are listed and possible mitigation strategies are listed for FECC leadership's consideration.

Problem	Considerations
Extreme amount of turnover in FECC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create standing agenda items for FECC Operations Board meetings.</li> <li>• Create an ad hoc Law Enforcement Operations Group with representation from FECC (9-1-1 Training &amp; QA/QI Coordinator), FECC radio team, and patrol supervisors to find workable solutions to enhance field operations. Run these meetings like FECC Operations Board meetings.</li> <li>• Have a technological audit/assessment done.</li> <li>• Reach out to the Montana Public Safety Communications System (MPSCS) team to help find workable solutions.</li> <li>• Determine if a criteria-based guideline system will enhance law enforcement dispatch services.</li> </ul>
The level of service and safety of our officers needs to improve.	
Telling officers to stand by while on a traffic stop or other significant calls is not a good safety protocol.	
There is no follow-up or any kind of following SOP in CAD narratives.	
No tabulation of issues, no follow-up, and no communication	
We need a complete audit of our technology. I think we've fallen far behind.	

Table 13: List of Concerns from Client Law Enforcement Agencies

**Fire/EMS Dispatch:** FECC provides fire and EMS radio dispatch service for the following fire and EMS agencies (Table 14). Kalispell Fire/EMS is on one channel, but all other fire and EMS departments (combination and volunteer) share a channel on a conventional radio system:

Agency	Number of Radio Channels
Kalispell Fire/EMS Department	1
Evergreen Fire Rescue	1 Shared
Whitefish Fire/EMS Department	
Glacier Park International Airport Fire Department	
Smith Valley Fire Department	
Bigfork Fire Department	
Columbia Falls Fire Department	
Big Mountain Fire Department	

Table 14: Fire and EMS Agencies Served/Number of Radio Channels Assigned

In addition to the fire and EMS departments served (Table 14), FECC also provides radio dispatch services for 12 volunteer fire departments in Flathead County (Table 15):

Flathead County Volunteer Fire Departments	
Bad Rock FD	Hungry Horse FD
Blankenship FD	Marion FD
Creston FD	Martin City FD
Coram-West Glacier FD	Olney FD
Ferndale FD	Somers-Lakeside FD
	South Kalispell FD
	West Valley FD

Table 15: Other Fire Departments Served by FECC

The fire departments in Flathead County serves multiple purposes. Some are strictly fire service departments, while others are a combination of fire, quick response units (QRU), and/or ambulance services. Regardless of the services provided by these fire entities, all are requested to communicate directly with FECC when responding to or working on incidents. The PSTs assigned and working their respective fire channel(s) will provide run times for all fire response incidents and maintain additional documentation in CAD.

Fire/EMS calls are dispatched by the PSTs according to pre-built response plans in the CAD system, commonly referred to as special response information (SRI).

During interview sessions with client agency fire department leaders, concerns were raised regarding the current methodology for fire/EMS dispatch. The issues listed below were viewed as those requiring immediate attention. Problem statements are listed (Table 16) and possible mitigation strategies are listed for consideration.

Problem	Considerations
We need a single dispatch channel for fire to free up the tactical channel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and plan the same channel concept as used for law enforcement:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dispatch channel</li> <li>○ Operations channel</li> <li>○ Tactical (already established)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
We have multiple fire and EMS agencies trying to talk to dispatch on the same frequency and it doesn't work.	
We don't want to go to a trunked system because we can't talk to people inside a building.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a standing agenda item for FECC Operations Board meetings.</li> </ul>
Many of us feel dispatch could not handle a Mayday situation due to shortages in personnel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a Fire Operations Group as suggested with additional representation from FECC and the radio team to find workable solutions,</li> <li>• Have a technological assessment done.</li> </ul>
What is the strategic long term goals for maintenance, upkeep, and improvements for our hardware because it's not getting done?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use NIST recommendation 22, which includes the installation, inspection, and testing of emergency communications systems, radio communications, and associated operating protocols to ensure that the systems and protocols are effective for large-scale emergencies in buildings with challenging radio frequency propagation environments and can be used to identify, locate, and track emergency responders within indoor building environments and in the field.<sup>76</sup></li> </ul>
We need a fire group that meets monthly to make these decisions along with FECC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach out to the Montana Public Safety Communications System (MPSCS) team to help find workable solutions.</li> <li>• Run meetings like FECC Operations Board meetings.</li> </ul>

Table 16: List of Concerns from Client Fire Agencies

In support of the incident handling phase, FECC maintains several SOPs governing various actions to be taken by the PST under specific operational conditions. Table 17 offers a minor sampling and may not be a complete list.

<sup>76</sup> National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). Testimony. The Building and Fire Safety Investigation into the World Trade Center Collapse. Appendix A. List of Recommendations. Group 6. Improved Emergency Response. "Recommendation 22." Available at <https://www.nist.gov/speech-testimony/building-and-fire-safety-investigation-world-trade-center-collapse>. Accessed on 05/31/2024.

Eff. Date	Title	Last Update
2017	Law Dispatch	--
2017	Fire/EMS Dispatch	--
2017	Ambulances	01/05/2024
2017	Radio Malfunction	--
2017	Field Personnel Safety	--
2017	Canceling EMS	01/17/2024

Table 17: FECC Supporting Documents for the Incident Handling Phase

The review team noted there were no SOPs or training material available providing details on FECC radio system and its configuration. This is not to suggest that such information does not exist; we just did not see or receive any.

### **Consideration**

FECC leadership should consider developing a Tactical Interoperability Communications Plan (TICP) for Flathead County and its client agencies. The TICP is an essential tactical planning and knowledge management tool that defines the scope of interoperable assets available in the county; it should include how the assets are shared, how their use is prioritized, and the steps individual agencies should follow to request, activate, use, and deactivate each asset.<sup>77</sup> This effort may provide opportunities to help address and mitigate some of the issues raised in Tables 13 and 16. A [downloadable template](#) is available for use in developing and writing the TICP for Flathead County.

Consideration should be given to developing SOPs for the systems highlighted in the call processing and incident handling phases. From a readiness perspective, system overview details and all actions to be taken by the PST during system failure are paramount. SOP guidance will provide these details. In addition, streamlining current SOPs and categorizing them by public safety discipline will help with efficiency. When writing an SOP governing the actions that must be taken when there is a system failure and day-to-day overload, the following industry standards and best practices are available to aid in this effort:

- [SAFECOM Writing Guidelines for Standard Operating Guidelines](#)
- [DHS Programming Guide for Interoperability Radio Channels](#)
- [SAFECOM/DHS Communications-Specific Tabletop Exercise Methodology](#)
- [APCO ANS 1.121.1-2022 Managing Operational Overload in the ECC](#)
- [APCO ANS 1.110.1-2015 Multi-Functional Multi-Discipline Computer Aided Dispatch \(CAD\) Minimum Function Requirements](#)

<sup>77</sup> CISA. Emergency Communications Guidance Documents and Publications. Helpful Resources. "Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan Template. Available at <https://www.cisa.gov/emergency-communications-guidance-documents-and-publications>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

- APCO/NPSTC 1.104.2-2017 Standard Channel Nomenclature for the Public Safety Interoperability Channels
- APCO/NENA 1.102.3-2020 ECC Service Capability Criteria Rating Scales
- APCO ANS 1.115.1-2018 Core Competencies, Operational Factors, and Training for Next-Generation Technologies in Public Safety Communications
- APCO ANS 2.106.1-2019 Public Safety Grade Site Hardening Requirements
- NFPA 1225 Standard for Emergency Services Communications

## ECC PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The mission of every public safety agency is to ensure all departments are meeting or exceeding community and stakeholder requirements and expectations. Public safety agencies, like FECC, must be prudent and efficient with public funds, be aware of public perception, and remain vigilant in protecting public trust. Many agencies will institute total quality management (TQM) practices for this effort. TQM focuses on process measurement and controls to ensure continuous improvement.<sup>78</sup>

For the ECC leadership, measuring ECC performance is an essential part of the job and is one of the most difficult things to get right. Many ECCs will develop and institute performance measurement systems, such as key performance indicators (KPIs) for this effort. Without the use of KPIs, the ability to quantify an ECC's effectiveness is severely diminished. Why is it important or necessary to develop a performance measurement system for the ECC? Ultimately, it gives ECC leadership the following vital information:<sup>79</sup>

- Where the ECC has been.
- Where it is going.
- Whether something is going wrong.
- When the ECC reaches a specific target.

The benefits of developing a good performance measurement system cannot be understated. Doing nothing simply embraces the status quo. Establishing quality metrics for the performance measurement system will:<sup>80</sup>

- Help with the strategy and direction of the ECC.
- Provide a focus for the entire enterprise.
- Help with decision-making.

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<sup>78</sup> ISIXSIGMA. What is Total Quality Management and Why Does it Matter? Available at <https://www.isixsigma.com/dictionary/total-quality-management-tqm/>. Accessed on 05/07/2024.

<sup>79</sup> ISIXSIGMA. The Importance of Implementing Effective Metrics. Available at <https://www.isixsigma.com/metrics-methodology/importance-implementing-effective-metrics/>. Accessed on 05/07/2024.

<sup>80</sup> HBR. The True Measures of Success. Available at <https://hbr.org/2012/10/the-true-measures-of-success>. Accessed on 05/07/2024.

- Help drive performance.
- Help drive change as the ECC evolves.

This section will identify the KPIs in use by FECC and offer other areas of performance measurement for consideration.

### **CALLS FOR SERVICE (CFS)**

A performance measurement routinely captured is the call for service (CFS) metric. A call for service refers to the person or entity requesting public safety service from the ECC. The person or entity may use a different technological means to contact the authority/agency having jurisdiction (AHJ). The most common will be the basic or enhanced 9-1-1 and or 10-digit or 20-digit dedicated telephone lines. The CFS data collected typically revolves around the total number of inbound and outbound calls using software provided by the customer premise equipment (CPE) and/or CAD system. Data collection increments are typically by day, week, month, and year and are reported in a few ways. This section will cover a few of these methods using FECC data provided to the review team.

#### ***Analysis – Annual Call Volume***

In the APCO RETAINS Effective Practices Guide (EPG), annual call volume (ACV) is defined as “The total number of calls processed by an ECC in a year.” According to the APCO RETAINS EPG, “Call volume will vary throughout the day, the week, and the year. Analyzed appropriately, it is possible to determine the hourly, daily, weekly, and seasonal fluctuations that make appropriate staffing and efficient scheduling challenging.”<sup>81</sup> This data may serve many purposes, such as justification for an increase in staffing, new technology or upgrades, budgeting, and adjustments in scheduling.

#### ***Finding – Annual Call Volume***

***Incoming/Outgoing Calls:*** Table 18 represents the annual call volume as it relates to all incoming and outgoing call activity for FECC. The historical data presented recorded the total number of inbound and outbound calls from all telephone lines in FECC. The data shown is for three years (2021-2023) and was provided by FECC leadership.

<b>Time Period</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>3-yr Avg</b>
Yearly	145,169	160,914	176,505	482,588	160,863
Average Monthly	12,097	13,410	14,709		13,405
Average Hourly	16.57	18.37	20.15		18.36
Average Daily	398	441	484		441
Average Minute	0.28	0.31	0.34		0.31

*Table 18: FECC Annual Call Volume – Total Incoming/Outgoing Calls*

<sup>81</sup> APCO Project RETAINS. Staffing and Retention in Public Safety Communication Centers. Effective Practices Guide and Staffing Workbook (2005). “Analyze hourly call volume for a week.” Pg. 83.



The review team noted the total number of incoming and outgoing calls received by FECC over the past three years shows moderate decreases from the year 2021 to 2023. FECC leadership indicated the decreases were due to the FCSO and KPD making improvements on their agency phone trees to intercept non-emergency calls to help take some pressure off FECC.

The average annual call volume for FECC is close to 161,000 inbound/outbound calls per year. With the data provided, other metrics can be developed for reporting purposes. In this case, using data provided for 2023, the average call totals received by month, day, hour, and minute can be expressed and used for planning purposes.

Additional data was provided to the review team and is shown in Table 19. The data collected lists a percentage of phone calls that were strictly 9-1-1 calls in relation to the yearly number total of incoming and outgoing call totals shown in Table 18.

Year	2023	2022	2021
Percentage of incoming/outgoing calls – 9-1-1 calls only	30.05%	24.95%	23.78%

*Table 19: FECC Annual Incoming/Outgoing Calls – Percentage Related to 9-1-1 Calls Only*

Based on the data received and displayed in Table 19, what is immediately telling is that, on average, roughly 76% of the annual call volume for FECC are non-emergency calls. This is a significant number worthy of attention by FECC leadership, especially with the current staffing situation and the PSTs performing vertical operations (i.e., receiving, processing, and dispatching) with the requirement of all calls received (emergency/non-emergency) needing to be entered into CAD.

This is an area that should be assessed much like the consideration made for ancillary duties. The goals of this endeavor are to determine if a reduction in tasks can be made, what types of non-emergency calls are coming into the center that can be handled by client agencies, etc.

**9-1-1/Emergency Calls:** Table 20 represents annual call volume as it relates to the total number of 9-1-1/emergency calls received by FECC. The historical data presented was collected over three years and was provided by FECC leadership. The data contains the total number of emergency calls for service, whether a dispatch was made or not.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Data includes Wireline 9-1-1, Wireless 9-1-1, 10-digit emergency, TDD and VoIP calls.

Time Period	2023	2022	2021	Total	3-yr Avg
Yearly	43,025	40,148	41,980	125,153	41,718
Average Monthly	3,585	3,346	3,498		3,476
Average Hourly	4.91	4.58	4.79		4.76
Average Daily	118	110	115		114
Average Minute	0.08	0.08	0.08		0.08

Table 20: FECC Annual Call Volume – Total 9-1-1/Emergency Calls

The review team noted a sizeable increase in the total number of 9-1-1/emergency calls received by FECC in 2023 from the total received in 2022. Notable fluctuation in the total number of 9-1-1/emergency calls received may be due to changes in seasonal transient populations and other factors. FECC leadership has tangible forecasting data for planning purposes.

**Administrative/Non-Emergency Calls:** Table 21 represents the annual call volume as it relates to the total number of administrative/non-emergency calls received by FECC.

Time Period	2023	2022	2021	Total	3-yr Avg
Yearly	102,144	120,766	134,525	357,435	119,145
Average Monthly	8,512	10,064	11,210		9,929
Average Hourly	11.66	13.79	15.36		13.60
Average Daily	280	331	369		326
Average Minute	0.19	0.23	0.26		0.23

Table 21: FECC Annual Call Volume – Total Administrative/Non-Emergency Calls

The review team noted a steady decrease in the total number of administrative/non-emergency calls received by FECC from 2021 to 2023. Noted earlier, FECC leadership mentioned the decreases were due to the FCSO and KPD making improvements on their agency phone trees to help take some of the pressure off FECC.

**Text-to-9-1-1 Calls:** This section represents the annual call volume as it relates to the total number of text-to-9-1-1 calls received by FECC. FECC was unable to provide this data so there are no metrics listed in Table 22. Next Generation 9-1-1-capable ECCs, like FECC, can receive text messages, video, and photographs from the caller’s phone or other capable electronic devices (e.g., iPads and tablets).

Time Period	2023	2022	2021	Total	3-yr Avg
Yearly	--	--	--	--	--
Average Monthly	--	--	--		--
Average Hourly	--	--	--		--
Average Daily	--	--	--		--
Average Minute	--	--	--		--

Table 22: FECC Annual Call Volume – Text-to-9-1-1 Calls

As texting continues to work its way as the preferred communication method of choice, users are becoming more familiar and savvy with placing 9-1-1 calls via text. For the ECC, these numbers may increase over time. The PSTs must be prepared and remain vigilant in terms of their readiness to process these types of calls for service. FECC leadership must be aware of the number of text-to-9-1-1 calls they are receiving to shift their programs to meet the increases. Consideration should be given to finding a way of capturing this data for planning purposes.

**Domestic Violence (DV) Calls:** According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), domestic violence is one of the most common crimes to which law enforcement officers will respond<sup>83</sup> and can be one of the most dangerous types of calls they will be sent to respond. In a 2010-2016 report conducted involving line-of-duty deaths, when officers responded to dispatched calls for service, analysis conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) indicated of the 133 calls-for-service deaths, 38 of those calls resulted in an officer fatality.<sup>84</sup>

Time Period	2023	2022	2021	Total	3-yr Avg
Yearly	2,833	2,641	2,868	8,342	2,781
Average Monthly	236	220	239		232
Average Hourly	0.32	0.30	0.33		0.32
Average Daily	8	7	8		8
Average Minute	0.01	0.01	0.01		0.01

Table 23: FECC Annual Call Volume – Domestic Violence Calls

Table 23 represents the annual call volume as it relates to the total number of domestic violence calls received by FECC. The review team noted the DV call volume to be steady. In this regard, the PSTs must remain vigilant in terms of their operational readiness in the handling of these types of CFS.

**Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Calls:** This section represents the annual call volume relating to calls received in FECC from citizens using TTY/TDD telephone technology. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires an ECC that answers 9-1-1 and other telephone emergency services to provide TTY/TDD users with direct access and an opportunity to benefit from the emergency services that are equal to the opportunity afforded to others.<sup>85,86</sup>

<sup>83</sup> COPS. Dispatch. "Domestic Violence 101: How Should a Law Enforcement Agency Respond?" Available at [https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/10-2020/domestic\\_violence\\_101.html](https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/10-2020/domestic_violence_101.html). Accessed on 05/07/2024.

<sup>84</sup> COPS/National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund. Making It Safer. A Study of Law Enforcement Fatalities Between 2010-2016. "Calls for Service." <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/ric/Publications/cops-w0858-pub.pdf>. Accessed on 05/07/2024.

<sup>85</sup> APCO ANS 1.108.1-2018 Minimum Operational Standards for the Use of TTY/TDD or Similar Device in the Public Safety Communications Center. <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/31051-2015-tty-tdd-training?layout=default> Accessed on 05/07/2024.

<sup>86</sup> FCC. Access for 9-1-1 and Telephone Emergency Services. Available at <https://www.fcc.gov/general/access-9-1-1-and-telephone-emergency-services>. Accessed on 05/07/2024.

Time Period	2023	2022	2021	Total	3-yr Avg
Yearly	--	--	--	--	--
Average Monthly	--	--	--		--
Average Hourly	--	--	--		--
Average Daily	--	--	--		--
Average Minute	--	--	--		--

Table 24: FECC Annual Call Volume – TTY/TDD Calls

The review team did not see or receive data for this section, so there are no metrics listed in Table 24. This is not to say this data does not exist; we simply did not receive any for this section. In addition, SOPs relating to effectively processing TTY/TDD calls were not in place.<sup>87</sup> The only areas where TTY/TDD is mentioned is in the Calltaking Operations SOP, Section 1) Emergency Calls, Sub-Section K. An example is given of a TTY call that was difficult to understand due to the caller being intoxicated. No specific guidance is given on how to successfully process TTY/TDD calls. The other area is in two training documents: a TTY test call in the FECC Progress Report – Practical Phase I Call Taking – Week One & Two, which is a checklist used in the new hire training process. The other document is the trainee’s performance record where the trainee is expected to compose a TTY message.

This section is not aligned with industry standards and best practices for processing TTY/TDD calls in the ECC, and FECC leadership should work to develop and align their SOPs and training program with APCO/NENA ANS 3.105.1–2015: Minimum Training Standard for TTY/TDD Use in the Public Safety Communications Center.

**EMS Calls:** EMS calls are handled by FECC PSTs for the internal and client agencies in Flathead County. According to FECC SOP – EMD, PSTs are responsible for using a criteria-based dispatch (CBD) system for all medically related calls received at FECC.<sup>88</sup> Table 25 represents the annual call volume as it relates to the total number of EMS calls received. The review team noted that the number of EMS calls has remained consistent over the past three years.

Time Period	2023	2022	2021	Total	3-yr Avg
Yearly	10,020	9,952	9,570	29,542	9,847
Average Monthly	835	829	798		821
Average Hourly	1.14	1.14	1.09		1.12
Average Daily	27	27	26		27
Average Minute	0.02	0.02	0.02		0.02

Table 25: FECC Annual Call Volume – Emergency Medical Service Calls

<sup>87</sup> APCO ANS 1.108.1-2018 Minimum Training Standards for TTY/TDD Use in the Public Safety Communications Center. Chapter 2 Agency responsibilities. Specifically, section 2.2.3. <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/31051-2015-tty-tdd-training?layout=default> Accessed on 05/07/2024.

<sup>88</sup> FECC SOP. “EMD.” Last Update: 05/29/2024.

The review team noted there is a modest increase in the number of EMS calls received each year. FECC leadership should keep an eye on the rate of increase each year and make operational adjustments as needed.

**Emergency Fire Services Calls:** Emergency fire service calls are handled by FECC PSTs for the internal and client agencies in Flathead County. Table 26 represents the annual call volume as it relates to the total number of emergency fire service calls received by FECC. The review team noted that the number of fire calls has maintained a steady but modest decrease year after year.

Time Period	2023	2022	2021	Total	3-yr Avg
Yearly	11,545	12,637	13,322	37,504	12,501
Average Monthly	962	1,053	1,110		1,042
Average Hourly	1.32	1.44	1.52		1.43
Average Daily	32	35	36		34
Average Minute	0.02	0.02	0.03		0.02

Table 26: FECC Annual Call Volume – Emergency Fire Service Calls

**Consideration – Annual Call Volume**

The annual call volume data presented in Tables 18 through 26 contained three years’ worth of data. One key benefit to using data presented over multiple years offers solid a baseline for developing forecasting models that can be used for planning purposes. For example, by conducting a simple three-year average, using data taken from the Yearly column in Table 18, we can safely predict that FECC can expect to receive at least 41,718 emergency CFS in 2024. Granted, the method used is crude and the forecasted number is modest in comparison to the annual call volume for the year 2023. From a planning perspective, the data collected gives FECC leadership a good starting point.

Using the forecasting concepts presented helps with planning for workforce management, allocation of resources, and efficiency and effectiveness of the ECC. FECC leadership should consider developing forecasting models for the ECC and begin the process of analyzing and identifying patterns and trends in call volume for proactive planning and mitigation efforts. Work on developing a year-to-year percentage of increase for forecasting, this would provide a better determinant. The review team sees this as an opportunity to engage shift supervisors in this process.

**KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI)**

Establishing a KPI system is crucial for the ECC. KPIs are quantifiable performance measures used by ECC leadership to gauge progress toward meeting its strategic and operational goals. KPIs measure various aspects of the ECC with the intent of improving operational performance and mitigating risk. Several KPIs are directly tied to adequate staffing levels and influence the

quality of performance. ECCs that measure and monitor KPIs, such as call answer time, incident processing time, and other ECC performance indicators, help ensure service levels do not decline. APCO ANS 1.117.1-2019 Public Safety Communications Center Key Performance Indicators provide ECCs with guidelines and recommendations about specific indicators that gauge ECC performance.

### CALL ANSWER TIME METRICS

When a citizen calls 9-1-1 to report an emergency, they expect their call to be answered promptly by a competent PST who can help them. The following are three PSC industry call-answering standards that are used by ECCs to measure their call-answering time performance.

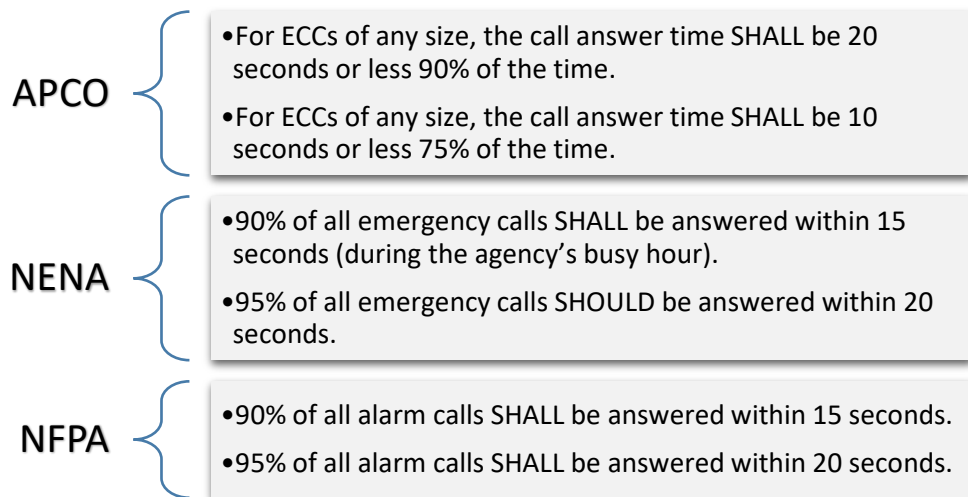


Figure 26: PSC Industry Call Answering Standards (APCO,<sup>89</sup>NENA,<sup>90</sup> NFPA<sup>91</sup>)

### Analysis

A popular performance metric used to gauge an ECC’s effectiveness is the call processing time. Call processing times are not simple measures and can be counterproductive if not properly developed. To be realistic and reliable, the creation of such metrics must take into consideration all factors involved in the call processing effort. One such metric is the call answer time. The call answering time is the percentage of calls answered within (x) number of seconds.<sup>92</sup> It is usually expressed as an average or a percentile.

<sup>89</sup> APCO ANS 1.113.2-2024 Public Safety Communications Incident Handling Process. Chapter 4 Call Processing. 4.6 Call Processing Metrics. 4.6.3 Call Answer Time. Available at <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/11132-2024-psc-incident-handling-process>. Accessed on 05/09/2024.

<sup>90</sup> NENA-STA-020.1-2020 for 9-1-1 Call Processing. 2.2 Call taking standards. 2.2.1 Standard for answering 9-1-1 calls. “The application of the standard SHALL begin at the time of Call Arrival and extend to the time Call Answer at the point when two-way communication can begin.”

<sup>91</sup> NFPA 1225. Chapter 15. 15.4 Operating Procedures. “15.4.3 Call processing time shall include the time from call answer to initial notification of the responding ERU(s).”

<sup>92</sup> APCO ANS 1.117.1-2019 Public Safety Communications Center Key Performance Indicators. 2.3 Call taking KPIs. 2.3.1 Mission-critical call taking KPIs.” 2.3.1.1 Percentage of 9-1-1 calls answered within x number of seconds. Page 9.



From the data provided by FECC, Table 27 lists the call percentage totals for wireline and wireless 9-1-1 calls received in FECC over the past three years. The rate of increase and decrease between the two are consistent within the public safety communications industry.

Table 28 lists the call answering time is the percentage of calls answered within (x) number of seconds. The average call answering time metrics listed for the past three years is consistent with PSC industry standards for medium size ECCs.<sup>93</sup>

KPI Type	2023	2022	2021
Wireline Call % 9-1-1	14%	10%	7%
Wireless Call % 9-1-1	86%	90%	93%

Table 27: FECC Percentage of Wireline and Wireless 9-1-1 Calls Received

KPI Type	2023	2022	2021
911 call answer time 0-10 seconds	87%	85%	80%
911 call answer time 10-20 seconds	9%	10%	14%
911 call answer time +20 seconds	4%	5%	6%

Table 28: FECC Average 9-1-1 Call Answer Time in Seconds

Tables 29 and 30 present the average time spent processing EMD and text-to-9-1-1 calls (expressed in seconds). In accordance with industry standards, for EMS calls processed by ECCs of any size, the call answer to incident entry time SHALL be within 80 seconds or less 90% of the time.<sup>94</sup> For text-to-9-1-1 calls, there is not enough tangible data available for this effort. As ECCs begin to process more text-to-9-1-1 calls, more performance measurement data become available.

KPI Type	2023	2022	2021
Call Processing Time – EMD Phone Calls	--	--	--

Table 29: FECC Average Time Spent Processing EMD Calls.

KPI Type	2023	2022	2021
Call Processing Time – Text-to-9-1-1 Calls	--	--	--

Table 30: FECC Average Time Spent Processing Text-to- 9-1-1 Calls in Seconds.

<sup>93</sup> APCO ANS 1.113.2-2024 Public Safety Communications Incident Handling Process. Appendix C APCO/GM CSSR Call Processing and Incident Handling Times. Available at <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/11132-2024-psc-incident-handling-process>. Accessed on 05/09/2024.

<sup>94</sup> APCO ANS 1.113.2-2024 Public Safety Communications Incident Handling Process. 4.6.4 Call Answer to Incident Entry – by PS Discipline. Specifically, 4.6.4.3. Available <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/11132-2024-psc-incident-handling-process>. Accessed on 05/09/2024.

The review team did not see or receive data for Tables 29 and 30, so there are no metrics listed. FECC leadership mentioned they could not pull this data as their current phone system cannot differentiate between EMD calls and other types. Partnering with the vendor's support services or customer success manager to discuss the capability of pulling this data in the future will be beneficial.

### ***Consideration***

The review team was unable to determine if FECC is aligned with industry standards relating to the call answer to incident entry time standard for EMD calls. To remedy this issue, FECC leadership should consider conducting an audit of the call answer to the incident entry process. Part of this effort should involve the collection of data from the time the call is answered, to initiation of incident entry into CAD.<sup>95</sup> The data should be collected and separated by public safety discipline (law, fire, and EMS). This effort should provide FECC leadership with a true accounting of the call answer to incident entry time by public safety discipline for FECC. The other point for consideration is to determine if any anomalies exist and mitigate them.

***Incident Entry to Call Dispatch – by PS Discipline:*** Consideration should be given to developing an incident handling performance metric that measures the time from initiation of incident entry into CAD, up to the time the incident is dispatched and assigned to the responder(s). This will complement the call answer to the incident entry performance metric.

Note: During the site visit, the review team learned of impending upgrades to the telephone and CAD systems. FECC leadership should work closely with each vendor to ensure call metrics such as those listed can be produced. Likewise, as recommended by NFPA 1225, call answer and call processing times must be evaluated monthly for compliance purposes and service output.<sup>96</sup> This should be a common practice with up-to-date SOPs and training for those who will be involved in the performance measurement system.

## **CALL TRANSFERS**

A 2022 article posted by Intrado revealed that wireless calls are based on cell tower location and statically routed to a pre-assigned ECC. Based on the routing arrangement, Intrado

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<sup>95</sup> APCO ANS 1.113.2-2024 Public Safety Communications Incident Handling Process. 4.6.4 Call Answer to Incident Entry – by PS Discipline. Specifically, 4.6.3.4. Available <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/11132-2024-psc-incident-handling-process>. Accessed on 05/09/2024.

<sup>96</sup> NFPA 1225. Chapter 15. 15.4 Operating Procedures. “Specifically, 15.4.1.1.”

estimates approximately 10% of all wireless calls, and up to 50% of wireless calls in border areas, need to be transferred to a more appropriate ECC based on the jurisdiction.<sup>97</sup>

### ***Analysis***

A call transfer is a call that is redirected from one ECC to another ECC or to another emergency service-related agency and in which the PST has no need for additional information and therefore disconnects once the transfer has been completed.<sup>98,99</sup> A key point for consideration is that call transfers will add a delay in the public safety response. ECCs must do everything they can to keep the number of transfers down to an acceptable level.

Call transfers bring an element of risk to the agency because they increase the likelihood of human and/or technological error. For example, a likely scenario is dropping a call. A dropped call occurs when an active call that was just in its conversation state ends for any reason. A dropped call may be caused by different reasons, such as hand-off failure.<sup>100</sup> This situation requires written directives, training, and quick action from the PST of the transferring ECC. Likewise, this issue can be addressed through technology, internal processes, and procedures. Keeping track of call transfer rates in the ECC is crucial to helping address and mitigate any risk to the lowest level as reasonably possible.

### ***Finding***

When residents or visitors to Flathead County dial 9-1-1, their call is usually answered by PSTs in FECC. However, when it comes to wireless 9-1-1 calls, there will be times when such calls will route to an adjacent county based on the antenna sector they hit or connect with on cellular towers. When those 9-1-1 calls route other counties like Missoula, Lincoln, Glacier, or Lake, they are transferred by those county ECCs to FECC as the call is in their area of responsibility. Tables 31 and 32 reflect the total number of inbound and outbound 9-1-1 call transfers for FECC collected over the past three years.

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<sup>97</sup> Intrado. Transforming How 911 Calls are Routed to Public Safety: Introducing Locate Before Route. "Transforming your PSAP with Locate Before Route: How it Works." Available at <https://www.intrado.com/blog/transforming-how-911-calls-are-routed-to-public-safety-locate-before-route>. Accessed on 05/10/2024.

<sup>98</sup> APCO 1.117.1-2019 Public Safety Communications Center Key Performance Indicators, "Glossary of Terms" and "Transfers"

<sup>99</sup> Connecticut State Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, "Glossary of Terms" and "Call Transfer." Available at <https://portal.ct.gov/DESPP/Division-of-Statewide-Emergency-Telecommunications/Glossary-of-Terms>. Accessed on 05/10/2024.

<sup>100</sup> Keysight Technologies. Drive Test: What is the Difference Between Dropped and Blocked Calls? Available at <https://edadocs.software.keysight.com/kkbopen/drive-test-what-is-the-difference-between-dropped-and-blocked-calls-589742558.html>. Accessed on 05/10/2024.

Time Period	2023	2022	2021	Total	3-yr Avg
Yearly	--	--	--	--	--
Average Monthly	--	--	--		--
Average Hourly	--	--	--		--
Average Daily	--	--	--		--
Average Minute	--	--	--		--

Table 31: FECC 9-1-1 Call Transfers Received (Inbound)

Time Period	2023	2022	2021	Total	3-yr Avg
Yearly	985	2,037	1,152	4,174	1,391
Average Monthly	82	170	96		116
Average Hourly	0.11	0.23	0.13		0.16
Average Daily	3	6	3		4
Average Minute	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00

Table 32: FECC 9-1-1 Call Transfers Made (Outbound)

The review team did not see or receive data for Table 31, so no metrics are listed. We did receive data for Table 32 and noticed the rate of 9-1-1 call transfers (outbound) fluctuates each year. Without the data for Table 31, we were unable to compare inbound call transfers with outbound transfers. This data is important as it may reveal anomalies in the 9-1-1 call routing network so notifications can be made to the 9-1-1 MSAG administrator for resolution. To mitigate risk in the call transfer process, FECC leadership has SOP Calltaking Operations, dated 2017, which contains guidelines on the transfer of emergency 9-1-1 calls. The subject of 9-1-1 call transfer is covered in more detail in the Findings section for 9-1-1 Call Transfers.

### Consideration

The review team learned the state of Montana is in the process of migrating to GIS data for 9-1-1 and transitioning from using MSAG and ALI tabular databases to GIS databases for 9-1-1 call location and routing.<sup>101</sup> Until then, FECC leadership should assess its call-taking SOPs and training program materials as they relate to the 9-1-1 call transfer process and make necessary updates. In addition, planning efforts should be made on the transition from MSAG data to GIS data for 9-1-1 calls. This will ensure consistency, offer applicable mitigation measures, and help eliminate risk. When auditing SOPs relating to the call answer process, the aforementioned should always be considered.

<sup>101</sup> Montana State Library. Montana Next Generation 9-1-1 GIS. Available at <https://next-generation-9-1-1-montana.hub.arcgis.com/>. Accessed on 05/10/2024.

Following established national standards is crucial, given the risks involved when transferring calls from one ECC to another. The following standards are available for use by FECC leadership to address the risk:

- [APCO ANS 1.118.1-2020 Key Performance Indicators for Public Safety Communications Center Personnel](#)
- [APCO/NENA ANS 1.107.1-2015 Standard for the Establishment of a Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Program for Public Safety Answering Points](#)
- [NFPA 1225 Standard for Emergency Services Communications](#)

Note: On January 25, 2024, the FCC adopted a report and order<sup>102</sup> requiring all wireless carriers to implement location-based routing nationwide for wireless calls and real-time text (RTT) communications to 9-1-1 call centers. The report and order give nationwide mobile service providers six months and non-nationwide providers 24 months to implement location-based routing. This action may help reduce the need for call transfers from wireless calls. FECC leadership should stay informed on this matter and look for any unusual changes in call transfer rates for wireless calls.

## CALL SURGE

When a surge in call volume occurs, it can be a challenge for an ECC to handle. This is true even if an ECC is appropriately staffed and funded to meet the routine demands of calls for service from citizens of the community it serves. The need to be vigilant is now. Based on current trends at the national level and the civil unrest across the nation, ECC leadership needs to be watchful in their respective jurisdictions. They must ensure the ECC is prepared for the impact that may come because of a surge in service requests. An unexpected influx in calls for service can unfold without warning.<sup>103</sup>

### *Analysis*

Call surge is the ability of the ECC to handle a sudden or unexpected increase in call volume typically associated with large-scale emergencies or natural disasters and is one of many contributors to day-to-day overload in the ECC.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> FCC. FCC Adopts Location-Based Routing for Wireless 911 Calls and RTT-to-911 Messages. Available at <https://www.fcc.gov/consumer-governmental-affairs/fcc-adopts-location-based-routing-wireless-911-calls-and-rtt-911-messages#:~:text=Enforcement-,FCC%20Adopts%20Location%2DBased%20Routing%20for%20Wireless%20911%20Calls%20and,communications%20to%20911%20call%20centers>. Accessed on 05/31/2024.

<sup>103</sup> [APCO ANS 1.121.1-2022 Managing Operational Overload in the Emergency Communications Center](#)

<sup>104</sup> [APCO ANS 1.121.1-2022 Managing Operational Overload in the Emergency Communications Center. Chapter 4 Day-to-Day Overload. Available at https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/11211-2022-managing-operational-overload-in-the-ecc?layout=default](#). Accessed on 05/10/2024.

### ***Finding***

Call surges can be an issue for the ECC when faced with staffing shortages. FECC leadership noted that call surge becomes a problem due to staffing issues, especially during the peak season, which is May through September. Mandatory overtime and holdovers are the standard response. The review team sees this as a meaningful stopgap measure; however, the effects will lead to added stress, burnout, low morale, and turnover. Call surge or the frequency of times numerous calls are coming into FECC is not routinely collected.

### ***Consideration***

The review team sees an opportunity for optimization. As a risk mitigation measure, FECC leadership should consider conducting an audit and creating new and/or revising their written directives and procedures to address operational overload in the ECC. Doing so will help address matters such as call surges and add details beyond what FECC leadership may have already addressed. Consideration aligning internal programs with APCO ANS 1.121.1-2022 Managing Operational Overload in the ECC. This industry standard can be used as a resource for auditing purposes as the standard contains all the detail necessary for optimizing programs to address operational overload.

FECC leadership should ensure the training program subject matter is set to address the topics of operational overload, such as call surges. The law of probability suggests that a call surge can occur when the ECC becomes overwhelmed; although the odds of this happening are low, it could occur. FECC PSTs need to know what to do in these instances and be trained to respond appropriately.

To automatically handle non-emergency calls, especially when operations are intense, an interactive voice response (IVR) capability is worth investigating. The IVR is an auto-answer or call tree mechanism with varying degrees of automation. Basic systems provide plain language directions to leave a voicemail, while more sophisticated systems can be programmed to provide information and answers to questions voiced.

Another option is an automated voice dispatching system (AVD) for dispatching fire calls. This technology could help with call surges and improve dispatch times for fire services. Such systems provide PSTs with a fast and consistent method of transmitting a fire call over the radio to fire crews both in and out of quarters.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (QA/QI) PROGRAM**

An essential system established within many successful ECCs is the QA/QI program. QA/QI programs are designed to ensure the ECC provides consistent quality services to all customers,



across all shifts and by all employees. This section will report our findings and considerations concerning the QA/QI programs in place for FECC.

**Analysis**

According to the APCO/NENA ANS 1.107.1.2015 Standard for the Establishment of a Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Program for Public Safety Answering Points, QA/QI processes are intended to accurately measure the quality and performance of the service provided. The process of QA/QI includes, but is not limited to, the following criteria:<sup>105</sup>

- Analysis of performance trends
- Compliance with written directives and SOPs
- Customer service levels
- Optimized use of agency resources
- Overall performance of each employee
- Review of the operation as a whole

Regular and routine QA/QI reviews are one of the most comprehensive and effective means by which ECC management can become fully aware of ECC staff performance. The essence of a QA/QI program is directly tied to the policies, procedures, workflows, training, and KPIs referenced in this report.

A minimum requirement established in APCO/NENA ANS 1.107.1.2015 Standard for the Establishments of a Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Program for Public Safety Answering Points requires ECCs, in the normal course of their business, to review at least 2% of all calls for service. When the 2% factor would not apply or would be overly burdensome due to low or excessively high call volumes, ECCs must decide on realistic levels of case reviews.<sup>106</sup>

**Finding**

FECC has a QA/QI program in place that focuses on the call taker and dispatcher performance. The SOP used to support the QA/QI program currently in place is listed in Table 33.

Eff. Date	Title	Last Update
2017	Quality Assurance	--

*Table 33: FECC Supporting Documents for the QA/QI Process*

The FECC Quality Assurance SOP covers the compliance responsibilities specific to positions identified in the SOP. A purpose statement indicates the intent of the SOP is to determine the trend analysis for performance improvement, training purposes, and

<sup>105</sup> APCO/NENA ANS 1.107.1-2015. Chapter 5, “5.4 Performance Review and Evaluation Procedures.”

<sup>106</sup> APCO/NENA ANS 1.107.1-2015. Chapter 5, “Review Process Requirements.” 5.3.1.2. Page 22.

employee evaluation. Procedural guidance is given for the following positions identified in the SOP:

- 9-1-1 Center Director
- 9-1-1 Supervisors and Leads
- 9-1-1 Call Takers and Dispatchers

Components of the program are mentioned but are not covered in detail, including random sampling, who performs QA reviews and the forms to use, briefing process and record retention. Based on the SOP provided and reviewed, it falls short of addressing many main components found in QA/QI programs for ECCs, such areas were either missing or not covered in detail:

- Case review reporting and feedback process
- Evaluation guidelines
- Performance reports (individual, shift, agency)
- Field unit feedback reports
- Record keeping
- Written directives outlining each component
- Training of those involved and responsible for the QA program

### ***Consideration***

FECC leadership should draw attention to the findings listed. Each point is essential to maintaining the integrity of FECC QA/QI program. As an internal quality assurance measure of the program, FECC leadership should consider scheduling periodic audits of the QA/QI program using industry standards to serve as a benchmark. Consideration should be given to using the APCO/NENA ANS 1.107.1.2015 Standard for the Establishment of a Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Program for Public Safety Answering Points as a guide to measure and or enhance their QA/QI program.

FECC leadership should ensure those involved and conducting QA/QI reviews meet the minimum training requirements listed in APCO ANS 3.106.2-2017 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications Quality Assurance Evaluators (QAE). Some of the training requirements for the QAE are listed below:

- Demonstrate ability to select reviewable incidents.
- Demonstrate ability to examine related documents.
- Demonstrate ability to rate calls based on agency criteria.
- Demonstrate ability to identify positive and negative performance trends.
- Demonstrate ability to develop recommendations for performance improvement.
- Demonstrate ability to prepare reports and brief management as required.

## OPERATIONAL REDUNDANCY

Operational redundancy is a concept that refers to the ability of the ECC and its personnel to carry out essential operational duties 24/7/365 in the event of technology failures in the ECC. It entails work both in the primary ECC if/when some limitations (such as computer slowdowns or outages) occur or if the primary ECC is completely out of service due to more significant issues and must be relocated. The extent and duration of the impact will vary from incident to incident. This section contains a review of the operational redundancy plans and practices that are in place for FECC.

### ***Analysis***

From an operational readiness perspective, industry standards and best practices strongly encourage ECCs to have written plans that describe to all affected personnel what to do in the event of an unexpected loss of the communications function or facility. For example, those ECCs wanting CALEA accreditation must comply with a mandatory standard that requires written plans that speak to maintaining essential communications in the event of unexpected loss of the communications function or facility.<sup>107</sup>

### ***Finding – Technology Redundancy***

The review team identified written directives related to technology redundancy, which are listed in Table 34. The written directives make a noble attempt at addressing technology redundancy but fall short of addressing the necessary elements of mission-critical systems found in FECC. For example, the Missoula 9-1-1 Phone Outage Contingency Plan addresses calls received from Missoula County in the event of phone system failure.

The review team did not see an SOP for FECC detailing actions required in the event of phone system failure in the center. This is not to suggest that one is not available; we just could not find one.

Eff. Date	Title	Last Update
2017	Missoula 9-1-1 Phone Outage Contingency Plan	--
2017	Radio Malfunction	--
2017	CAD System Failure	--

*Table 34: FECC SOPs that Address Technical Systems Failure*

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<sup>107</sup> CALEA Standards for Public Safety Communications Agencies. Chapter 7 Critical Incidents, Special Operations, and Homeland Security. 7.1 Emergency Operations. Specifically, 7.1.2. Emergency Operations Plan and 7.1.4. Operational Readiness. 2020 Version 2.29

### **Consideration – Technology Redundancy**

The review team noted that many of the SOPs listed need review and possible revision. Scheduling efforts for this process should be made so they are addressed as soon as possible. When conducting the review and revision exercise, the review team strongly encourages FECC leadership to align these SOPs with industry standards and best practices, and at a minimum, the following technology redundancy areas should be addressed either in current SOPs or by developing new ones:

- **ECC Overview:** In the SOP, this section should provide an overview of the ECC, and all mission-critical technology systems used by the PST (e.g., CAD, telephone, alarm, hardware, and software). It should contain details on what to do in the event of system failure, notifications processes involved, and offer information on the backup resources relating to the dispatch console positions, including radio and telephone backup capability and portable radios available for use.
- **9-1-1 Call Diversion:** This SOP should describe in detail what the PSTs on duty are to do in the event there is a failure in the 9-1-1 system and or if they must evacuate the ECC. It should contain details involving the immediate re-routing of 9-1-1 calls, the tandems that support FECC, and the notification processes involved.
- **Major System Failure:** In the SOP, this section should cover major and or extended communications system outages relevant to FECC stakeholders and the ECC. Mission-critical systems such as the LMR, microwave system, 9-1-1 system, CAD, and paging systems must be covered.

As SOPs are evaluated and either rewritten or newly developed, addressing the following mission-critical systems is paramount. Table 35 gives a listing of mission-critical systems that should be covered by an SOP:

<b>Mission-Critical Systems</b>	<b>Items to address</b>
9-1-1 / CPE	System failure, internal and external equipment
LMR system	System failure tower sites, equipment rooms, external interference
CAD	System failure, back-up methods, notifications
Network	System failure, notifications
Cybersecurity	Response to incidents, notifications
Master audio logger	System failure, notifications
Master clock	System failure, back-up methods, notifications

*Table 35: Mission-Critical Systems Requiring Operational Redundancy SOPs*

The following industry standards and best practices may be helpful when updating or creating new written directives are listed below:

- APCO ANS 1.121.1-2022 Managing Operational Overload in the ECC
- APCO ANS 1.115.1-2018 Core Competencies, Operational Factors, and Training for Next-Generation Technologies in Public Safety Communications
- APCO ANS 2.106.1-2019 Public Safety Grade Site Hardening Requirements
- NFPA 1225 Standard for Emergency Services Communications
- APCO ANS 1.103.2-2022 Wireless 9-1-1 Deployment and Management Effectiveness Practices Guide
- APCO ANS 1.110.1-2015 Multi-Functional Discipline Computer Aided Dispatch Minimum Functional Requirements
- APCO/NENA ANS 1.102.3.2020 Emergency Communications Center (ECC) Service Capability Criteria Rating Scale
- FCC Emergency Planning: Public Safety Answering Points

### ***Analysis – Facility Redundancy***

Facility redundancy is associated with the backup facility used by the ECC when the primary ECC is comprised. Such backup facilities are typically set up in different locations and operate independently from the primary. A backup ECC may accept overflow calls from the primary ECC or be activated if the primary is compromised.<sup>108</sup>

### ***Finding – Facility Redundancy***

The review team did not see or could not find an emergency action plan (EAP) or SOP guidance listing the internal processes for PSTs to follow regarding facility redundancy and emergency evacuation of personnel from the ECC. This is not in alignment with industry standards and best practices.

There is SOP guidance shown in Table 34 that would complement the EAP and serve as a good start in this process. The SOPs offer guidance to the PST on actions to take when these technological systems such as CAD and the radio system fail.

The motivation and focus of the EAP are on the safety and welfare of the PST. Establishing emergency procedures with all the steps to be taken in the event the PSTs are forced to evacuate the ECC is paramount. The content of the EAP should cover the evacuation, response, and activation of the backup facility, radio operations, and the backup process for the 9-1-1 system (switching or rerouting).

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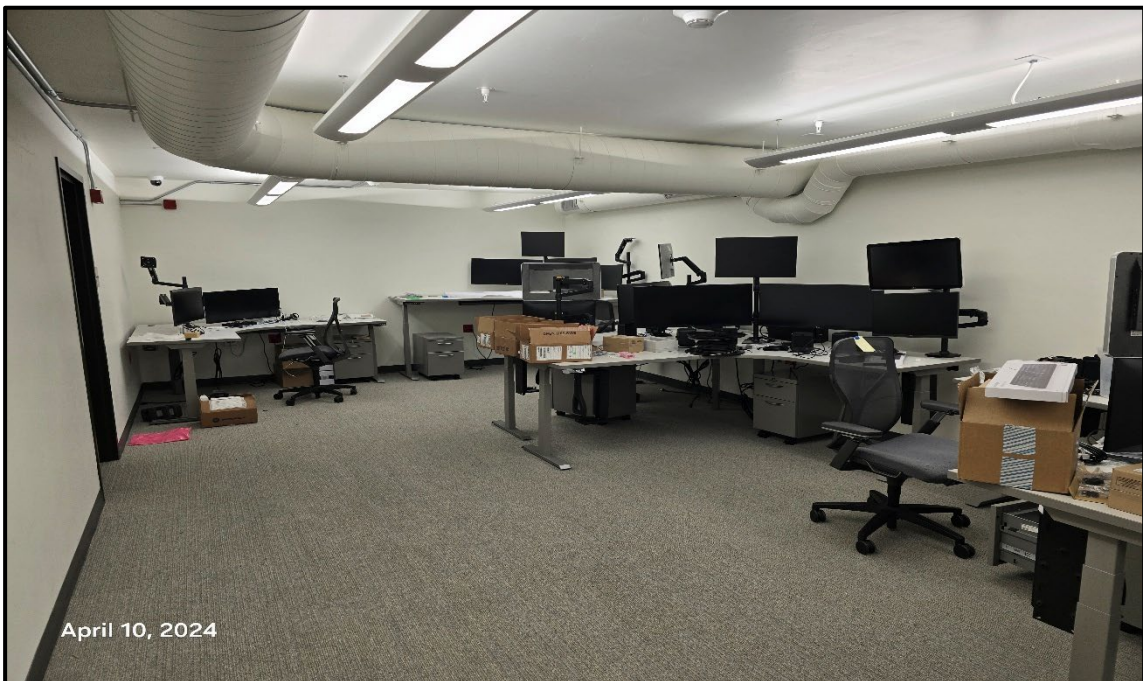
<sup>108</sup> Law Insider. “Backup PSAP definition.” Available at <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/backup-psap>. Accessed on 05/10/2024.



The review team learned that FECC has a new backup facility in the city of Kalispell (Figure 27). This facility has been renovated and will have the latest 9-1-1, radio, and CAD software and hardware enhancements.



*Figure 27: Exterior View of Back-Up Facility (Front)*



*Figure 28: Interior View of Back-Up Facility (View from Entrance Door)*

***Consideration – Facility Redundancy***

The review team encourages FECC leadership to develop an action item prompting the development of an EAP for the ECC and align it with the industry standards and best

practices listed below. Since this is a shared facility with FC-OES, FECC leadership should collaborate with that office in the development of the EAP.

To ensure the readiness of essential equipment in the designated backup facility, FECC leadership should consider developing checklists that complement the EAP and make them available to the PSTs to enhance operational readiness and SOP compliance. Consideration should be given to using the checklist developed by FEMA in the Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans Comprehensive Preparedness Guide for this effort. Pages 82 & 83 of this guide contain a preparedness checklist for communications to ensure facility redundancy and operational readiness.<sup>109</sup>

The following resources are available for this effort:

- [APCO ANS 1.102.3.2020](#) Emergency Communications Center (ECC) Service Capability Criteria Rating Scales
- [FEMA Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans – Comprehensive Preparedness Guide \(CPG\) 101](#)
- [NENA Informational Document: Communications Center/PSAP Disaster and Contingency Plans Model Recommendation](#)
- [OSHA Evacuation Plans and Procedures eTool](#)

Once the EAP is written, FECC leadership must take the steps necessary to test the EAP. All PSTs must receive training on the EAP and should participate in a tabletop exercise involving evacuation of the ECC. This should be done no less than once or twice a year and should include all shifts. It's also practical to test the backup facility, including its activation and equipment.

## **CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS (COOP)**

The purpose of a continuity of operations plan (COOP) is for the ECC to establish policy and offer guidance to preserve mission-critical functions in the event of an outage of critical infrastructure or an emergency that threatens or compromises operations and becomes necessary to relocate staff and functions.

### ***Analysis***

A mandatory compliance requirement under CALEA's accreditation program for public safety communications centers is a written plan to maintain essential communications in the event of an unexpected loss of the ECC function of the facility.<sup>110</sup> This requirement

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<sup>109</sup> FEMA Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans - Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101. Available at [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema\\_cpg-101-v3-developing-maintaining-eops.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_cpg-101-v3-developing-maintaining-eops.pdf). Accessed on 05/31/2024.

<sup>110</sup> CALEA. Standards for Public Safety Communications Agencies. Standards Titles. 6 Operations. 6.4 Facilities and Equipment. Available at <https://calea.org/standards-titles>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.



serves as a minimum standard and industry best practice for ECCs across the country and is aligned with other leading public safety communications associations like APCO, NENA, and NFPA.

### ***Finding***

The review team noted that FECC does have a COOP in place for the ECC, but it needs to be updated. However, FECC does have emergency dispatch operational procedures (Table 3) that guide the PSTs through each event. These procedures do not offer guidance to the PST in the event one of these situations directly impacts FECC (e.g., earthquake, flooding, blizzards, explosions, etc.).

### ***Consideration – Resources for Writing a COOP***

A COOP is extremely vital for the ECC and should be included as part of the library of written directives. The review team advocates for FECC leadership to enter an action item into its strategic plan. The action item is for the updating of a complete disaster recovery plan for FECC and COOP that includes policy and procedures for all mission-critical systems. Updating the COOP should be a collaborative effort with FECC Operations Board, Flathead County Administrator, Flathead County Office of Emergency Services (FC OES), and FECC staff.

From a mission-critical technology perspective, PSTs may not be involved in technology system disaster recovery, but they may frequently assist FECC technologists working from afar. The PSTs should have a working knowledge of these systems. Additionally, the PSTs may require instruction and skill testing on how to work successfully without these systems to accomplish all duties and responsibilities required of the operation.

As FECC leadership begins updating comprehensive COOP and disaster recovery plans, incorporate technologists (IT, radio) input and ensure the technology maintainers have their COOPs/disaster recovery plans intact. Likewise, identifying the role of the PSTs in both plans is paramount, and their input is necessary in the development.

NFPA, APCO, and FEMA have standards and other resources available for COOP development.<sup>111</sup> FEMA makes resources available to assist agencies in their planning effort. For example, a continuity assessment tool is available that agencies can use to conduct an assessment of their current programs to identify gaps. Also available is a continuity resource toolkit and guidance circular offering information on closing gaps found.

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<sup>111</sup> APCO/NENA ANS 1.102.3-2020 ECC Service Capability Criteria Rating Scale; NFPA 1221, section 4.10, “NENA-INF-017-2018 PSAP Disaster & Contingency Plans Model; FEMA Continuity Guidance Circular” (2018).

FECC leadership can use a COOP template that is available to ECCs in the state of Massachusetts as a guide when developing their COOP. Additionally, an example of a COOP plan is available from the City of Bozeman and Montana State University. This COOP plan is constructed similarly to the template offered by the state of Massachusetts and FEMA, and its structure ensures every aspect necessary for a model COOP is covered. FECC leadership can use parts of the example plans that apply to them.

Another option available is the APCO/NENA ANS 1.102.3-2020 Emergency Communications Center (ECC Service Capability Rating Scale) to identify their current service capabilities. The standard includes a self-evaluation assessment tool to facilitate an objective review of the current capabilities of the ECC against models representing the best levels of preparedness, survivability, and sustainability. The standard includes recommendations and requirements for site selection and security.

### ***Consideration – Practice the COOP***

Once the COOP is updated, FECC leadership should make it a practice to test elements of the COOP regularly. This can be accomplished through tabletop exercises and drills.

Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the review team suggests that FECC leadership conduct after-action reviews and incorporate lessons learned into the new COOP. The Department of Justice (DOJ), through the Community-Oriented Policing Service (COPS), has a document on conducting after-action reviews that FECC leadership can use to guide these conversations. Likewise, getting assistance from the FC OES may be helpful in this effort.

## Section 2: Training

### Introduction

Behind every exemplary ECC is its training program. The training program serves as the foundation central to the ECC's success. The ability of any ECC to provide quality services to the public and emergency responders is dependent on their capacity to provide both initial and ongoing training to ECC staff that is aligned with industry standards.

ECC leaders must realize the importance of a quality, industry-based training program. Quality written directives, training bulletins, and in-service training will assist employees in achieving the mission of FECC. Proper training and refresher training will enhance the performance of new PSTs as well as benefit seasoned ones.

This section relates to the training and career development programs in effect for FECC. It will convey the results, conclusions, and considerations from an evidence-based assessment. The assessment focuses on the following key principles found in model training programs.

- Training that is consistent with the agency's mission, values, goals, and objectives.
- Training that meets agency and stakeholder needs.
- Funding for training is provided.
- Accountability for all training is provided.

These principles are crucial in helping FECC effectively operate in an ever-challenging industry while functioning in a complex and sophisticated society.

### Training Mandates

ECCs are unique work environments in a constant state of change driven by technology, the needs of the public, and first responders. Those working in these challenging environments are expected to be competent, highly trained, possess a high degree of skill, and display consistent job performance. To ensure proficiency in delivering the services demanded and expected by the community that the ECC serves, some states and agencies have adopted minimum training standards and certifications for their in-house training programs.<sup>112</sup>

#### ***Finding – Training Mandate***

In the State of Montana, the Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 2023 establishes the qualifications and certification requirements for PSTs. These are outlined in the Code in Title 7; Local Government, Chapter 31; General Emergency and Protective Services, Part

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<sup>112</sup>Establishing and expanding a public safety ... (n.d.-f).

[https://www.911.gov/assets/BLS\\_Toolkit\\_Part\\_2\\_Training\\_01DEC2021\\_Final.pdf](https://www.911.gov/assets/BLS_Toolkit_Part_2_Training_01DEC2021_Final.pdf). Accessed 05/20/2024.

2; Public Safety Communications Officer.<sup>113</sup> The specific requirements for PST training are listed in MCA 7-31-202 and 7-203-203.

## **Mandatory & Required Training**

In the emergency communications industry, mandatory training refers to training required of all PSTs in a region codified through regulatory processes and/or policies and standards established by a governing body or by the agency.<sup>114</sup> Currently, no federally mandated training requirements exist for PSTs.

### ***Analysis: PST Mandated Training***

To meet the mandated training, PSTs must:

- Attend and complete the basic course for Public Safety Communications Officers conducted by the Montana Law Enforcement Academy (MLEA) within one year from the date of hire.
  - This is a two-week course covering:
    - Effective communications
    - Radio and telephone procedures
    - Incident documentation

### ***Analysis: PST Required Training***

To utilize the Criminal Justice Information Network (CJIN), PSTs must:

- Complete CJIN certification within six months of gaining access.
- Must recertify every two years.<sup>115</sup>
- CJIN courses are conducted online and are accessible from the host agency's CJIN terminal.

FECC requires certification in Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD), and in addition:

- Must complete a minimum of 12 hours of annual continuing education.
- Requirement of the AFSCME Local 3032 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Continuing education is discussed later in this section.

## ***Findings – PST Training Requirements***

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<sup>113</sup> Montana Code annotated 2023. 7-31-202. Qualifications for public safety communications officers, MCA. (n.d.). [https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title\\_0070/chapter\\_0310/part\\_0020/section\\_0020/0070-0310-0020-0020.html](https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0070/chapter_0310/part_0020/section_0020/0070-0310-0020-0020.html). Accessed 05/29/2024.

<sup>114</sup> APCO International. (2011). Public Safety Communications: The Lifeline of Public Safety the Status of The Profession, Challenges Faced and The Need for Change. Second ed., APCO ProCHRT, Training. Pages 16–24. Accessed 4/4/2024.

<sup>115</sup> Other courses. Montana Department of Justice. (2023, October 2). <https://dojmt.gov/mlea/other-courses>. Accessed 05/18/2024.

FECC PSTs are sent to the mandated training academy after they complete their in-house training, and typically, within the required timeline dependent on staffing and availability of open spots in the MLEA. If there is no availability within one year, FECC requests an extension from the state until there is an opening.

The required CJIN online certification is done in-house while the PST is in training.

The review team was unable to find any written directives outlining these training requirements or how they are accomplished by FECC.

Continuing Education and EMD training are discussed later in this section.

### ***Considerations – PST Training Requirements***

The training mandates set forth by the State of Montana are minimal and easily achievable. FECC exceeds these requirements by adding EMD certification and extensive OJT.

The review team recommends developing written directives outlining the training process in totality for both new and veteran training, including required certifications, such as PST, and how and when certifications will be taught and maintained.

One way to ensure requirements are met is to include them in the training curriculum and develop lesson plans for each. This will provide specific details for each requirement and ensure the mandatory topics are covered with the PST regardless of the instructor. The following resources will offer valuable insight into the development of written directives and in-house training requirements for PSTs:

- [APCO ANS 3.103.2.2015 Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators](#)
- [Implementation Guide for APCO ANS Recommended Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators](#)

### ***Analysis – EMD Training and Certification***

Emergency medical dispatch (EMD) is a systematic program of handling medical calls for assistance. Trained PSTs use locally approved EMD guidecards to quickly and properly determine the nature and priority of the call, dispatch the appropriate response, and give the caller instructions to help treat the patient until the responding EMS unit arrives.<sup>116</sup> Quality EMD programs have complete training, certification, and refresher

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<sup>116</sup> APCO. EMD Program. What is Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD)? Available at <https://www.apcointl.org/training/emd-program/>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

training regimens overseen by an agency medical director. Finally, a solid program includes QA checks and QI steps at an individual or group level.

### **Findings – EMD Training and Certification**

The State of Montana does not require EMD certification for PSTs but has an agreement with King County Washington to use their EMD guidecards and system. The state offers this EMD program free and provides free training for centers choosing to use the system. ECCs may elect to use a different EMD program, but the state will not pay for them.

FECC subscribes to the criteria-based dispatch (CBD) certification modeled after the King County, Washington, CBD provided by the state. All FECC PSTs whose job description includes call taking must be certified as an EMD. The current EMD guidecards are the CBD EMD, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, dated September 2016. These are due to be updated, and updates are controlled by the State of Montana.

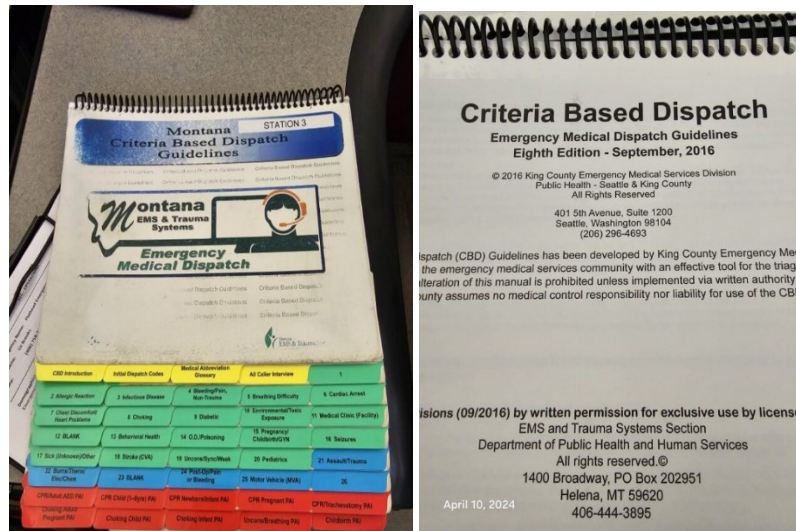


Figure 29: EMD Criteria-Based Guidecards

There are no state or agency requirements for continuing education or recertification of EMD. King County does not have recertification requirements for the EMD certification, however, they do offer EMS Online<sup>117</sup> training for agencies with established accounts, like the State of Montana.

An identified weakness is the lack of written directives regulating the certification and training processes for CBD. There are, however, written directives outlining the required use of CBD for calls received by FECC.

<sup>117</sup> Emergency medical dispatch (EMD) program. King County, Washington. (n.d.). <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dph/health-safety/health-centers-programs-services/emergency-medical-services/emergency-medical-dispatch>. Accessed 5/17/2024.

Table 36 lists the written directives FECC has on file applicable to the EMD program:

Control No.#	Title	Date
EMD; Revision 2	Emergency Medical Dispatch	01/22/2024
Ambulances; Revision 2	Ambulances	1/5/2024

*Table 36: FECC EMD Written Directives*

Training is conducted by the CTO during the Call Taking (Phase 1) portion of new hire training.

As of the writing of this report, FECC did not have a trained and certified EMD instructor, however the review team was advised FECC's Training Coordinator has since been certified as an EMD instructor. They have created in-house refresher training for staff and look forward to continuing this as the staffing levels increase.

The review team learned of an EMS Program Manager (PM) for Flathead County that is a certified EMD instructor and resides in the same facility as FECC. The EMS PM falls under the Office of Emergency Services (OES). The EMS PM is used by the state to fill in at the MLEA academy and has traveled to other ECCs in the state to provide EMD training and certification using the King County EMD program adopted by the state.

During our interview with the EMS Program Manager, he indicated he was willing and available to provide training for FECC, which may have the added benefit of helping to strengthen relationships between departments.

***Consideration – EMD Training and Certifications:***

The training coordinator, along with FECC leadership, should evaluate the options for EMD certification and consider whether their current program meets the criteria outlined in the analysis section and if the current program is sufficient to meet the expectations and needs of the agencies FECC serves.

FECC leadership should consider using the resources available to them with the EMS PM in-house to provide EMD training for both new and veteran PSTs. This is a valuable asset and provides an opportunity for one less area of training for leadership to worry about, allowing them to focus on other important training areas.

FECC leadership should determine where they want to include the EMS PM in the training program and include the PM in the schedule for both new and recurrent training. Including the EMS PM in recurrent training also provides an added quality assurance component for FECC.



Long-term, training staff to become instructors may provide backup in case the EMS PM is not available, and FECC can choose to use either instructor for EMD certification based on staffing and availability. This additional staff training can also provide a deeper understanding of the CBD for the instructors.

However, under the current staffing crisis, at a minimum, FECC should consider using the EMS PM to conduct EMD training and avoid costly overtime and increased scheduling issues. The use of the EMS PM has the added benefit of relationship-building for FECC and other county departments.

FECC should include CBD certification and training in the development of written directives for the training program.

In addition, the TC should continue to develop ongoing refresher training in-house for both new and veteran PSTs. This should be built into the training manual curriculum and lesson plans that are discussed later in this document.

## **TRAINING PROGRAM**

Employee training lies at the core of building a loyal and dedicated workforce. Employee training also serves as a key element in the retention of employees. 94% of employees say they wouldn't quit their jobs if offered training and development opportunities,<sup>118</sup> and 92% say employee training programs have a positive effect on their engagement when well planned.<sup>119</sup> This section contains the review team's assessment and findings on the FECC training program.

### ***Analysis – Training Program***

An ECC's training program should be developed with the assurance of meeting the needs of the agency. The training program should be aligned with the agency's mission, values, goals, and objectives. PSC standards and best practice developers such as APCO, NENA, CALEA, NFPA, and IAED all advocate for ECC training program developers to get input from sources such as internal and external stakeholders, training committee, and the agency's chief executive officer when constructing the training program.

The FECC training program should be a structured process specific to the job competencies required by ECC staff. These competencies should relate to the knowledge, skills, abilities, and tasks performed by ECC staff.

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<sup>118</sup> ZIPPPIA. 35 Key Employee Training and Development Statistics [2023]: Data + Trends. Available at <https://www.zippia.com/employer/employee-training-development-statistics/>. Accessed on 05/23/2024.

<sup>119</sup> ZIPPPIA. 35 Key Employee Training and Development Statistics [2023]: Data + Trends. Available at <https://www.zippia.com/employer/employee-training-development-statistics/>. Accessed on 05/23/2024.

The importance of quality written directives, training materials, QA/QI, and delineated responsibilities for administering in-service training will help ensure the success of the program and assist employees in achieving the stated mission. Proper training and refresher training will enhance the performance of new employees as well as benefit seasoned employees at all levels of the agency in achieving the stated mission.

**Finding – Training Program**

The review team was unable to find any written directives outlining the administrative components of the FECC training program. For example, written directives should be in place to align with PSC industry standards that address new hire and existing staff training requirements (such as those listed in Table 37), the documentation process, lesson plan development, remedial training, and CDE requirements.<sup>120</sup>

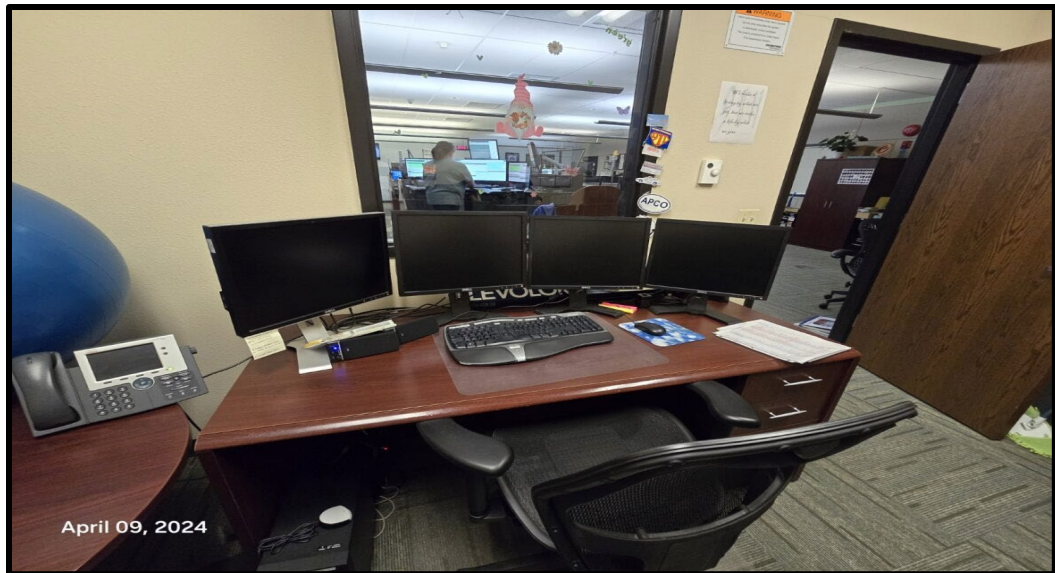
PST Training Requirements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed curriculum based on tasks of the most important and frequent assignments.</li> <li>• Describe the training program, benchmarks, timelines, and available learning support tools and methods.</li> <li>• Describe attendance requirements and expectations.</li> <li>• Expectations regarding customer service, personal conduct and behavior, courtroom demeanor, and ethical rules.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and explain specific expectations to evaluate PST performance.</li> <li>• Expectations of the PST’s role in the National Incident Management System (NIMS), Incident Command System (ICS), Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP), and state and local emergency operations plans.</li> <li>• Require and ensure no less than 24 hours of continuing education or recurrent training for each PST annually.</li> </ul>

Table 37: PST Training Requirements

**Finding – Training Space**

FECC has multiple training areas available depending on the size and need. Figure 30 presents a photo of one section of the training room which is just off the dispatch floor. The training room is extremely small but contains a computer set up with training on the CAD system. Each employee uses this room at the beginning of their training to complete the Tyler University training and to learn the basics of the CAD system. This room would be challenging to accommodate more than two trainees at any one time.

<sup>120</sup> APCO ANS 3.103.2-2015 Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators. Chapter 2 Agency Responsibilities. Available at <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/31032-2015-public-safety-telecommunicator/?layout=default>. accessed on 05/23/2024.



*Figure 30: FECC Training Room*

There are additional spaces in the building available for training and meetings, including the Media Briefing Room accessible immediately upon entering the building, and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

The Media Briefing room is the medium-sized meeting room of the three, with a table and eight chairs. This room is sufficient for small meetings or training opportunities. The EOC is a large room with audio/visual (AV), whiteboards, and classroom-style seating with numerous tables and chairs. This room is accessible from both the media room and the hallway, allowing access from either side. This room is large enough to support multiple new hire candidates, multi-agency training, tabletop exercises, or meetings open to the public.

### ***Consideration – Training Space***

FECC has three rooms available to them for various sizes of training courses. In addition to the CAD training computers that are already there, consideration should be given to adding a mock radio console to the training room attached to the dispatch floor, allowing for both new hires and veterans to train on the same equipment that is used by FECC in day-to-day operations.

### ***Consideration – Written Directives***

FECC would benefit from developing written directives that guide the training program overall, to encompass all aspects of the program.

As a starting point, FECC leadership should ensure the Training Coordinator training program and written directives are in place aligning with the [APCO ANS 3.104.2-2017 Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications Training Coordinators](#)

and that FECC Training Coordinator is trained under these standards as soon as staffing allows.

FECC leadership should look toward aligning its training program written directives with Telecommunicators. All the APCO training standards listed throughout this report have a chapter dedicated solely to agency responsibilities and lists requirements that one would find in many PSC training programs nationally.

**Training Academy:** Aside from developing written directives to address gaps identified, consideration should be given to creating a new hire training program for FECC and establishing an academy, providing a consistent foundation for newly hired ECC personnel. This in-house training curriculum should contain lessons that simulate job tasks the PST will experience in the ECC. The phase one training curriculum should contain and provide the most up-to-date policies and procedures for trainees. This could also include the initial EMD certification referred to in this document and the online CJIN requirement.

**Long-term planning:** As part of its strategic plan, FECC leadership should consider having its training program certified by APCO through its training program certification process. Like going through an agency accreditation process, candidate agencies must follow specific processes to educate, prepare, and apply for certification. Going through such a process shows the PSC agency's commitment to meeting national standards. Receiving this certification would be a huge accomplishment for FECC, FECC staff, and the community of Flathead County.

Another consideration for FECC leadership is to reach out to nearby agencies that have successfully gone through the APCO Training Program Certification process<sup>121</sup> such as the Chouteau County Sheriff's Office 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Center in Fort Benton Montana, or the Idaho State Police Regional Communications Center in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

### **Analysis – New Hire Training**

CALEA establishes several mandatory requirements for ECCs under their accreditation program. One area is the training of new hires. Below is a list of CALEA mandatory training requirements:<sup>122</sup>

- All new hires complete a training program before routine assignment in any capacity.

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<sup>121</sup> APCO. Agency Training Program Certification. Available at <https://www.apcointl.org/services/agency-training-program-certification/>. Accessed on 05/23/2024.

<sup>122</sup> CALEA. CALEA® Standards for Public Safety Communications Agencies. Available at: <https://www.calea.org/standards-titles>. Accessed on 5/19/2024.

- Training program for new hires includes both classroom and OJT with a host of performance measurement requirements.
- An orientation handbook is provided for all new hires.
- All training is documented and maintained on file under agency-employee records retention requirements.

The compliance standards listed are considered minimum requirements and many ECCs will use industry standards and best practices developed and posed by associations such as APCO, NENA, IAED, NFPA, and CALEA as a benchmark when evaluating or auditing their internal PST training programs for new hires.

**Findings – New Hire Training**


The first day for a new hire at FECC includes an orientation. Approximately two hours of this is conducted at the Flathead County HR Department with a member of the HR staff. From that point, the employee returns to FECC and receives an orientation from a member of FECC administration, including a tour of the facility, an IT orientation, and an administrative overview of items like hours of work, breaks, access to the facility, employee mailboxes, etc. When this is completed, they listen to phone calls and radio transmissions at a position on the dispatch floor for the remainder of the day.

Days two through five are typically off the dispatch floor in the training room attached to dispatch. New hires use the computers in this room to complete online Tyler (New World) CAD training for approximately 28 hours. Once that is finished, they are provided with mapping and further CAD training to finish the week. The trainee is then placed into OJT with a CTO through four phases.

Phase	Topic	Duration	Notes
	Orientation	1 day	Partially done by HR, partially in-house at FECC
1	Call Taking	6-8 weeks	* These two phases are interchangeable depending on CTO Availability.
	Shadow	2 days	
2	Fire/EMS*	2-4 weeks	
	Shadow	2 days	
3	Law*	4-6 weeks	During critical staffing this phase may be skipped
	Shadow	2 days	
4	Shadow Phase	1 week	

Table 38: FECC New Hire Training Phases

Trainees are provided with Daily Observation Reports (DORs) completed by the CTO and discussed with the trainee. Both the CTO and trainee sign the DOR. Figure 31 shows a sample DOR.



# FLATHEAD 911

Emergency Communications Center

## Daily Observation Report – Call Taking

Trainee Sample DOR# 1  
 Trainer Sample Trainer Date 01/01/2024

For ratings other than 4, please explain and provide examples of traits and behaviors.

1=Unacceptable   
  4=Acceptable   
  7=Superior   
  N/O=Not Observed   
  NRT=Not Responding to Training

	Performance Criteria	Rating 1-7	Comments
1	Attendance and Dependability	7	Comments required
2	General Appearance	4	
3	Acceptance of Feedback	4	
4	Attitude Toward Job & Personnel	4	
5	Attitude Toward Callers	4	
6	Knowledge of Policies & Procedures	2	Comments required
7	Knowledge of Personnel / Unit ID's	4	
8	Knowledge of Geography / Use of Resources	3	Comments required
9	Knowledge of Equipment / Systems	4	
10	Call-Taking Skills	2	Comments required
11	Control of Call / Obtaining Pertinent Info	4	
12	Concise & Accurate Call Entry	3	Comments required
13	Chooses Correct Call Log Service Type	3	Comments required
14	Follows EMD Protocol & Selects Correct IDC	4	
15	Listening and Comprehension Skills	2	Comments required
16	Memory Retention	4	
17	Ability to Correlate Information	4	
18	Use of Good Judgment / Decision Making	4	
19	Ability to <u>Multi-Task</u>	4	
20	Teamwork in Dispatch	4	

Trainee Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Trainer Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
 Reviewed by \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 31: FECC Sample DOR

At the end of each phase, the trainee is evaluated for 20 hours by a supervisor or manager. If the supervisor or manager agrees they are ready to work on their own in that phase, they are released to work that phase independently for a minimum of two weeks.

This process is used after phases one through three, and before moving to the next phase. In the shadow phase, they are evaluated for one week and then released as fully trained PST.

Throughout the training process, beginning after week three, trainees are provided a color-coded tracking sheet that provides them with information on how they are progressing and where they may need more work. This is a great way for the trainee and CTO to track progress and easily see where they need to focus more on training. An example of this is in Figure 32.

Trainee Name:		Phones		9/30/2023		Page 1 of																						
		Phones /Law/Fire-		Date Started Training		Date Ended Training																						
Date	DOR#	Trainer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
9/30/2023	1	Sample Name																										
10/1/2023	2	Sample Name																										
10/2/2023	3	Sample Name																										
10/3/2023	4	Sample Name																										
10/7/2023	5	Sample Name																										
10/8/2023	6	Sample Name																										
10/9/2023	7	Sample Name																										
10/10/2023	8	Sample Name																										
10/14/2023	9	Sample Name																										
10/15/2023	10	Sample Name																										
10/16/2023	11	Sample Name																										
10/17/2023	12	Sample Name																										
10/21/2023	13	Sample Name																										
10/22/2023	14	Sample Name																										
10/23/2023	15	Sample Name																										
10/24/2023	16	Sample Name																										
10/28/2023	17	Sample Name																										
10/30/2023	18	Sample Name																										
11/1/2023	19	Sample Name																										
11/3/2023	20	Sample Name																										
11/7/2023	21	Sample Name																										
11/7/2023	21.5	Sample Name																										
11/8/2023	22	Sample Name																										
11/9/2023	23	Sample Name																										
11/11/2023	24	Sample Name																										
11/14/2023	25	Sample Name																										
11/16/2023	26	Sample Name																										

Page 1

Yellow: Not Observed    Green: 4 - 7    Black: Not Responding to Training

Figure 32: FECC Trainee Tracking Sheet

In addition to this training process, the trainee must attend an 80-hour course at the Montana Law Enforcement Academy (MLEA) as described in the PST required training section of this report.

**CTOs:** FECC has recently begun using the APCO CTO certification and training course for the CTOs. All CTOs are current in their certifications and have completed the APCO online CTO course. Other than the online course, CTOs receive no other training.

Interviews with PSTs indicated the new hire training is organized; however, CTOs are inconsistent in the way they train. The review team found that newly hired PSTs received inconsistencies in hands-on training from their CTOs. These inconsistencies may affect the success of new hires throughout their training experience.

Trainees are taught from the beginning that they must adjust to the training style of their various trainers rather than the trainers adjusting to the needs of the trainee. This appears to be an organizational philosophy as this is introduced in the recruitment PowerPoint “The Good, the Bad, the Ugly” (GBU), which is discussed in the Recruitment and Retention section of this document.



In the GBU, the interested candidates are told “No two trainers teach the same way. You will have to adjust to the different styles and methods of each trainer while working with them.”

### **Consideration – New Hire Training**

Current Standards and Best Practices like the APCO Core Competencies for Public Safety Communications Training Officers<sup>123</sup> provide a recommendation that opposes the philosophy demonstrated above, of trainees having to adjust to trainers’ styles with competencies such as 7.2.3.1 *“The CTO shall demonstrate the ability to use multiple teaching methods and instructional techniques to meet the specific needs of the trainee. These may include identifying learning style preferences, multiple intelligences, generational learning factors, etc.”* FECC would benefit from reviewing these core competencies and ensuring all CTOs are trained in the best practice methods.

**New Hire Training Program Gaps:** The review team noted some gaps in the new hire training program. The “gap” in a gap analysis process refers to the space between where we are (present state) and where we want to be (desired state).<sup>124</sup> The gaps identified were:

- Lack of written directives outlining a description of the new hire training process.
- Lack of a training academy.
- Lack of lesson plan development.

The gaps identified are crucial to the success and retention of newly hired PSTs.

**Written Directives:** FECC leadership should develop written directives outlining what is expected of both the trainee and the trainer while training is occurring with a CTO. These directives should include the expectations of both the trainee and the CTO throughout the training phases.

**Training Academy:** Aside from developing written directives to address gaps identified, consideration should be given to establishing an academy, providing a consistent foundation for newly hired ECC personnel, and reducing the continual stress of training for the CTOs. This in-house training program should simulate job tasks they will experience in the ECC and provide the most up-to-date policies and procedures to trainees. This academy can encompass base knowledge like memorization, geography, and policy introduction, as well as EMD certification from the EMS PM, and the online CJIN training.

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<sup>123</sup> Core competencies and minimum training standards for ... (n.d.). <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/31013-2017-cto>. Accessed 05/19/2024.

<sup>124</sup> ISixSigma. “From Problem to Solution: The Power of Gap Analysis.” Available at <https://www.isixsigma.com/dictionary/gap-analysis/>. Accessed on 05/19/2024.

**Lesson Plan Development:** Lesson plans are discussed later in this document in the Training Program Manual section.

**Analysis – Remedial/Recurrent Training:**

Remedial or recurrent training is something every new PST may encounter in their training process. Remedial and or recurrent training means additional training provided to PSTs following the identification of a need to increase proficiency in performing job tasks. ECC training programs aligned with industry standards will have reporting systems in place to inform ECC leadership and PSTs about performance levels and assist in identifying areas of superior performance as well as areas for improvement and remedial action.<sup>125</sup> Remedial and or recurrent training for the PST ensures they are set up for success, and the agency ensures performance expectations established are being met.

**Finding – Remedial/Recurrent Training:**

FECC uses remedial training as needed for a performance improvement plan. These are typically used when a trainee is not progressing after receiving appropriate training opportunities. Figure 33 shows an example of a remedial training document. This information is then followed by specific bullet points outlining the subjects in need of addressing. The review team found no written directives addressing remedial or recurrent training.

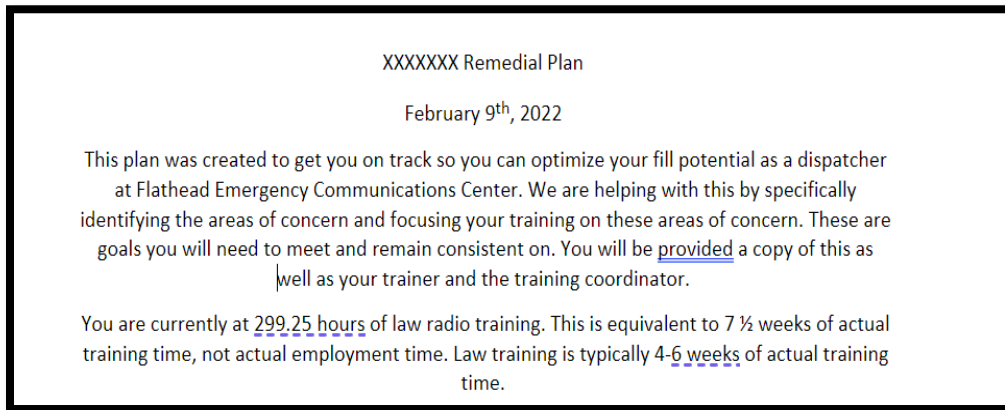


Figure 33: Remedial Training Example

**Consideration – Remedial/Recurrent Training:**

Remedial training is an integral part of the ECC’s training and quality assurance programs. FECC has a standardized format used by the training coordinator to

<sup>125</sup> APCO/NENA ANS 1.107.1-2015 Standard for the Establishment of a Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Program for Public Safety Answering Points. Available at [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.nena.org/resource/resmgr/Standards/APCO-NENA\\_ANS\\_1.107.1.2015\\_Q.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.nena.org/resource/resmgr/Standards/APCO-NENA_ANS_1.107.1.2015_Q.pdf). Accessed on 05/23/2024.

document remedial training, however, the process itself is not documented in written directives.

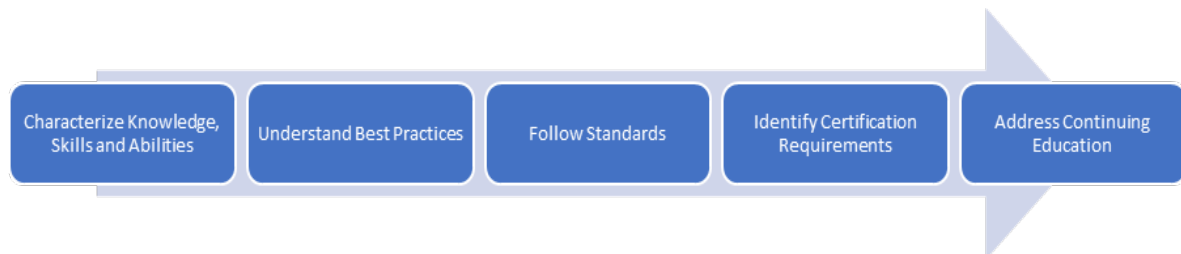
FECC should consider developing written directives to ensure consistency in application and transparency for all FECC employees. These directives should outline the requirements for remedial/recurrent training, including how the need may be recognized, who will conduct the training, the methodologies used for training, when the training should be conducted (how soon), where the training will be documented, and any repercussions for failure to respond to training.

Another consideration, the training program coordinator can develop some “training in a box” programs in areas where new PSTs historically struggle. Training officers can look for free training resources provided by many PST training vendors. This type of preparation removes the strain of doing a remedial action plan and saves time to prevent a delayed response to getting the PST proficient to the agency standard.

### ***Analysis – Continuing Education***

Initial and continuing education training for PSTs is important as they provide essential services to the public in an ever-expanding and rapidly changing public safety environment. PSTs play a critical role in the chain of public safety response. Their ability to have a critical impact on improving victim/patient, responder, and citizen safety outcomes relies on the training PSTs receive. The 9-1-1 community needs training programs that are based on nationally recommended topics that can be used to train aspiring and current PSTs.<sup>126</sup>

ECCs are encouraged to become familiar with and adopt national standards and best practices. Identifying and adopting certification programs will protect the public and validate the knowledge a PST must possess. Training programs should seek to meet the needs of new hires and veteran PSTs, highlighting the need for continuing education in a comprehensive training program. Figure 34 illustrates the process that ECCs should take when developing a PST training program specific to their operations.<sup>127</sup>



*Figure 34: Steps for a Successful PST Training Program*

<sup>126</sup> 9-1-1.gov. Establishing and Expanding a Public Safety Telecommunicator Training Program December 2021. Available at: [https://www.911.gov/assets/BLS Toolkit Part 2 Training\\_01DEC2021\\_Final.pdf](https://www.911.gov/assets/BLS_Toolkit_Part_2_Training_01DEC2021_Final.pdf) Accessed on 05/23/2024.

<sup>127</sup> 9-1-1.gov. Establishing and Expanding a Public Safety Telecommunicator Training Program December 2021. Available at: [https://www.911.gov/assets/BLS Toolkit Part 2 Training\\_01DEC2021\\_Final.pdf](https://www.911.gov/assets/BLS_Toolkit_Part_2_Training_01DEC2021_Final.pdf) Accessed on 05/23/2024.

New technologies are frequently integrated into emergency communications. PSTs need to develop new skill sets to accurately keep pace throughout their careers. Continuing education is a vital element of this process, especially since the landscape of 9-1-1 is changing as legacy networks and systems migrate to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1). Certain roles and responsibilities are ever evolving and ensuring that all PSTs are aware of those changes helps to significantly reduce anxiety as well as personal and agency liability. In addition to in-house resources for training, numerous vendors provide public safety communications training courses, and many are available online.

Continuing education includes both classroom and online training. While online training is available from many sources, it is not recommended that this type of on-duty training be conducted when staff are assigned call taker or dispatch responsibilities. PSTs will not be able to fully concentrate if they are busy working a console, while also trying to follow an online training. Current standards recommend that PSTs receive a minimum of 24 hours of continuing education annually.<sup>128</sup> This continuing training can be CDEs or in topics for seldom used skills to assist PSTs in maintaining those rarely used skills. An example of a seldom-used skill would be TTY training. Agencies can choose to provide the training opportunity via online, virtual classroom, or in-person training.

### ***Findings – Continuing Education***

The review team found no written directives specific to continuing education other than Article 27 of the CBA which requires 12 hours of continuing education annually. Interviews conducted onsite revealed that ongoing training occurs to retain certifications, such as CJIN or CTO; however, during our interviews, some PSTs felt that over time the frequency and quality of continuing education have diminished. PSTs stated they complete online CDEs for credit but receive little to no in-person training.

The lack of staffing has had a critical impact on the ability to provide or complete continuing education. Staff are working at the console full-time, including the training coordinator, which makes it difficult for the TC or supervisors to conduct training or for PSTs to complete training. This lack of ongoing training was consistently mentioned during the onsite interviews, but the stress caused by consistent overtime due to staffing would also be increased with added hours required to provide ongoing training.

### ***Consideration – Continuing Education***

When staffing allows, FECC should consider utilizing an automated system to catalog and track completed training, such as the [APCO My Training Portal](#), which allows active members to enter their completed continuing education information in the Classes

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<sup>128</sup> 9-1-1.gov. Establishing and Expanding a Public Safety Telecommunicator Training Program December 2021. Available at: [https://www.911.gov/assets/BLS\\_Toolkit\\_Part\\_2\\_Training\\_01DEC2021\\_Final.pdf](https://www.911.gov/assets/BLS_Toolkit_Part_2_Training_01DEC2021_Final.pdf) Accessed on 05/23/2024.

Taken section. This would provide a documented record for the agency and the employee.

FECC should consider creating an ECC training committee, as discussed in the Considerations – FECC Training Program Manual section. This will bring additional help for the TC and provide a broader pool of talent to help create and conduct continuing education.

### ***Analysis – Recertification and Professional Development***

Attending training classes and workshops and obtaining certifications are paramount for a PST to succeed in the public safety environment. Industry best practices and standards identify that a successful training program enhances professional competencies through training and obtaining certifications. PST certification can result in higher pay and other benefits for the PST, such as membership in a specialty group, like a Critical Incident Team, or becoming a CTO.

While there are various certifications and licensure requirements across the nation, the most common in the industry include the following:

- Basic Emergency Telecommunicator
- Communications Training Officer (CTO)
- Medical Dispatch Protocols
- Fire Dispatch Protocols
- Law Enforcement Protocols
- CPR Protocol for Healthcare Providers
- National Incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command System (ICS) 100, 200, 700, and 800; advanced courses are 300 and 400.

Continuing education to maintain the certifications that PSTs hold is necessary and must be scheduled and completed before a certification lapse.

### ***Finding – Recertification and Professional Development***

There are no state or EMD recertification requirements. CJIN requires recertification every two years, and APCO requires recertification every two years for those certified as APCO CTOs. There are no other requirements to recertify for FECC PSTs.

### ***Finding – Professional Development:***

The review team did not find any professional development planning in our review of the provided documentation. Interviews indicated that ongoing training has diminished since the COVID pandemic and with the staffing issues FECC is currently experiencing. This has impacted ongoing training as well as professional development.

### ***Consideration – Professional Development***

A review of the Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications Supervisor standards would provide the agency guidance in preparing and training current and future communications center supervisors. This standard identifies the core competencies and minimum training requirements for this position (e.g., managing daily operations, performing administrative duties, and maintaining employee relations). This position provides leadership and guidance to employees to achieve the agency’s mission while providing service to its responders and the public.<sup>129</sup>

FECC leadership should consider identifying veteran PSTs with the potential to serve as a future leader for the department and enrolling them in programs such as APCO’s Registered Public-Safety Leader (RPL). Leadership should further consider succession planning and written directives outlining how PSTs can request professional development and ensure leadership is aware of their interest in future positions.

In addition, current leadership should consider attending APCO’s Certified Public Safety Executive (CPE) Program. This program is geared toward developing ECC leaders to address challenges unique to this profession and reach higher levels of professionalism and expertise.<sup>130</sup>

## **Training Program Manual**

The training program manual is a quintessential tool used in the ECC training program. This manual is the foundation of the entire training program because it contains institutional knowledge that is needed for training new and veteran PSTs. PSC agencies create training manuals to increase organizational and operational productivity and ensure their PSTs have the tools and information necessary for success in their respective positions. Such manuals contain sets of instructions designed to improve the quality of a job, process, or task performed. Some common applications may include, but are not limited to:

- New hire onboarding
- New protocol or process documentation
- New policy and or standard operating procedures
- Rolling out new hardware and software
- Product instructions and information

The best training manuals are well written, easy to understand, and provide concepts in understandable language, using relevant examples and imagery.

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<sup>129</sup> APCO. Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications Supervisor. Available at: [apcointl.org/~documents/standard/31022-2017-psc-supervisor/?layout=default](https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/31022-2017-psc-supervisor/?layout=default). Accessed on 05/23/2024.

<sup>130</sup> APCO. Certified Public-Safety Executive (CPE) Program. Available at <https://www.apcointl.org/lp/cpe-application/>. Accessed on 05/23/2024.



## ***Analysis – Training Program Manual***

Professional development is essential for ECCs that want to onboard, retain, and promote their staff members. The training program manual is one key element that ensures the objectives are met. The training manual is a comprehensive document that serves as a roadmap for learning and understanding one’s roles and responsibilities in the ECC. It is a valuable resource that enables ECC staff to become and remain competent at doing their jobs.

PSC industry standards and best practices in the U.S. place responsibility on ECC leadership to design effective training topics and methods to enhance the learning experience for new and veteran PSTs.<sup>131</sup> ECCs in alignment with industry standards and best practices will develop training curricula specific to their agencies and will house materials in the training program manual. The training curriculum will contain topics, including roles and responsibilities, job-specific areas relevant to the agency, and the technology and equipment used by the PST.

Chapter 4 of the APCO Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators identifies the recommended minimum training topics that should be included in any PST training program. In addition to the work done by APCO, in May 2016, the National 9-1-1 Program published the Recommended Minimum Training Guidelines for the Telecommunicator.<sup>132</sup> This document was developed by a workgroup including numerous public safety organizations, including APCO, NENA, NFPA, The Denise Amber Lee Foundation, the National Association of State 9-1-1 Administrators (NASNA), and more. The goal was to identify nationally recognized, universally accepted, minimum topics that can be used to train aspiring and current PSTs, and that provide the foundation for ongoing professional development and continuing education elements. The recommended minimum training guidelines cover the following topics:

- Telecommunicator roles and responsibilities
- 9-1-1 call processing
- Radio communications
- Emergency management
- Emergency communications technology
- Legal concepts
- Interpersonal communications
- Stress management
- Quality assurance

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<sup>131</sup> Refer to APCO, CALEA, NENA and NFPA association websites for more information on industry minimum training requirements.

<sup>132</sup> The Recommended Minimum Training Guidelines for the Telecommunicator is currently in the revision/update phase. Go To APCO Standards webpage. APCO Standards Activities in Progress. Revisions to Current APCO ANS Standards (bottom of page). Available at <https://www.apcointl.org/services/standards/>. Accessed on 05/31/2024.

- OJT guidelines

Each training topic listed above will contain numerous subtopics unique to the agency and operational concepts of the ECC. It should be noted that the training topics identified in both guiding documents are designed to provide minimum-level understanding. These training topics should be fully incorporated into all levels of the ECC, including front-line call takers, dispatchers, and supervisors. The skills from this training will affect every aspect of the training program, from interacting with the classroom trainer, supervisors, and coworkers, to succeeding in the call handling and dispatch process.

### ***Findings – FECC Training Program Manual***

FECC has four sections to their training manual: Training Orientation, Call Taking Training, Fire-EMS Radio Training, and Law Radio Training.

Each section contains informational documents related to the topics in that section, and a checklist as described below. The outline is the same on the checklist document; however, the titles are inconsistent. Some documents are titled Progress Report, while others are Training Guide or Training Checklist. These documents are used every week throughout the training process outlining the following:

1. Summary of the equipment or task the trainee is responsible for understanding.
2. A check-off list with columns for:
  - a. Date shown (demonstrated)
  - b. Trainer initials
  - c. Trainee initials
  - d. Trainee “Trainee Comfortable Date” indicating the trainee is comfortable performing the category or task listed.
3. Performance milestones
4. Assignments (for the trainee)

The information on these checklists provides clear expectations for the trainee and the CTO. It also allows for signatures from the trainee acknowledging both the receipt of the information and an acknowledgement of a level of comfort with each topic.

**FECC Progress Report  
Practical Phase I Call-taking - Week One & Two**

**Equipment and Tasks:**

Trainees are responsible for knowing how to perform the following tasks. Both Trainer and Trainee should initial & date when the following tasks have been demonstrated. The trainee should enter the date in the "Trainee Comfortable Date" field once they feel comfortable performing the task solo.

Equipment or Task	Date Shown	Trainer Initials	Trainee Initials	Trainee Comfortable date.
Headset / Radio / Speaker Volume Control				
Radio & Speaker Volume Control				
How to sign in and out of the phone, CAD, and CJIN Terminal				
Answer singular non-emergency calls				
Make outgoing phone calls (PBX, outside line, and speed dial)				
Understand usage of CAD and all its components				
Verify basic addresses, common places & mile markers				
Rolodex and reference manuals				
Transfer calls to another extension				
TTY test call				
MT Call 1 PSAP for Crime stoppers				
Understand Global Subject or Vehicle entered into narrative vs global				
Understand what the following CJIN functions are: 28,29,31,confirmations, locates, clear/cancel				
Fill out time sheet / check email daily				
Interpret schedule for law enforcement and 911 center				

**Performance Milestones:**

The following indicate the level of performance most trainees should be performing at by the end of the first full week of practical training.

- Is able to verify standard addresses, common places, and mile-markers in CAD.
- Inputs names and license plates directly into the person and vehicle screens. *At this point, it is acceptable to put them directly into the narrative for in-progress calls.*
- By the end of week one, the trainee should be able to satisfactorily handle the a majority of routine calls with minimal trainer assistance:

**Assignments:**

- Writes down the names and badge numbers of the S.O. and P.D. officers on duty during each shift worked and zone worked (if applicable).

Revised 10/2021

*Figure 35: FECC Trainee Progress Report*

***Considerations – FECC Training Program Manual***

While FECC has a lot of good information in the current training manual, it could be further improved by using APCO ANS 3.103.2-2015 Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators as a resource guide to compare the framework for addressing essential areas of ECC operations.

FECC leadership should consider using the Training Manual Frameworks Comparisons in this document when reviewing the training manual to mirror the framework demonstrated in standards and best practices.

FECC leadership has an opportunity to use one of the most important elements in any ECC training program: participation from ECC staff and its stakeholders in the process of updating the training manual. One way of accomplishing this is to form an FECC training committee. The purpose of this committee would be to assist in developing and evaluating FECC training needs. The review team also suggests identifying the roles of the training committee to promote its effectiveness in working with the Training Coordinator and to prevent miscommunication.

## ***Analysis – Lesson Plans***

Lesson plans are the basis of any course and should be developed after the course learning objectives. The goal of the lesson plan is to help support the course learning objectives. While the curriculum looks at an entire period, such as the new hire training period, the lesson plan looks in more detail at the day-to-day courses. The lesson plan is a more specific and detailed document that outlines what will be covered in a single class or lesson.

A lesson plan is the framework for instruction and guides the implementation of a standards-based education.<sup>133</sup> PSTs need to know the plan for their training and learning experience. Providing the objectives for a topic of instruction provides a road map to where the instruction will take that new PST, tells them what to expect in the training, and promotes consistency among trainers.

Every lesson plan needs an objective, relevant standards, a timeline of activities, an overview of the class, assessments, and required instructional materials. Written correctly, the lesson plan outlines what will be taught and provides justification for teaching it.

Lesson plans help ensure that information is presented to students in the same way for each class an instructor teaches, regardless of who instructs the class. Having lesson plans ensures the training course is up to date, a record of each training class is maintained on file and each class receives the same information, helping to ensure sustainable lesson plans that are standardized and successful.

For ECCs vying for CALEA accreditation, certification standards make it mandatory for the agency to require lesson plans for all training courses conducted by agency trainers. This is to include:

- Performance and job-related requirements
- Content of the training
- Specification of appropriate instructional techniques
- A formal process for approval of lesson plans
- Identification of and tests used in the training process

Table 36 shows an excerpt from the U.S. National 9-1-1 Program, which guides how to create a formal training program. Further information is also in Appendix C.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Teal center fact sheet no. 8: Effective lesson planning. LINC.S. (2019a, April 8). Available at <https://lincs.ed.gov/state-resources/federal-initiatives/teal/guide/lessonplanning>. Accessed 05/23/2024.

<sup>134</sup> U.S. National 9-1-1 Program; Establishing or Expanding a Public Safety Telecommunicator Training Program. May 2022. Available at [https://www.911.gov/assets/N911-Program\\_BLS\\_Toolkit\\_Training\\_08JUNE2022\\_Final.pdf](https://www.911.gov/assets/N911-Program_BLS_Toolkit_Training_08JUNE2022_Final.pdf). Accessed 05/23/24.

Lessons Plans	
<p><b>Guidance</b> Use a lesson plan template to document the course topic, the delivery method, the number of hours, the learning objectives and information to be taught, as well as how the PST will be evaluated.</p> <p><i>Tips and Advice</i> Having lesson plan templates ensures that different trainers use the same information to teach trainees and are not relying on memory to pass along important messages.</p> <p>(Appendix E, Model Lesson Plan, contains a lesson plan template.)</p>	<p><b>Sample Language</b> [Refer to Appendix E, Model Lesson Plan.]</p>

Figure 36: Excerpt from U.S. National 9-1-1 Program – Guidance on Creating a Lesson Plan.

### **Findings – Lesson Plans**

The review team was unable to find any specific, detailed lesson plans for either new hire training or continuing education. FECC does have a list of tasks and performance milestones for each phase of training. However, there is no depth to the information so that trainees or lateral transfers can later refer to it as a resource. Additionally, there’s nothing that provides a foundation for the trainers to ensure they are providing consistent information, regardless of who is conducting the training.

A model lesson plan format is provided in Appendix C – Model Lesson Plan. Specific information within each lesson plan will provide each new PST and/or lateral transfer with a resource to be referred to during the initial training and will also provide trainers with a framework for instruction to ensure consistency.

### **Considerations – Lesson Plans**

FECC Training Coordinator should review the information in Appendix C of this document regarding the creation of lesson plans and develop lesson plans for both new hire and veteran training.

FECC training program lesson plans must ensure that tasks are being taught and the process for accomplishing them should be based on the exact functions and tasks assigned to the job being trained for. Consideration should be given to using the concepts established by Benjamin Bloom in 1956. Bloom and his colleagues developed what we know as Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives, which shows a path of educational attainment through six orders of learning.<sup>135</sup> Figure 37 provides a pyramid graphic to help demonstrate Bloom’s taxonomy used to assist in course design and lesson plan development. Bloom’s taxonomy is a framework for learning, teaching, and educational achievement in which each level depends on the one below.

<sup>135</sup> Armstrong, P. (2010). Bloom’s Taxonomy. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. Available at <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>. Accessed on 05/23/2024.

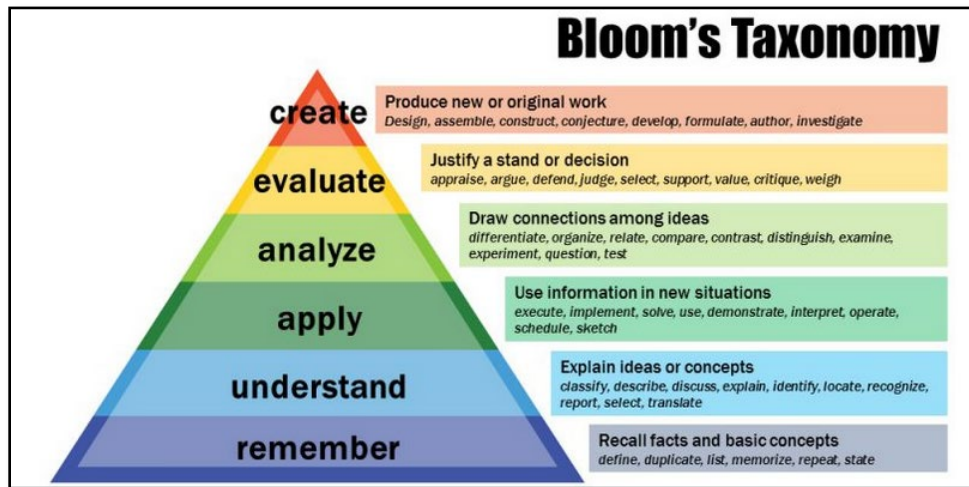


Figure 37: Bloom's Taxonomy for Learning

## FECC Training Coordinator (TC)

The job of the Training Coordinator is vital to the success of the agency. Industry standards expect TCs to understand the theories, processes, and best practices around adult learning and training methods.<sup>136</sup> Agencies are best served by TCs who possess these skills and work to ensure appropriate methods and learning styles are being utilized.

### ***Analysis – Training Coordinator***

A successful training coordinator will exercise considerable discretion, initiative, and independence to accomplish program goals and objectives. Building strong professional relationships and ongoing trust with PSTs, CTOs, supervisors and other ECC staff is critical to overall program success.

Leading PSC associations<sup>137</sup> see the training coordinator as being able to perform the following essential job functions with or without reasonable accommodation:

Training Coordinator Essential Job Functions	
Manage the full range of activities for the 9-1-1 operations training program.	Plan, facilitate, schedule, and track training program certifications for the agency.
Ensure training program practices and materials adhere to agency accreditations and certifications.	Responsible for planning, instructing, and facilitating in-service training days and leading the in-service training committee.

<sup>136</sup> APCO ANS 3.104.2-2017 core competencies and ... (n.d.-a). <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/31042-2017-training-coordinator>. Accessed 05/19/2024.

<sup>137</sup> Leading PSC associations: APCO, CALEA, IAED, NENA, NFPA



Supervise CTOs within the training program and lead all CTO meetings.	Manage the training activities, monitor performance and assignments of trainees, ensure the quality of training and lessons, conduct reviews to ensure trainees are meeting course objectives, provide testing, and manage schedules for 9-1-1 Call Taker and/or Dispatch Trainees from hire until released from probation.
Identify policies and procedure improvements in the 9-1-1 telecommunication division and drive recommended updates and improvements.	Maintain training records and compilation of continuing education requirements for certification programs.
Prepare information including reports, proposals, and other related program correspondence.	Provide information and assistance to other departments, outside agencies, and the public as necessary.
Represent the agency in forums such as service relationships and public presentations.	Attend conferences, conventions, or other various meetings and training to stay up to date on trends in technical advances, training development, policy, and procedures.

Table 39: Training Coordinator Essential Job Functions

**Finding – Training Coordinator (TC)**

The full FECC job title responsible for training is 9-1-1 Training & Quality Assurance Coordinator. The alignment of the responsibilities for this position is discussed further in the Organizational Structure section of this document.

FECC TC job summary lists this position as responsible for administering and overseeing a comprehensive training program, including policy and procedure development, and oversight of the QA/QI program. It also lists this position as participating in the supervision of 9-1-1 emergency dispatchers.

Among other requirements, this position requires the ability to maintain the following certifications and abilities:

- Maintain CTO certification.
- Follow best practices and standards.
- Learn and maintain CAD functionality and maintenance.
- Ability to learn and maintain skills with scheduling software.
- Maintain a current Montana driver's license.
- Meet security approval by FECC and NCIC/CJIN requirements.

***Considerations – Training Coordinator (TC)***

FECC leadership should use APCO's ANS 3.104.2-2017 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications Training Coordinator as a resource guide to create a framework for addressing essential areas in the roles of the Training Coordinator and consider whether the current organizational structure and job descriptions align with the expectations of the position.

## Section 3: Staffing

### Introduction

The APCO Project RETAINS is a nationally recognized resource available to help define staffing requirements for ECCs. Project RETAINS includes a toolkit that utilizes formulas and provides processes that estimate staffing needs by looking at factors such as the available hours employees can work, turnover rates, coverage hours, call volume, and call processing time. The EPG was developed based on Project RETAINS research and addresses human resources and personnel budget needs while addressing the challenges associated with hiring and retaining qualified personnel for the critical positions required in an ECC.

Using the Project RETAINS Toolkit, the review team estimated staffing requirements for FECC. The staffing assessment identified both current reported and suggested optimal staffing levels.

Appendix H contains the staffing calculations, including the net available work hours (NAWH) calculation, as discussed in this section.

### The Assessment

The staffing assessment consists of specific data and uses a five-year trend analysis. The review team examined the current staffing levels to identify the components and data needed to estimate staffing needs in the Toolkit.

### Staffing Assessment Tool

The review team utilized the RETAINS Toolkit to formulate staffing level considerations for FECC. Staffing for coverage positions is based on the number of tasks or workstations that must be covered and the number of hours each position must be covered.

### Net Available Work Hours

The NAWH calculation is an integral component of a staffing assessment because it determines the actual time that an employee is available to perform the duties of a position. NAWH is calculated by subtracting all time spent away from the console from the annual scheduled work hours for each position. Time away from the console includes vacation, sick leave, leave from the Family Medical Leave Act, military leave, training, meals, and other breaks, and any functions or tasks that take the employee from their primary role. The numbers are based on annual averages earned and used by all current employees and were provided by FECC. Coverage positions (independent of volume) are based on a workstation that must be staffed or covered.

## Turnover and Retention Rate Average

Adequate staffing in the ECC is crucial to the retention of employees. When staffing levels in the ECC are not maintained, employee issues such as increased OT, workload, stress, errors, decreased job satisfaction, burnout, and turnover become evident. This section covers the turnover and retention rate for FECC.

### **Analysis**

Retention rates for each of FECC’s coverage positions are based on the agency’s highest staffing level, the number of veteran employees who left for any reason, and the number of trainees who left during initial training.

Based on the cumulative turnover and retention rates shown in Table 40, FECC has an average 47.28% retention rate and an average 52.72% turnover rate for the position of PST and Supervisor combined.

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
<b>PST &amp; Supervisor Combined</b>					
Retention Rate	35%	40%	18%	58%	85%
Turnover Rate	65%	60%	82%	42%	15%
<b>Average Retention Rate</b>	<b>47.28%</b>				
<b>Average Turnover Rate</b>	<b>52.72%</b>				

Table 40: Retention and Turnover Rates 2019–2023

### **Analysis**

The average five-year retention rate for FECC is 47.28%. The 2018 Project Retains supplemental study states that the national average was 71%. Compared to FECC’s 84% retention rate in 2018 they were well over the national average that year. Comparing FECC’s five-year average as seen in Table 40 does not take into account any impact that the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic may have had on staffing levels.

Two significant factors affecting retention and turnover in the ECC are NG9-1-1 and millennial workforce considerations.<sup>138</sup>

- **NG9-1-1 Workforce Finding:** As the public safety communications industry transitions to NG9-1-1, the Flathead County and FECC leadership must be forward-thinking when it comes to the ECC workforce. “The workforce in a fully broadband-enabled ECC will require the expertise needed to analyze, process, and transmit many new forms of communications, including text, photo, telemetry data, and more. This will entail an expanded set of knowledge, skills, and abilities as well as

<sup>138</sup> APCO International. *Staffing and Retention in Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs)*. Available at: <https://apconetforum.org/iweb/upload/StaffingandRetentionPSAPsSupplementalStudy.pdf>. Accessed 5/23/2024.

new staffing models to manage the heightened impacts of broadband technology, including critical incident exposure, workforce burnout, retention challenges, and generational differences.”<sup>139</sup>

- **Millennial Workforce Finding:** Millennials were projected to make up half of the U.S. workforce in 2020. Significant challenges with recruiting and retaining millennials include the following:<sup>140</sup>
  - Millennials desire work that encourages a work/life balance and sets clear boundaries between work and lifestyle.
  - Millennials deeply mistrust social institutions, especially the government, and they are likely to associate ECCs with the government.

### **Consideration**

The Project RETAINS EPG generally suggests that the individual responsible for managing the ECC is a major catalyst for employee turnover. The guide recommends that the individual responsible be specifically trained in effective practices related to retention. The individuals in ECC management positions should be evaluated to ensure they are meeting performance expectations in accordance with APCO ANS 3.109.3-2022 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Requirements for Public Safety Communications Center Manager/Director.

According to the Project RETAINS EPG,<sup>141</sup> the factors that predicted ECC retention rates are, in order of importance, as follows:

- Staffing situation (whether the center is fully staffed or not)
- Average overtime per month per employee
- Hourly base pay
- Employee satisfaction with working conditions

The five most valued retention interventions in the HR field are as follows:

- Conducting internal studies to understand why employees leave or stay.
- Improving selection practices.
- Conducting exit interviews.
- Improving communication between management and employees.
- Expanding or improving training and development opportunities.

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<sup>139</sup> APCO International. *Broadband Implications for the PSAP – Analyzing the Future of Emergency Communications*. Available at: <https://www.apcointl.org/technology/next-generation-9-1-1/project-43-broadband-implications-for-the-psap>. Accessed 05/23/2024.

<sup>140</sup> George Mason University Center for Social Science Research. (2018). *Staffing and Retention in Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs): A Supplemental Study*.

<sup>141</sup> George Mason University Center for Social Science Research. (2018). *Staffing and Retention in Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs): A Supplemental Study*.

A detailed list of shift management effective practices is included in [Appendix C](#).<sup>142</sup>

## Current Staffing Environment

To meet public safety and responder agency needs, the ECC must be appropriately staffed.<sup>143</sup>

The suggested FTE estimate is based on answers to the following questions:

- How many positions need to be covered?
- How many hours per day does the position need to be covered?
- How many days per week does the position need to be covered?
- How many weeks per year does the position need to be covered?

The number of coverage positions depends on the number of primary dispatch channels and the call taker positions required to manage the workload effectively. Table 41 represents optimal staffing considerations for FECC.

After calculating the NAWH and average turnover rate for each coverage position required to staff the individual positions for FECC (PSTs), the following estimated FTEs needed to cover these positions are presented in Table 41. This calculation accounts for FTE positions only.

Position	Working Supervisors	CT/Dispatchers
Minimum staffing	1	5
Hours per day	24	24
Days per week	7	7
Weeks per year	52	52
Total hours needing coverage	8,759.52	43,797.60
<b>Current authorized positions</b>	2	20
<b>Total FTEs needed</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Difference</b>	<b>-7</b>	<b>-24</b>

Table 41: Current Minimum Staffing Considerations

### Analysis

The number of primary positions that need to be staffed (i.e., call taker and dispatcher) is a significant factor in determining staffing levels. According to the Project RETAINS EPG, there are direct correlations between job complexity and retention.<sup>144</sup> Job complexity is driven by the number of job tasks assigned to a PST. As an example,

<sup>142</sup> APCO International. (2005). *Staffing and Retention in Public Safety Communications Centers*.

<sup>143</sup> APCO International. Emergency Communications Center (ECC) Service Capability Criteria Rating Scale. Section 3.2.15.1. Available at: [apcointl.org/doc/9-1-1-resources/apco-standards/135-public-safety-answering-point-psap-service-capability-criteria-rating-scale/file.html](http://apcointl.org/doc/9-1-1-resources/apco-standards/135-public-safety-answering-point-psap-service-capability-criteria-rating-scale/file.html). Accessed on 5/23/2024.

<sup>144</sup> APCO International. (2005). *Staffing and Retention in Public Safety Communications Centers*.



dispatching on multiple radio frequencies would qualify as a complex job factor. The review team suggests maintaining staffing levels to accommodate call volume and additional duties.

**Finding**

The review team estimates that FECC requires an authorized strength of 44 PSTs and 9 supervisors to adequately cover the shift schedule. This calculation is based on a 40-hour workweek with coverage 24/7. For this calculation, the review team has assumed that there will always be five PSTs and one supervisor on shift (as coverage positions). Based on this suggestion, FECC will need to fill 31 FTE positions. In an ideal scenario, the supervisors are not working supervisors filling the duties of a PST as is in current practice.

**Consideration – Staffing Best Practices**

Across the country, one of the many challenges ECC leadership faces is keeping the center fully staffed. To help address this matter, a good planning effort must be put in place. For FECC, the planning effort must be a collaborative effort between the FECC command staff and the county’s HR department. Collectively, the goal should involve an assessment of current hiring practices and the development of a hiring plan for the ECC with workable solutions (e.g., realistic job previews, job-specific pre-employment skills testing, psychological evaluation, and background checks) to mitigate and avoid the high cost of early staff turnover. APCO’s Project RETAINS lists some effective practices to keep the ECC fully staffed.<sup>145</sup> A list of effective practices FECC command staff should use is listed in Figure 38. A summarized version of these effective practices is presented in Appendix C.

Effective Practices Related to Staffing	
<b>Calculate your staffing needs.</b>	If your employees average more than eight hours of OT every month, you need to analyze your staffing numbers.
<b>Know your numbers.</b>	Query your telephone or CAD database to obtain the historical data you need to describe the workload.
<b>Do your homework.</b>	Decision-makers want to know that you have a good understanding of activity levels and the capability of your staff to handle them.
<b>Do not do it alone.</b>	Pull together the people who can help make the initiative a success and get the staff involved. If you have a member of the team who loves numbers or is particularly good with analytical tasks, provide oversight and delegate.

<sup>145</sup> APCO Project RETAINS. (2005). *Staffing and Retention in Public Safety Communications Centers. Effective Practices Guide and Staffing Workbook*. Chapter 1, “Staffing.”

<b>Request the authority to hire an appropriate number of employees.</b>	Building a case for adequate staffing based on historical records, a sound rationale, and accurate calculations as well as centering performance on quality indicators is key.
<b>Monitor the adequacy of authorized staffing levels.</b>	Continually monitor quality indicators such as the use of OT and the ability to answer calls directly and within your targeted speed of answer goals (e.g., within three rings or 90% of calls answered within 10 seconds). If carefully calculated, estimates do not result in meeting your service quality goals, figure out why and build a case for staffing based on your findings.
<b>Make recruiting a priority.</b>	Get employees involved and work with the city or county personnel office while ensuring they take your request seriously. Educate them (in their language) and enlist their support.
<b>Staff to authorized levels.</b>	Being fully staffed and having all authorized positions filled is the most effective strategy you can use to increase your retention rate.
<b>Keep the center fully staffed.</b>	The safety of personnel in the field and the well-being of citizens depend on your ability to ensure adequate staffing levels and keep all authorized positions filled.
<b>Hire so employees can comfortably handle the workload.</b>	Build a case to hire proactively, so the communications center isn't always playing catch-up.
<b>Keep the staff you have.</b>	Use effective management practices to provide direction and support for employees. If salaries are not competitive or not aligned with other public safety personnel, do something about it. Collect relevant data and use solid evidence to prepare your request. Do not give up if decision-makers don't give you what you request the first time you ask.
<b>Hire to accommodate predictable turnover.</b>	Do a historical study of the turnover and retention rates in your center. Include turnover as a factor when determining hiring needs and build a case for hiring to accommodate predictable separations.
<b>Consistently staff necessary positions.</b>	Consistently and adequately staffing necessary positions sends a powerful message to employees, field personnel, and client agencies about the importance of the work and dedication to providing high-quality services to the community.

Figure 38: Effective Practices Related to Staffing

## Specialization vs. Cross-staffing

For ECC leadership, one of the most important decisions that will be made is how the work gets done. Typically, ECC leaders have developed written directives where position management is identified and outlines how PSTs will be distributed within the ECC and the duties they are expected to perform. The decision to have specialized or cross-staffed PSTs will be identified.

### ***Analysis***

For the ECC, specialization refers to individual tasks being divided into separate jobs. An example is the separation of call taker and dispatching duties. Most medium-to-large ECCs will create separate job positions. Each PST is trained explicitly to perform specific tasks within each role. Over time, the PST becomes proficient and effective in the job role. EMD is another example of a specialized job position.

Cross-staffing refers to the PST fulfilling multiple duties. An example is the consolidation of call taker and dispatching duties into one job position. Some medium and most small ECCs will have cross-staffed positions. Each PST is cross-trained to perform both job tasks. Research conducted by APCO, as well as other organizational leadership studies, shows that cross-staffing is an effective practice for successful organizations.<sup>146</sup>

### ***Finding***

FECC is structured as a medium-sized center. They have implemented cross-staffing job positions titled Call Taker/Dispatcher. Cross-staffing is a workable staffing solution, and FECC benefits from cross training all PSTs to improve workload management during operations.

### ***Consideration***

FECC leadership should consider developing a workload assessment system and updating it every three years. At a minimum, the workload assessment should contain an outline of calculations required, any source documents, personnel, and/or equipment necessary to accomplish tasks required of each position in the ECC.

FECC leadership should consider discontinuing the practice of using supervisors as working supervisors, who serve as both call takers and radio dispatchers to augment PST shortages in the ECC. This approach may add additional stress to those employees, not to mention this approach detracts from the regular supervisory duties that they should remain focused on such as QA/QI, scheduling, discipline, annual reviews, and remedial training and/or performance improvement plans. Please refer to the Supervisor Support Positions section below for more information.

## **Support Positions**

Through extensive research, it has been well established that many ECCs lack sufficient PSTs to handle workloads comfortably, confidently, and with success. Compounding this matter is the lack of adequate support staff for the PST and ECC. Support positions in the ECC are those that

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<sup>146</sup> George Mason University Center for Social Science Research. (2018). *Staffing and Retention in Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs): A Supplemental Study*.

center on management, supervision, training, and QA. These support positions are solely dedicated to supporting the ECC and are crucial to its success and sustainability.

### ***Finding***

The organizational structure at FECC usually consists of one support position comprised of one shift supervisor on duty at all times. Due to their current staffing crisis, this is not a mandate that they can fulfill.

### ***Consideration***

The current headcount for the supervisor position is not adequate, and consideration should be given to specializing in this role with clearly defined supervisory duties – not to be continued as a working supervisor.

If FECC leadership decides to expand the organizational structure of the ECC, consideration should be given to an analysis of organizational structures common to many ECCs. APCO's occupational standards may be used as a guide for this process and to further define various positions and update job descriptions appropriately. At a minimum, those with support responsibilities should adhere to applicable standards for the position.

- **Manager/Director**

This position is tasked with managing and directing all aspects of an ECC while effectively utilizing leadership skills, resources, and partnerships to successfully provide emergency communications service.

APCO ANS 3.109.3.2022 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for a Public Safety Communications Manager/Director includes a list of training requirements, skills, knowledge, and other job requirements that are commonly found in a management-level position within an ECC.

- **Supervisor**

This position is tasked with managing daily operations, performing administrative duties, and maintaining employee relations. This position provides leadership and guidance to employees to achieve the agency's mission while providing service to the public and the agency's responders. APCO's Standard Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for a Public Safety Communications Supervisor includes a list of training requirements, skills, knowledge, and other job requirements that are commonly found in a management-level position within an ECC.

- **Other Occupational Positions**

In addition to manager and supervisor, APCO has published seven other occupational standards establishing core competencies and minimum training standards for the following positions:

- PST
- Communications Training Officer
- Instructor
- Training Coordinator
- QAE
- Public Safety Communications Technician (including CAD, GIS, and radio technician positions)

FEEC leadership is encouraged to use the national standards listed to develop job descriptions, performance appraisals, and training curriculums ([Appendix B](#)).

### ***Consideration***

Succession planning is the process of identifying the critical positions within your organization and developing an action plan for individuals to assume those positions. Taking a holistic view of current and future goals, this type of preparation ensures that you have the right people in the right jobs today and in the years to come.<sup>147</sup>

By creating an internal succession plan the ECC evaluates the team's needs for the future and develops key talent right from within your ECC to perform these roles. The PSTs will understand their role within the plan and know what's expected of them moving forward. The team's shared goal will be transparent, and any staff interested in strengthening their skills by stepping into these critical positions will put their best foot forward through targeted career development strategies.

## **Scheduling**

Ideally, a staffing schedule is designed to create maximum efficiency based on appropriate staffing levels. Staffing levels should be driven by a detailed workload analysis, a consideration of research material, and the application of relevant standards. When developing schedules, ECC leadership should be mindful of and consider employee work-life balance, but it is secondary to the purpose of the organization.

Developing an effective work schedule for the ECC is often difficult due to the combination of constant coverage requirements, staffing, and the unpredictability of incident demands. Because of the 24/7/365 nature of the ECC's mission, work-life balance is difficult to achieve,

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<sup>147</sup> University of Washington. "Professional & Organizational Development- Succession Planning." Available at: <https://hr.uw.edu/pod/organizational-excellence-and-development/organizations/succession-planning/>. Accessed 05/23/2024.

especially when faced with mandated OT, sick leave abuse, and staffing shortages. ECCs utilize several schedules to meet organizational requirements while trying to balance employee needs.

According to Burgess, shift duration is a factor in human error and risk management.<sup>148</sup> Cognitive functions diminish as prolonged sleep deprivation persists. Other research studies have compared the various shift schedules (8-hour shifts, 10-hour shifts, and 12-hour shifts). Compared with 8-hour shifts, working 10-hour shifts was associated with a 13% increase in overall risk of incident and injury, while 12-hour shifts featured a 27% increase in negative occurrence risks.<sup>149</sup> Studies for work periods beyond eight hours accumulate risk to the point where 12-hour shifts feature twice the risk of accidents.<sup>150</sup>

### **Analysis**

There are many definitions for the term “work schedule.” For this section, we will use the following definition, the work schedule is defined as all an employee’s work shifts and on-call shifts, including specific start and end times for each shift, during a consecutive 7-day period.<sup>151</sup>

This segment of the report describes the most common work shift schedules found in many ECCs. In addition, the pros and cons for each scheduling option, the traditional 5 days on/2 days off, 8-hour format (Figure 38); 4 days on/3 days off (Figure 39), 10-hour format; and the Pittman 12-hour schedule (Figure 40) are listed. There are multiple scheduling options for each shift schedule listed. Should FECC leadership consider using any of them, they must weigh the pros and cons for their ECC and assess which shift format works best for their needs.

### **Traditional 8-Hour Format (5 Days On/2 Days Off)**

There is a reason the traditional format has been adopted as the primary work schedule since the enactment of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938. The primary origins of the 8-hour day were based on the efficacy of assembly line workers in performing their duties without mistakes. From the employee perspective, the symmetry of “eight hours labor, eight hours

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<sup>148</sup> Burgess, P. (2011, October 14). “Optimal Shift Duration and Sequence: Recommended Approach for Short-Term Emergency Response Activations for Public Health and Emergency Management.” Available at: [ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2005.078782](https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2005.078782). Accessed 05/17/2024.

<sup>149</sup> Steffey MA, Scharf VF, Risselada M, Buote NJ, Griffon D, Winter AL, Zamprogno H. A narrative review of occupational scheduling that impacts fatigue and recovery relevant to veterinarian well-being. *Can Vet J.* 2023 Jul;64(7):674-683. PMID: 37397701; PMCID: PMC10286151

<sup>150</sup> Burgess, P. (2011, October 14). “Optimal Shift Duration and Sequence: Recommended Approach for Short-Term Emergency Response Activations for Public Health and Emergency Management.” Available at: <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2005.078782>. Accessed 05/17/2024.

<sup>151</sup> National Women’s Law Center. The Schedules that Work Act. “WorkSchedule.” Available at <https://nwlc.org/resource/the-schedules-that-work-act-section-by-section-summary/#:~:text=An%20employee's%20work%20schedule%20is,a%20consecutive%207%2Dday%20period..accessed on 05/16/2024>

recreation, eight hours rest” espoused by Robert Owen in the 19th century was appealing.<sup>152</sup> The schedule recognizes the limits of human behavior regarding attention spans, needed rest, and maximizing efficiency. A single vacancy results in impacting two PSTs with overtime (i.e., four-hour blocks each) versus the current method of impacting five PSTs with two-hour blocks each.

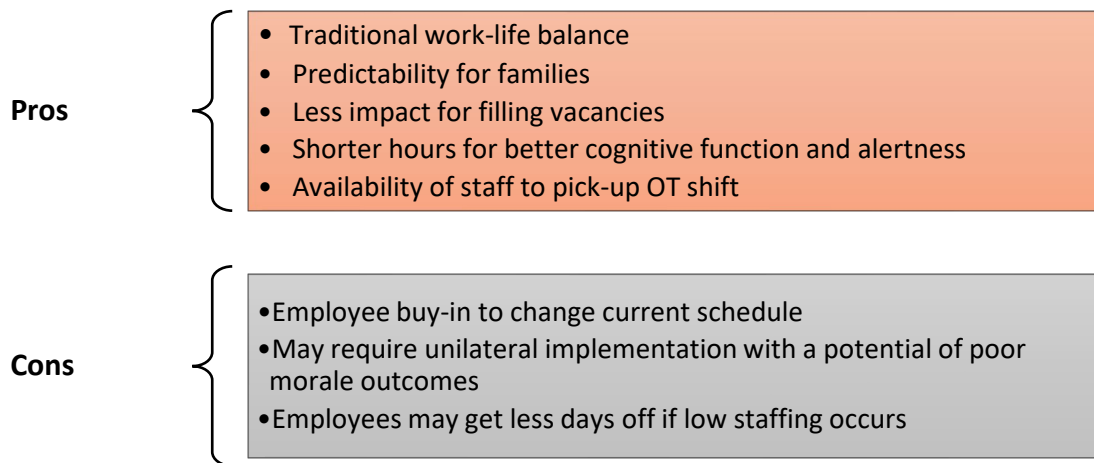


Figure 39: Pros and Cons of a Traditional 8-Hour Shift Format

### 10-Hour Format (4 Days On/3 Days Off)

The 10-hour work format is a form of compressed workweek schedule (CWS) that offers a way for employees to work a full 40-hour workweek in fewer than the traditional five days.<sup>153</sup> For instance, employees work four days per week for 10 hours per day. ECC leaders may choose to implement this type of work schedule for their agency to increase productivity, employee satisfaction, and work-life balance. The main advantage of a compressed workweek is the fact that there are fewer days that a PST must report to work, while still working the same number of hours in a pay period as a traditional eight-hour workday.

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<sup>152</sup> CNBC. A brief History of the 8-hour workday, which changed how Americans work. Available at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/05/03/how-the-8-hour-workday-changed-how-americans-work.html>. Accessed on 05/17/2024.

<sup>153</sup> Business News Daily. What is a Compressed Work Schedule and Should You Offer It? Available at: <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/11209-what-is-a-compressed-work-schedule.html>. Accessed on 05/19/2024.



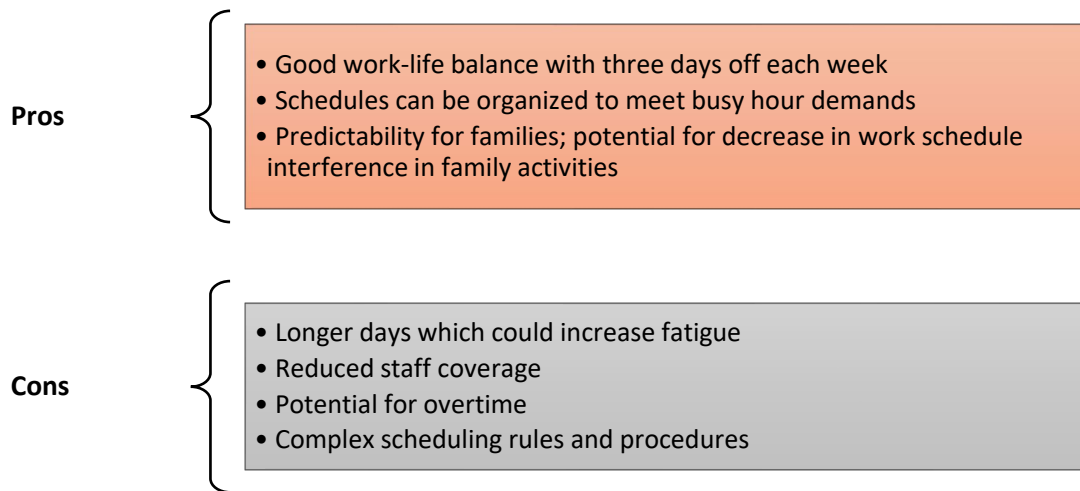


Figure 40: Pros and Cons of 10-Hour Shift Format

### Pitman 12-Hour Format

This type of work format for public safety agencies is appealing due to the “squad” design promoting team identification and the ability to meet the operational needs of the agency.<sup>154</sup> The Pitman schedule is self-admittedly designed for mid-to-large-sized agencies and requires an appropriately staffed center.<sup>155</sup> The schedule is hard on the health of the employees and may lead to long-term health issues.<sup>156</sup> Facilitated dialogue discussions between all stakeholders should accompany any consideration of the Pitman schedule. Figure 41 presents the pros and cons of the traditional 12-hour work shift format.

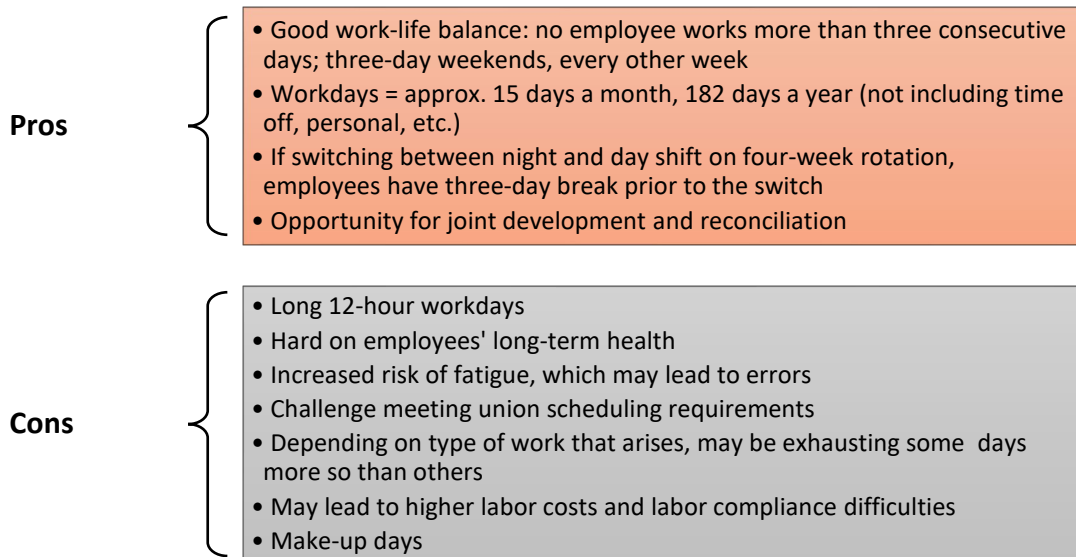


Figure 41: Pros and Cons of Pitman 12-Hour Format

<sup>143</sup> CNBC. A brief History of the 8-hour workday, which changed how Americans work. Available at: [cnbc.com/2017/05/03/how-the-8-hour-workday-changed-how-americans-work.html](https://www.cnbc.com/2017/05/03/how-the-8-hour-workday-changed-how-americans-work.html). Accessed on 05/18/2024.

<sup>155</sup> PowerDMS. What You Need to Know About the Pitman Schedule. Available at: <https://powerdms.com/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-pitman-schedule>. Accessed on 05/18/2024.

<sup>156</sup> Virtanen, M., & Kivimäki, M. (2018). Long Working Hours and Risk of Cardiovascular Disease. *Current Cardiology Reports*, 20(11), 123. Available at: [Doi.org/10.1007/s11886-018-1049-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11886-018-1049-9). Accessed on 05/18/2024.

**Finding – FECC Work Shift Scheduling Parameters**

For FECC, the work schedule parameters are codified in the following documents.

- ARTICLE 8 “Hours of Work” and ARTICLE 9 “Work Schedules” found in a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between Flathead County and the AFSCME LOCAL 3032.<sup>157</sup>
- Hours of Work, Meal Breaks, and Rest Breaks section. Part “A. Hours of Work and Attendance.” Verbiage states, “Employees shall follow established work schedules and receive prior approval from their supervisor to deviate from normal schedules.” This is found in the Personnel Policies and Procedures of Flathead County on page 13.

On page 6 of 17 in the CBA, ARTICLE 9, Work Schedules, Section 9.1 gives the FECC 9-1-1 Center Director discretion to change the work schedule only after meeting with the union to provide notice before making any changes. The director must provide a minimum of 60 days’ notice before implementation of any schedule change.

The review team noted there is no SOP guidance, training curriculum, or lesson plans that address the work scheduling process and/or methodology behind its development and administration.

**Finding – FECC (FTE) Work Shift Schedule Format**

FECC leadership has currently instituted a fixed, four days on/three days off, 12 hours per day work shift schedule for its authorized FTE allotment. This action is necessary due to the staffing shortages the ECC is currently facing. The work shifts are fixed and consist of three staggered groups with a permanent rotation of three 12-hour shifts at the designated time increments listed in Table 42:

FECC Work Shift Times	
Shift 1	0500 to 1700
Shift 2	0700 to 1900
Shift 3	1700 to 0500
Shift 4	1900 to 0700

Table 42: Current Work Shift Time Increments

FECC leadership mentioned that pre-COVID, the PSTs were already on the 4-3-12 work shift schedule format, rotating every eight weeks. However, with the current number of FTEs on hand, it is difficult to train a new hire and work console at the same time, which is happening now out of necessity.

<sup>157</sup> Agreement Between Flathead County and the AFSCME, LOCAL 3032 (July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2025)

**Minimum Staffing Levels:** FECC leadership has established a minimum staffing level for each work shift that requires no less than four FTEs on the night shift and five FTEs on the day shift. Currently, due to recent staffing losses, FECC is not able to meet its set minimum staffing requirement established for the day shift. Not being able to meet minimum staffing levels will affect operational readiness. FECC leadership must keep an eye on the impacts and outcomes of these shortages and mitigate them as quickly as reasonably possible.

The review team learned that FECC leadership's goal is to hire enough FTEs to raise minimum staffing levels by one FTE for each work shift. The leadership realizes that steps toward this effort cannot be taken until staffing levels have normalized.

**Work Schedule Construction:** Assembling the work schedule is currently assigned to the 9-1-1 Training & Quality Assurance Coordinator. FECC has procured Schedule Express, which is a web-based work scheduling software program made by SafeCities, located in San Jose, California. The entire work shift schedule is administered through Schedule Express.

Figure 41 gives a snapshot of the Schedule Express GUI for the work schedule. Displayed is the work schedule that was in effect for the day shown.<sup>158</sup> Immediately noticeable is that FECC is not meeting minimum staffing requirements for the day shift, which is set at five FTEs (see orange box in Figure 42). Also notable is the number of FTEs in the training process, which on this day is four.

During the onsite tour, the review team noted that trainees were performing various roles in the center, mainly call taking. This aspect does offer some relief to the veteran PSTs on duty but not much. The trainees are not counted as scheduling resources as they are still in the training process and have not met the necessary criteria to be considered a full scheduling resource.

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<sup>158</sup> The details shown in Figure 41 were taken from the May 16, 2024 work schedule via Schedule Express.

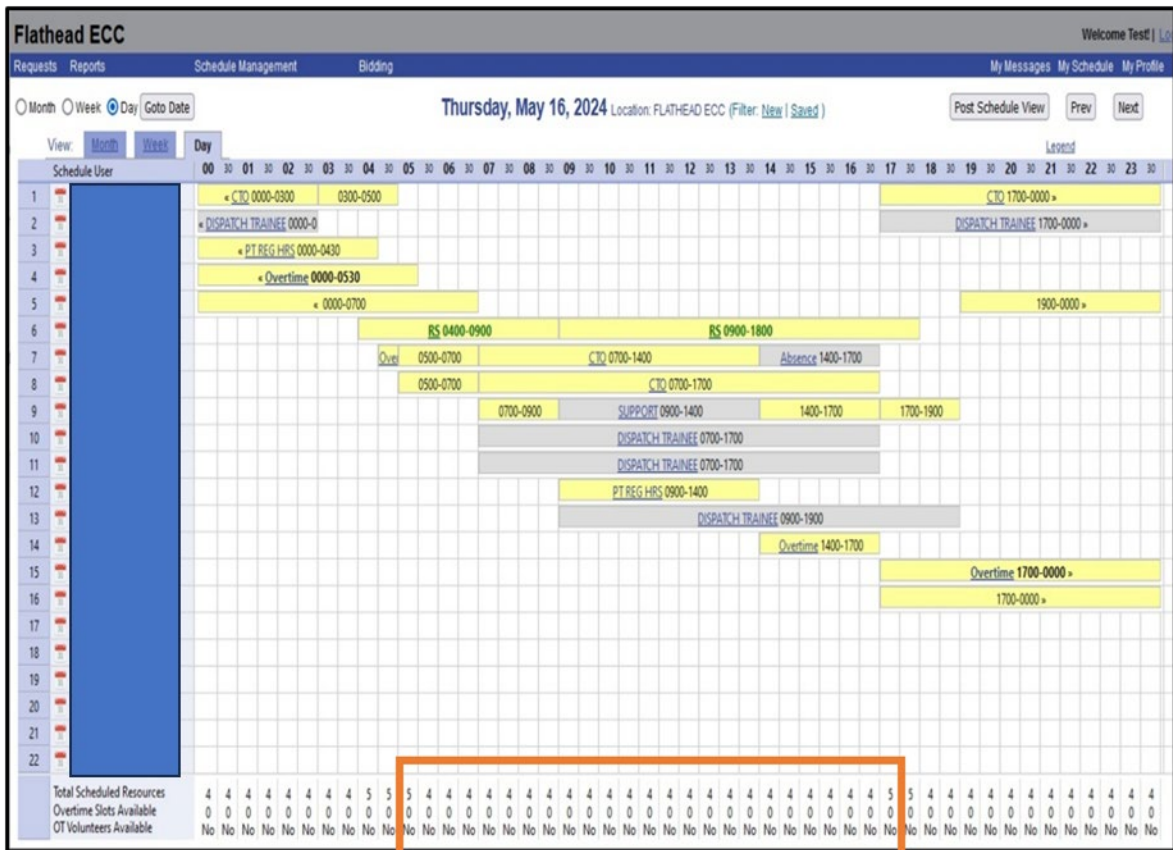


Figure 42: Example of FECC Work Shift Scheduling Format – By Day

Figure 43 gives a snapshot of the entire work schedule listed by Week 3, May 2024. The format presents an overview of the schedule for the week but does not give a graphical illustration.

The visual may or may not be of value to the schedule maker, but based on experience, some have and use graphics while others don't. What is clear, this format is great as it presents the total scheduling resources for the week. Also, through this software, the work schedule can be assembled weeks in advance and used for planning purposes such as crafting various work schedules for potential use.

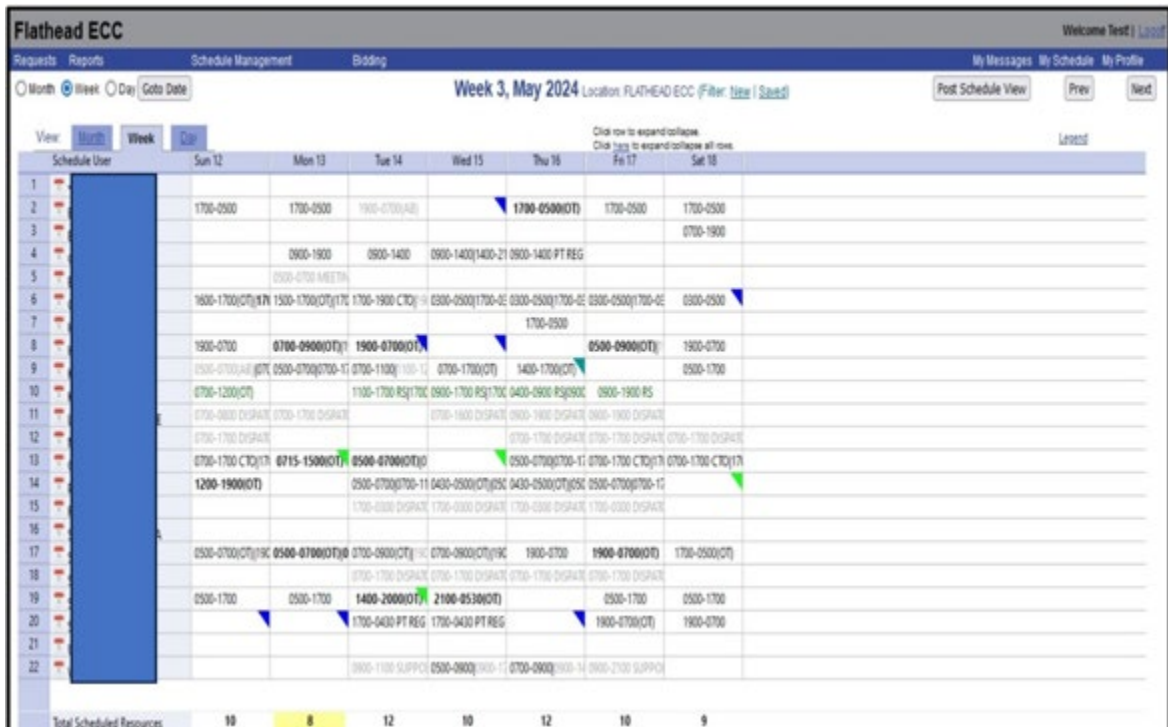


Figure 43: Example of FECC Work Shift Scheduling Format – By Week

**Identified issues:** Almost all public safety departments with approximately 25 FTEs or more use the 12-hour work schedule format.<sup>159</sup> FECC’s current staffing allotment falls short of the number of FTEs needed for this type of work schedule to be effective. To address the shortfall while maintaining the 12-hour shift, FECC leadership has had to issue overtime and/or use holdovers to sustain its work shifts. Continued staffing shortages have greatly impacted the current work schedule, to the point where it has affected operational readiness, service levels, and employee morale.

The review team noted other issues affecting the work shift schedule listed below:

- It’s challenging to meet minimum staffing levels as required with the current allotment of FTEs.
- Mandatory overtime. PSTs already completing a 12-hour shift must put in more time due to gaps in the work shift, staffing, and training issues.
- The work schedule remains fixed.
- Cliques and silos have developed as an effect of fixed shifts, thus weakening esprit de corps in the ECC.
- Consistency in the service levels is a concern among stakeholders who are receiving services from FECC.

<sup>159</sup> PowerDMS. 8, 10, and 12 Hour Shift Schedules for a 25-Person Department. Available at <https://www.powerdms.com/policy-learning-center/8-10-and-12-hour-shift-schedules-for-a-25-person-department>. Accessed on 05/19/2024.

### ***Finding – FECC (PTE) Work Shift Schedule Format***

FECC maintains a small group of employees classified as part-time employees (PTEs) in the center. The PTE's skill sets vary, and some do not perform the same tasks as the full-time PSTs. The PTEs are factored into the work schedule shown in Figures 42 and 43 but are inconsistently reflected in the minimum staffing count. This action may be due to the experience of the PTE and how they are being used in the center.

### ***Considerations***

***Written Directives Related to the Work Shift Schedule:*** As mentioned, FECC does not have any policies, SOPs, or training materials related to work shift schedule development. Directives should be in a place that provides staff with work scheduling program guidance and controls (i.e., methodology, construction, and administration) necessary for the success and sustainability of the program. At a minimum, consideration should be given to developing an action plan that includes developing new directives that explain the scheduling process, including:

- Who is responsible for the work schedule administration, including alternates.
- How the work schedule is put together, including the technology and or any alternate methods used.
- Approval process.
- Interface with the union and CBA compliance.
- How the schedule gets distributed to ECC staff.
- How shift bids and paid time off are handled.
- How changes are made to the work schedule and communicated to staff.
- What quality assurance measures are in place to ensure it is equitable for all.
- What training is involved for all those responsible for the management of the work schedule.

***Collaboration:*** The review team sees an opportunity for FECC leadership team to collaborate with the PSTs to develop workable solutions to help address the issues and concerns listed in the Finding – FECC (FTE) Work Shift Schedule Format section. These planning efforts are crucial. Reasonable solutions gathered and implemented should be documented and included in the work schedule program as the backup plan in the event FECC goes through another staffing crisis like they are experiencing now.

***Alternative/Flexible Scheduling:*** The APCO Project RETAINS Report (2018) strongly encourages ECC leaders to think outside of the box and consider alternate and/or flexible work arrangements to, in the case of FECC, cover shifts, maintain minimum staffing requirements, reduce the mandatory overtime and holds that are causing strife among many of the PSTs we spoke with. Many articulated clearly that they want to live a normal life and can't achieve it when most of their time is spent at work.

In addition, family obligations such as caring for their children and/or aging or ill parents and being with friends are also valued as important needs. Successful ECC leaders understand and embrace these concerns and work diligently to develop work schedules that help the PSTs balance work with personal obligations. It's these efforts by FECC leadership that will lead to successful employee retention, reduction in mandatory overtime, and improved morale.

Consideration should continue to be given to embracing alternative and flexible scheduling concepts in the work schedule that can be applied now, especially with current staffing shortages. Those with responsibility for developing the work schedule should consider using some of the practices contained in the Effective Practices: Shift Management guide, and the FECC leadership team should follow the practices contained in the Effective Practices: Keeping the ECC Fully Staffed. Both supporting documents also can be found in Appendix C. Irrespective, once staffing normalizes, FECC leadership should assess reinstating and continue the practice of the 2-8's, 2-12's work shift schedule, if applicable. Likewise, consideration should be given to the scheduling options presented in this report.

The CBA offers an element of flexibility to FECC leadership in determining and exploring different shift scheduling options when the work schedule is not working. The alternate scheduling option shown in Table 44 may help address service level concerns and perhaps reduce cliques and silos that have developed due to the current schedule, which brings negative energy into the ECC operations floor.

One option for consideration is instituting a rotating 12-hour work shift schedule. An example of this 12-hour shift schedule is the "2-2 3-2 2-2" rotating shift schedule shown in Table 43. This 12-hour rotating shift concept creates rotating teams<sup>160</sup> working the day shift during a cycle and then working the night shift in the next cycle. Then the team working the night shift will work the day shift in the following cycle and so on. Each shift will need enough PSTs to ensure minimum staffing requirements are met. A public safety department with roughly 25 FTEs or more can effectively use this type of work schedule.<sup>161</sup> To offer a good balance, each team should contain a good mix of experienced and non-experienced PSTs.

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<sup>160</sup> Each team would contain the staffing allocation as defined by the AHJ and or ECC leadership.

<sup>161</sup> PowerDMS. 7 Different 12-hour Shift Schedule Examples to Cover Round the Clock. Available at <https://www.powerdms.com/policy-learning-center/7-different-12-hour-shift-schedule-examples-to-cover-round-the-clock>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.



### First Shift Cycle

Week	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Hours <sup>162</sup>
Team 1	D12	D12			D12	D12	D12	60
Team 2			D12	D12				24
Team 3	N12	N12			N12	N12	N12	60
Team 4			N12	N12				24
Shifts	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	

### Second Shift Cycle

Week	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Hours
Team 1			N12	N12				24
Team 2	D12	D12			D12	D12	D12	60
Team 3			D12	D12				24
Team 4	N12	N12			N12	N12	N12	60
Shifts	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	

Table 43: Example of the 2-2 3-2 2-2 (12-hour) Rotating Shift Schedule

The review team has provided additional flexible schedule examples for consideration that use a mixture of 5-2-8, 4-3-10, and 3-12-4 work shift scheduling formats. These examples are found in Appendix C titled, Flexible Work Shift Scheduling Examples.

ECC leadership should be mindful of careful management and implementation of any change made to the work schedule. Likewise, they should ensure union representation is included in every step. Should FECC leadership consider implementing a change to the work schedule such as the example given in Table 43 and the others provided in Appendix C, weighing the pros and cons of each scheduling format is paramount to determine the best option for the team. The goal is not to compromise FECC operational mission and employee satisfaction.

**Analyze Minimum Staffing Requirements:** The minimum staffing requirements should be examined to ensure the allotment set is reasonable and meets operational needs. Assessing the ECC call volume metrics collected and presented by hour, day, week, and month will help in this process. Establishing these metrics can be challenging as the processes, if not well thought and planned, can be time-consuming. In addition, to the call volume metrics, consideration should be given to capturing and using the key performance indicators (KPI) listed in call processing and dispatching in Appendix C – Key Performance Indicators. The data captured may help with validating changes to the minimum staffing requirements.

<sup>162</sup> The 'Hours' column lists total hours worked in the week for 1 FTE on each team.

In our industry, we know some work shifts are busier than others and staffing requirements are structured to address peak days and times. Likewise, there are months in the calendar year that are busier than others. FECC experiences spikes in call volume between May and October, which is a heavy travel season for the region experienced each year. Ultimately, with this data on hand, and embracing and using alternative and flexible schedule options, FECC leadership will be able to create a work schedule that meets operational requirements, focus can be applied on training new and veteran PSTs, and improve employee work-life balance, which is a huge morale booster. Maintaining the status quo is no longer an effective or sustainable strategy for the work scheduling process.

***Change Management:*** Another key point for consideration is the conditional aspect of change. People are reluctant to change and most fear it. The review team advocates engaging PSTs to help determine which shift would maintain the best work-life balance while ensuring that operational needs are met. Addressing coverage requirements, staffing constraints, employee preference, and overtime restrictions must be at the forefront.

FECC leadership is encouraged to develop a process and written directive for introducing any change into ECC. There are a host of change management models to help in this effort. The review has provided some change management models for potential use and can be found in Appendix C – Change Management Models. The review team emphatically advocates that any change in the ECC involving processes, systems, technology, and/or training should not be implemented until such change has been fully conveyed to the entire FECC team. This approach will help with CBA compliance.

## Section 4: Recruitment and Retention

### Introduction

Fundamental to the operations of the ECC are the individuals the agency hires to staff it. The Staffing section addresses the correct number of staff quantitatively. This section will focus on the qualitative aspects of staffing the ECC.

The right recruitment helps find suitable candidates to work in the role of a PST. There isn't a specific set of individual characteristics that candidates will possess to guarantee instant success, but hiring the right group of people through the hiring process is crucial not only to the successful operations of the ECC but also to retaining personnel.

This becomes even more important as the profession moves towards new technologies and services to the community like text, video, telemetry, and more. These changes, commonly known as NextGen, bring with them new workforce roles. APCOs Project 43: Broadband Implications for the PSAP<sup>163</sup>, will bring a different set of core competencies required for successful PSTs.

Adequately testing candidates to assess their skills before offering them employment is vital. It's essential to openly discuss ECC operations and scheduling with the candidate pool to ensure the scope of work meets candidate expectations. It's detrimental to hire someone unaware of the nature of shift work in an ECC because it impacts their chances for a long and fruitful career.

Thorough training of personnel once hired is essential to retention rates, which was covered in the Training section. Successful operations are also impacted by consistency and relevancy of training. If new employees feel they are not getting the tools and support they need via training, they will be more likely to find employment elsewhere. Certainly, technological tools are scrutinized thoughtfully by new employees as they determine their interest and ability to remain on the job for an extended period. Competitive pay and the opportunity to advance over the years are both important factors affecting retention. Often overlooked, the quality of the relationship between the employee and their immediate supervisor has been deemed to be among the most important factors for job satisfaction and, therefore, retention.

Finally, support mechanisms such as an employee assistance program (EAP) with critical incident stress management (CISM) programs are available to PSTs to help retain employees and assist employees who are prone to chronic or cumulative stress.

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<sup>163</sup> Project 43: Broadband implications for the PSAP. APCO International. (n.d.-a). <https://www.apcointl.org/technology/next-generation-9-1-1/project-43-broadband-implications-for-the-psap>. Accessed 5/20/2024

## Recruitment

Attracting, hiring, and retaining PSTs continues to be a significant challenge for most jurisdictions, yet the need will never end. As a recent article in the APCO PSC Magazine stated, *“The search for great team members is ongoing because the need is ongoing and we never close.”*<sup>164</sup> A recent survey of 841 ECCs showed that 82% were understaffed and struggling with hiring and retention.<sup>165</sup> These are staggering numbers and ECCs must find ways to adapt and improve recruitment over simply advertising in the same methods they always have and expecting candidates to find them.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) encourages businesses of all kinds to consider who their best candidates are and find out how and where they look for jobs<sup>166</sup>. SHRM’s updated methods for recruiting include using QR codes to simplify the application process and using text-based interview scheduling, programmatic job advertising, and placing ads on social media.

Employers must react quickly and take proactive measures to find the right candidates. ZipRecruiter recently published its Q1 2024 survey results,<sup>167</sup> reporting that 92% of employers responded to their application within one week and 46% within three days. In addition, 46% of new hires were proactively recruited without having applied for the position.

### ***Finding – Methods of Recruiting***

The review team learned that the Flathead County HR Department directly receives applications for employment for all departments within the county, including FECC.

Departments within Flathead County are provided direct access to pull the applications for their departments immediately upon upload, set their interviews, and select which portions of their processes they would like HR to participate in, if any.

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<sup>164</sup> APCOINTL. (n.d.-f). Available at <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/article/cde-61710-recruiting>. Accessed 05/20/2024.

<sup>165</sup> New report reveals 9-1-1 profession stressed & ... (n.d.-s). Available at <https://www.nena.org/news/646775/New-Report-Reveals-9-1-1-Profession-Stressed--Stretched-to-Its-Limits.htm>. Accessed 05/20/2024.

<sup>166</sup> Maurer, R. (2023, December 21). 10 must-haves for successful recruiting in 2023. Welcome to SHRM. Available at <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/talent-acquisition/10-must-haves-successful-recruiting-2023>. Accessed 05/20/2024.

<sup>167</sup> New hires survey. ZipRecruiter Economic Research. (n.d.). <https://www.ziprecruiter-research.org/new-hires-survey>. Accessed 05/20/2024.

FECC uses multiple methods for recruitment as outlined in the table below:

Job Posting Locations	
Local newspaper	High circulation days (Sunday, Wednesday, Friday)
Tuesdays Top Job Boards	Top jobs for the week in the A section of the newspaper
MaxRecruit	Distributes to top job hiring sites online (e.g., Indeed, ZipRecruiter, and Glassdoor)
Shopper	Free weekly newspaper
Social media	Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Northwest Mountain Jobs
Veterans Network	Web-based veteran/military job board
Diversity Network	Combination of sites featuring top jobs promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion
Flathead County website	County website
Additional Recruitment Efforts	
Method	Description
Recruitment video	<u>Flathead 911: Help Us, Help You. Flathead 911Facebook   Facebook</u>
Community college	Launched a dispatcher course that was discontinued due to lack of interest
Job fairs	Dispatch and/or HR set up tables at job fairs

Table 44: FECC Job Posting Locations and Recruitment Efforts

As a department within Flathead County, FECC website is a subsection of the overall county website<sup>168</sup>. The review team searched the website for employment opportunities, the 9-1-1 position was listed 20th in a list of 24 county departments with job openings on the county employment webpage.

Through the county website, an applicant can navigate to the FECC subsection consisting of a summary of FECC, a graphic listing the emergency phone number 9-1-1, a graphic and link to sign up for emergency notifications, and the suicide prevention and domestic violence hotline numbers. There is no link on this website to view or apply for open positions; however, there is a link to FECC social media, specifically Facebook.

FECC also created a recruitment video featuring a traumatic call handled by a FECC dispatcher to draw interest from potential applicants. This video is available on the FECC Facebook page.

<sup>168</sup> Current employment opportunities: Flathead County, MT. Flathead County. (2023, May 25). <https://flathead.mt.gov/department-directory/human-resources/apply>. Accessed 05/20/2024.

### ***Consideration – Methods of Recruiting***

ECC leadership must continually research where jobseekers are searching and update methodologies to find more candidates, like the examples provided by SHRM of using QR codes and advertising on social media.

The candidates we hire today are the PSTs who will be transitioning to new technologies and an influx of data they may need to analyze and communicate quickly and accurately. Recruitment must take into consideration NextGen implications discussed earlier in this section and hire candidates that demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and abilities to handle these added responsibilities.

APCOs Project 43: Broadband Implications for the PSAP<sup>169</sup> offers recommendations when recruiting candidates. Some examples include:

- Increased job exposure early in the process: Having candidates listen to multiple emotionally difficult calls in the application process can help candidates determine if this is a job they are interested in and may help to avoid losing candidates after time and money is spent on training. FECC has included this in their “Good, Bad, and Ugly” (GBU) presentation, which is discussed later in this section.
- Get involved at the state and federal levels to help drive opportunities to create grants for the development of post-secondary educational programs for IT, PST, and other related emergency response skills.

In a 2023 article on 911.gov titled “Facing Staffing Challenges, Industry Stakeholders Share Tips to Attract and Retain Telecommunicators,”<sup>170</sup> the National 9-1-1 Program describes partnering with stakeholder organizations to create a checklist of methodologies ECCs are trying to overcome with the recruitment and retention crisis seen across the nation.

While all of these may not be feasible for FECC, leadership should consider all options to recruit and retain quality PSTs. The 911.gov checklist includes the following ideas to consider:

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<sup>169</sup> Project 43: Broadband implications for the PSAP. APCO International. (n.d.-a). <https://www.apcointl.org/technology/next-generation-9-1-1/project-43-broadband-implications-for-the-psap>. Accessed 05/20/2024.

<sup>170</sup> Facing staffing challenges, industry stakeholders share tips to attract and retain telecommunicators. 911.gov. (n.d.). <https://www.911.gov/newsletters/issue-13/facing-staffing-challenges-industry-stakeholders-share-tips-to-attract-and-retain-telecommunicators>. Accessed 04/21/2024.

Methodologies for Recruitment and Retention	
Flexible scheduling	Consider artificial intelligence (AI)
Incentives	Invest in current staff
Updated job descriptions	Give regular praise to exceptional staff
Nontraditional talent	Reach out to local media
More than just job boards on city/county sites	Create online videos
Consider former staff	Assess ECC leadership
Examine true staffing needs	Hire a recruiter
Embrace new technology	Research remote work concepts

Table 45: Methodologies for Recruitment and Retention

**County/FECC Website:** It is in FECC’s best interest to create a section on their website proactively providing details about the position of PST. Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency (CRESA)<sup>171</sup> in Washington is a good example of a webpage offering an easy-to-follow application process. The home page has a button leading to a career opportunities page that includes all positions with a link to apply, job descriptions, pay and benefits, the CBA, and a form to sign up for notification of future openings.

FECC leadership should work with the county to develop easy navigation from the county’s home page to the FECC webpage and develop the FECC page to include information simplifying the application process and providing information candidates need. It can include the following:

- A link taking interested candidates to the application
- Job description
- The breakdown of positions within the ECC (how many PSTs, supervisors, etc.)
- Details about the job duties and requirements
- The technology used within the ECC
- Information about salary and benefits including shift differential or bilingual pay
- Minimum qualifications
- Pictures inside the ECC and the team that works within it
- Details about the hiring process
- Details about the training process
- Schedule information
- Videos promoting the ECC

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<sup>171</sup> 1-1 services. 9. (n.d.). <https://cresa911.org/157/9-1-1-Services>. Accessed 5/20/2024.



In addition, FECC leadership should work with the county to highlight the 9-1-1 position on the employment section of the county website by placing it at the top of the list of openings during critical staffing levels, like FECC is experiencing at the time of this report.

**Job Fairs:** FECC leadership should continue to attend job fairs with HR to help attract local candidates for the PST role. The presence of an employer at a job fair increases the brand awareness and visibility of the employer in the competitive job market.<sup>172</sup> The review team found that currently, these events are staffed by a Human Resources employee recruiting for the county, often accompanied by the FECC Director.

When possible, FECC leadership should strongly consider inviting a PST to participate in the job fair. This not only allows the potential candidate to hear about the job from someone performing the job, but it also gains buy-in from the staff who participate.

**Social Media:** Another creative idea that will get the attention of job seekers is to create a social media video portraying a day in the life of a PST like the video that the San Jose Fire Department has created on their recruitment page<sup>173</sup> or that Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon has on their page.<sup>174</sup> This helps paint the picture of the seldom known scenarios inside of an ECC, and the team that sits behind the headset. It allows the public to catch a glimpse of the tasks and responsibilities being performed by real people to which they can relate. It sparks excitement within the community and grabs the attention of the people who want to have that rewarding career in an ECC. FECC leadership should consider contacting a local college to see if this could be an opportunity for a media student to complete a project. This could save money and engage the community as well.

FECC currently has a recruitment video highlighting a traumatic 9-1-1 call. While this demonstrates a low-frequency/high-risk event, FECC should consider creating a recruitment video like the videos referenced in this section providing an overview of the center and its mission and values. This provides potential candidates with a more realistic view of the day-to-day operations and the totality of the job.

**Colleges and High Schools:** FECC worked with Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) to create a dispatch course, but it did not receive enough interest and was discontinued. However, FECC leadership should continue building relationships with the

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<sup>172</sup> Tech Jobs Fair. Top 5 Benefits of Attending Job Fairs for Employers. Available at: <https://techjobsfair.com/benefits-of-attending-job-fairs-for-employers/>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

<sup>173</sup> Dispatcher Recruitment. City of San Jose. Available at <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/fire-department/fire-communications/dispatcher-recruitment>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

<sup>174</sup> Employment. Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon. (2024b, February 26). Available at <https://ecso911.com/employment/>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

college and consider opportunities to recruit from the FVCC Criminal Justice Program. This would be beneficial for local applicants in the relevant field.<sup>175</sup> FECC should consider sending both the training coordinator and a PST to talk about the ECC and how rewarding it is to work with the community as the hero behind the headset. They could further sign up to be guest speakers on the class syllabus every semester to become a permanent fixture in the eyes of the criminal justice program.

FECC should partner with Whitefish, Glacier, Flathead, Columbia Falls, and other local high schools on career day to introduce the students to the concept of public safety dispatching. Presentations can include videos of PSTs at work showing the rewarding aspects of a career in 9-1-1, discuss the pay and benefits, show clips of PSTs discussing their favorite aspects of a career in public safety, and open their world about 9-1-1 and the secure lifestyle it can offer straight out of high school. Consider including short clips demonstrating a day in the life of a 9-1-1 dispatcher to give them a realistic idea of the job. Remain open and transparent about shift work and the challenging aspects of the job as well to ensure they have a full, transparent picture of the life of a PST. Allow time for questions and be sure to provide contact information so they can follow up with questions or request a sit-along with the ECC.

Another opportunity for students to learn about a career as a PST is to provide them with information on APCO's student membership<sup>176</sup> and share the new high school program in Cobb County, Georgia, that's providing students with a base 9-1-1 certification. Consider working with educators in Flathead County to create a similar program to encourage students to pursue a career in 9-1-1.

**Open House:** Host an open house or offer opportunities for small tours. Seeing the facility and the activity in a 9-1-1 center can bring more interest and an opportunity for potential candidates to speak with the professionals inside the center.

**Recruitment Cards:** Continue to provide your team members with a small business card highlighting pay, benefits, hours, training provided, agency mission, and a link to complete pre-employment steps online.<sup>177</sup> Encourage them to hand the cards out to people in the community that they think would be a great fit for the ECC. These cards can include a space for the referring employees to place their names, and FECC can

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<sup>175</sup> *Criminal justice*. Flathead Valley Community College. (2024, March 18). <https://www.fvcc.edu/track/criminal-justice>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

<sup>176</sup> Student & Educator Membership. APCO International. (n.d.-d). Available at <https://www.apcointl.org/membership/join-login/student-educator-membership>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

<sup>177</sup> PSC Magazine. Recruiting Quality Public Safety Telecommunicators. Available at: <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/article/cde-61710-recruiting>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

consider a reward for the referring employee upon the successful hiring of a candidate, or successful completion of training.

### ***Analysis – Incentives and Referral Bonuses***

Incentives are essential in today's labor market, allowing the organizations you represent to find and keep valuable team members. These incentives can come in many forms, from monetary rewards for hiring and retention to extra pay for completing specific tasks or goals.<sup>178</sup> Incentives also provide an additional reason for job seekers to join the team, as they are assured of being rewarded accordingly. By offering hiring incentives, organizations may entice applicants who otherwise would not have considered working for them.<sup>179</sup>

Incentives, such as financial rewards, health and wellness programs, flexible work arrangements, mental health services, tuition reimbursement, or pet-friendly policies, help your organization create an attractive job offering that increases applications for your open positions and improves the positive perception of your hiring process with candidates.<sup>180</sup> Understand your agency's unique selling points to potential recruits and leverage them when searching for the perfect candidate. Any one of these selling points can be the difference between getting the candidate you want and having them decline your job offer.

### ***Finding – Incentives & Referral Bonuses***

Montana Statute 7-4-501<sup>181</sup> limits financial awards to \$50 for public employees. For this reason, there are no monetary hiring incentives or referral bonuses used in FECC's recruitment process.

### ***Consideration – Incentives and Referral Bonuses***

Incentives work well for job seekers who are focused on financial compensation over other forms of compensation. You can use these bonuses to bridge the gap between what job seekers want and what companies want to pay. It is a lot easier for a business to commit to a one-time bonus over an above-average salary.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Track Five. Attracting Top Talent – Hiring Incentives for 2023. Available at: <https://trackfive.com/blog/attracting-top-talent-hiring-incentives-2023/>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

<sup>179</sup> Track Five. Attracting Top Talent – Hiring Incentives for 2023. Available at: <https://trackfive.com/blog/attracting-top-talent-hiring-incentives-2023/>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

<sup>180</sup> Track Five. Attracting Top Talent – Hiring Incentives for 2023. Available at: <https://trackfive.com/blog/attracting-top-talent-hiring-incentives-2023/>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

<sup>181</sup> Montana Code annotated 2023. Part 5. Local Government Employee Incentive Award Program - Table of Contents, Title 7, Chapter 4, MCA. (n.d.). [https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title\\_0070/chapter\\_0040/part\\_0050/sections\\_index.html](https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0070/chapter_0040/part_0050/sections_index.html). Accessed 05/20/24.

<sup>182</sup> Track Five. Attracting Top Talent – Hiring Incentives for 2023. Available at: <https://trackfive.com/blog/attracting-top-talent-hiring-incentives-2023/>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

Employee referral bonuses are a great way to encourage current team members to recommend people they know who are qualified for the role. This can range from paying a small referral bonus to additional paid days off. An employee referral system cannot replace recruiting agencies, but it can act as a supplementary avenue for increasing employment.

While Montana statute 7-4-501 has limited Flathead County from this option, there are examples indicating this may be changing with the current staffing crisis across the nation. One example is state-run healthcare facilities in Montana using hiring incentives to attract more employees.<sup>183</sup> Should the county have an opportunity to use this tool in the future, FECC could benefit by attracting more applicants, including experienced PSTs.

***Physical and Mental Health Programs:*** Physical and mental health programs also can be effective hiring incentives. Employers will appeal to top talent and increase employee retention by offering various benefits, from attractive healthcare plans to gym membership reimbursement.

FECC has an EAP program called “The Standard.” Employees can find information at [www.healthadvocate.com/standard6](http://www.healthadvocate.com/standard6) or by calling 877-851-1631. This information is posted in the center and is available in the documents section of FECC’s PowerDMS. These programs are described further in the [CISM and EAP section](#) of this document.

These are examples of benefits that can be highlighted in job advertisements to attract more candidates. These opportunities bring in younger recruits. Younger generation workers tend to prioritize health and wellness more than previous generations, so use these to your advantage when searching for talent.<sup>184</sup>

## Hiring Process

The hiring process in many ECCs is a continuous process. Creating a successful hiring process requires identifying the right candidates through application assessment, testing, interviews, and thorough background investigations. This section outlines the workflow and the order in which it is completed, for hiring in FECC.

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<sup>183</sup> Newspapers, H. MICHELS Lee. (2024, January 19). State offers bonuses to attract more workers at facilities. Bozeman Daily Chronicle. [https://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/news/state\\_government/montana-state-facilities-pay-bonus-hire-travelers-mental-health/article\\_9558030b-bd32-5940-93da-6c6c64d04acf.html](https://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/news/state_government/montana-state-facilities-pay-bonus-hire-travelers-mental-health/article_9558030b-bd32-5940-93da-6c6c64d04acf.html). Accessed 05/20/2024.

<sup>184</sup> Track Five. Attracting Top Talent – Hiring Incentives for 2023 Available at: <https://trackfive.com/blog/attracting-top-talent-hiring-incentives-2023>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

### ***Analysis – Hiring Process***

The hiring process for PSTs varies depending on the agency. However, there are some common requirements that one can expect to see. Most ECCs require at least a high school diploma or equivalent, and some agencies may prefer candidates with an associate degree in a related field, such as criminal justice or emergency management.<sup>185</sup> The hiring process for PSTs is extensive and may include:

- Panel interview
- Skills test
- Background investigation
- Complete medical and psychological evaluation
- Preliminary application review

### ***Finding – Hiring Process***

The hiring process for FECC is shown in Table 46:

<b>Hiring Process</b>
Application Review
Informational Session (GBU) and Tests
Background Check
Sit-along
Typing Test
CritiCall Test
Interview
Hearing & Drug Test

*Table 46: Hiring Process*

***Application review:*** The application is received in the Flathead County HR system and immediately uploaded to a file for the FECC Director to download. The Director downloads and screens all applications and determines which candidates will move forward in the hiring process.

***Informational Session:*** Applicants are invited to attend a group informational session called the Good, Bad, and Ugly (GBU). After the GBU presentation, those candidates who choose to continue are given two tests at the informational session:

- Spelling quiz: Tests their ability to correctly spell common words. This is important when documenting information in CAD and other public records to ensure accuracy and professionalism.

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<sup>185</sup> U.S. BLS. Occupational Outlook Handbook. Public Safety Telecommunicators. Available at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/office-and-administrative-support/police-fire-and-ambulance-dispatchers.htm#tab-4>. Accessed on 05/29/2024.

- **Split ear quiz:** Tests their ability to hear radio traffic and information over the phone at the same time and quickly document the important details.

**GBU:** The GBU presentation is an in-person session conducted by the Director with a slideshow that outlines the history and activity levels of FECC. It also contains audio and pictures of a fatal structure fire in which a father and his children were killed and another recording of a hysterical caller. The slide show contains “good” aspects of working at FECC at the beginning and end of the presentation, and provides multiple examples of the “bad” and “ugly” in the middle of the presentation. This presentation is done just before the spelling and split ear tests.

The GBU was discussed in both internal and external stakeholder interviews, and there are strong opinions in favor and against this presentation. Some stakeholders felt it was unnecessary and it was chasing candidates away. Some felt it was wrong to expose people to traumatic calls before they were trained to deal with them. Others felt the presentation was a great tool that weeded out candidates who would not be able to handle the job anyway.

**Background Check:** The Director primarily conducts background checks on applicants and decides if they fit the criteria to move forward. Occasionally, the Director asks the Administrative Assistant to check references on her behalf. The background includes a criminal history and reference check. If the Director chooses to recommend an applicant for hire, she is required to send the application and at least two employment-related references to the HR department before HR signs off to hire the applicant. To decrease the amount of time it takes to complete the process, HR has agreed to allow the Director to hire applicants contingent on the background check.

**Sit-along:** Sit-alongs provide job exposure to candidates to help them determine if the profession is a good fit for them and to expose them to the high-stress environment before accepting a position with FECC. This can help to avoid the candidate moving forward and then deciding the job is not for them after FECC has put time and money into their hiring and training.

**Typing Test:** A typing test, also referred to as a keyboarding test, is designed to ensure the candidate can enter data quickly and accurately. FECC requires 40 words per minute to move forward in the hiring process.

**CritiCall Test:** The CritiCall test has several components and is designed to test the candidate’s ability to multitask and other critical areas FECC has determined are key to a successful PST. The specific components used by FECC are outlined in the Analysis-Testing section of this document.

**Interview:** The interviews are conducted by the Director and one or more dispatch supervisory staff. Due to staffing levels, it has typically only involved the Director and the 9-1-1 Training & QA Coordinator. When staffing levels allow, the Director invites other supervisors and/or leads to participate. In the past, the Director would invite law enforcement personnel to participate but this practice has diminished due to scheduling conflicts and availability which leads to delays in the hiring process.

**Hearing and Drug Test:** Hearing test and drug screening to ensure the candidate can meet the requirements for hearing and can pass a drug screen as part of the background.

**Hiring Timeline:** The overall process for hiring a PST can be lengthy. FECC leadership has worked hard to streamline the process to get candidates hired as quickly as possible, both for staffing purposes and to avoid losing applicants in the process. This is a great step to improve staffing levels as quickly as possible.

FECC's average time from application submission to start date between January 2023 and April 2024 is seven weeks.

Hired	Applied	Days
3/27/2023	1/10/2023	78
5/22/2023	4/14/2023	38
6/4/2023	4/18/2023	47
5/30/2023	4/16/2023	44
9/25/2023	8/2/2023	54
9/28/2022	8/1/2022	58
10/7/2023	8/23/2023	45
11/14/2022	9/4/2022	71
12/18/2023	10/26/2023	53
12/20/2023	11/6/2023	44
12/27/2022	11/14/2022	43
2/28/2024	11/17/2023	101
3/4/2024	1/21/2024	43
3/11/2024	2/14/2024	26
3/18/2024	2/16/2024	31
3/31/2024	2/18/2024	42
4/1/2024	2/26/2024	35

Table 47: FECC Hiring Timeline

In addition to the steps above, FECC has created a list of things for applicants to consider while they are in the process. Applicants are given this document prior to interviews and told to bring it with them if they are invited to an interview.



Figure 44 shows a sampling of the document.

Experience has shown that many applicants for Dispatcher positions consider only certain aspects of the job while ignoring less attractive features. As a result, when new employees encounter negative job features they sometimes react by leaving the position before training is completed or within a few months of release from the training program.

There are many satisfying and rewarding aspects of this position. There is no question that dispatchers make significant contributions to the welfare and safety of their fellow citizens and emergency responders. It is important for all applicants to carefully consider *both* the negative and positive features of a new career *before* considering the position.

The job factors listed below are features of the Dispatcher position that many applicants are often unaware of. Please read and carefully consider each one before initialing.

**This questionnaire should be carefully considered when applying for this position. Please consider discussing the various aspects with your family and how each item may personally affect you. Should you be successful in passing all the phases in the hiring process and are offered a position, this form will then become part of your permanent personnel file.**

**\*\*\*REMEMBER TO BRING THIS BACK WITH YOU IF YOU ARE INTERVIEWED\*\*\***

**WORKING ENVIRONMENT**

No.	Comment	Initial
1	You must have regular and predictable attendance.	
2	You must arrive for work on time with all <u>issued</u> equipment and be immediately prepared for work.	
3	You will likely be required to work different shifts in a 24 x 7 work environment.	
4	You may have no choice about which shift you are assigned to work.	
5	You may have no choice about which days you work.	
6	You may be required to work all shifts, including during the training period.	
7	You will be required to work weekends on a regular basis.	
8	You must be prepared to work any and all Federal, State, and religious holidays on the recognized or actual date.	
9	You must be prepared to work on personally important or special days (i.e. birthdays, anniversaries, sporting events, pre-scheduled appointments, etc.).	
10	You must be able to obtain <u>childcare</u> for all types of shifts on a regular basis.	
11	You must be able to obtain childcare for weekends and holidays on a regular basis.	
12	You must be able to obtain childcare <u>on</u> short notice on a regular basis.	
13	You must be able to work <u>voluntary</u> overtime, before or after a shift, sometimes with little to no notice.	
14	You must be able to work <u>mandatory</u> overtime, before or after a shift, sometimes with little to no notice.	
15	You must have access to reliable transportation that functions in the 24 <u>hour</u> environment.	
16	You must be willing to carry a working phone and contact the department when requested.	
17	You must be willing to respond back to work with little to no notice.	

Figure 44: New Hire Considerations

### Considerations – Hiring Process

FECC should consider changing the order of the process to the suggested order in Figure 45:

Hiring Process
Application Review
CritiCall Test
Informational Session (GBU) and Tests
Interview
Sit-along
Background Check
Hearing & Drug Test

Figure 45: Suggested Hiring Process

Changing to the suggested order provides several benefits:

- The applicant can take the CritiCall test remotely prior to interviews. Having candidates test directly after the application saves FECC leadership from interviewing or spending further time with candidates who would not qualify based on test scores.
- This also provides information on the candidate's ability to pass the skills test before being invited to the interview process, and it lets the interview panel know the candidate has the skill level needed to perform the functions of the job.
- This order limits the number of participants at each step – only those who pass the CritiCall move forward to the informational session; only those who pass CritiCall and are still interested after the session move to interviews; only those who pass the testing, session, and interviews sit-along with dispatch; and only those who remain interested after the sit-along are put into background checks. This saves time and resources for the center, specifically the Director who is tasked with completing the background check.
- Placing the background check towards the end also eliminates the Director needing to unnecessarily learn background information on people who are not serious candidates.

**Application Process:** The Director would benefit from creating written directives on the application process and any automatic disqualifiers. FECC leadership should then consider using the Administrative Specialist position to track all incoming applications removing any disqualifiers from the process and organize the rest for the Director's screening process.

**Informational Session:** FECC leadership should review the components within CritiCall and consider whether the spelling and split ear tests given at the informational session are necessary. CritiCall already has the components to test these areas, and FECC is using these, making the additional testing redundant. Removing unnecessary steps helps to further streamline the process and save time for both the agency and the candidates.

**GBU:** FECC leadership should review this presentation and consider updating it to include other types of calls that are difficult but more frequent as well. APCO Project 43: Broadband Implications for the PSAP<sup>186</sup> workforce section discusses job exposures during application processes more thoroughly, and it would benefit leadership to review this document. The GBU is also mentioned in the Training section of this document with

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<sup>186</sup> Project 43: Broadband implications for the PSAP. APCO International. (n.d.-a). <https://www.apcointl.org/technology/next-generation-9-1-1/project-43-broadband-implications-for-the-psap>. Accessed 5/20/2024.

consideration for verbiage change, and leadership should review that section when updating the GBU.

**Background Check:** The Director should consider what other options she may have for background investigations. One consideration is reaching out to some of FECC's law enforcement partner agencies to see if they can complete pre-employment background checks for FECC.

Another option is asking if there are retired officers who are contracting to complete background checks or other options law enforcement may be using to complete these.

Good background investigations take time and should be conducted by someone who has attended background investigation courses. The review team is unaware if the Director has been trained in a background investigation course. These checks are time-consuming and frequent due to staffing needs, and assigning them elsewhere frees time for the Director to focus on other areas that need attention.

**Typing Test:** The CriteCall test has a component that tests keyboarding and can be used in place of the typing test. This would help streamline the process even further as it would be one less step for the candidate and for FECC leadership to manage.

**CriteCall:** FECC leadership is in the process of moving to the remote version of CriteCall. This would allow the Administrative Assistant, or the Director's designee, to send a link to candidates allowing them to take the CriteCall test remotely. This is an area where the Director should involve the Administrative Assistant as soon as that position is filled, as it will take time to manage and monitor.

**Interview:** When staffing allows, FECC leadership should also consider including a PST in the interview process. Candidates value the ability to hear from staff who are doing the job they are applying for, and staff have more buy-in to new employees when they are involved in the selection process. This provides positive benefits for both the candidate and current staff.<sup>187</sup>

It would be beneficial for FECC leadership to include HR in the interviews whenever possible. Having HR involved can protect the agency, as HR always has the most up to date information on laws impacting what can and cannot be asked in an interview, and they can provide information on things like veteran points or disability issues. This

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<sup>187</sup> HR Collaborative. (2018, November 15). *Why your entire team should be involved in the hiring process*. Available at <https://hrcollaborative.com/2017/09/why-your-entire-team-should-be-involved-in-the-hiring>. Accessed 05/20/2024.

would also provide a relationship building opportunity between FECC leadership and HR leadership.

**Analysis – Testing**

The use of pre-employment testing is necessary to determine if prospective candidates will perform well under stress, have the best aptitude for oral and written communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking during emergencies, and have the appropriate skills.

It also provides a miniature replica of the emergency services job testing applicants in job-related skills, such as multitasking, data entry, and alphanumeric memory. These tests provide the applicants a realistic preview of the job task, so much so that ECC/HR have reported that some applicants have removed themselves from the recruitment process knowing that they do not possess the skills and abilities necessary for success.<sup>188</sup>

Individual agencies may select which components they wish to test with choices such as:

Decision Making
Keyboarding
Call Summarization
Character Comparison
Cross Referencing (Audio)
Suburban-Rural Map Reading
Prioritization
Memory Recall Numeric (Audio)
Memory Recall
Spelling
Reading Comprehension
Personality

Table 48: CitiCall Components

Being able to test candidates remotely benefits the agency by providing a larger pool of applicants who can test from anywhere without the commitment of travel.

It is a function of the PST to receive and process audible information from various telecommunications devices, as well as differentiate and process numerous non-verbal audible alarms and indicators. It is crucial to adequately test personnel to assess their

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<sup>188</sup> Testing solutions for Public Safety 9-1-1 Agencies and HR Personnel Available at: <https://critical911.com/dispatcher-testing/agencieshr/>. Assessed 05/29/2024.

skills before offering them employment. The importance of good hearing for discerning background sounds while call taking or faint radio transmissions as a dispatcher cannot be overstated. Similarly, typing or keyboarding tests are frequently used instead of, or in addition to, the practical typing test, which is the result of writing up the scenarios just referred to.

**Finding – Testing**

FECC uses CritiCall to administer skill-level testing to gauge the candidate pool on multi-tasking skills, data entry, memory recall, and more. At the time of this report, FECC is revalidating the test and moving to the remote version to allow candidates to take the CritiCall portion remotely. The table below lists all components currently used by FECC.

Decision Making
Data Entry MT
Data Entry MT with Audio
Call Summarization I
Call Summarization II MT
Cross Referencing
Cross Referencing Audio
Character Comparison
Memory recall
Memory Recall-Numeric (Audio)
Prioritization
Mathematics
Suburban-Rural Map Reading
Spelling
Sentence Clarity
Reading Comprehension

*Table 49: FECC CritiCall Components*

**Considerations – Testing**

The use of remote CritiCall testing is an excellent screening tool for hiring PSTs. FECC uses CritiCall and had just begun implementing the remote option at the time of this writing. FECC should track the results to determine how this impacts their hiring process. FECC should also consider changing the order of their process to have candidates take the CritiCall test at the beginning of the process, before the informational session. This enables FECC to only move candidates forward who have passed the skills test, saving time and resources by limiting the candidates to only those who have demonstrated the abilities required of a PST.

## Retention

Retaining quality employees through a staffing crisis can be extremely challenging for leadership. FECC leadership is focused on hiring staff to stabilize the center but retaining the staff that are there is equally important.

### ***Analysis – Impact of Low Staffing on Retention***

Retention-related factors, such as pay, relationships, promotion opportunities, technological tools, and certainly the stress associated with low staffing levels, can hinder the retention of existing fully trained staff. Some attrition can certainly be attributed to the difficulty of working multiple overtime shifts and APCOs Project 43: Broadband Implications for the PSAP reports that research has shown job complexity adds to retention issues – the more complex the job, the less satisfied employees become, and retention decreases.<sup>189</sup> When staffing is low, employees are forced to work extra hours and handle additional duties, increasing the complexity of the job.

### ***Finding – Impact of Low Staffing on Retention***

Veteran staff are more apt to leave the agency due to burnout from working short-staffed over a prolonged amount of time and at such a frantic pace. As the number of staff continues to decrease, it seems the workload continues to increase. Working a long stretch of consecutive days leaves staff fatigued and has a negative impact on performance, customer service, and morale.

The common stressors the review team discovered during staff interviews were staffing, cost of living vs. wages, work-life balance, inconsistencies in training, having to find their own coverage for time off, equipment issues, and not getting breaks while on duty.

It is important to note the most common impact mentioned was the poor relationship with field units, specifically, the Sheriff's Department. The staffing issues may have an impact on PSTs' ability to provide all the services the users would prefer, which may be causing some frustration in the field. However, the perception from dispatch that the Sheriff's Department is intentionally difficult, to the point some dispatchers are afraid to work that channel because of the treatment, is a significant statement.

### ***Consideration – Impact of Low Staffing on Retention***

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<sup>189</sup> Project 43: Broadband implications for the PSAP. APCO International. (n.d.-a). <https://www.apcointl.org/technology/next-generation-9-1-1/project-43-broadband-implications-for-the-psap>. Accessed 5/20/2024.

FECC leadership needs to make this relationship rebuild an immediate priority. This will take a collaborative effort between the Sheriff, Under Sheriff, FECC leadership, and County Administrator to make this happen. The ultimate goal behind this effort is to restore the professional relationship between all parties and work toward developing a sense of teamwork. The current state is not working and having a damaging effect. Issues at the top level are trickling down to the line-level staff, which leads to added stress and pressure on PSTs. The Sheriff and Under Sheriff both expressed their understanding of the difficulties and challenges PSTs face daily in their jobs and that the FECC is struggling, as they are, in hiring and keeping staffing. A realization must come that the current strategy is not working and the energy from this group should be focused on developing workable solutions that benefit both parties in these trying times. Ultimately, it is the leadership from this group that is going to lead to the success or failure of the mission and that is serving the citizens of Flathead County.

A couple of resources that may help rebuild relationships and conflict resolution are listed below. Another approach may be enlisting help from HR in possibly bringing in consulting services specialized in team building and conflict resolution.

- [Conflict Resolution Strategies for Inclusive Leaders](#) (St. Catherine University)
- [A Comprehensive Guide to Managing Conflict in the Workplace](#) (Lattice)
- [Effective Team Building for Government Employees](#) (Select Training & Management Consultancy)
- [Know Your People: The Key to Effective Leadership in Public Safety](#) (Lexipol)

FECC leadership should work on providing positive feedback and giving “shout-outs” to exceptional employees. Such action goes a long way toward helping to retain quality employees.<sup>190</sup>

### ***Analysis – Succession Planning or Promotional Opportunities***

Identifying potential successors requires strategic planning. To develop a successful succession program the agency will need to identify what tasks and positions should be included and what skills and competencies are required for each task and position.<sup>191</sup> It is equally important that the agency consider how a candidate will be considered as a potential successor, what skills and characteristics are deemed required to assume the responsibilities, and the willingness of the candidate to accept a promotional or lateral position.

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<sup>190</sup> Facing staffing challenges, industry stakeholders share tips to attract and retain telecommunicators. 911.gov. (n.d.). <https://www.911.gov/newsletters/issue-13/facing-staffing-challenges-industry-stakeholders-share-tips-to-attract-and-retain-telecommunicators>. Accessed 5/20/2024.

<sup>191</sup> Home. MindTools. (n.d.). <https://www.mindtools.com/atzir78/succession-planning>. Accessed 05/27/2024.



Succession planning, like any training program, is an investment. It is recommended that agencies not focus on a single candidate, which could result in a loss of investment due to the person leaving or not fulfilling expectations. The planning process should be inclusive and include a pool of candidates who have expressed an interest in the position. This would encourage individuals to take more responsibility for their individual career development. This emphasis on self-direction replaces the organization's control over career development and redirects responsibility to the individual employee.

Agencies should be aware of potential issues resulting from identifying and training potential successors. Common pitfalls include the appearance of favoritism, entitlement, and stifling incentives for staff to exert effort or apply for consideration.

Developing successors provides a pool of potential staff and continuity of knowledge. In addition to providing staff available to perform critical tasks, developing successors provides for a more seamless transition. A succession program shows that an organization values and is willing to invest in its staff; this may lead to an increase in ownership of the organization and a desire to excel. An organization that is committed to developing its staff provides an ongoing career path for staff, which may increase retention and encourage personal development. These things can be fostered through individual development plans. Once candidates have been identified as possible successors, individual development plans can be used to narrow developmental gaps. The individual development plan is a tool used by both the employees and the supervisor to help organize and plan learning and development to build necessary competencies.

Some recommended methods for developing successors through individual development plans include:

- Coaching: Focusing on tasks to develop skills.
- Mentoring: Process of working with a more experienced person for development.
- Training: Process of learning and enhancing skills to perform a task.
- Education: Formal process of enhancing knowledge through an accredited source such as a college or university.
- Professional recognition: Affiliation, education, and certifications with professional organizations.
- Shadowing: Informal process of observing another perform the tasks to be able to complete the task independently.

***Finding – Succession Planning***

The review team was unable to find any written directives outlining succession planning for FECC, and interviews indicated that opportunities to promote are rare.

FECC has two lead positions that are filled, but they are budgeted and approved for six, as well as two dispatch supervisor positions. The lead position requires the candidate to currently work at FECC, not be on probation, and have two years of public safety experience in an approved environment. A supervisor position has the same requirements, with a requirement of three years.

FECC does not have a plan in place to identify staff who are interested in future promotions or to offer training to help employees prepare.

### ***Consideration – Succession Planning***

Creating an internal promotional step-up program would assist those interested in preparing for the promotion by acquiring knowledge and skills before the promotion. Programs like APCO ANS 1.22.1-2023 Registered Public-Safety Leader (RPL), NENA's Emergency Number Professional (ENP), and the APCO Certified Public Safety Executive (CPE), when coupled with other related training, can be used as incentive milestones leading to promotions. This program can be written into policy to be used as a guide for those with promotional aspirations.

APCO ANS 1.22.1-2023 Career Progression Within the Public Safety Emergency Communications Center is a guide to create, legitimize, and instruct agencies and their respective employees on how to develop career pathways for all personnel.

### ***Analysis – CISM and EAP Programs***

An EAP is a voluntary, work-based program that offers free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, referrals, and follow-up services to employees who have personal and/or work-related problems. EAPs address a broad and complex body of issues affecting mental and emotional well-being, such as alcohol and other substance abuse, stress, grief, family problems, and psychological disorders. EAP counselors also work in a consultative role with managers and supervisors to address employee and organizational challenges and needs. Many EAPs are active in helping organizations prevent and cope with workplace violence, trauma, and other emergency response situations.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> US Office of Personnel Management. Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Online at: <https://www.opm.gov/frequently-asked-questions/work-life-faq/employee-assistance-program-eap/what-is-an-employee-assistance-program-eap/>. Accessed on 04/20/2024.

CISM is a short-term, psychological first-aid intervention strategy that can help mitigate long-term mental health issues for first responders. CISM interventions encourage individuals to emote the impact of the cognitive, emotional, and psychological symptoms that manifest as a direct result of exposure to traumatic stress, especially repetitive traumatic stress. CISM aims to return those involved to a pre-event “normal” status quicker than if left to their own devices and deter PTSD.<sup>193</sup>

**Finding – CISM and EAP Programs**

**EAP:** All FECC employees have access to an EAP program. This program has free, confidential counseling services available to employees and their dependents. The EAP offered is from a vendor called The Standard and a flyer is stored in the documents folder in PowerDMS.

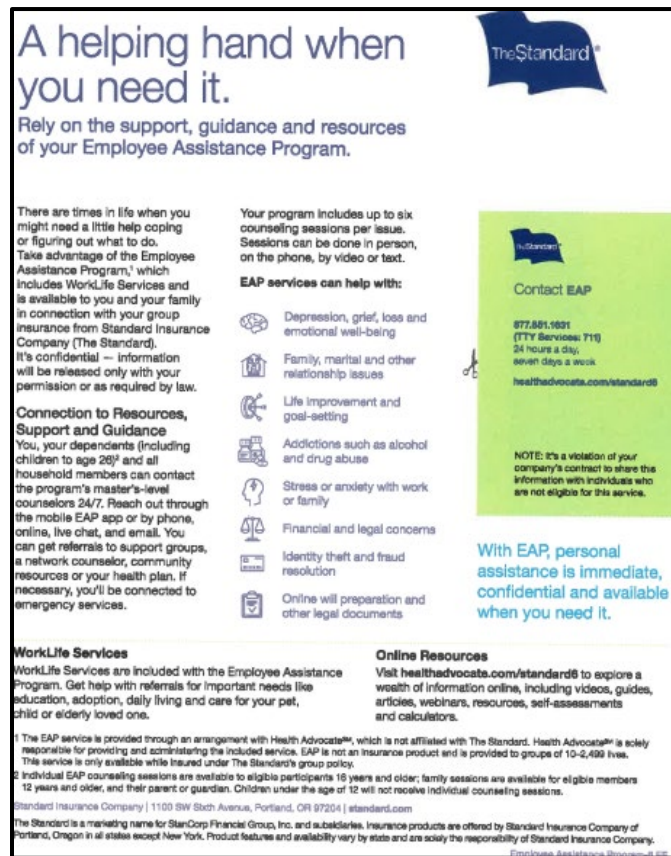


Figure 46: FECC EAP Flyer

The flyer is also posted in dispatch, and information on the EAP is included in the new hire packet for all new employees. Through this program, employees and their families

<sup>193</sup> EMS1. (2020, September 28). Healing first responders through Critical Incident Stress Management Interventions. EMS1. <https://www.ems1.com/ems-products/fitness-health/articles/healing-first-responders-through-critical-incident-stress-management-interventions-wZnokJsR6TG3YoTe/>. Accessed 04/21/2024.

can find access to confidential services 24/7 by phone or through the website [www.healthadvocate.com/standard6](http://www.healthadvocate.com/standard6) for help with issues, including:

- Depression, grief, or emotional wellbeing
- Family/marital issues
- Life improvement/goal setting
- Legal documents or preparation advice
- Financial concerns
- Stress and/or anxiety
- Addiction/substance abuse
- Identity theft/fraud

Through interviews, the review team learned that some PSTs were unaware or unfamiliar with access to all these services, though most were aware of the existence of the EAP.

***CISM: APCO ANS 1.119.1-2021 Public Safety Telecommunicator Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Program*** addresses the critical need for CISM services within ECCs and provides resources and tools to provide further detailed information that may prove beneficial to an agency.

FECC has a written directive titled Critical Incident Stress Debriefing, implemented in 2017, that outlines the process for handling the request for a debriefing, but there are no written directives outlining the process for a member of FECC to request a debriefing. There are no written directives outlining CISM or peer support programs.

### ***Consideration – CISM and EAP Programs***

Information about the EAP and CISM programs should be included in the FECC written directives and FECC training manual to ensure that all employees are aware of the benefits. In addition, FECC leadership should continue to make it a practice to include PSTs in any CISD for major incidents that they may have been involved in.

Consider posting information on both the EAP and CISM contacts and include CISD in training to normalize the discussion on dealing with traumatic calls. These can be posted in the breakroom, bathroom doors, or any common area so that staff can easily read and obtain information as needed. Even sharing articles and CDEs like the recent PST Magazine article “How Can We Cope”<sup>194</sup> can help PSTs realize they are not alone, and that it is ok to reach out when they need help.

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<sup>194</sup> APCOINTL. (n.d.-f) Available at <https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/article/cde-65177-how-can-we-cope>. Accessed 05/20/2024.

CISM should also be a topic for ongoing training. Consider asking peer support members to conduct ongoing training and include this topic in annual training plans.

Management should consider reviewing the [APCO ANS 1.119.1-2021 Public Safety Telecommunicator Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Program Standard](#) and develop a program within the ECC that educates all PSTs in Critical Incident Stress Management and the tools available to them for support. Creating a culture of awareness and embracing CISM begins with leadership.

The standard begins with agency responsibilities like:

- Providing adequate resources
- Defining appropriate use
- Providing regular updates on information and events related to CISM/CISD
- Fostering partnerships between all public safety entities
- Creating a stigma-free workplace

The standard also offers ideas for helping employee stress levels like new employee family nights and offers suggestions for creating team leads and getting involvement from staff to ensure the burden does not all fall on management.

Consider structuring a team within the ECC that supports personnel proactively, not just during a critical incident. This creates trust and builds relationships to ensure when critical incidents occur, staff feel comfortable reaching out to one another and are secure in the fact they will have strong, confidential support to help them cope with their trauma. Team leads and CISM members are also discussed in the standard.

FECC leadership should determine the interest level amongst staff and appoint a lead for this project to help them work through creating a team or becoming part of another public safety team with one of the law enforcement or fire agencies. Reviewing the standard will provide FECC leadership with information on all of this and more as it relates to CISM/CISD.

### ***Analysis – Exit Interviews***

The purpose of an exit interview is to assess the overall employee experience within an organization and identify opportunities to improve retention and engagement. Having a clear set of standards in place when conducting exit interviews can also play an essential role in risk management. Exit interviews are important because they offer a deeper look

at the workplace culture, day-to-day processes, management solutions, and employee morale.<sup>195</sup>

Exit interviews, when conducted with care, can provide a flow of thoughtful feedback and insight on all three fronts. They can increase employee engagement and retention by revealing what works or doesn't work inside the organization.

### ***Finding – Exit Interviews***

The FECC HR Department offers optional exit interviews unless the employee leaving is transitioning to another county department. Since 2022, there have been 22 employees that have left employment, but only one that has participated in a formal interview. Two others offered their reasonings in their resignation letters.

The results of these documents confirm information that the review team was given during interviews with ECC staff. Specifically, some of the areas of concern that led staff to depart the agency are:

- Too much forced overtime
- Inconsistency in CTO training
- Lack of ongoing training
- Lack of consistency among supervisors/leadership
- Lack of communication and perceived favoritism by management
- Negativity in the center

In addition to the HR exit interviews, the review team learned the Director conducts her informal exit interviews to determine why people are leaving.

### ***Consideration – Exit Interviews***

FECC leadership should take the time to evaluate the exit interview information and look for patterns. If you hear consistently good comments about managers or supervisors, consider a development program and succession plan for him or her. Equally, if you get consistently poor feedback about someone, follow up with their manager and get to the root of the problem.<sup>196</sup>

In addition to offering exit interviews in person, offer to off-board employees by allowing them to complete the questionnaire online. This allows time for the former employee to reflect and gain more perspective on the situation. If there was conflict and

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<sup>195</sup> HR Acuity. Purpose & Importance of Exit Interviews [10 Reasons to Conduct Them]. Available at: <https://www.hracity.com/blog/importance-of-exit-interviews/>. Accessed 05/20/2024.

<sup>196</sup> Mind Tools. Exit Interviews Getting Feedback from Departing Staff. Available at: <https://www.mindtools.com/a2j4u6g/exit-interviews>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

a lot of heated emotions were involved, waiting gives time for the emotional reactions to cool down.<sup>197</sup>

The interviewer doesn't necessarily have to be an HR professional. A neutral manager or a trusted mentor with good people skills might be the right person for the task. Outsourcing the exit interview to an independent firm may also be a good option in some cases. Because the reasons behind leaving can be sensitive and emotional, it helps if the interviewer is trained in active listening and skilled at being empathetic and nonjudgmental. The information will not be useful if the departing employee doesn't feel safe and comfortable enough to be candid and forthcoming.<sup>198</sup>

It's helpful if HR leaders maintain a consistent schedule for periodically sharing exit interview data and important trends with executives. Quarterly updates work well for many organizations. Time for these updates to be in sync with board meetings or other important dates in decision-making are key. Most importantly, don't let any valuable data go to waste.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> HR Acuity. Exit Interview Data Analysis Strategies & Best Practices. Available at: <https://www.hracuity.com/blog/use-exit-interview-data-strategically/>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

<sup>198</sup> HR Acuity. Exit Interview Data Analysis Strategies & Best Practices. Available at: <https://www.hracuity.com/blog/use-exit-interview-data-strategically/>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.

<sup>199</sup> HR Acuity. Exit Interview Data Analysis Strategies & Best Practices. Available at: <https://www.hracuity.com/blog/use-exit-interview-data-strategically/>. Accessed on 05/20/2024.



## Section 5: Considerations

The following contains a summary and list of considerations based on the findings in this study. Further details can be found in each of the respective sections in this report.

### Operations

- Develop a strategic plan for FECC to include action plans. This document should be updated annually.
- Develop a mission statement to complement its vision and core values statement. It's important to get buy-in from the entire team as this effort will require total team involvement.
- Align FECC written directives with existing PSC industry standards and best practices.
- Involving internal and external stakeholders and ECC staff in the development of the policies, procedures, directives, and workflows is paramount to the success of ECC.
- Work closely with HR to bring all FECC job descriptions up to date.
- Develop a CONOPS plan, including details specific to the operational mandates and duties of the ECC.
- Address issues in the ECC affecting operational effectiveness.
- Conduct an audit of all job duties performed by the PSTs. The goals are to determine the complexity of the job, task overload, and possible consolidation of job duties, and develop action plans for mitigation.
- Update the COOP and disaster recovery plans that clearly outline the role of the PSTs.
- Consider developing an Emergency Operations folder in PowerDMS and house all SOPs relating to critical incidents.
- Consider using criteria-based call guide systems specific to law enforcement and fire operations. Tailor these systems to meet the requirements of law enforcement and fire departments.
- Develop systems and processes for collecting KPI data; this is necessary for tracking trends, staffing, and budgetary purposes.
- Benchmark the QA/QI program with industry standards.

## Training

- Form a training committee to assist in the development and evaluation of FECC training needs.
- Develop written directives outlining the training process for both new hires and veteran PSTs.
- Increase training for CTOs on adult learning to help CTOs learn to adapt to the trainee's learning style rather than forcing trainees to adapt to the varying CTO training styles.
- Establish regular meetings between CTOs and leadership to ensure CTOs are all on the same page and teaching the same way.
- Consider auditing the CTO program. Use the APCO AND 3.101.3-2017 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications Training Officer (CTO) as a benchmark.
- Ensure the revision, implementation, and oversight of FECC training program is accomplished and apply it consistently among all PSTs.

## Staffing

- In the short term, continue to add as many FTEs as the budget will allow and then build up to full staffing as indicated in the RETAINS/Staffing section of this report.
- FECC leadership should consider the RETAINS staffing analysis and prepare future casting of the budgets to increase staffing levels.
- Ensure individuals responsible for FECC administrative oversight are specifically trained in effective practices related to turnover and retention.
- Continue to assess current hiring practices and develop a hiring plan for FECC with workable solutions (e.g., realistic job previews, job-specific pre-employment skills testing, psychological evaluation, and background checks).
- Ensure information about the EAP program is included in FECC written directives and training manual to ensure all employees are aware of this benefit.
- Invest and fully fund professional development training for FECC leadership and PSTs.
- Create a culture of recognition. Look for opportunities to recognize exemplary job performance. This does not have to be expensive. It can be as simple as a pat on the back or a sincere compliment (e.g., a thank you email or card, or a friendly greeting at work).

- Consider succession planning for the internal growth of the individuals dedicated to the success of the ECC. It's obvious that they have pride in FECC, so put long-term planning in to retain them.
- Develop a workload assessment system and update it every three years.
- Consider using alternative and flexible scheduling options to help deal with staffing shortages and mandatory overtime, and to reduce pressure on current fully trained PSTs.
- Collaborate with the PSTs to develop workable solutions for the work shift schedule.
- Develop a process and written directive for introducing change into ECC.

## **Recruitment and Retention**

- Consider creating a section on the FECC website providing details about the position of PST.
- Consider keeping open recruitment for qualified candidates to increase your candidate pool, rather than just a short window of opportunity.
- Consider hiring call takers to assist in the ECC to relieve the pressure on current staff having to perform all tasks.
- Consider streamlining call taker training so new staff can be released to work solo sooner. After staffing has increased, those call takers could then be scheduled to complete the other parts of the training to become full PSTs.
- Consider hiring part-time PSTs. Part-time workers can be used to fill in scheduling gaps and work when full-time staff desire to take time off. Part-time staff can also be scheduled to work during identified peak times to give the working shift extra help during those times.
- Create an internal promotional step-up program to assist those interested in preparing for promotional opportunities by acquiring knowledge and skills before the promotion.

## **Conclusion**

ECCs across the country are struggling with the fact that they cannot continue to do business the way they have always done it. Financial strains, advancements in technology, significant challenges with staffing and retention, changes in the public's perception and expectations, and the need for more interoperability between ECCs are some of the more familiar challenges facing ECCs.

The review team believes that through a collaborative improvement effort, using the information and guidance provided in this report, stakeholders can make informed decisions on what is best for all concerned and move forward accordingly. FECC is at an advantage due to the following:

- FECC veteran staff are currently very experienced and proficient in most areas.
- Flathead County Commissioners, County Administrator, FECC Operations Board, and FECC leadership are committed to the success and continuous improvement of FECC and its personnel.
- Efficiency and effectiveness can be further enhanced by technological tools that are highly available.
- It is clearly understood within the entire organization that more staffing is warranted and in dire need of FECC.

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## Appendix A – List of Abbreviations

ACS	APCO Consulting Service
ADA	Americans with Disability Act
AHJ	Agency/Authority Having Jurisdiction
ALI	Automatic location identification
ANI	Automatic number identification
ANS	American National Standards
ANSI	American National Standards Institute
APCO	Association of Public Safety Communications Officials
CAD	Computer-aided dispatch
CALEA	Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies
CFS	Calls for Service
CONOPS	Concept of operations
COOP	Continuity of operations plan
CPE	Customer premise equipment
CPR	Cardiopulmonary resuscitation
CSRIC	Communications, Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council
CTO	Communications training officer
DOR	Daily observation report
EAP	Emergency Action Plan
ECC	Emergency Communication Center
EMD	Emergency Medical Dispatch
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EPG	Effective Practices Guide
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
FECC	Flathead Emergency Communications Center
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GIS	Geographic information system
HR	Human resources
IP	Internet Protocol
KPI	Key performance indicators
LMR	Land mobile radio
NAWH	Net available work hours
NCIC	National Crime Information Center
NENA	National Emergency Number Association
NFPA	National Fire Protection Association
NG9-1-1	Next Generation 9-1-1
OES	Office of Emergency Services
OJT	On-the-job training
OT	Overtime
PSAP	Public safety answering point
PST	Public safety telecommunicator

PTE	Part-time equivalent
QA/QI	Quality assurance/quality improvement
QAE	Quality assurance evaluators
RETAINS	Responsive Efforts to Assure Integral Needs in Staffing
RFP	Request for proposals
SEG	Standardized Evaluation Guidelines
SOP	Standard operating procedures
TCPR	Telecommunicators Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
TTY	Teletypewriter
TDD	Telecommunications device for the deaf



## Appendix B – APCO Standards

### About APCO Standards

As an accredited ANSI<sup>200</sup> standards development organization, APCO International is dedicated to ensuring that public safety communications have a role in the development of standards that affect the emergency communications industry. Policy and procedure manuals, job descriptions, training manuals and programs, and standard operating guidelines must meet or exceed existing national standards. The following standards may be downloaded at no cost on the [APCO International Standards](#) web page.

#### **1.112.2-2020 Best Practices for the Use of Social Media in Public Safety Communications**

This standard provides a consistent foundation for agencies to develop specific operational procedures and competencies and recognizes the need for each agency to customize specific procedures to its local environment.

#### **1.112.2-2018 Common Incident Disposition Codes for Data Exchange**

Disposition codes are used by PSAPs and public safety to identify the outcome of an event (incident). These codes typically involve the use of numeric, alpha, or alphanumeric characters that are only meaningful to a specific agency or region. This standard provides a list of common disposition codes for use by PSAPs and public safety when sharing incident information with disparate agencies and authorized stakeholders.

#### **1.115.1-2018 Core Competencies, Operational Factors, and Training for Next-Generation Technologies in Public Safety Communications**

This standard identifies the core competencies, operational factors, and minimum training requirements relating to next-generation technologies.

#### **1.102.3-2020 Emergency Communications Center Service Capability Criteria Rating Scale**

This standard is intended to assist ECC managers and their governing authorities in identifying their current level of service capability. An assessment tool is provided to objectively assess the capabilities of the PSAP against models representing different levels of preparedness, survivability, and sustainability amidst a wide range of natural and man-made events. The second version includes the addition of day-to-day operations service capability criteria items and updates to “survivability” items based on lessons learned in the field since the original publication.

#### **1.107.1-2015 Establishment of a Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Program for Public Safety Answering Points**

This standard defines the recommended minimum components of a QA/QI program within a public safety communications center. It recommends effective procedures for implementing the components of the QA/QI program to evaluate the performance of public safety communications personnel.

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<sup>200</sup> ANSI. [www.ansi.org](http://www.ansi.org).

### **1.110.1-2015 Multi-functional, Multi-discipline Computer-Aided Dispatch Minimum Functional Requirements**

The multifunctional, multidiscipline CAD minimum functional requirements standard identifies the minimum functional requirements that a CAD system will include broken down by public safety discipline. Also identified are the optional functional requirements that a CAD system should include.

### **1.116.2-2020 Public Safety Communications Common Status Codes for Data Exchange**

This standard provides a standardized list of status codes that can be used by emergency communications and public safety stakeholders when sharing incident-related information. Creating a common status code does NOT mean that an agency must change the codes they use internally. The intent is to have each agency map its internal codes to the standardized list.

### **1.104.2-2017 Standard Channel Nomenclature for the Public Safety Interoperability Channels**

Provides the standard nomenclature for FCC- and NTIA-designated nationwide interoperability channels used for public safety voice communications.

### **1.118.1-2020 Key Performance Indicators for Public Safety Communications Personnel**

This standard provides ECC management with KPIs as they relate to personnel performance measurements, accuracy, and quality of information logged or provided by ECC personnel. This standard identifies specific areas of personnel performance, which should be measured to benchmark individual effectiveness.

### **1.117.1-2019 Public Safety Communications Center Key Performance Indicators**

This standard provides communications center management with KPIs as they relate to the operational performance of communications centers. Topics may include but are not limited to the number of 9-1-1 calls, time to answer, number of emergency/non-emergency incidents, number of abandoned calls, length of call, wired/wireless/text/TDD/TTY and next generation sessions, trunk group, number of calls transferred, police/fire/EMS calls handled, customer satisfaction and frequency of review.

### **1.113.2-2024 Public Safety Communications Incident Handling Process**

This standard defines the recommended minimum steps and decision-making processes for the handling of public safety requests for service (referred to as “incidents”). It defines the process for handling an incident by the PSAP from the initial report through the disposition of the incident. The initial report may come from various sources but starts with the delivery mechanism and continues with the triage of the request for service, the documentation and dissemination of information, and the point of closure for the incident.

### **1.114.1-2017 Best Practices for ECCs When Processing Vehicle Telematics Calls From Telematic Service Providers**

Telematics data provides an opportunity for public safety agencies to dispatch more efficiently based on crash notification elements and specific crash data. Law enforcement agencies, working in correlation with telematics call centers, can work together to assist in the location of missing people, recovery of stolen vehicles, and vehicle slowdown to stop vehicles involved in criminal activity. In emergencies, effective communication between the telematics call center and the local PSAP is critical.

#### **1.101.4-2022 Responding to Calls of Missing, Abducted and Sexually Exploited Children**

This standard presents the missing, abducted, and/or sexually exploited child response process for public safety telecommunicators, including the process from first response through ongoing incident and case support.

#### **1.104.2-2017 Standard for Channel Nomenclature for the Public Safety Interoperability Channels**

This describes standard nomenclature for FCC- and NTIA-designated nationwide interoperability channels used for public safety voice communications. The public safety community uses spectrum allocated by the FCC and NTIA in multiple bands that are replete with interoperability channels. It is necessary to develop and employ a common set of channel names so that all responders to an incident know which channel to tune their radios to as well as the band and primary use for the channel.

#### **1.105.2-2015 Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce Deployment**

This standard includes information to provide guidance and helpful material regarding the development, maintenance, and deployment of a telecommunicator emergency response task force.

#### **1.108.1-2018 Minimum Operational Standards for the Use of TTY/TDD or Similar Device in the Public Safety Communications Center**

ADA regulation requires 9-1-1 and other telephone emergency service providers to provide TTY/TDD users with direct access and an opportunity to benefit from emergency services that are equal to the opportunity afforded to others. Many of the citizens who are protected by the ADA communicate via texting and expect to do the same with a public safety communications center or PSAP. This standard encourages public safety communications centers or PSAPS to develop methods that accept these text messages to maintain citizens' expectations.

#### **1.103.2-2022 Wireless 9-1-1 Deployment and Management Effective Practices Guide**

This guide provides effective practices to increase a PSAP manager's understanding of the technology application and the ability to better manage wireless calls as well as public and responder expectations.

#### **2.101.3-2021 Alarm Monitoring Company to Emergency Communications Center (ECC) Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) Automated Secure Alarm Protocol (ASAP)**

This standard provides detailed technical data to software providers who support CAD systems or alarm monitoring applications concerning the common data elements and structure that will be used when electronically transmitting a new alarm event from an alarm monitoring company to a PSAP.

#### **2.103.2-2019 Common Incident Types for Data Exchange**

This standard defines and outlines common public safety communications incident types for data exchange.

#### **2.105.1-2017 NG9-1-1 Emergency Incident Data Document**

This standard provides the format for sharing emergency incident information.

#### **2.106.1-2019 Public Safety Grade Site Hardening Requirements**

This standard addresses the requirements for public safety–grade site hardening of wireless communications sites and facilities. The establishment of a standard is intended to assist public safety communications wireless network builders in constructing hardened public safety wireless networks and systems.

### **3.103.2-2015 Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators**

The standard identifies minimum training requirements for public safety call takers, fire service dispatchers, law enforcement dispatchers, and EMS dispatchers. It is one of many public safety communications training standards developed because of APCO’s Project 33 initiated in 1995.

### **3.108.2-2018 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications Instructor**

This standard defines the minimum training standards for PSAP instructors.

### **3.106.2-2017 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications Quality Assurance Evaluators**

This standard defines the minimum training standards for PSAP QAE evaluators.

### **3.109.3-2022 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications Manager/Director**

This standard outlines the core competencies that define the basic functions, duties, responsibilities, knowledge, abilities, and expertise attributable to individuals who manage public safety communication functions.

### **3.102.2-2017 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications Supervisor**

This standard identifies the core competencies and minimum training requirements for public safety communications supervisors. This position is typically tasked with managing daily operations, performing administrative duties, and maintaining employee relations. This position provides leadership and guidance to employees to achieve the agency’s mission while providing service to the public and emergency responders.

### **3.107.2-2022 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Requirements for Public Safety Communications Technician**

This standard defines the minimum training standards for PSAP communications technicians.

### **3.104.2-2017 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications Training Coordinator**

This standard identifies the core competencies and minimum training requirements for public safety communications training coordinators. This position is typically tasked with the planning, development, coordination, implementation, and administration of training within a public safety communication center. This document seeks to define the knowledge, skills, and duties of the individual responsible for the training program as well as the agency’s responsibilities for providing training to individuals in this critical function.

### **3.101.3-2017 Core Competencies and Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Communications Training Officer**

The focus of the minimum training standards for the public safety communications training officer (CTO) is to provide the training necessary to foster levels of consistency for training officers providing OJT to active PSTs as well as promote the leadership role of the CTO in a public safety communications center.

### **3.105.1-2015 Minimum Training Standard for TTY/TDD Use in the Public Safety Communications Center**

This standard addresses the minimum training requirements, in general, necessary to foster levels of consistency for all personnel in an emergency communications environment assigned to answering TTY/TDD calls for service specifically in the public safety environment. This standard responds to the valid needs of the rapidly expanding and ever-changing industry, providing competent training standards while defining training in certain knowledge, skills, and abilities and recognizing the need to supplement basic competencies with agency-specific information and existing equipment-use parameters.

### **APCO Sample RFP Template for NG9-1-1 Capabilities**

APCO has prepared this sample RFP template for NG9-1-1 capabilities to assist 9-1-1 directors and authorities with their procurement activities. This document is intended to address several concerns APCO has identified with the state of progress toward NG9-1-1. Additionally, the document is intended to be used as a guide for agencies, not as a cut-and-paste document.

### **Cybersecurity Training for Public Safety Communications Personnel**

This cybersecurity training standard addresses training for ECC staff, including PSTs, supervisors, ECC management, and ECC administration. It also addresses training for personnel who are not in professional technical positions but who are privileged users with administrative privileges, allowing them to handle some technical tasks such as application installation, operating system updates, application administration, database management, or system administration.

### **NFPA Standards**

NFPA published Standard 1061 on professional qualifications for public safety telecommunicators. This standard was prepared by the Technical Committee on Public Safety Telecommunicator Professional Qualifications and released by the Technical Correlating Committee on Professional Qualifications. The standard identifies the minimum job performance requirements for public safety telecommunicators. NFPA Standard 1221<sup>201</sup> addresses the capabilities of personnel assigned to communications centers, systems interoperability, and requirements of building location and construction.

### **NENA Standards<sup>202</sup>**

NENA is an accredited standards development organization just like APCO and NFPA. NENA has published numerous public safety communications standards and best practices.

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<sup>201</sup> NFPA. <https://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/all-codes-and-standards/list-of-codes-and-standards/detail?code=1221>.

<sup>202</sup> NENA. <https://www.nena.org/>.

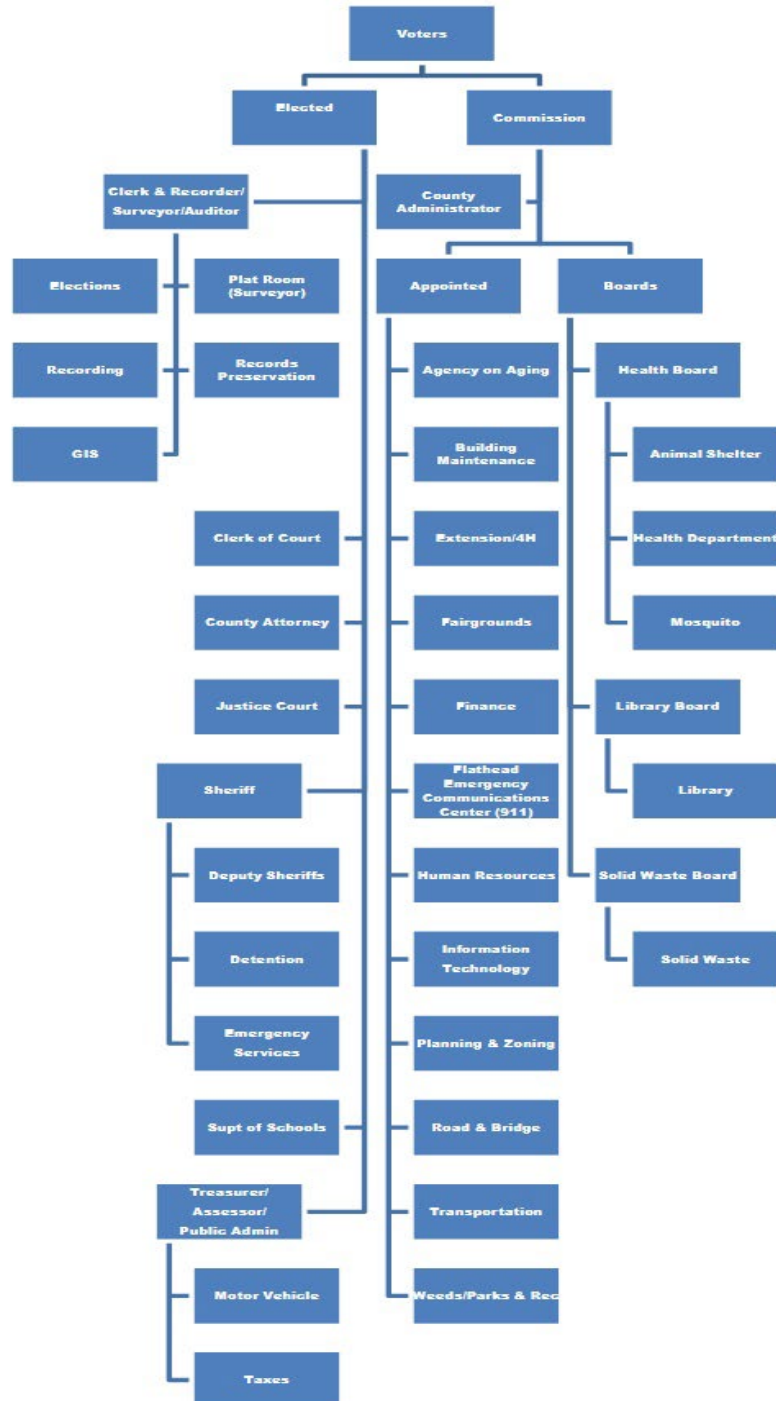
## Appendix C – Supportive Documents

1. Flathead County, Montana, Organizational Chart
2. Creating an Effective Department Mission Statement
3. Examples – ECC Mission Statements
4. Establishing a Successful Mentoring Program
5. Tips for Successful Performance Improvement Plans (PIP)
6. FECC Communications Coordination Service Map
7. Effective Practices Related to Job Complexity
8. Ancillary Duties Template
9. FECC – Call Processing/Incident Handling Workflow
10. Key Performance Indicators – Call Taking
11. Key Performance Indicators – Dispatch
12. Training Manual Frameworks Comparison
13. Mandatory Training Requirements for PSTs in the State of Virginia
14. Model Lesson Plan
15. Strategic Plan Framework Example
16. Effective Practices: Shift Management
17. Effective Practices: Creating Good Working Conditions
18. Effective Practices: Keeping the ECC Fully Staffed
19. Flexible Work Shift Scheduling Examples
20. Change Management Models/Frameworks
21. SWOT Analysis

# FLATHEAD COUNTY, MONTANA, ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

FECC is a standalone department organized within the Flathead County, Montana, organizational structure. Within the structure, the 9-1-1 Center Director reports to the Flathead County Administrator.

## ORGANIZATION CHART



Source: Flathead County Montana – Annual Financial Report FY End 2023



## How To Create an Effective Department Mission Statement

- **A mission statement**

- Names your department and articulates its purpose.
- Defines your department’s functions.
- Describes the population your department targets.

### Simple Template

The mission of **(your department)** is to **(your purpose)** by providing **(your department’s functions)** to **(your stakeholders)**.

### Example

“The mission of BCC’s Assessment Team is to facilitate the development and assessment of learning outcomes and departmental objectives in academic and non-academic departments at Bronx Community College by providing encouragement, instruction, and assistance to faculty, staff and administrators.”

### Department Mission Statement Rubric

Exemplary	Acceptable	Developing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear and concise statement</li> <li>• Specific to the department (identify what it does that separates it from other departments)</li> <li>• Clearly identifies function of department</li> <li>• Identifies population the department serves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement of department’s purpose</li> <li>• Function of department stated</li> <li>• Population served identified</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General statement of the department’s purpose</li> <li>• Function of the department needs clarity</li> <li>• Does not clearly identify population served</li> </ul>

*Source: Indiana University & Various Sources; Rev: 01/09/2024*

## Examples – ECC Mission Statements

### **Penobscot Regional Communication Center – Maine**

The Penobscot Regional Communication Center serves as an enhances 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) and Dispatch Center providing a critical communications link between the Emergency Services personnel (Police, Fire, and Ambulance) and the citizens of Penobscot County. We will carry out our mission providing the highest level of customer service possible, utilizing the care values of Integrity, Compassion, Professionalism and Team Spirit.

### **Southeastern Massachusetts Regional 9-1-1 District**

As Team Members of the Southeastern Massachusetts Regional District, we are committed to providing prompt, accurate, coordinated and reliable Next Generation-9-1-1 and emergency services for all of those that we serve. Such service shall be provided in a courteous, responsive, and professional manner and be recognized as a trusted provider of emergency communications. To act with integrity and professionalism; maintaining an environment responsive to the needs of the agencies, organizations, and community that we serve and capitalize on new and advancing technology and innovations to further our mission and strengthen our partnership with all we serve.

### **Fountain Warren Regional Dispatch Center – Indiana**

Dispatchers are the first true responders; we are the first voice you will hear when you have an emergency. Our mission is to provide the vital link between our public safety agencies and our citizens we protect and serve. We strive to ensure the preservation of life and property by treating all of those who use our services with professionalism, courtesy and compassion and by relaying accurate information in a timely and efficient manner.

### **Santa Fe Regional Emergency Communications Center – New Mexico**

As Team Members of the Santa Fe Regional Emergency Communications Center, we are committed to providing prompt, accurate, coordinated and reliable E-9-1-1 and emergency dispatch service for all of those that we serve. Such service shall be provided in a courteous, responsive and professional manner and be recognized as a trusted provider of emergency communications. To act with integrity and professionalism; maintaining an environment responsive to the needs of the agencies, organizations, and community that we serve and capitalize on new and advancing technology and innovations to further our mission and strengthen our partnership with all we serve.

## Establishing a Successful Mentoring Program

An organization that invests in its people will reap the benefits, as confident, successful people will significantly contribute to the organization. A cohesive strategy for success with organizational mentorship has several basic steps that a leader can implement from all levels of command:

1. ***Actively engage with potential leaders.***

Being a leader in an organization is an honor and one that is often taken for granted. Engagement with potential leaders provides an opportunity to “know your people,” which can assist current leaders in cultivating the future of an organization or agency.

Engagement also allows a leader to enhance their perspective and understand employees’ interpretation of procedures, equipment, and policies. This can be very beneficial when establishing policies and procedures and determining purchases for items such as technology. The future leaders will take note, and it helps to break the barrier of the “us versus them” mentality.

2. ***Treat leadership as a tangible skill.***

Leaders should invest in growing their own leadership abilities and training and instill a culture that appreciates the solid leadership the agency desires. Investing in leaders’ skill packages will enhance their ability to carry out tasks more effectively, making the agency better as a whole. Impart a philosophy that everyone must continue to learn and better themselves.

3. ***Identify and clarify the most desired attributes to becoming a leader.***

Without objectives, a goal cannot be attained. Making clear the type of leader an agency desires will produce more leaders. Encouraging the actions and decisions that reflect what the community and agency’s desires are will pay dividends in emboldening future talent to rise to the challenge of joining the leadership team.

4. ***Provide training opportunities and confidence-building scenarios.***

Training is designed to build the confidence of a leader and future leaders is more important than identifying what was less than perfect. Always look for ways to build the confidence of the team.

5. ***Establish relationships and networks for employees.***

Most developing leaders are not in tune with professional organizations. There is an assumption that these organizations are only for police executives. On the contrary, organizations like the IACP, APCO, NENA, NFPA provide a vast number of resources that all levels of ECC personnel stand to benefit from.

Encouraging your employees in leadership to join local, state, national, international public safety communications organizations can be very beneficial to their networking and ability to access information to assist on agency projects. Networking also provides contacts that could be beneficial as an employee moves through the ranks within the ECC.

6. ***Enhance the visibility of role models.***

“If they can see it, they can achieve it,” In one study, 88 percent of women surveyed said they are encouraged by seeing other women in leadership roles and, therefore, believe they can achieve such a position.<sup>203</sup> Agency representation at all levels should comprise qualified individuals that reflect the desired future of the agency.

The nexus to leadership is obvious, but even in training units, communications training officer (CTO) programs and other opportunities that showcase employee potential should be

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<sup>203</sup> MPMG Women’s Leadership Study. Moving Women Forward into Leadership Roles. Available at <https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/ph/pdf/ThoughtLeadershipPublications/KPMGWomensLeadershipStudy.pdf>. Accessed on 05/18/2024.

capitalized on. As an executive, if the agency is not as diverse as desired, seeking out programs designed to recruit people with specific skills, who speak specific languages, or come from specific backgrounds can be beneficial. Many times, these programs are tied to funding opportunities, as many agencies are suffering from the same recruitment pitfalls.

7. ***Chart the path to leadership.***

Employees should know what is expected at each level and what is needed for those wanting to enter a specialty or leadership role. Career pathing and creating a roadmap of the type of employee that would make the best fit are imperative. If the career path is followed, the employee being selected for a specialty unit or leadership role would reach their new role with a solid foundation of training, knowledge, and experience to build from, benefiting the agency as a whole.

Each element of an agency's promotional process should coincide with the type of leader they desire in the rank or position. Assessments should be built on the philosophy and culture the agency is trying to achieve. An example would be, if mental health is a tenet of the future agency culture, require promotional candidates to read a book on emotional survival concepts or resiliency and test them on it.

8. ***Combine reward systems.***

Formal and informal recognition, as well as informal perks, can encourage employees to seek their potential. In addition, agencies whose employees believe their work is valued are more likely to retain their employees.

Source: Lynette Falzone, "[The Power of Mentorship](#)," *Police Chief Online*, December 20, 2023. Some sections were edited for relevance to *Public Safety Communications*.

## Tips for Successful Performance Improvement Plans (PIP)

Determine if the PIP is appropriate.

Have a discussion with the employee.

Create an action plan.

Create achievable goals.

Identify the resources and support the agency will provide.

Monitor employee progress.

Clarify the consequences of different outcomes and celebrate successes.

Communicate with the employee along the way.

Review the outcome.

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### PIP Resources:

SHRM – [How to Establish a Performance Improvement Plan \(PIP\)](#)

ASANA – [How to use Performance Improvement Plans \(PIPs\)](#)

Forbes Advisor – [How to Create a Performance Improvement Plan \(PIP\)](#)

Betterworks – [Performance Improvement Plans: Why They Don't Work and What They Do Instead](#)

Workhuman – [Performance Improvement Plans \(PIPs\): What Are They and How to Ensure You Don't Need to Use Them](#)

Keller – [Why Leadership Fails](#)

# FECC Communication Coordination Services Map



## Effective Practices Related to Job Complexity

- **Manage job complexity.**

Keep the number and variety of tasks that are a regular part of a job manageable. Redistribute tasks if some consoles have heavier workloads than others. There may be inevitable differences from one console to another, but there is no excuse for a “killer” console.

- **Arrange the work area for efficient performance.**

Seems obvious, but it is easy to add new equipment without reviewing all aspects of the workstation.

Ask employees for ideas about how to reduce complexity and make the work area more efficient. Set up a “Function Study Team” to review this aspect of the work on a regular basis.

- **Review work assignments annually.**

Make sure the work is distributed fairly, and the gradual addition of tasks to the core set of responsibilities hasn’t made the job more complex than it needs to be.

- **Rotate tough assignments.**

Consider rotating the toughest assignments from day to day or even from the first half of a shift to the second half, so that the most challenging work is shared, and nobody must bear the full brunt of it for a full week or a full shift.

- **Keep the workload manageable.**

Monitor agent occupancy levels and use of overtime. If there are particularly tough consoles, work with employees to redesign the way the work gets accomplished.

- **Provide ongoing training.**

Always provide support and training when employees are asked to take on additional tasks or when there is a change in equipment or procedures.

- **Learn from other managers.**

Ask other managers about strategies they have used and found successful in easing the transition from old to new software, from independent to consolidated center operations, etc.

- **Develop a standard process.**

If your center serves multiple agencies, each with a different set of workflows for routine tasks, develop a standardized process to minimize the potential for errors.

- **Analyze costs and benefits of new equipment.**

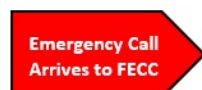
When purchasing new equipment or software, consider what will be gained as well as what will be lost.



## Ancillary Duty Assessment Template

Ancillary Duty to Discontinue	Consideration	Agreed Upon Action	Due Date
<p>Answering non-emergency administrative calls during and after regular business hours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This task should be managed by each partnering agency and should not be transitioned to FECC.</li> <li>• A technological solution such as an auto attendant that provides instructions to callers about who/when to contact and also states if this is an emergency to call 9-1-1.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	
<p>Serving as the main switchboard for partner agency administration phone calls.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This task should be managed by each partnering agency.</li> <li>• A technological solution such as an auto attendant that directs the caller to the person they want to speak with when that person is not on duty or unavailable. Such calls should not be directed to FECC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	
<p>After-hours Public Works call handling.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This should only be transitioned to FECC as a value-add fee for service outside of primary mission-critical service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	
<p>PSTs are used by LEOs for calling the jail.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the situation isn't routine or there is an officer safety factor involved, then FECC PST should be the one calling.</li> <li>• At times, most of these situations are routine and is a task best managed by each partner agency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	

## Flathead Emergency Communications Center (FECC) Call Processing/Incident Handling Workflow



C-1	C-2	C-3	C-4	C-5	C-6	C-7	C-8
<b>Call Delivery Method</b>	<b>Call Answer Phase</b>	<b>Call Interrogation</b>	<b>Call Answer to Incident Entry</b>	<b>Incident Entry to Call Dispatch</b>	<b>Post Dispatch Phase</b>	<b>Call Complete</b>	<b>Process Complete</b>
Wireline	9-1-1 Calls answered 10 seconds or less	Refer to 9-1-1 system display for subscriber information	Document All Information into CAD	Dispatch Phase - Dispatch Applicable Units	Update Responders as Needed	Disposition Code Given	
Wireless	Greet Caller	Determine Jurisdiction	Remember the Priority	Radio Broadcasting Techniques Exercised	Update CAD as Needed	Units Clear the Scene	
SMS/Text-to- 9-1-1	Determine Location / Address	Call Transfer		Update CAD as Needed		CAD Call Updated and CAD Call is Closed	
10/20 Digit Emergency Number	Determine Name and Call Back Number	Ask Clarifying Questions		Update Responders as Needed			
Long Distance Calls	Determine Nature / Incident Type	Use Applicable Criteria- Based System (EMD)					
Telematics	Determine Safety of Caller	Determine Priority					
Direct Dial	Confirm Name						
Tip Line	Take Control of the Call						
	Show interest / Explain Waits						
	Do Not Disconnect From Caller If No Immediate Response						
	Listen						

FECC: Supporting Documents (Call Processing/Incident Handling Process)		
Eff. Date	Title	Last Update
2017	Call Taking Operations	--
2017	Automated Call Distribution	01/05/2024
2017	Language Line	--
2017	CAD Operations	--
2013	CAD Messaging	12/12/2023
2017	EMD	01/22/2024
2017	Law Dispatch	--
2017	Fire/EMS Dispatch	--
2017	Ambulances	01/05/2024
2017	Canceling EMS	01/17/2024
2017	Field Personnel Safety	--
2017	Quality Assurance	--

*\*\* May not be a complete listing of FECC supporting documents for call processing/incident handling.*

## Key Performance Indicators – Call Taking

This is an excerpt taken from the APCO 1.117.1-2019 Public Safety Communications Center Key Performance Indicators standard. The following mission-critical KPIs relate to call answering and call processing of voice- and non-voice calls to and from the ECC. ECCs shall measure the following:

- **Mission Critical**

- Percentage of 9-1-1 calls answered within x number of seconds
- Percentage of non-9-1-1 or non-emergency calls answered within x number of seconds
- Percentage of CAD entries, or calls for service, entered within x number of seconds from call-answer-time to available-for-dispatch time

- **Conditional**

- Percentage of 9-1-1 calls answered within x number of seconds by call source (such as voice or text)
- Percentage of 9-1-1 calls answered within x number of seconds during the busiest hour of the day
- Percentage of alarm calls answered within x number of seconds
- Average talk time duration
- Ring time durations by call source
- Percentage of high-priority calls for service (CAD entries) entered within x number of seconds from call-answer-time to available-for-dispatch time
- Percentage of total calls by event type
- Percentage of total calls by call source
- Percentage of 9-1-1 calls transferred to an outside agency (may require outgoing call data)
- Percentage of abandoned 9-1-1 calls
- Percentage of abandoned calls with follow-up contact (requires outgoing call data)
- Percentage of calls resulting in a CAD calls for service
- Percentage of time PSTs were performing call related activities (e.g., call processing, after-call work, hold, etc.) out of the total time they were available

- **Data Requirements**

- All incoming calls, voice, and non-voice
- Call taker ID
- Call source
- Event priority
- Event type
- Timestamps demarcating (e.g., ring-time, answer time, hang up time, calls for service creation time, and call transfer time)
- All other conditional data required for ECC KPIs

## Key Performance Indicators – Dispatching

Excerpt taken from the APCO 1.117.1-2019 Public Safety Communications Center Key Performance Indicators standard. The following mission-critical KPIs focus on radio-related performance, from the point a call is available for dispatch, through close of the call, including field-initiated events. ECCs shall measure the following:

- **Mission Critical**

- Percentage of calls dispatched within x number of seconds
- Percentage of calls in which dispatcher responded to emergency (emergency alerts, mayday) activation within x seconds

- **Conditional**

- Percentage of high-priority calls dispatched within x number of seconds
- Dispatch times by call type during busy seasons
- Percentage of calls in which response plan was over-ridden
- Percentage of accurate status changes
- Percentage of time dispatcher airs life or scene safety information (such as weapons, CPR in progress, hazmat on the scene) when it is available
- Average time between entry of life or scene safety information to transmission to the field.
- Percentage of transmissions answered within x number of seconds
- Percentage of status checks completed within x seconds of designated time
- Percentage of calls with stop traffic requests completed within x seconds
- Percentage of calls closed with correct disposition coding or case number
- Incidents generated by field units versus other sources
- Number of on-air units per dispatch position sorted by discipline
- Call pending time by priority

- **Data Requirements**

- Number of status checks recommended by CAD timers
- Number of officer emergency alerts, mayday activations
- Number of CAD calls with all statuses included
- Number of traffic stop calls
- CAD Information for service for the period
- Number of Unit ID logs
- Recordings pertinent to the KPI metrics.
- Radio System Activity logs
- Calls for Service
- Calls Resulting in a Dispatch
- Calls for Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- Call Answer Times
- Call Transfers
- Call Surge

## Training Manual Frameworks Comparison

This appendix contains a comparative analysis of training program frameworks from two leading PSC industry standards development bodies. FECC does not currently have an organized training manual; however, when developing one, FECC can use this table to help develop a strong, organized manual. This sheet offers a simple comparison and may offer some guidance to FECC leadership when developing the training program manual.

Chapter	FECC Training Program Manual	APCO Training Program Certification <sup>204</sup>	NFPA 1225 <sup>205</sup>
<b>1</b>		Definitions	Administration
<b>2</b>		Agency Responsibilities	Referenced Publications
<b>3</b>		Organizational Integrity	Definitions
<b>4</b>		General Knowledge and Skills	Public Safety Telecommunicator I
<b>5</b>		Tools, Equipment and Technology	Public Safety Telecommunicator II
<b>6</b>		Professional Competence	Incident/Tactical Dispatcher
<b>7</b>		Public Safety Call Taker	Public Safety Communications Training Officer (CTO)
<b>8</b>		Law Enforcement Dispatcher	Public Safety Communications Supervisor
<b>9</b>		Fire Service Dispatcher	Public Safety Quality Assurance/Improvement Personnel
<b>10</b>		Emergency Medical Services Dispatcher	Public Safety Communications Training Coordinator
<b>11</b>			Public Safety Communications Center Manager/Director
<b>12</b>			
<b>13</b>			

<sup>204</sup> APCO P33 Training Program Certification (2010) requires agencies to meet or exceed the APCO ANS 3.103.1-2010 Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators. <https://www.apcointl.org/services/agency-training-program-certification/>

<sup>205</sup> NFPA 1225 is Standard for Public Safety Telecommunications Personnel Professional Qualifications (2022). <https://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/nfpa-1225-standard-development/1225>

## Example of Mandatory Training Requirements for PSTs

Type	Minimum Required Training
<b>Basic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the development, evolution, and role of today’s dispatcher.</li> <li>• Identify utilization of equipment and various components.</li> <li>• Demonstrate dispatcher communication and interpersonal skills.</li> <li>• Informing colleagues and supervisors.</li> <li>• Identify applicable laws, definitions and background information related to terrorism.</li> <li>• Identify the federal laws and regulations established for dispatch operations and explain the relationship of the law to dispatch operations.</li> <li>• Prepare for and testify for a deposition and courtroom testimony.</li> <li>• Identify and determine the validity of legal documents.</li> <li>• Identify factors relevant to dispatcher and emergency communications agencies liability civil/criminal.</li> <li>• Maintain a professional appearance and demeanor.</li> <li>• Identifying ethical principles and standards.</li> <li>• Acquire cultural diversity awareness.</li> <li>• Identify techniques to prevent and manage stress.</li> </ul>
<b>Call Taker</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to use and manage a phone system.</li> <li>• Demonstrate dispatcher telephone techniques, call control, and information dissemination.</li> <li>• Demonstrate and identify how to manage specialized calls.</li> <li>• Describe the call type using the classification process- Emergency, Non-emergency, and Routine.</li> <li>• Identify calls for services related to disaster(s) or potential disaster(s) and various rescue operations.</li> <li>• Provide caller instructions prior to law enforcement arrival and identify responder safety issues.</li> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to use and manage Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD).</li> <li>• Use VCIN/NCIC or other manuals for assistance.</li> </ul>
<b>Dispatcher</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Radio communication techniques.</li> <li>• Radio technology/equipment.</li> <li>• Radio discipline.</li> <li>• Identify the appropriate techniques for dispatching law enforcement officers during time/life critical incidents.</li> <li>• Multi-functional dexterity in the context of dispatching- simultaneously obtaining, processing, and deciphering, relaying, and documenting information.</li> <li>• Identify category assignment and dispatch prioritization.</li> <li>• Federal Communications Commission.</li> <li>• Specific PSAP directives.</li> <li>• Job-related equipment training.</li> <li>• Workstation observation.</li> <li>• OJT with DORs.</li> </ul>

## Model Lesson Plan

Author			
Name	{First name} {Last name}	Date	mm/dd/yyyy
Lesson Plan Approval	{First name} {Last name}	Date	mm/dd/yyyy
Review/Revision history	{mm/dd/yyyy},{mm/dd/yyyy},{mm/dd/yyyy},		
Unit Overview			
Lesson Plan Title	{Title}	Approximate time needed	{# of hours}
Key Lesson Points/Objectives		Lesson Description	

Resources Needed	Source of Information

Evaluation Methods

Conducting the Activity



## Strategic Plan Framework Example

**Vision** – Provides a statement developed by the governing body that serves as a clear guide for choosing current and future courses of action.

**Mission** – Provides a description of why the governance structure exists and elaborates on how the board plans to achieve the vision.

**Objectives** – Identifies the result the board aims to achieve.

**Strategy** – Outlines the long-term plan to objectives and actionable steps.

**Approach** – Specifies an approach for executing the strategy.

**Tactics** – The initiatives, projects, and programs developed that are the key to execution. They are the actions the board will take to get things done.

**Updates** – Strategic plan updates, which should be regularly scheduled (at a minimum annually).

<b>Effective Practices: Shift Management</b>	
<b>Offer as much flexibility as possible.</b>	Providing an established system for swapping times when there is a special occasion is important, even though it can be time-consuming to keep track of all the activity in a large center. It is better to provide a system that legitimizes exchanges rather than one that ignores the need and constantly adjusts the schedule for unplanned or unscheduled sick leave. Offering legitimate processes for getting time off minimizes surprise absenteeism and makes it easier for managers and employees to plan.
<b>Consider alternative shift lengths.</b>	If workable for the ECC, explore the feasibility of offering different shift lengths, such as a combination of 8-hour and 10-hour shifts. In at least one center, the decision to offer a choice of different shift lengths resulted in employees using fewer sick days and reducing overtime.
<b>Review your shift structure and change it if it is not working for people.</b>	If the existing shift-assignment process is not working at your center, investigate other options and try something different. Explore the trade-offs involved in using a shift length other than the one currently used or consider using a combination of shift lengths. Be sure to involve employees early in the process if you are considering changes to the existing schedule or shift-selection process.
<b>Do a formal survey of employee satisfaction.</b>	Conduct the survey with the shift-selection and scheduling processes. Ask about the strengths and weaknesses of the existing processes. Make sure you hear from everyone and not just the most vocal employees.
<b>Involve employees in the decision.</b>	Do this before making changes in the shift-selection process. Explore all the trade-offs involved in using a shift length other than the one you are using.
<b>Conduct a pilot study.</b>	This should be done before full implementation, especially if significant changes are being considered.
<b>Recognize and reward seniority.</b>	The method used to determine shift assignments makes a difference. Our research found that if shifts were assigned by a supervisor, employees were less satisfied than when shift assignments involved bidding by seniority.
<b>Think win-win.</b>	The most important message about effective practices related to shift management is to use a schedule that fits the needs of the center and employees.

*Source: APCO Project RETAINS*

## Effective Practices: Creating Good Working Conditions

- **Build a positive relationship between communications center employees and field personnel.**

Clear communication and trust are easier to gain if people know each other and trust the training that has been provided at both ends of the communication exchange.

A proactive approach is especially important to build trusting relationships. Don't let tensions build if there has been an incident related to miscommunication at either end. Treat employees well so they will be positive ambassadors if they move into sworn or other positions of influence within the city, county, or state.

- **Do not condone verbal abuse of call takers or dispatchers.**

If there are problems with verbal abuse, intervene early and get them resolved. Intervene directly or use the chain of command; make sure employees know they are accountable, but they also need to feel supported.

- **Build team spirit.**

To function effectively a team needs a clear structure and a clear elevating goal that is understood and shared by everyone on the team. The structure of the team should be obvious, aligned with the expected result, and use resources strategically.

- **Provide training in interpersonal communication skills and conflict resolution.**

The communication skills needed to work effectively with colleagues may be different than those needed to handle callers. Training in conflict management contributes to proficient handling of calls but it can also improve relationships among employees.

- **Provide professional help and support.**

Provide highly qualified professional help for employees who may be struggling with personal or professional issues. Make sure confidentiality is respected and work to reduce any stigma associated with obtaining help when it is needed.

- **Structure the physical environment to support effective performance.**

A comfortable (personal) chair and headphones, reasonable control over temperature and lighting, noise control, clean restrooms, a pleasant place for breaks away from the console, and provisions for employee safety contribute to employee morale and performance. Remember that the chairs wear out, and replacements costs should be built into the budget.

- **Schedule breaks.**

Provide for scheduled break time away from the console so employees can leave the workstation for breaks and/or meals

*Source: APCO Project RETAINS*

## Effective Practices: Keeping the ECC Fully Staffed

Recommendation	RETAINS Research Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Calculate your staffing needs.</b></li> <li>• <b>Know your numbers.</b></li> <li>• <b>Do your homework.</b></li> <li>• <b>Don't do it alone.</b></li> <li>• <b>Request the authority to hire an appropriate number of employees.</b></li> <li>• <b>Monitor the adequacy of authorized staffing levels.</b></li> <li>• <b>Make recruiting a priority.</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff to authorized levels.</b></li> <li>• <b>Keep the center fully staffed.</b></li> <li>• <b>Hire so employees can comfortably handle the workload.</b></li> <li>• <b>Keep the staff you have.</b></li> <li>• <b>Hire to accommodate predictable turnover.</b></li> <li>• <b>Consistently staff necessary positions</b></li> </ul>	<p>Characteristics of fully staffed centers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher retention rates (No. 1 predictor of center retention rate).</li> <li>• More employees who are satisfied.</li> <li>• Employees worked fewer OT hours.</li> <li>• Smaller in size (e.g., fewer employees).</li> <li>• Employees who handled fewer calls per year had a higher percentage of staff that was fully trained and working independently.</li> </ul> <p>Characteristics of centers where current staffing allowed them to comfortably handle the workload:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher retention rates.</li> <li>• More employees who are satisfied.</li> <li>• Employees worked fewer OT hours.</li> </ul> <p>Characteristics of chronically understaffed centers and centers that had a serious staffing problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower retention rates.</li> <li>• More employees were dissatisfied.</li> <li>• Employees worked more OT hours.</li> <li>• Employees handled more calls per year.</li> </ul> <p>Employees who gave high-performance ratings to their center's ability to consistently staff necessary positions were more satisfied and were from centers with higher retention rates.</p>

*Source: APCO Project RETAINS*

## Flexible Work Shift Scheduling Examples

The flexible work shift schedule examples provided are simple representations designed to stimulate thought and generate ideas. Before beginning to create a work schedule, always begin with the coverage requirements established by the agency (i.e., the minimum number of PSTs needed at different times of the day, each day of the week). Also, having a firm understanding of what your call volume looks like is detrimental to the scheduling effort. In the ECC, call loads aren't always evenly distributed, so you'll want to staff for peak hours of the day. Below are a couple examples of flexible work scheduling options that contain a combination of fixed and flexible work shift.<sup>206</sup>

An example of a 12-hour shift schedule with flexible 8-hour shifts added is shown below:

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Hours
Team 1	D12	D12			D12	D12	D12	60
	A8	A8	A8	A8	A8			40
			A8	A8	A8	A8	A8	40
	N12	N12			N12	N12	N12	60
Team 2			D12	D12				24
		A8	A8	A8	A8	A8		40
	A8	A8	A8	A8			A8	40
			N12	N12				24

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Hours
Team 3			D12	D12				24
	A8	A8			A8	A8	A8	40
	A8	A8	A8	A8	A8			40
			N12	N12				24
Team 4	D12	D12			D12	D12	D12	60
		A8	A8	A8	A8	A8		40
	A8	A8	A8	A8			A8	40
	N12	N12			N12	N12	N12	60

In this example, 8-hour shifts are added. For the scheduler, the 8-hour shifts can be used to provide support to those days and times when peak hours occur. In addition, offering a flexible scheduling option to PSTs may be beneficial to those not liking the 12-hour shift.

<sup>206</sup> D=Day shift, A=Afternoon shift, and N=Night shift. The number after the letter is the shift hour. The Hours column represents total hours worked for the week by one FTE. The Team column represents the number of teams in the work schedule. FTEs would be added to a team ensuring minimum staffing requirements are met.

An example of a 12-hour shift schedule with flexible 10-hour shifts added is shown below:

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Hours
Team 1	D12	D12			D12	D12	D12	60
		A10	A10	A10	A10			40
				A10	A10	A10	A10	40
	N12	N12			N12	N12	N12	60
Team 2			D12	D12				24
	A10				A10	A10	A10	40
	A10	A10	A10	A10				40
			N12	N12				24

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Hours
Team 3			D12	D12				24
	A10	A10				A10	A10	40
			A10	A10	A10	A10		40
			N12	N12				24
Team 4	D12	D12			D12	D12	D12	60
	A10	A10	A10	A10				40
				A10	A10	A10	A10	40
	N12	N12			N12	N12	N12	60

An example of a 12-hour shift schedule with added flexible 8-hour and 10-hour shifts is shown below:

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Hours
Team 1	D12	D12			D12	D12	D12	60
		A10	A10	A10	A10			40
			A8	A8	A8	A8	A8	40
	N12	N12			N12	N12	N12	60
Team 2			D12	D12				24
	A8			A8	A8	A8	A8	40
	A10	A10	A10	A10				40
			N12	N12				24

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Hours
Team 3			D12	D12				24
	A10	A10				A10	A10	40
		A8	A8	A8	A8	A8		40
			N12	N12				24
Team 4	D12	D12			D12	D12	D12	60
	A10	A10	A10	A10				40
	A8			A8	A8	A8	A8	40
	N12	N12			N12	N12	N12	60

To emphasize, the work shift examples provided are hypothesized, and it is up to the agency to determine if a combination of fixed and flexible shift scheduling options are right for them. A final word: 10-hour shifts are best to address busy periods of 6 hours. Multiple shift lengths are best for the busiest hours in the ECC, usually 2 to 4 hours. For ECC leadership, using a combination of 8-, 10-, and 12-hour

work shifts offers scheduling options that may help in addressing operational needs, training, and employee satisfaction.



## Change Management Models/Frameworks

- **ADKAR** – This is based on the analysis of hundreds of successful and unsuccessful organizational changes over many years: <https://www.prosci.com/methodology/adkar>
- **Lewin** – This is an approach that is simpler than most of the other models: <change.walkme.com/lewin-change-management-model/>
- **MSG** – This is the systems model of change management and continuous change process model: <managementstudyguide.com/systems-model-of-change-management.htm>
- **McKinsey 7-S** – This is used to help a company understand its current business structure, what needs to change and why: <www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/enduring-ideas-the-7-s-framework>
- **The Kübler-Ross Model** – This follows the human reaction to loss and change. It is used to understand how employees react to business changes: <www.change-management-coach.com/kubler-ross.html>
- **The Satir Change Model** – The focus is on how a group reacts to change: <satirglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Satir-Change-Model.pdf>
- **William Bridges' Transition Model** – The focus is on the productivity drop that occurs when people transition to a new way of doing things: <wmbridges.com/about/what-is-transition/>

## SWOT ANALYSIS: Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)

SWOT is an acronym that stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. **Strengths** describe the positive attributes internal to an organization; these are within an organization’s control. **Weaknesses** describe the negative factors that detract from an organization’s value; these areas require enhancement to be competitive. **Opportunities** are external, positive factors from which an organization may benefit. **Threats** are external, negative factors beyond an organization’s control. Below is the SWOT conducted on FECC.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Current staff</li> <li>▪ Resiliency of staff members to persevere</li> <li>▪ PSTs are cross trained</li> <li>▪ Customer service: good rapport with the community and other departments</li> <li>▪ Most client agencies have a favorable impression of FECC</li> <li>▪ Strong desire to assist the public and client agencies</li> <li>▪ Teamwork: Able to count on each other for support</li> <li>▪ Multiple options for backup operations</li> <li>▪ PowerDMS used to house standard operating procedures (SOPs)</li> <li>▪ Recent wage increase</li> <li>▪ Currently taking advantage of flexible work scheduling practices</li> <li>▪ Most staff feel comfortable discussing issues with FECC leadership and believe they care about employees</li> <li>▪ Labor/management relationship is collaborative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Staffing issues:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Many FTE positions not filled</li> <li>○ Not taking advantage of Non-Emergency Operator positions</li> <li>○ Mandatory overtime</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Organizational/general management:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 9-1-1 Director’s work schedule; lack of visibility during normal business hours</li> <li>○ No strategic plan in place</li> <li>○ Lack of a mission statement and defined goals</li> <li>○ No CONOPS or succession plans in place, COOP should be updated</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Culture               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Negative employees are affecting morale in the ECC</li> <li>○ Issues in the ECC are not dealt with consistently</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ EMD Guidecard system               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ System is proprietary; no customization</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ No criteria-based systems in place for police and fire operations (call processing and incident handling)</li> <li>▪ Facility: No room for expansion and operations area is small</li> <li>▪ Leadership               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Perception is 9-1-1 Director is not getting things done</li> <li>○ Stakeholders perceive the 9-1-1 Director makes excuses rather than fixing issues.</li> <li>○ Lack of mentorship or training for 9-1-1 Director</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Ancillary duties affecting FECC workloads; magnified due to short staffing</li> <li>▪ Training issues               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Inconsistencies in CTO training of new hires</li> <li>○ Online CTO cert is only training provided to CTOs</li> <li>○ Lack of ongoing CDE (partially due to staffing)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Inability to take breaks/lunch due to staffing</li> <li>▪ Lack of professionalism, specifically on FCSO Channel (both internal and external)</li> </ul>

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish a best practice approach to ECC management               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Get back to basics</li> <li>○ Collaborate with other FC departments</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Develop team building opportunities with the Operations Board</li> <li>▪ Consider developing a Tactical Advisory Committee</li> <li>▪ Change 9-1-1 Training &amp; QA Coordinator to an exempt 9-1-1 Program Manager</li> <li>▪ Develop a KPI system for the ECC</li> <li>▪ When staffing permits, explore employee engagement opportunities within the center</li> <li>▪ Consider CTO incentive pay and additional certification opportunities to set them apart from the others</li> <li>▪ Consider a lateral transfer recruitment campaign to attract other top talent</li> <li>▪ Request user agencies conduct training for PSTs to build relationships and provide continuing education opportunities</li> <li>▪ Develop relationship and utilize OES personnel like the EMS PM to provide training and certifications on EMD</li> <li>▪ Involve Flathead County HR in hiring process to provide guidance on the applicable laws, build relationships, and provide an outside perspective in interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Update the COOP and succession plan</li> <li>▪ Cohesiveness between FECC and FCSO leadership lacking</li> <li>▪ Collaboration and communication between departments and leadership</li> <li>▪ Silos exist between the shifts which hinders cohesiveness</li> <li>▪ Burnout from the excessive amounts of overtime</li> <li>▪ Having working shift supervisors prohibits basic supervision of the ECC</li> <li>▪ Field personnel feel that critical safety information isn't being broadcast to them</li> <li>▪ Fire department radio channel gets neglected when ECC is busy</li> <li>▪ Poor professional relationship between Sheriff's Office and FECC.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Former FECC employees now at the FCSO are negatively influencing other personnel (perceived by both staff and stakeholders)</li> <li>b. Newer dispatchers are afraid to work FCSO channel due to poor treatment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## **Appendix D – APCO Institute Training Programs**

### **About the APCO Institute**

As part of APCO International, the APCO Institute is uniquely positioned to offer highly specialized training and resources on foundational, current, and emerging topics that public safety telecommunications professionals need to know. APCO International's leadership role in public safety communications worldwide means that our training programs and resources reflect the pressing issues that affect ECCs of all sizes and meet the needs of our more than 30,000 members. As a nonprofit entity, the institute offers exceptional and affordable training opportunities to public safety agencies and practitioners, regardless of their financial resources. Our certification programs and certificate courses are delivered in several formats:

### **Online Courses**

These courses are training that's ready when customers are. Working in an ECC is not a 9-to-5 job. That is why most institute classes are offered online. Their 24-hour accessibility – from any internet-enabled device – means that students can participate in training when it works for them. Lessons are released each Wednesday and must be completed prior to the following Wednesday.

### **Co-host Courses**

The institute works with ECCs around the country to host training courses on-site to meet the needs of public safety communications professionals from a particular region or area. These co-hosted courses enable students to receive world-class training without incurring travel expenses.

### **Contract Courses**

Agencies that request on-site training just for their own staff members can schedule a contract course with the institute. All courses are taught by the institute's adjunct instructors, who travel to the agency and provide training that meets the specific needs of the agency.

### **Agency Courses**

The institute's train-the-trainer model allows ECCs to develop an in-house instructor program so that training can be conducted by specially trained agency staff members who can provide continuing education at the time and in the way that best meets the agency's needs.

### **CALEA Public Safety Communications Accreditation Manager**

Recognizing the success of the accreditation process is dependent upon the skills of the accreditation manager, and this online course was developed specifically for the CALEA public safety communications accreditation manager. Accreditation manager courses include the following:

- **CALEA Accreditation for Law Enforcement, 6th Edition**
- **CALEA Accreditation Manager PSC**
- **CALEA Training Academy**
- **CALEA Campus Security**

### **Call Processing Incidents Involving Veterans With PTSD**

This course provides information regarding the challenges that returning military veterans are facing and prepares telecommunicators for the possibility of interaction with veterans in crisis. The focus is on veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury.

### **Communications Center Supervisor, 5th Edition**

The APCO Institute Communications Center Supervisor course is designed for prospective, new, or experienced communications supervisors who want to enhance their supervisory skills and knowledge. Students should be experienced in communications center operations, have a working knowledge of communications policies and procedures and be either in or under consideration for a supervisory position. Students must bring their agency's policies and procedures manual to class for reference.

### **Crisis Negotiations for Telecommunicators, 2nd Edition**

Crisis situations differ from the daily emergencies that today's PSTs handle. Hostage situations, barricaded subject incidents and suicidal callers, among others, require an advanced level of training for the telecommunicator to handle them successfully. Students should have successfully completed a formal basic telecommunicator training program.

### **Customer Service in Today's Public Safety Communications, 1st Edition**

Providing satisfactory customer service in the high-energy and often high-stress field of public safety communications is paramount to successful performance in this profession, both for the individual telecommunicator as well as the agency they represent. This course addresses all aspects of customer service and how it impacts our industry.

### **Communications Training Officer, 7th Edition**

The CTO course focuses on the essential elements of a one-on-one training program. Topics include the roles and responsibilities of a trainer, adult learning styles, documentation, and counseling techniques. Students receive sample forms.

### **Communications Training Officer, 6th Edition, Instructor**

APCO Institute's CTO course certifies experienced telecommunicators to train and evaluate new trainees in a one-on-one training situation. APCO Institute's CTO program has been successfully implemented in hundreds of agencies nationwide. Now in its sixth edition, the materials are easier to teach and available for your agency instructors.

### **Disaster Operations and the Communications Center, 1st Edition**

This course serves to educate the PST on a wide range of man-made and natural disasters, their effects on the community and its infrastructure, and the response and recovery needs of each. Prerequisites: students must have successfully completed a formal basic telecommunicator training program.

### **Public Safety Communications Staffing and Employee Retention**

Designed to provide guidance and information to communications center employees at every level, this course provides over three hundred tips, guidelines and effective practices on subjects ranging from creating effective shift schedules to candidate recruitment and from maintaining staff to employee recognition.

### **Active Shooter Incidents for Public Safety Communications, 2nd Edition**

Active-shooter incidents and their response pose several unique concerns for all facets of public safety, including public safety communications. There are multitudes of issues that make responding to an active-shooter incident more difficult than other armed subject calls or violence-in-progress incidents. Students should have successfully completed a formal basic telecommunicator training program.

### **Bullying and Negativity in the Communications Center, 2nd Edition**

Bullying is prevalent in the workplace, including America's ECCs. The number of U.S. workers affected by bullying is estimated to be a staggering 65.6 million. This course helps participants learn to identify different types of bullying, how to address it when it happens and how to create a healthy workplace that can prevent bullying and negative behavior from occurring.

### **Comprehensive Quality in the Communications Center, 1st Edition**

A comprehensive quality program cannot be created overnight. A program must be thought-out, and prior planning efforts put into the system must utilize the methods of measurement and the analysis of results achieved. A successful quality program will require a systematic approach. This course will provide the necessary insight so that the proper tools and methodologies can be employed to make the quality program a vital and useful part of your organization. Topics include:

- Quality.
- Quality planning and methodologies.
- Standards and liability in quality programs.
- Building a performance evaluation program.
- Feedback and coaching.
- Surveys and analysis.

Class lectures are supplemented by practical exercises that help students apply the lessons to their own agency. Students not only learn about a QA/QI program but also how to implement the program within their agency.

### **Cybersecurity Fundamentals for the ECC**

This course is built on the experiences of public safety cybersecurity experts and ECC professionals. This course provides ECC professionals with foundational knowledge of cyberattacks, including the anatomy of a cyberattack, signs of an ongoing cyberattack and mitigation techniques. This includes preparing for cyberattacks, response to those attacks and the type of data to protect for post-attack forensics.

### **Public Safety Communications Staffing & Employee Retention, 1st Edition**

In 2009, the Next Generation of APCO Project RETAINS announced research that proved turnover rates for ECCs in the U.S. were at 19%. That was an increase of 3% since 2005 and still reflected a higher turnover rate than the teaching and nursing industries – both highly publicized staffing crises.

### **Public Safety Telecommunicator, 7th Edition**

Meets and exceeds the APCO Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators (2015). The PST-training standard is widely recognized as the national industry standard for basic telecommunicator training.

### **Public Safety Telecommunicator, 7th Edition, Instructor**

This course combines enhanced instructional-techniques training with specific training on how to conduct the Public Safety Telecommunicator, 7th edition, student course. Successful completion of this course enables your agency instructors to instruct the Public Safety Telecommunicator, 7th edition, student course in-house, allowing for a significant reduction in your new-hire and in-service training and travel costs.

### **Law Enforcement Communications, 1st Edition**

APCO Institute's Law Enforcement Communications, 1st edition, course raises the bar for in-service law enforcement communications training. This dynamic course covers the terms, techniques and written directives required for excellence in law enforcement call taking and dispatch.

### **Law Enforcement Communications Instructor, 1st Edition**

This course combines enhanced instructional techniques training with specific training on how to conduct the Law Enforcement Communications, 1st edition, student course. Successful completion of

this course enables your agency instructors to instruct the Law Enforcement Communications, 1st edition, student course in-house, allowing for a significant reduction in your new-hire and in-service training and travel costs.



## **Appendix E – Other Documents, Studies and Standards Consulted**

1. Site Visit Photo Log
2. Workforce Information
3. Standard Operating Guidelines/Procedures
4. Policies
5. Call Volume and Call Processing Statistics
6. QA Programs
7. Training Program, Documents and Records
8. PSAP Recruitment Hiring and Retention Considerations/Resource Guide
9. FECC Chain of Command
10. Flathead County Agency Website
11. Dispatch Protocols
12. Communications Officer Job Description
13. ECC Exit Interview Responses

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## **Appendix H – RETAINS Staffing Considerations**

# Agency Overview

Demographics	
Service Population	111814
Square Miles	5256
Service Area	Other
Sworn Employees	0
Civilian Employees	22
Number of VOIP Calls	3485
Number of TDD Calls	0
Number of EMD Calls	9028
Average Time for EMD Calls	0.00

## Communication Services Provided

Emergency Calls	Call	
	Taking	Dispatch
Law Enforcement	✓	✓
Fire	✓	✓
Medical (EMS)	✓	✓
Medical (EMD)	✓	✓
NCIC/CIC	✓	✓

Non-Emergency Calls	Call	
	Taking	Dispatch
Administrative Calls	✓	✓
Public Works/Utilities	✓	✓
Animal Control	✓	✓
After Hours (for public emergencies)	✓	✓

## Workload Summary

	Total Number	Percent of Total
Total Call Volume	149547	100%
Incoming Call Volume	113784	76.1%
9-1-1/Emergency Call Volume	43025	28.8%
Dispatched 9-1-1/Emergency Call Volume	97208	65%
Wireless Call Volume	36827	24.6%

*This provides an annual summary of total call volume including a categorized breakdown of types of calls and their percentage of the total volume.*

# Staffing Summary

## Coverage Positions

Coverage Positions handle a particular task or "cover" a work station for a specified length of time.

Position	Current Authorized	Estimated FTE	Difference
9-1-1 Call Taker and Dispatcher	20.00	43.99	23.99
Supervisor	2.00	8.80	6.8
<i>Subtotal</i>	22.00	52.79	

	Current Authorized	Estimated FTE
<i>Overall Staffing Total</i>	22.00	52.79

## Positions Calculations

### Coverage Positions

Full-time employees (FTE) = Hours needing coverage ÷ Employee Availability Turnover Adjustment

Position	Hours Needing Coverage	÷	Employee Availability	=	Staff Needed	Turnover Rate (%)	=	FTE
9-1-1 Call Taker and Dispatcher	43797.60	÷	1520.00	=	28.81	52.70	=	43.99
Supervisor	8759.52	÷	1520.00	=	5.76	52.70	=	8.80

# Survey Results

## Employee Satisfaction

This report prepared for:  
Catherine Wix

For Flathead Emergency Communications  
625 Timberwolf Parkway  
Kalispell, MT 59901

April 09, 2024

7 employees responded to this survey  
(41.18% response rate)

Courtesy of:  
APCO Project RETAINS

Responsive Efforts To Address Integral Needs in Staffing

## INTRODUCTION

The questions in the Employee Satisfaction Survey (ESS) came from a national survey that was developed specifically for the purpose of understanding staffing and retention issues in public safety communications centers.

The ESS was designed to:

- \* gather pertinent information from employees
- \* assure anonymity
- \* facilitate high response rates (e.g., the survey is short and to the point)
- \* provide a quick analysis of the data
- \* be presented in a useful format for managers

## Using the Information in this Report

There are two basic strategies used to improve organizations. The most familiar of these, the "problem solving process," has a proven track record. Whether it consists of a four step process or a ten step process the fundamental strategy is the same - identify a problem and fix it.

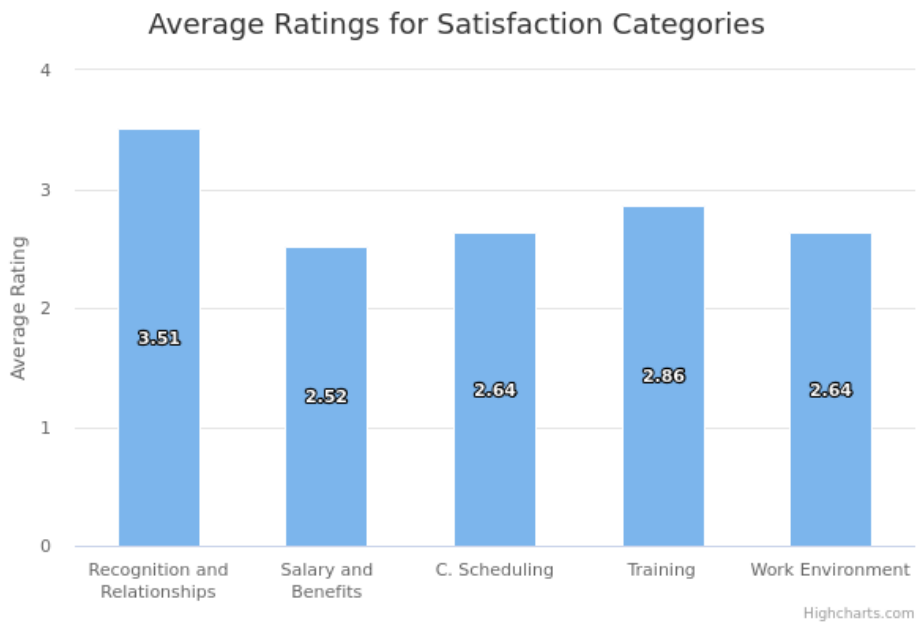
Over-reliance on the problem solving approach keeps everyone focused on finding problems. That quickly leads to discouragement; no matter how good an organization is, it is always possible to find something wrong with it. Emergency Communications Center (ECC) employees are immersed in situations where things have gone wrong. Managers and employees benefit when problems are identified and fixed, but they also need to hear about what they are doing right, and celebrate the wonderful work they do.

## Employee Satisfaction

Employees were asked to indicate the extent to which they were satisfied with several aspects of their job. The rating scale ranged from 1 to 5 (where 1 = not satisfied, 3 = satisfied, and 5 = extremely satisfied). The 20 items listed in this section represent five major categories of employee satisfaction: recognition and relationships, salary and benefits, scheduling, training, and the work environment. An average score was calculated for each category based on the responses to the items in the category. This score is an overall "category average."

Category averages are summarized first in the bar graph. Below the bar graph the specific satisfaction items are listed by category. For each item, the percentages of employees who indicated they were satisfied (i.e., they provided a rating of 3, 4, 5), or dissatisfied (rating of 1 or 2) are presented side by side. Category averages provide an overall sense of employee satisfaction and the percentages reported for individual items indicate the extent of satisfaction or dissatisfaction on specific issues.

The middle score in a 5 point scale is 3, so a category average of 2.5 or less in any category indicates a problem that needs to be addressed. Think of it as an opportunity to improve a process that is important to employees. Individual items with 25 percent or more dissatisfied employees identify specific areas that should be evaluated for improvement.



### Category 1: Recognition and Relationships - 3.51

6 Questions	% Satisfied	% Not Satisfied
Regular recognition of staff for high quality work.	64.3	35.7
The quality of interactions with management.	91.3	8.7
The way management responds to errors in a constructive way.	81	19
The interest management shows in creating good working conditions.	81.8	18.2
The opportunities to participate in decisions that affect me.	70	30
The quality of interactions with co-workers (both social and work related).	100	0

### Category 2: Salary and Benefits - 2.52

3 Questions	% Satisfied	% Not Satisfied
Retirement benefits.	40	60
Health care benefits.	71.4	28.6
Salary/earnings (base pay).	58.8	41.2

### Category 3: Scheduling - 2.64

4 Questions	% Satisfied	% Not Satisfied
The shift schedule used by this center.	84.2	15.8
The shift selection process used by this center.	90.9	9.1
Participation in scheduling decisions.	81	19



	% Satisfied	% Not Satisfied
Days off.	50	50

### Category 4: Training - 2.86

3 Questions	% Satisfied	% Not Satisfied
The length of time from hiring to working independently.	100	0
How well the training process prepared me to be effective in the job.	70	30
Appropriateness of the ongoing training that is provided.	77.8	22.2

### Category 5: Work Environment - 2.64

4 Questions	% Satisfied	% Not Satisfied
Comfortable working conditions (e.g., lighting, temperature).	72.2	27.8
The degree to which technology supports high productivity.	70	30
The noise level (does not distract me from my work).	90.9	9.1
Scheduled break time away from the console.	64.3	35.7

#### Center Performance

The performance ratings for the center are organized into three categories, each addressing three items, for a total of nine items. The number on top of each bar in each graph is the average rating for that item. The rating scale ranged from 1 to 5 (1 = poor, 3 = average, and 5 = excellent).

The first graph is about the ability of the center to perform the work at hand: answering calls in a timely manner, managing calls efficiently, and satisfying customers.

The second graph summarizes employee ratings related to staffing, the use of overtime, and the retention of qualified employees.

Last but not least are the functions related to the training of staff, effective shift management, and paying attention to employee satisfaction.

Next, the percentages of employees that rated their center high (a rating of 3, 4, or 5) or low (rating of 1 or 2) are presented side by side. The average ratings presented in the graphs and the high/low percentages may be used to identify areas where employees see a need for improvement.

Survey Question: Please rate the overall performance of the center on:

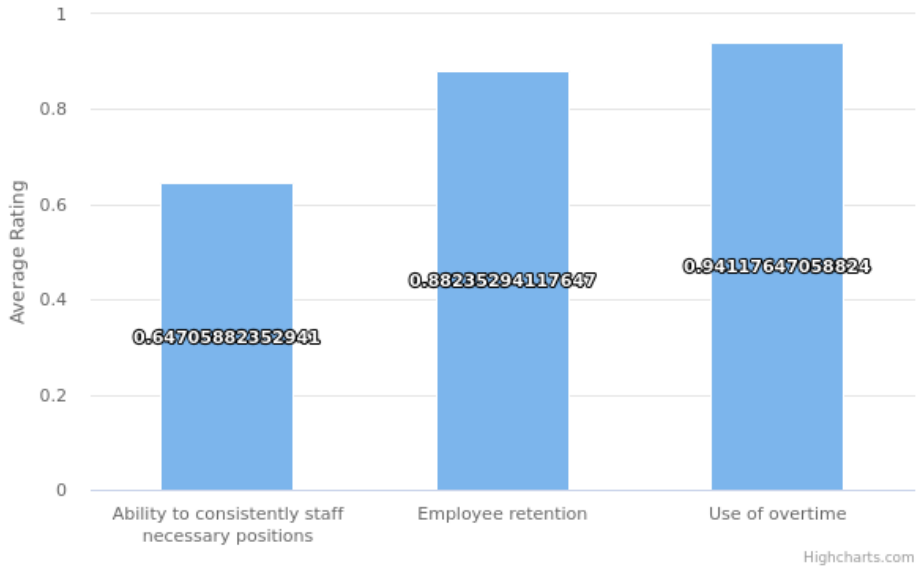
Rating Scale:

1 = Poor

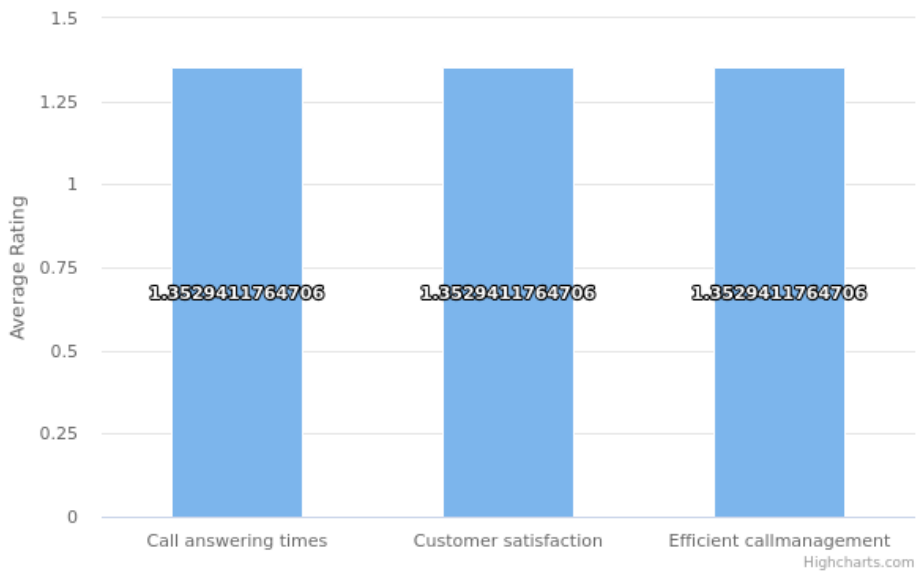
3 = Average

5 = Excellent

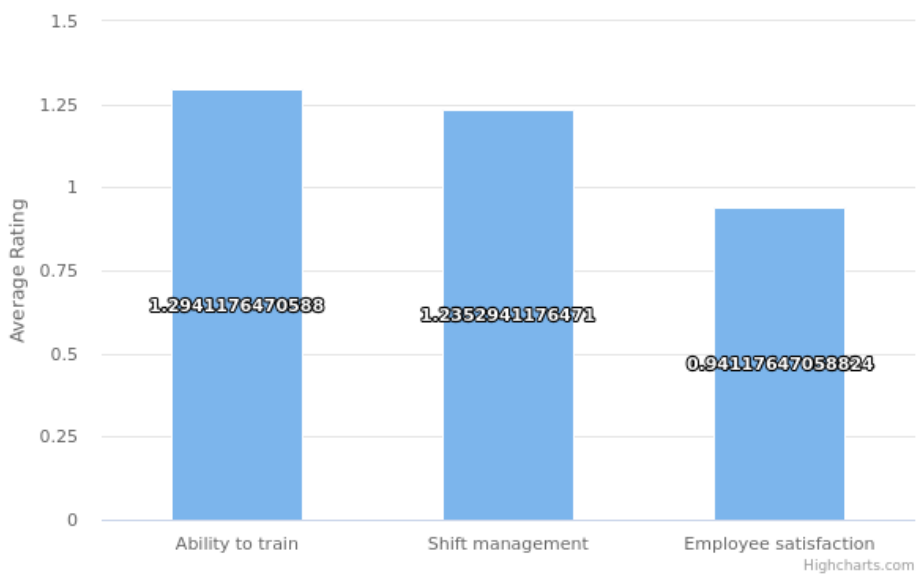
### Retention



### Performance



### Management



## Survey Question: Please rate the overall performance of the center on:

Item	% High	% Low
Ability to consistently staff necessary positions	0%	100%
Employee retention	40%	60%
Use of overtime	62.5%	37.5%
Call answering times	100%	0%
Customer satisfaction	100%	0%
Efficient call management	100%	0%
Ability to train	100%	0%
Shift management	90.5%	9.5%
Employee satisfaction	75%	25%

## Staffing and Overtime

The pie chart summarizes employee perceptions of the current staffing situation in your center. Perceptions vary because individual employee's experience the staffing situation differently based on different shifts, different experiences, etc. Summarize the percent of employees that selected each response in the table below. The total percent of employees that described the situation as "chronically understaffed" or a "serious problem" indicates the proportion of employees who are feeling stressed by the workload.

The current staffing situation in my center is best described as:

- The center is chronically (almost always) understaffed.: 14.29%
- Lack of adequate staff at this center is a serious problem.: 85.71%

If most employees indicate the center is fully staffed, and/or they can comfortably handle the workload you have reason to celebrate! If more than 25 percent of employees indicated staffing is a chronic or serious problem, it is time to review the relationship between workload and staffing needs. Compare employee perceptions of the staffing situation to your own. How well do they match?

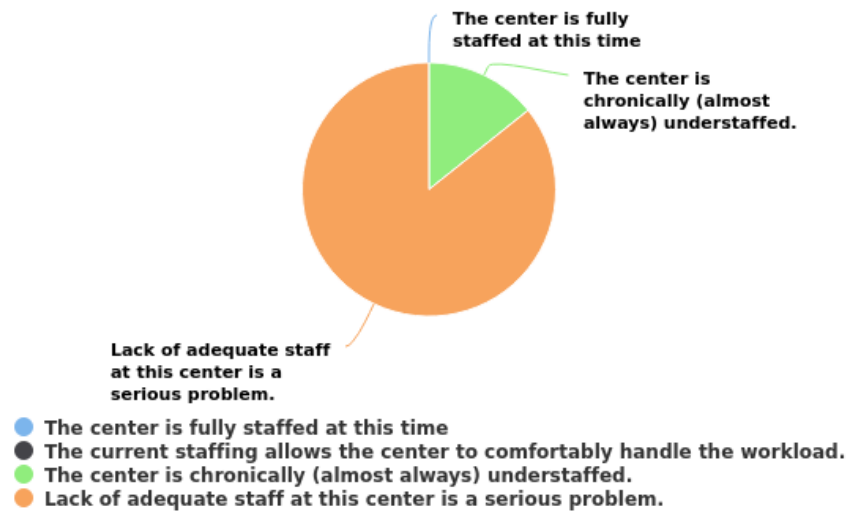
The numbers below the graph are about overtime in your center, they summarize the average hours of overtime worked by employees who participated in the survey, the minimum and maximum values, the number of employees who reported more than 8 hours of overtime per month, and the number of employees who reported no overtime. A quick review of overtime schedules should allow you to verify this information; and a budget review should allow you to determine your average overtime costs per month or per year. Look at the overall rating of center performance on the use of overtime (in the Center Performance section of this report) to see additional employee ratings related to overtime.

Staffing to authorized levels should be a first priority, and staffing adequately should be a close second. If authorized levels require extensive use of overtime, figure out how many employees are really needed to do the job and build a case for additional authorized positions. Legal liability and/or union demands may be an issue in some centers, but the problem with chronic understaffing is that it increases turnover, making the problem even worse. It is also expensive, especially when you consider increased training and productivity costs associated with high turnover, and lowered morale among the remaining employees who have to carry the extra workload.

# Your Center Results

Current Staffing in your Center

Current staffing in your center



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## Overtime

Average overtime hours per month	63.285714285714
Min/Max overtime hours per month	32/100
Number of employees reporting more than 8 hours per month	7
Number of employees reporting no overtime	0

## Job Complexity

The job complexity number for your center (the large number to the left) is calculated based on the average number of tasks employees reported as a regular part of their job. Centers that serve several law enforcement or fire departments can manage complexity by implementing standard operating procedures. Even though there are standardized protocols for EMD, and a CAD system can compensate for client idiosyncrasies, the number of tasks employees are routinely asked to handle is a factor that contributes to the centers ability to find and keep qualified employees.

**10** The average # of job tasks in your center.

Survey Question: Check ALL tasks that are a regular part of your job:

- Call Taking (9-1-1)
- Call Taking (Administrative)
- Dispatch Law Enforcement
- Dispatch Fire
- Dispatch Emergency Medical Services
- NCIC and/or state CIC checks
- City/County Services or Public Works
- Animal Control
- Train/Mentor New Employees
- Shift Supervision

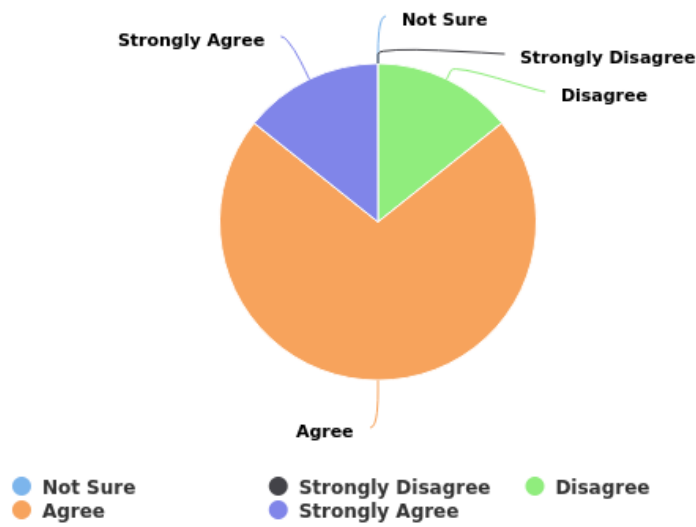
## The Application Process

The pie chart summarizes employee responses to the statement "The application process was thorough and extensive." The rating scale ranged from 1 = strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree. Total the percentages in the "disagree" and "strongly disagree" categories to find out what percent of employees feel the application process needs to be improved.

- Disagree: 14.29%

- Agree: 71.43%
- Strongly Agree: 14.29%

### A thorough application process



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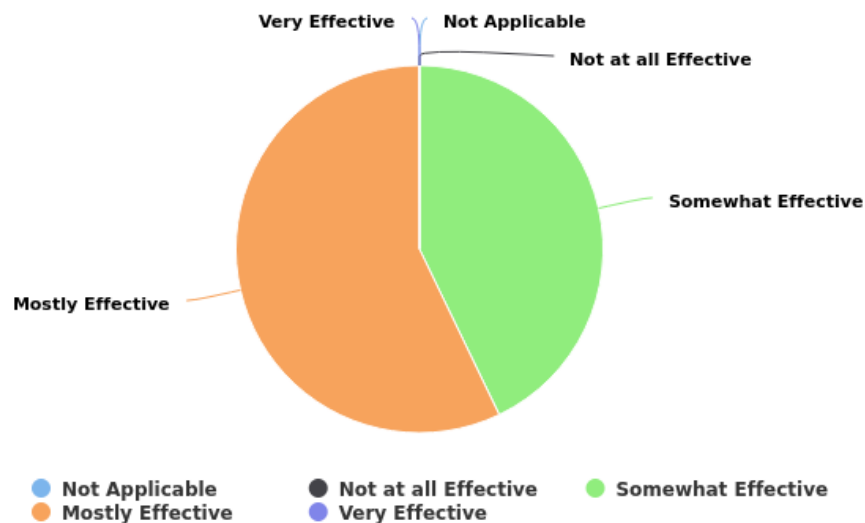
## Training and Mentoring

The survey included several questions about different aspects of the training process. The results of four questions are presented in pie charts. The response options varied from one question to the next, so read the legend that accompanies each chart. Analyze the balance between positive and negative responses.

Do your employees feel the mentoring process is effective? Do they feel there is an appropriate length of training time? Do they feel they are being prepared to be effective in their job? Are they satisfied with the appropriateness of the ongoing training they receive?

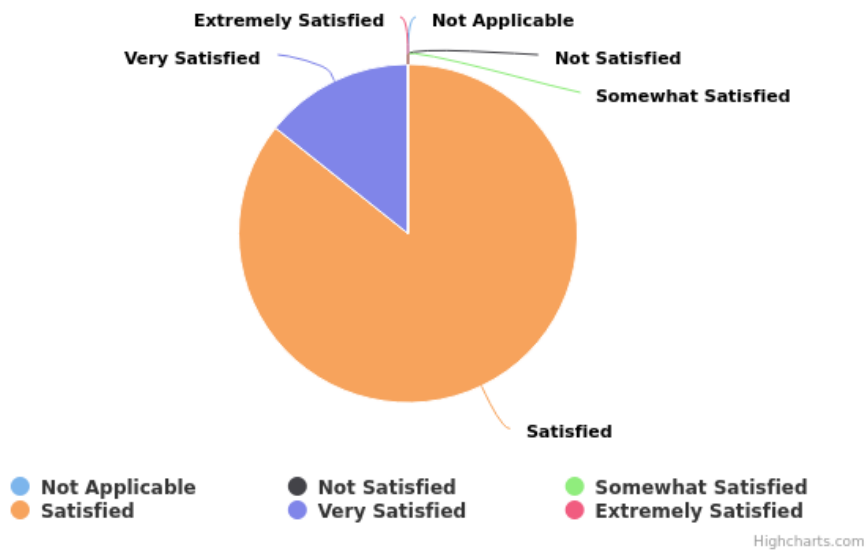
The section on Center Performance has a question about the "ability to train" and the results can be found in the bar graph pertaining to Management on the Center Performance page.

### Effective mentoring of trainees

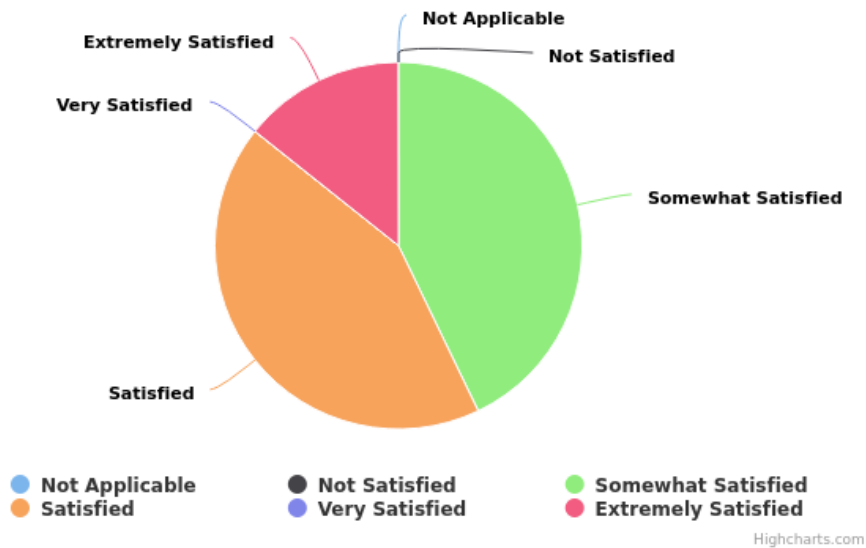


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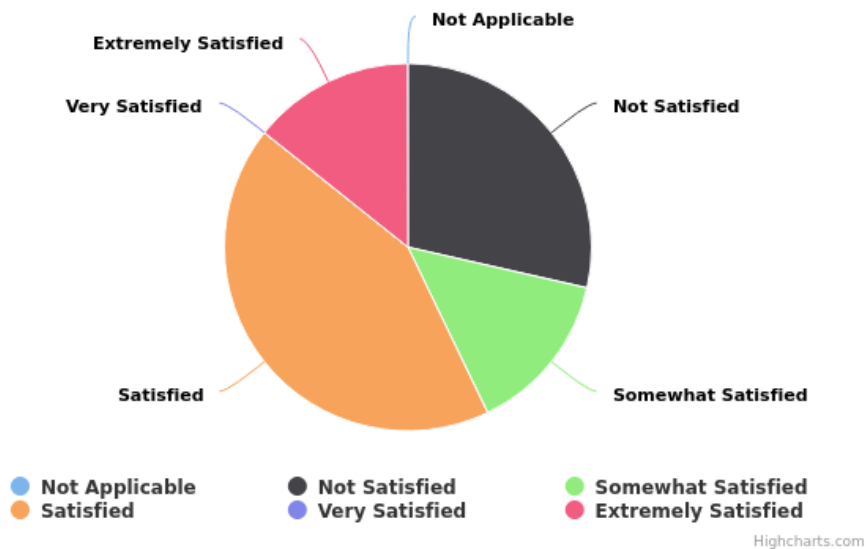
### Length of training time?



### Training prepares for effectiveness?



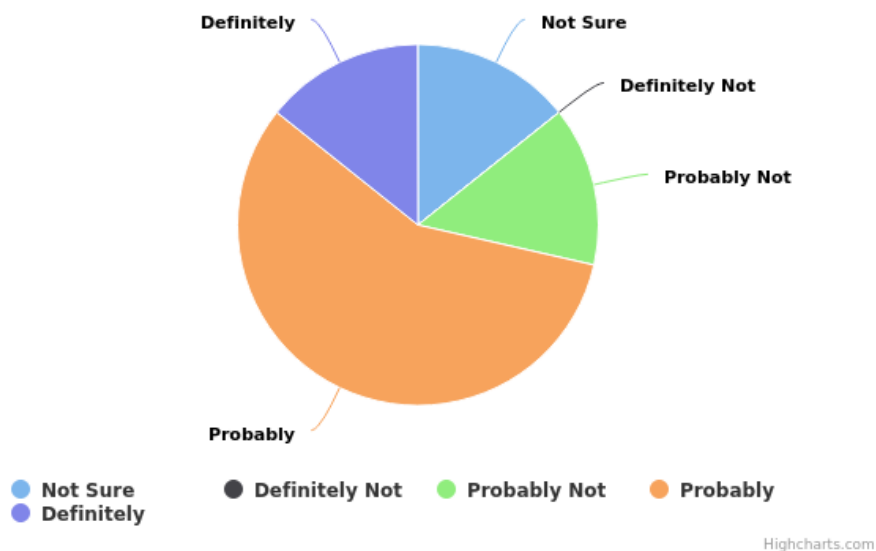
### Appropriate ongoing training provided?



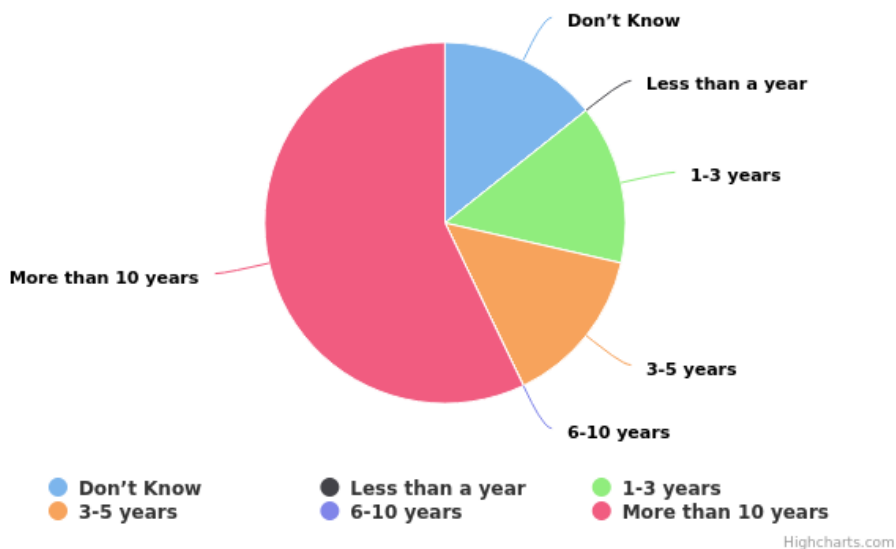
The two pie charts provide slightly different but related information: one asks about relatively short term plans while the other asks about long term plans. While any attempt to read the future is risky, the percentages can give you a rough glimpse into future plans - and help you anticipate recruiting or training needs. Clearly all employees are in a different place in their career - one more year for a 30 year veteran is an entirely different situation than one more year for a new recruit! This chart won't reveal such detail, but if you want to know employees' future plans, try asking them.

Adding together the percentage of employees who said they "Definitely" or "Probably" will spend the rest of their career with the center gives an indication of the stable core. On the flip side, these charts give you an idea of the portion of your staff that plans to move on to other things.

### Plan to spend the rest of your career here?



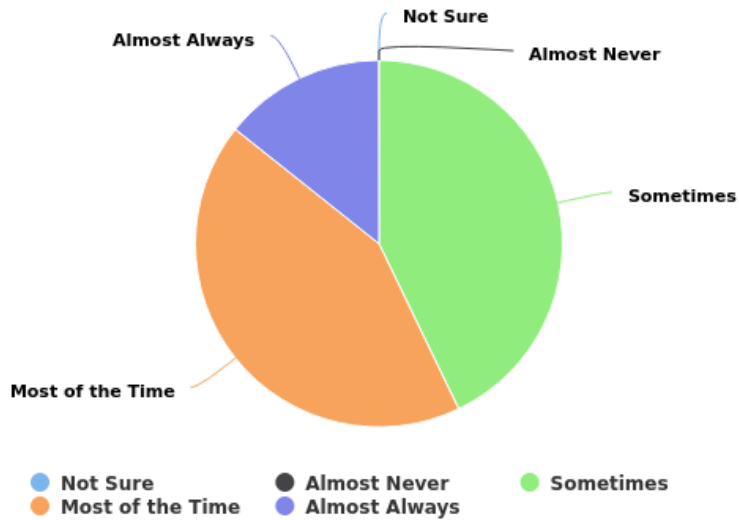
### How long do you plan to continue working here?



## Employee Recognition

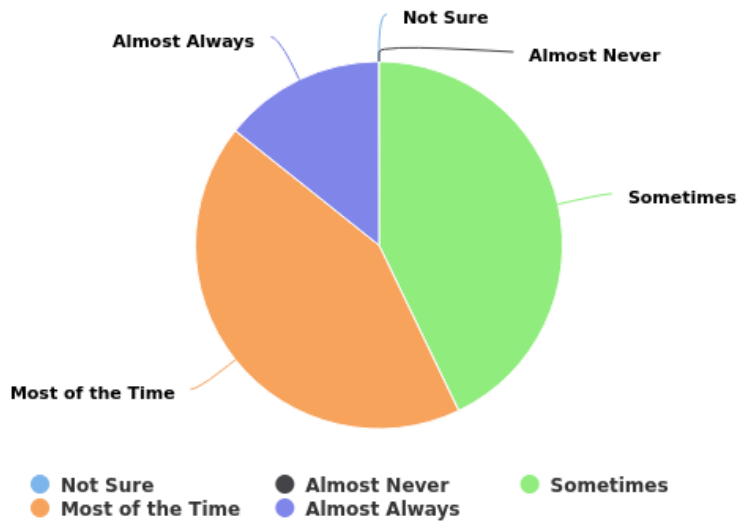
Each of the pie charts summarizes employee perceptions of feeling appreciated by a key source. Add up the "Most of the time" and "Almost Always" slices of the pie to find out what percent of employees feel appreciated. Then add up the "Not sure," "Sometimes," and "Almost Never" slices of the pie to find out what proportion of employees feel unappreciated. Compare the results across categories to determine where improvement efforts are needed. Enter the totals for each category below:

Do you feel appreciated by management?



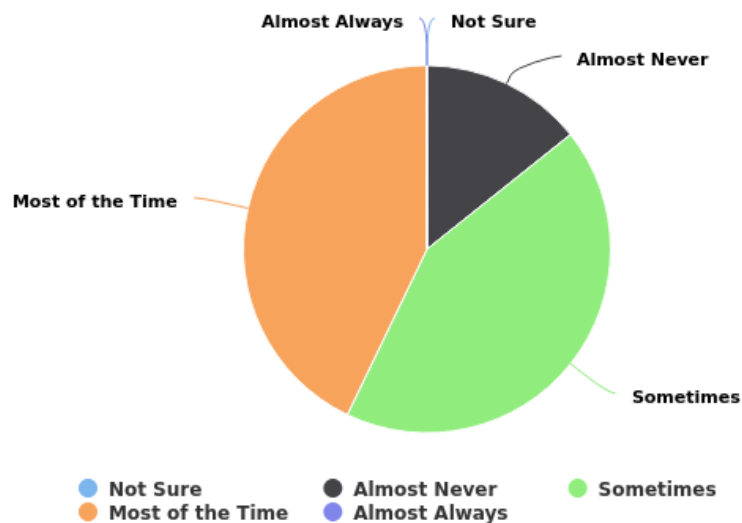
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Do you feel appreciated by your supervisor?



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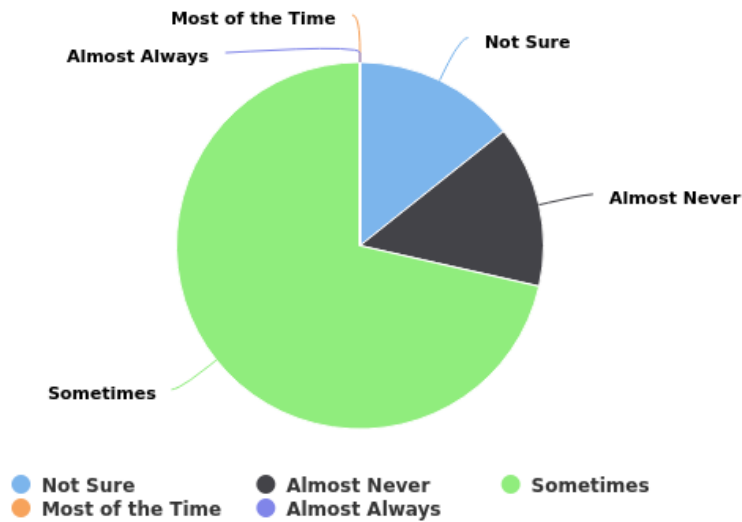
Do you feel appreciated by those you dispatch?



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## Do you feel appreciated by the media?



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### Do you feel appreciated by management?

Sometimes	42.86%
Most of the Time	42.86%
Almost Always	14.29%

### Do you feel appreciated by your immediate supervisor?

Sometimes	42.86%
Most of the Time	42.86%
Almost Always	14.29%

### Do you feel appreciated by the people you dispatch?

Almost Never	14.29%
Sometimes	42.86%
Most of the Time	42.86%

### Do you feel appreciated by the media?

Not Sure	14.29%
Almost Never	14.29%
Sometimes	71.43%

### Comments

The following comments are organized by the categories that were selected by employees at the time they submitted them.

Employees were asked, "What do you think really needs attention in this center? What aspect of the way things are done around here

doesn't work well?" They were also asked, "What do you really appreciate about the way things are done in this center? What works well? Please use these last questions to tell management what you feel is or is not working well. Please provide specific examples if applicable."

-----

## General Comments

- Well there's the obvious OT issues and staffing issues but that can be visually seen as management is working on it. The difference in expectations per person, expecting something out of one person but not another is not fair. I feel like there should be acknowledgement of when someone does a really good job on something. We have that spot on the white board why aren't we using it or even just a quick email/message saying hey you did a really good job on that.
- The idea (hopes and dreams) of getting this place back to how it used to be
- ALL RADIOS/PHONES/COMPUTERS NEED UPDATED OR REPLACED, EXTREMELY FRUSTRATING WHEN YOU CAN NOT HEAR OR COPY YOUR OFFICERS TRAFFIC AND VICE VERSA, PHONES HAVE A TIME LAG AND YOU END UP TALKING OVER YOUR CALLER, COMPUTERS DANGEROUSLY SLOW ON OPENING NEW CARDS AND FINDING PAST CALLS OR GLOBAL JACKETS
- SUPER EXCITED ABOUT RAISING THE HIGHERING WAGE AS WELL AS CURRENT DISPATCHER WAGE
- I BELIEVE OUR JOB IS HARD ENOUGH ON ITS OWN AND I APPRECIATE THE TEAM & PERSONALITIES WE'VE MANAGED TO KEEP THROUGH SOME PRETTY HARD TIMES. I FEEL THAT WE ALL HAVE EACH OTHERS BACKS AND WILL HELP OR ASSIST WHEREVER POSSIBLE AND NOT LET THE OTHER FAIL.
- THE ONLY THINGS THAT I SEE CURRETNLY THAT NEED THE ATTENTION ARE THE THINGS WE ALREADY KNOW AND ARE WORKING ON, LIKE STAFFING.
- I LIKE THE WAY WE HAD CHANGED HOW OT CALCULATIONS ARE SHOWN AND EMAILED TO EVERYONE. THE OT WORKED + BUILT IN OT FEELS MORE POSITIVE THAN HOW IT HAD IN THE PAST WITH THE - BASE OT NOT WORKED. THAT WAS A GOOD CHANGE.
- STAFFING IS THE MAIN CONCERN, AND WE ARE WORKING ON IT. EVERYONE IS GETTING EXCITED BECAUSE OF THE NEW PAY INCREASE, CAUSING A LOT MORE APPLICATIONS TO COME IN, AND BECAUSE OF THAT WE ARE CURRENTLY ABLE TO HIRE NEW PEOPLE AT A FASTER RATE. I AM HAPPY WITH THE NEW PAY RATE, AND THE INCREASE IN APPLICATIONS & NEW HIRES, BUT I AM ALSO A REALIST. THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE HERE THAT THINK THIS IS GOING TO BE A QUICK FIX, AND THAT THINGS WILL BE BETTER VERY SOON, BUT WITH OUR RETENTION RATE OF NEW HIRES, OUR ATTRITION RATE OF CURRENT EMPLOYEES, AND OUR CURRENT NUMBER OF TRAINERS, I FEEL IT IS GOING TO TAKE AT LEAST 5 YEARS BEFORE WE ARE FULLY STAFFED AGAIN. I AM AFRAID THAT THIS IS GOING TO CREATE ANOTHER WAVE OF BURN OUT AND NEGATIVITY, CAUSING MORE PEOPLE TO LEAVE, KEEPING US IN AN ENDLESS CYCLE OF MINIMAL STAFFING. I HONESTLY DONT KNOW WHAT THE ANSWER OR FIX IS FOR THIS ISSUE. I JUST HOPE THAT MANY WILL STAND BESIDE ME, AND KEEP PUSHING FORWARD THROUGH THIS.
- THERE IS NOT A LOT ABOUT THIS PLACE THAT I DONT APPRECIATE. THIS IS A GOOD JOB, WITH GOOD PAY, AND GOOD BENEFITS. I ENJOY MOST OF THE PEOPLE I WORK WITH, AND THE WORK THAT I DO. I FEEL THAT MANAGEMENT HAS MY BACK AND MOST OF THE TIME IS TRYING TO DO WHAT IS BEST FOR ME AND THE CENTER IN THE LONG RUN. SOME DISPATCHERS MAY HAVE ISSUES WITH OTHERS OR PEOPLE IN THE FIELD, BUT WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO GETTING THE JOB DONE, EVERYONE WORKS TOGETHER AND DOES WHAT THEY NEED TO DO. I WISH MORE PEOPLE HERE COULD APPRECIATE THE JOB AND WHAT WE ACTUALLY DO HERE THE WAY I DO. BUT IN REALITY, THERE IS A LOT OF BURN OUT, AND NEGATIVITY FROM A CERTAIN NUMBER OF PEOPLE HERE, ONES THAT I FEEL HAVE LOST THEIR VISION OF THIS JOB, HAVE LOST THEIR PASSION FOR THIS JOB. IN MY PERSONAL OPINION, THEY NEED TO FIND DIFFERENT JOBS, JOBS THEY WILL ENJOY. FOR ME, IF I DIDNT LOVE WHAT I WAS DOING I WOULDNT BE HERE ANYMORE, AND I LOVE THIS JOB, SO I AM GOING TO KEEP COMING BACK DAY AFTER DAY.

## Management

- I have appreciated the open door policy of management. They work various hours to ensure availability to all sides of our 24hr schedule. So whether you are dayshift or nightshift, you never work very many days without seeing management at some point. They are easy to speak with and always make time to listen. Whether you just need to vent, whether you have questions about something, or whether you are seeking guidance on how to handle a situation - they are always willing to help. I feel very fortunate for the current management having been through many managers and directors prior to the current staff.

## Morale / Discipline

- Morale is low, but the primary reason for that has been poor staffing. The only fix for this is more people. Thankfully a wage adjustment was recently approved and we are trending upward with applications and new hires. I am hopeful that morale will improve massively in the next few months as trainees finish up various phases of their training and are able to assist in the schedule and reduce OT and increase regular days off for the staff.

## Quality / Performance

- Being able to split our attention is a key factor in this job and I understand that. Can appreciate it. But with the situation we have going its becoming trying to focus on 3-5 things and expecting us to keep up with the high performance of all 3-5 things. While we train and hire more people that's great and all but what about those having to endure that 3-6 month long process(all the while just hoping they can make it through). At what point are we just going to put our foot down and say enough is enough and make the actual departments start helping us and not just have meetings about what could possibly happen. The fact that multiple agencies have 'joked' to us about what they are going to do when dispatch "falls" is just disrespectful.

- Staffing is a major problem, however there was a recent wage adjustment which has massively increased applications. So I believe the staffing problem will be going away soon. The next biggest issues is that due to low staffing for an extended period of time, dispatchers are tired and burned out. Which means the quality of the work they are performing is lower than desired. There is also the general mindset that they are 'untouchable' because we have been at such low staffing levels for so long. So even when supervisory staff addresses performance issues, there tends to be a bad attitude about with with no real repercussions and no noticeable changes. However, I am hopeful that soon our staffing levels will improve and we will once again be able to focus on a higher quality with a more energetic and responsive staff. As well as being able to more easily follow up with potential disciplinary action without fear that we will lose an employee when we are already so short staffed.

## Recognition

No comments

## Recruiting / Selection

No comments

## Salary / Benefits

- Salary was a big contributor to the low staffing issue. Wages were not competitive with other jobs in the valley including other county employment. This issue was routinely brought up over the last several years to those who are in charge of wage adjustments (not internal management but rather HR and commissioners and county administrator and during negotiations). The bare minimum of wage increases was done which put us farther behind the curve for attracting potential dispatchers. Our benefits are also not superb. Insurance isn't expensive but it also doesn't provide great coverage for anything beyond the routine. 30 years retirement, really needs to be 20 years (understood this isn't a local government issue). Used to have benefits with reduced gym memberships, that relationship for the county ended, unknown why.

## Schedule / Overtime

- The schedule is a lot and so is the OT, although this is hopefully going to be better soon. However I appreciate that the OT is parsed out in the way it is. OT is assigned to those who have worked the least of it. I cannot think of a more fair way of handling that. This way if you worked more OT than someone else, you get a break from it. This also gives you some ability to control maintaining certain days off. There is a lot of OT right now, but if you know you have something coming up and you want to keep those days off, you can work extra OT in the couple weeks leading up to it and then you are at the bottom for the OT assignment. This seems fair to all staff and doesn't pick on those with just the lowest seniority.

## Shift Selection Process

- Shift bidding is fair and consistent. This is always done by seniority. There are no surprises and it provides an extra incentive to stay longer for a more desired shift. Annual vacations are done the same way. The longer you are employed, the higher in seniority you become, the better selections you get. Seems like a good way of showing appreciation to more veteran dispatchers while still allowing more junior dispatchers to be a part of the process and have something to work towards.

## Shift Supervision

No comments

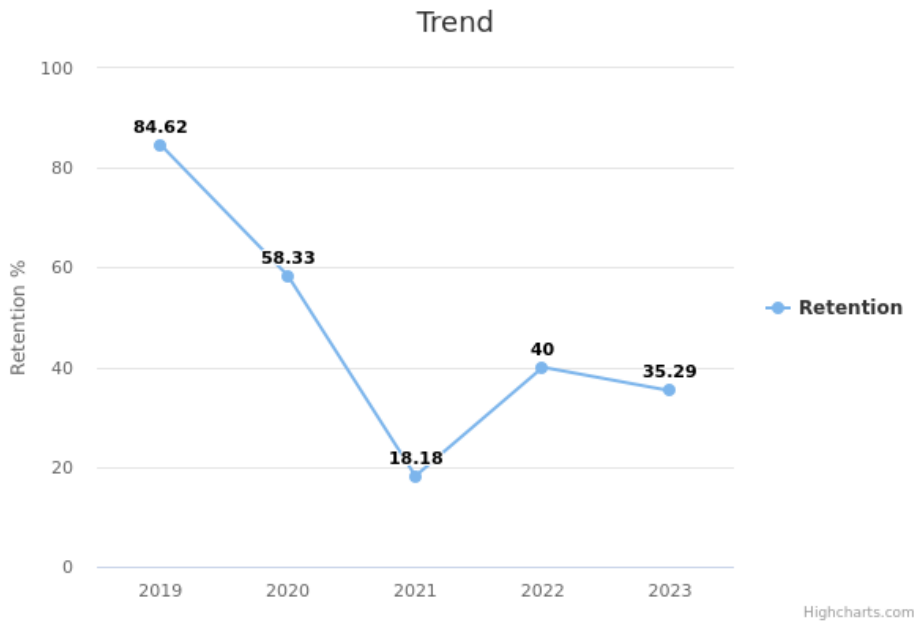
## Training

- I really think that the trainers need to come up with a way to make training more even across the floor. As its not fair for the trainee to be told one thing by someone then get told that its wrong by another. There has been many times I have seen a trainee get questioned about why they XYZ and the trainee tell that trainer that trainer(B) told them to go it that way. Then the train tell them not to, that its wrong or just not believe them. To note I was also there when trainer(B) told the trainee to do it that way. Another thing I think might be good to add to the training program is to note the good things the trainee did. As it appears only the bad parts get pointed out when there should be a good mix of the two.

## Working Conditions

No comments

# Retention Results Prepared for Flathead Emergency Communications



## Retention

The Project RETAINS studies defined retention rate as the proportion of employees that remained with the organization the previous year. Turnover is the complement of retention. Retention plus turnover equals a whole (i.e., percent retention + percent turnover = 100 percent).

## Interpreting Your Results

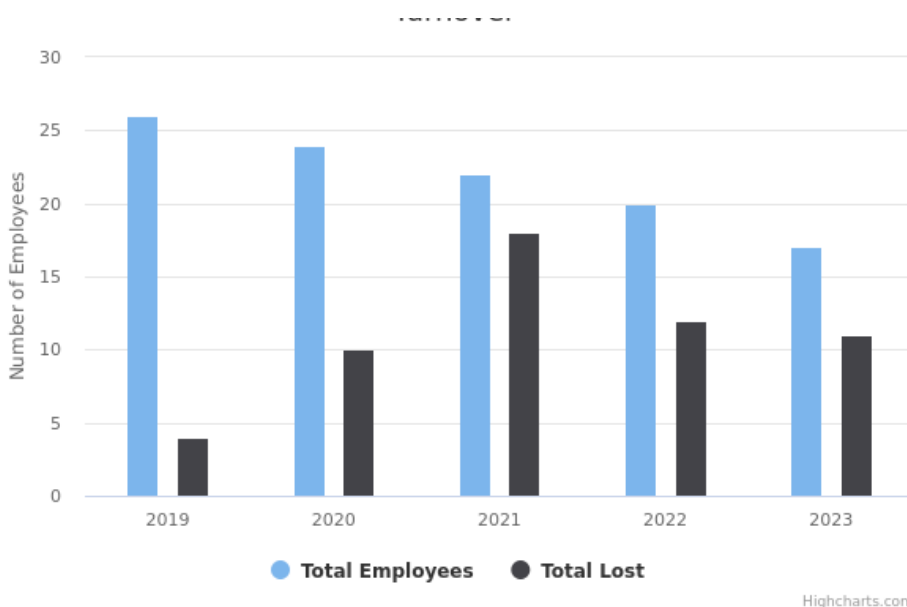
The charts provide different snapshots of retention and turnover in your center. Graph #1 -Trend graph shows the trend in your center's retention rate over time, depending on how far back you entered data. If the trend line is relatively flat it means retention in your center is stable. If your center's retention rate appears to be declining over time, a closer look at possible causes is advised.

Given these figures, it appears that retention has grown as a problem since the previous study.

The next section lists several effective practices that can help you get started. For more information and ideas about effective practices, please review the Effective Practices Guide listed under the Resources tab.

The Turnover bar graphs summarize the data for your center: Graph #2...summarizes the trends in the total number of people employed by your center each year compared to the total number of employees who left that year.

## Turnover



## Turnover: Comparing Experienced Staff vs. New Hires



Graph #3...shows the proportion of the total number of employees who left as the number of experienced employees and new hires.

## Effective Practices

- Keep the center fully staffed.
- Minimize the use of overtime.
- Revise the screening and application process.
- Improve the selection process.
- Strengthen the training program.
- Keep pay and/or benefits competitive.
- Modify the shift structure or scheduling process.
- Minimize job complexity (i.e., the number of tasks employees do as a regular part of their job).
- Redistribute the workload.
- Engage employees in improvement efforts.

## The Research Tells Us

In the 2018 study, fewer than 30.0 percent of directors report that their ECC was staffed to authorized levels for all 12 months. The largest proportion (41.4%) report that staffing was low for at least part of the year, and 29.8 percent report that staffing was below authorized levels for the entire year. Just 28.7 percent of ECCs were able to maintain staffing levels for the entire year.

There are significant differences between ECCs of different sizes and their experiences with meeting authorized staffing levels, as shown in Figure 3. Meeting authorized staffing levels appears to be a substantial challenge for large ECCs, with 77.3 percent reporting that they were consistently below authorized levels for the entire year compared to 38.0 percent of medium ECCs and just 19.2 percent of small ECCs. 41.4 percent of small ECCs indicate that they met authorized staffing levels all year, compared to 16.8 percent of medium ECCs and just 4.5 percent of large ECCs.

In certain respects, employee perceptions about staffing levels are in agreement with those of ECC directors, although in others, they are not. In ECCs where directors report being staffed to authorized levels for all of the past year, only 36.0 percent of the employees agree; where directors report that staffing levels were met for only part of the year, just 20.0 percent of the employees agree. However, where directors report that their ECCs were consistently below authorized levels all year, only four percent of the employees said there was enough staff, indicating agreement with the assessments of directors.

ECCs use several criteria to set staffing levels of calltakers and dispatchers, many of which differ in importance depending upon the size of the ECC.

- Large ECCs most often rely upon multiple metrics of demand and service:
  - 85 percent utilize peak hour call volume
  - 80 percent utilize total call volume
  - 65 percent utilize average calls per hour
  - 81 percent utilize desired service level, and
  - 61.9 percent utilize average answer times.
- Medium size ECCs tend to utilize total call volume (71.0%), followed by peak-hour call volume (69.0%), desired service level (67.5%), and budget (60.0%).
- Small ECCs, the most cited factor in determining staffing levels is budget (67.0%), followed by total call volume (53.4%), desired service level (48.7%), and peak hour call volume (47.7%).



## **APCO Project RETAINS**

### **Dispatcher Guidelines**

Prepared for Flathead Emergency Communications  
625 Timberwolf Parkway  
Kalispell, MT 59901

May 17, 2024

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# Dispatcher Guidelines

## Guidelines to Defining and Staffing the Dispatch Position

There is no equation or formula to estimate the most appropriate ratio of dispatcher to unit, dispatcher to number of channels or number of units per channel. The RETAINS 2018 study addresses several factors affecting dispatcher ability to serve units assigned to a dispatch position. When trying to discern the differences in workloads by center size, agency type, even time frame of individual dispatch shifts, it is important to closely review the non-radio responsibilities of individual positions.

ECCs offer a range of public services. These include essential emergency services, such as law enforcement, EMS, and fire, as well as a host of supplementary non-emergency services (e.g., animal control, public utilities assistance, and weather notifications). Some ECCs provide both calltaking and dispatch for their services, while others only provide dispatch. PST workload levels result from the combination of how many units, channels, and frequencies are monitored. These, in turn, are highly dependent upon factors such as call, incident volume, dispatcher experience, and total staffing.

Virtually all ECCs provide both calltaking and dispatch services for law enforcement (97%), fire (88.3%) and EMS (81.2%). Most ECCs also provide administrative calltaking and dispatch (92.9%), and many also provide calltaking and dispatch for animal control (75.7%) and after hours calls (62.1%).

Survey findings from the RETAINS 2018 study underscore the differences between dispatcher work requirements in centers of different sizes and settings. Specialization is a very important consideration because PSTs covering a variety of disciplines are likely to experience greater job complexity. In terms of specialization, small ECCs have a rate of specialization of 13.87 percent, medium ECCs specialize at a rate of 10.61 percent, and large ECCs average a rate of 42.96 percent.

One difference that presents itself here is that small ECCs have seemingly increased their rates of specialization since the last report. In 2017, 40.1 percent of ECCs report that their dispatch positions cover only one discipline at a time, such as law enforcement or fire, meaning that close to 60.0 percent of ECCs—a sizeable majority—have their dispatch positions handle multiple disciplines at a time. Here, too, there are significant differences between ECCs of different sizes.

Nearly all large ECCs (91.7%) report that their dispatch positions only focus on one discipline at a time. A majority of medium ECCs report this to be the case (55.5%), although less than a quarter of small ECCs indicate this to be true. Indeed, in small ECCs, fully 76.0 percent of dispatch positions are working with multiple disciplines at one time compared to 44.5 percent of medium ECCs and just 8.3 percent of large ECCs. These findings echo those of the 2009 report, where 71.0 percent of large ECCs, 47.0 percent of medium ECCs, and 17.0 percent of small ECCs had their dispatch positions handle only one discipline at a time.

It is clear from the data that there is a strong positive relationship between increasing ECC size and increasing rates of specialization. Given the data on the quantity of disciplines covered by ECCs and the divergent rates of specialization within ECCs of different sizes, it is important to examine the quantity of units that PSTs handle at a given time to determine the average workload for the dispatch position.

There are statistically significant differences between the average workloads of the dispatch position across ECCs of different sizes. PSTs at large ECCs handle a higher proportion of both law enforcement units and fire units at once, averaging 26 and 14, respectively. PSTs in medium ECCs average 16 law enforcement units and 11 fire units at once, and PSTs in small ECCs average just 8 law enforcement units and 5 fire units at once.

ECC size is not significantly related to the number of primary or secondary radio channels managed.

<b>Medium ECC Comparison</b>	<b>Data from RETAINS 2018 Report</b>	<b>Your Emergency Communications Center</b>
Number of Primary Radio Channels per PST	3	6
Number of Secondary Radio Channels per PST	3	5
Average number of Law Enforcement Units monitored per PST	16	5
Average number of Fire / EMS Units monitored per PST	11	5

**Following is a comparison of the data from the 2009 RETAINS NG Study and the 2018 RETAINS Report Dispatcher workload reported by ECC Directors of Medium ECCS**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2018</b>
Average law enforcement units a dispatcher handles at one time	28	16
Average fire/EMS units a dispatcher handles at one time	25	11
Number of primary radio channels a dispatcher is responsible for	3	3
Number of secondary radio channels a dispatcher is responsible for	5	3
Number of voice transactions required to see an incident through for law enforcement	7	N/A
Number of voice transactions required to see an incident through for fire or EMS	8	N/A
Total number of radio transactions per hour	260	N/A




## Appendix I – Master Photolog

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• 625 Timberwolf Parkway, Kalispell, MT</li><li>• Building exterior</li><li>• FECC is located inside the facility</li><li>• This is a shared facility</li><li>• Brick and Mortar building</li></ul>	 A wide-angle photograph of the FECC Headquarters building. The building is a two-story structure with a mix of brick and mortar. A large American flag and a smaller Flathead County flag fly on a tall pole in front of the building. A radio tower is visible in the background against a blue sky with scattered clouds. The building's name "FLATHEAD COUNTY SHERIFF & EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER" is visible on the upper part of the facade.


Description:	Photo No: 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Front of building</li><li>• Far left side</li><li>• CCTV cameras mounted on building corners</li></ul>	 A close-up photograph of the front of the FECC building, focusing on the far left side. The image shows the brick and mortar facade, a window with a dark frame, and a corner where a CCTV camera is mounted. The building's name "FLATHEAD COUNTY SHERIFF & EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER" and the number "911" are visible on the upper part of the wall. A date stamp "April 31, 2024" is present in the bottom left corner of the photo.


Assessment Date: May 14 – May 16, 2024

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)




Description:	Photo No: 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Front of building - Far right side</li><li>• Antenna tower adjacent to the building</li><li>• Roadway leading to vehicle access gate</li><li>• Vehicle parking slots visible</li></ul>	 <p>April 11, 2024</p> A photograph showing the front of the FECC Headquarters building, a two-story structure with a mix of brick and stone. A tall antenna tower stands adjacent to the building. A paved roadway leads to a vehicle access gate, and several parking slots are visible in the foreground. A white car is parked in the foreground. The sky is clear and blue.


Description:	Photo No: 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Front side of building visible</li><li>• Antenna tower adjacent to the building</li><li>• Roadway leading to vehicle access gate</li><li>• Vehicle parking slots visible</li></ul>	 <p>April 11, 2024</p> A photograph showing the front side of the FECC Headquarters building, a two-story structure with a mix of brick and stone. A tall antenna tower stands adjacent to the building. A paved roadway leads to a vehicle access gate, and several parking slots are visible in the foreground. A red car is parked in the foreground. The sky is clear and blue.

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)




Description:	Photo No: 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Vehicle bays visible far left – Brick and mortar bldg.</li><li>• Roadway leading to vehicle drive-thru gate</li><li>• Vehicle drive-thru gate is access controlled (see arrow)</li><li>• Vehicle parking slots visible</li></ul>	 <p>April 11, 2024</p> A wide-angle photograph showing a paved asphalt driveway leading to a fenced-in area. A yellow arrow points towards a gate in the distance. In the background, a brick building and several vehicles are visible under a clear blue sky.


Description:	Photo No: 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Vehicle drive-thru gate is access controlled (see arrow)</li><li>• Access control card reader</li><li>• Vehicle parking slots visible</li></ul>	 <p>April 11, 2024</p> A close-up photograph of an access control system. A yellow arrow points to a card reader mounted on a black metal post. Two yellow bollards are visible in the foreground. A silver car is parked behind a chain-link fence in the background.

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Antenna tower located adjacent to the building</li><li>• Top of the building visible</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p> A photograph showing a tall, lattice-structured antenna tower with several satellite dishes. The tower is positioned next to a multi-story building with a light-colored stone or brick facade. The sky is clear blue with a few wispy clouds. A date stamp "April 10, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.

Description:	Photo No: 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Rear of vehicle bay building</li><li>• Antenna tower visible in the distance</li><li>• Tree blocking view</li><li>• A portion of the emergency generator is visible</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p> A photograph showing the rear of a building with a stone or brick facade. A white generator unit is visible on the left side of the building. In the background, a tall antenna tower is visible, partially obscured by a tree. The ground is grassy and there are some bushes. A date stamp "April 10, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.


Assessment Date: May 14 – May 16, 2024




# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)




Description:	Photo No: 9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Vehicle bay building</li><li>• Emergency generator is visible</li><li>• CCTV located on the corner of the building</li></ul>	


Description:	Photo No: 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Main entrance to building</li><li>• Door is access controlled</li><li>• HID smart card reader - wall switch keypad Card reader visible - mounted on the wall adjacent to entry door</li><li>• CCTV cameras mounted near the ceiling on the wall</li><li>• Knox box mounted above the card reader</li></ul>	

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)




Description:	Photo No: 11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• The area shown is beyond the main entry door (shown in photo 10)</li><li>• Inside, another entry door is visible</li><li>• Access through the door leads to another door entry point</li><li>• Part of the restroom shown (left side)</li></ul>	 <p>April 11, 2024</p>

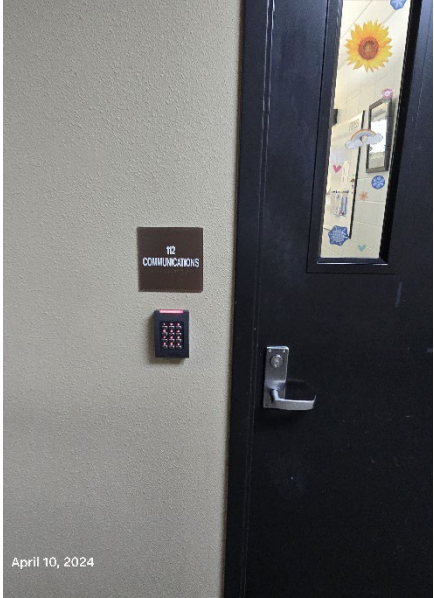
Description:	Photo No: 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Door visible controls access into main facility work offices to include the ECC</li><li>• HID smart card reader - wall switch keypad installed on wall adjacent to door strike - push bar</li><li>• Doorway controls access further into the facility</li></ul>	 <p>April 11, 2024</p>

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Closer view of the HID smart card reader - wall switch keypad installed on wall adjacent to door strike push handle</li><li>• Controls access into main facility work offices to include the ECC</li></ul>	 <p>A close-up photograph of a black HID smart card reader keypad mounted on a light-colored, textured wall. The keypad has a grid of red-lit buttons and a small green indicator light at the top. A date stamp "April 11, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.</p>


Description:	Photo No: 14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Beyond doorway shown in photo 12</li><li>• Access door to the ECC (right side)</li><li>• HID smart card reader - wall switch keypad installed on wall adjacent to door</li><li>• The door is labeled "112 Communications"</li></ul>	 <p>A photograph of a dark door with a silver handle. To the left of the door, a black sign reads "112 COMMUNICATIONS". Below the sign is a black HID smart card reader keypad. A window in the door shows a sun sticker and other decorations. A date stamp "April 10, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.</p>

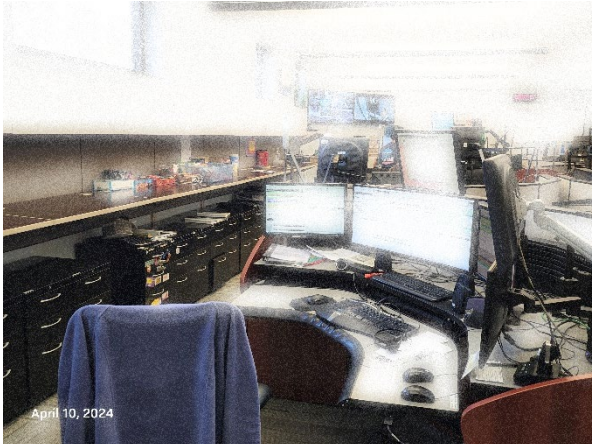


# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• PST working at one dispatch console position</li><li>• Work position located near second entry point into the ECC</li><li>• *Photo blurred for censorship of security cameras</li></ul>	 A photograph showing a person sitting at a dispatch console in a control room. The person is wearing a white shirt and is viewed from behind. The room contains several computer monitors and equipment. The photo is intentionally blurred to protect security. A date stamp in the bottom left corner reads "April 09, 2024".

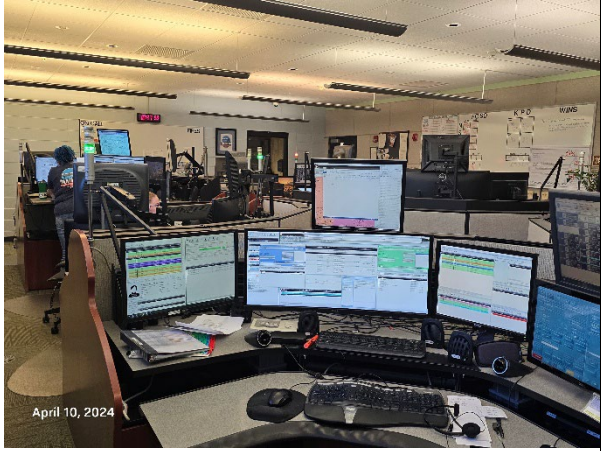
Description:	Photo No: 16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Another PST dispatch console position</li><li>• Work position located near the first entry point into the ECC</li><li>• *Photo blurred for censorship of security cameras</li></ul>	 A photograph of a dispatch console in a control room. The console is equipped with multiple computer monitors and a keyboard. A blue jacket is draped over the back of the chair in the foreground. The photo is blurred for security. A date stamp in the bottom left corner reads "April 10, 2024".

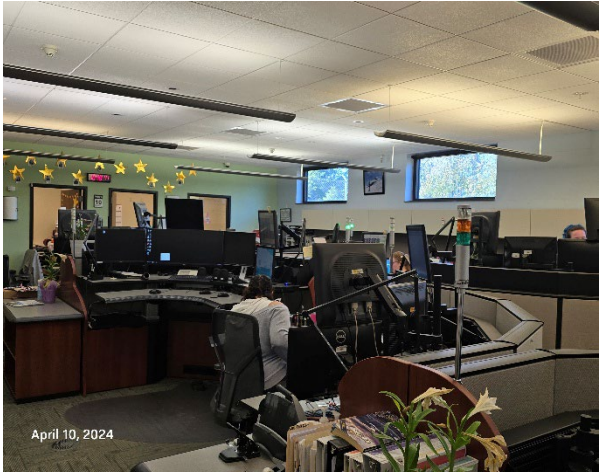
Description:	Photo No: 17
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# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)




<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Same PST dispatch console position shown in photo 16</li><li>• View looks across the room to the second door entry point into the ECC (far left corner)</li><li>• Work position located near first door entry point into the ECC</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p>
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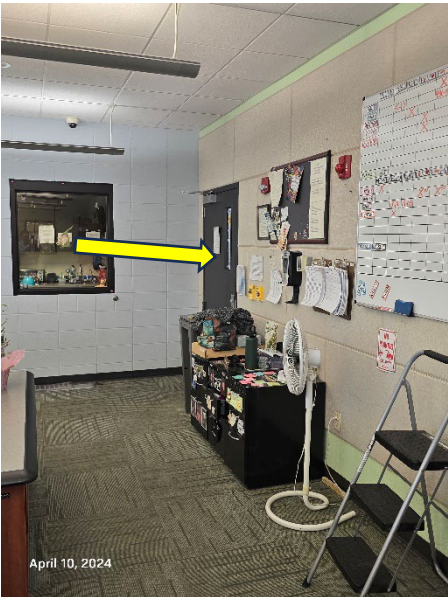
Description:	Photo No: 18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• View looks across the room near the second door entry point into the ECC</li><li>• Center work position occupied by a trainee</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p>

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Entry door to ECC shown (see arrow)</li><li>• Entry door closest to the main entrance to the facility</li><li>• Storage cabinet and file cabinets shown</li></ul>	 A photograph of an interior office space. On the left is a tall, dark wood storage cabinet with a potted plant on top. To its right are several black file cabinets. A yellow arrow points to a dark door in the background. The walls are light green, and the floor is covered in a patterned carpet. A date stamp "April 10, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.


Description:	Photo No: 20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Entry door to ECC shown (see arrow)</li><li>• Entry door furthest from the main entrance to the facility</li><li>• File cabinets shown</li></ul>	 A photograph of an interior office space. In the foreground, there are black file cabinets and a desk area. A yellow arrow points to a dark door in the background. The walls are light green, and the floor is covered in a patterned carpet. A date stamp "April 10, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.

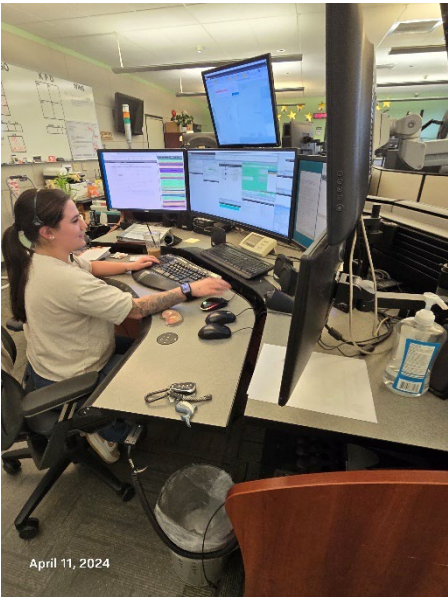


# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



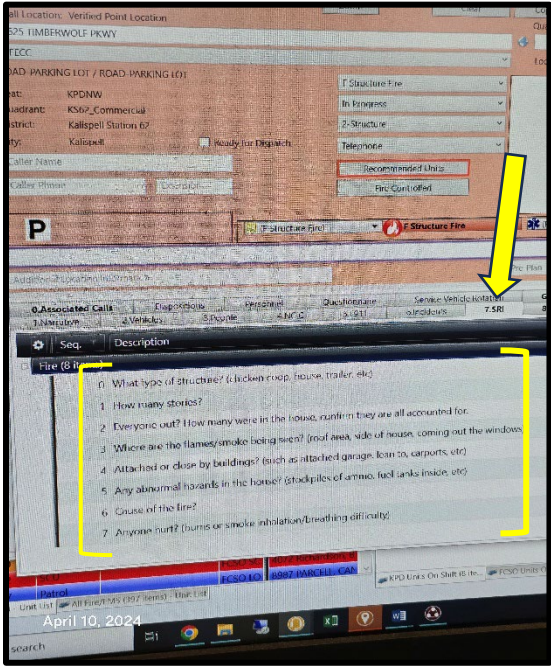
Description:	Photo No: 21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Back of dispatch console work position</li><li>• Status indicator light shown (green light)</li><li>• Light changes automatically when PSTs are on a call – three colors (red, yellow, green) are used to display the status of a call</li><li>• Status indicator lights are located at each console position</li></ul>	

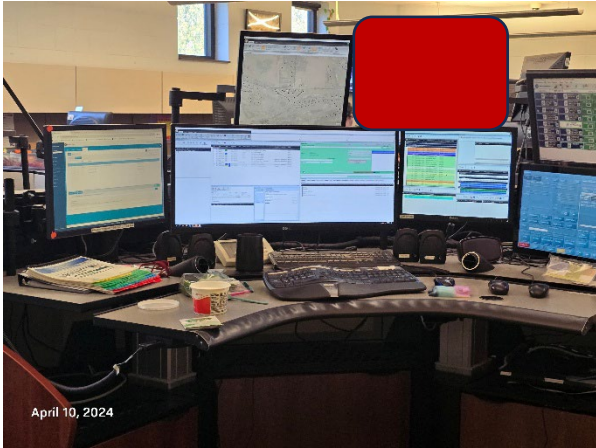
Description:	Photo No: 22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Typical dispatch console position layout</li><li>• Each position is redundant with access to all mission-critical systems (CAD, 911 CPE, radio, GIS mapping)</li><li>• All console work positions are adjustable for sit or stand operation.</li></ul>	

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



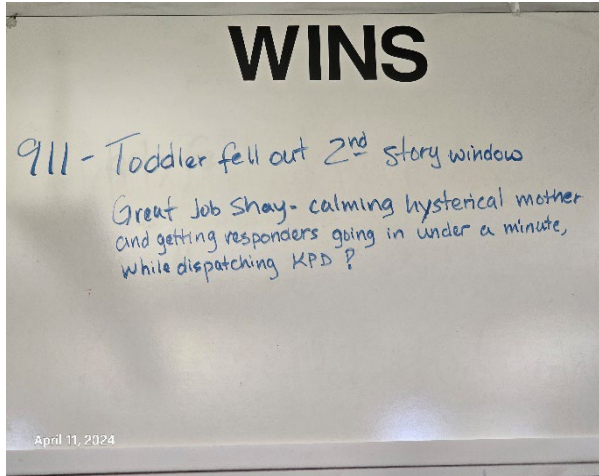
Description:	Photo No: 23
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of CAD Calls for Service (CFS) window</li><li>• Typical layout of CFS window</li><li>• The Special Response Instruction (SRI) tab is selected and shown (yellow arrow)</li><li>• SRI tabs have been created for fire response and contain instructions for the PST to follow (inside yellow brackets)</li><li>• No criteria-based guide card information (LE,FD, EMS) is available in the CFS window only SRI information</li><li>• There are a number of helpful tabs available to the PST</li></ul>	

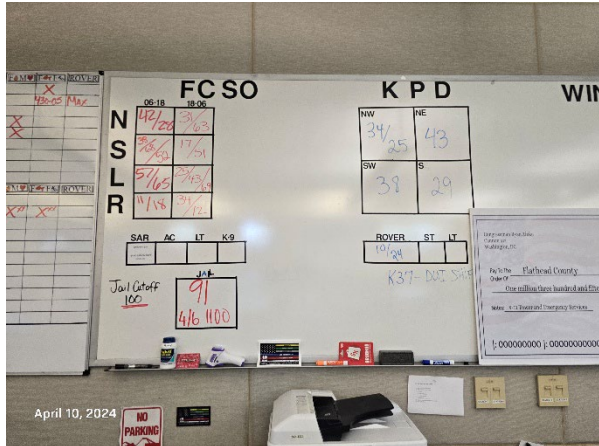
Description:	Photo No: 24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of a typical dispatch console work position</li><li>• Each position is completely redundant with no single point of failure</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p> <p>*Photo censored by APCO Program Manager- the agency specifically disapproved of any photo views of the security cameras.</p>

**ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG**

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li> <li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li> <li>• Photo of WINS whiteboard</li> <li>• FECC management uses the board to recognize PSTs that have performed in a commendable manner</li> <li>• Details are written on the WINS board for all to see</li> </ul>	


Description:	Photo No: 26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li> <li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li> <li>• Photo of whiteboard containing beat assignment for FCSO and KPD</li> <li>• Written on the board is the number of field units assigned to each beat</li> <li>• Whiteboard is located on a wall in the ECC</li> </ul>	

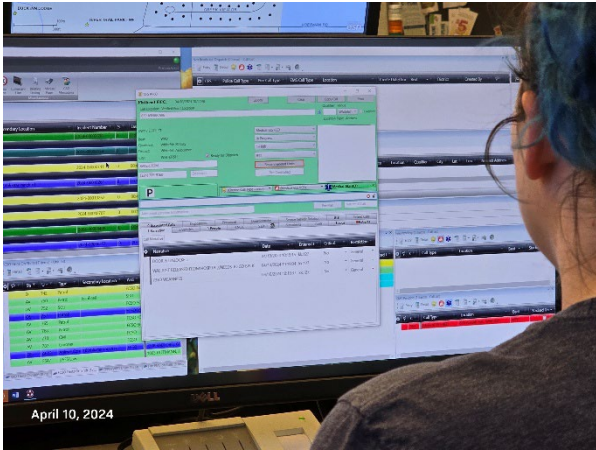


# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)




Description:	Photo No: 27
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of PST working at the dispatch console in a standing position</li><li>• Console is raised to accommodate the standing position</li><li>• Console furniture maker is Evans consoles and furniture was installed in 2010</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p>


Description:	Photo No: 28
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of PST working at the dispatch console in a standing position</li><li>• PST is working call using the CAD system CFS window</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p>

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 29
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of trainee PST working at the dispatch console in a standing position</li><li>• PST is in the call processing phase using the CAD CFS window and phone</li></ul>	 <p>A photograph showing a person from behind, wearing a headset and glasses, working at a dispatch console. The console has two large computer monitors displaying software interfaces. A keyboard and mouse are visible on the desk. The date "April 10, 2024" is printed in the bottom left corner of the photo.</p>


Description:	Photo No: 30
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of countertop with file cabinets located underneath</li><li>• The walkway is narrow in some areas</li></ul>	 <p>A photograph of a narrow walkway in an office. On the right side, there is a long, dark countertop with several file cabinets underneath it. The floor is covered with a patterned carpet. The date "April 10, 2024" is printed in the bottom left corner of the photo.</p>




**ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG**

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)




Description:	Photo No: 31
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of file cabinets and small storage areas located along the wall</li><li>• The walkway is narrow in some areas</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p>

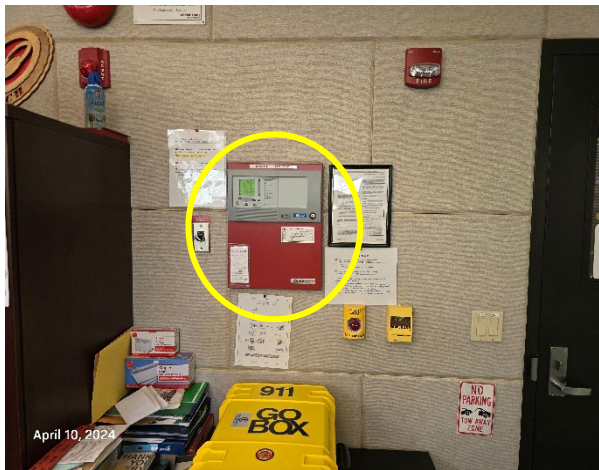
Description:	Photo No: 32
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of lighting used in the center</li><li>• Lights are on a dimmer switch and can be adjusted to the liking of each shift</li><li>• *Photo blurred for censorship of security cameras</li></ul>	

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



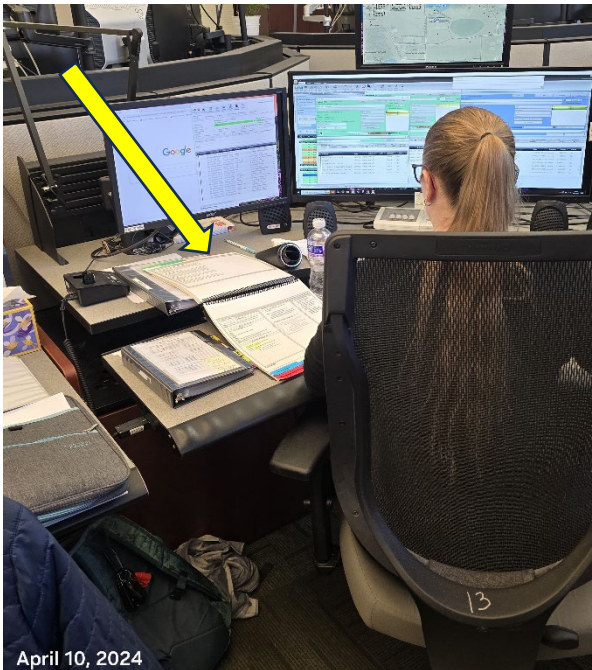
Description:	Photo No: 33
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• ECC has sprinklers, and smoke detectors are located in the center</li></ul>	


Description:	Photo No: 34
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of clean agent release - fire system panel</li><li>• Unit monitor the release of the clean agent in the ECC and adjacent equipment room</li><li>• Procedures for system fire alarm bells are posted next to the panel shown on the lower right side above the two small yellow wall boxes</li></ul>	

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 35
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of PST processing a call using the manual criteria-based guide card system</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p>


Description:	Photo No: 36
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of the emergency generator (yellow arrow) and UPS (blue arrow) annunciators</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p>

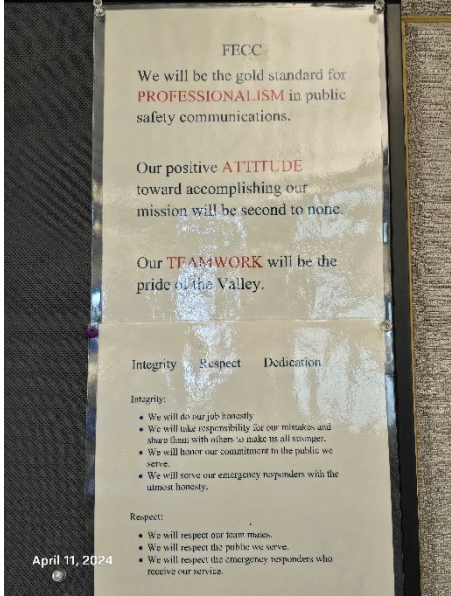
Assessment Date: May 14 – May 16, 2024



**ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG**  
 Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 37
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li> <li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li> <li>• Photo of a treadmill that can be placed at the PST console work position</li> <li>• PST can get their steps in while at work on the job</li> </ul>	

Description:	Photo No: 38
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li> <li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li> <li>• FECC's Vision and Core Values statements</li> <li>• To emphasize these statements, consideration should be given to having these professionally prepared and framed</li> </ul>	

**ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG**

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)




Description:	Photo No: 39
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li> <li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li> <li>• Core values statement</li> <li>• All PSTs should be held to account for the core values of the FECC</li> <li>• No one should be allowed to deviate from them</li> </ul>	<p>The photograph shows a poster with the following text:</p> <p>Integrity    Respect    Dedication</p> <p>Integrity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will do our job honestly</li> <li>• We will take responsibility for our mistakes and share them with others to make us all stronger.</li> <li>• We will honor our commitment to the public we serve.</li> <li>• We will serve our emergency responders with the utmost honesty.</li> </ul> <p>Respect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will respect our team mates.</li> <li>• We will respect the public we serve.</li> <li>• We will respect the emergency responders who receive our service.</li> </ul> <p>Dedication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will be devoted to our mission.</li> <li>• We will be devoted to our public.</li> <li>• We will be devoted to our team.</li> <li>• We will be devoted to our county.</li> </ul> <p>April 11, 2024</p>


Description:	Photo No: 40
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li> <li>• Inside ECC operations floor</li> <li>• Vision statement</li> <li>• All PSTs should be held to account for the vision of the FECC</li> <li>• No one should be allowed to deviate from them</li> </ul>	<p>The photograph shows a poster with the following text:</p> <p>FECC</p> <p>We will be the gold standard for <b>PROFESSIONALISM</b> in public safety communications.</p> <p>Our positive <b>ATTITUDE</b> toward accomplishing our mission will be second to none.</p> <p>Our <b>TEAMWORK</b> will be the pride of the Valley.</p> <p>Integrity    Respect    Dedication</p> <p>April 11, 2024</p> <p>Integrity:</p>

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)




Description:	Photo No: 41
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Outside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• A quiet room is available for the PSTs</li><li>• Room is marked #120</li></ul>	 <p>April 09, 2024</p>

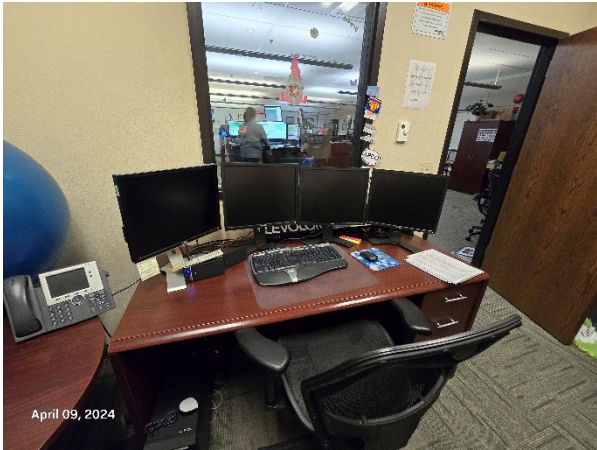
Description:	Photo No: 42
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Outside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo gives a snapshot of the inside of the quiet room</li></ul>	 <p>April 09, 2024</p>

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 43
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Outside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of the 9-1-1 Center Directors office</li></ul>	 <p>A photograph showing the interior of the 9-1-1 Center Directors office. The room is viewed through a glass door with a decorative pattern. Inside, there is a desk with a computer monitor, a chair, and various office supplies. A date stamp "April 09, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.</p>

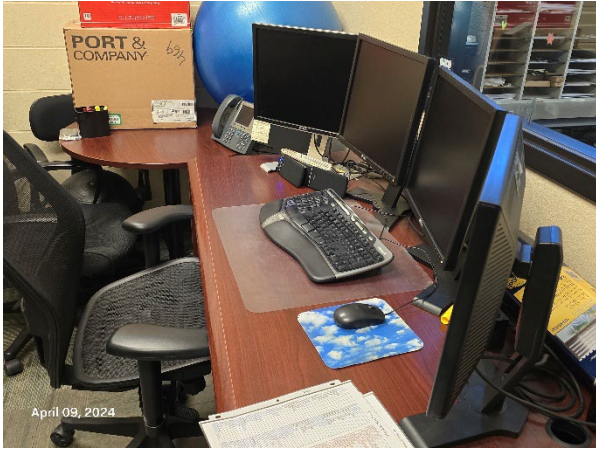
Description:	Photo No: 44
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo shows the training room which contains a mock workstation with access to CAD</li><li>• The room is quite small but can accommodate up to 3 people comfortably</li></ul>	 <p>A photograph of a training room mock workstation. The desk is equipped with multiple computer monitors, a keyboard, and a mouse. A blue exercise ball is visible on the left side of the desk. The room is small and appears to be used for training purposes. A date stamp "April 09, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.</p>

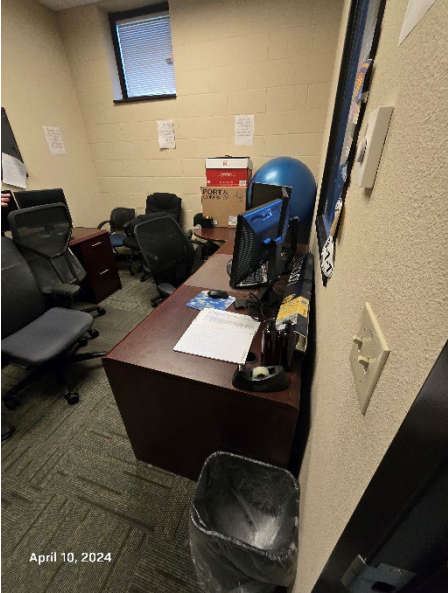


# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)




Description:	Photo No: 45
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Inside the training room</li><li>• Photo shows the mock workstation with access to CAD</li><li>• Room appears to be used for storage</li><li>• Consideration should be given to removing all non-training related items from this room and stored elsewhere</li></ul>	 <p>A photograph of a workstation in a training room. The desk is cluttered with multiple computer monitors, a keyboard, a mouse, and various papers. A blue exercise ball is visible in the background. A date stamp in the bottom left corner of the photo reads "April 09, 2024".</p>


Description:	Photo No: 46
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Inside the training room</li><li>• Photo gives another perspective of the training room and how small it is</li></ul>	 <p>A photograph showing a different view of the training room. It shows a desk with a computer monitor and a chair. The room appears small and cluttered. A date stamp in the bottom left corner of the photo reads "April 10, 2024".</p>

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 47
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside the vehicle maintenance bay</li><li>• Photo is of the new CPE equipment that is to be installed in May 2024</li></ul>	 <p>A photograph showing a large, black, rectangular piece of equipment, likely a backup radio base station, wrapped in clear plastic and secured with blue straps. It is sitting on a wooden pallet in a vehicle maintenance bay. The background shows various tools, equipment, and a concrete floor. A date stamp "April 09, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.</p>

Description:	Photo No: 48
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of backup radio base stations located on the countertop nearest to the emergency generator and UPS annunciator panels</li></ul>	 <p>A photograph showing several pieces of backup radio base station equipment, including a DuraComm unit, on a dark wood countertop. A brown fire extinguisher is visible in the background. A date stamp "April 10, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.</p>


Assessment Date: May 14 – May 16, 2024

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 49
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Wide screen monitor used to display live CCTV camera footage</li><li>• Camera views are of the FECC facility interior and exterior</li><li>• CCTV cameras are stationary and not pan/tilt/zoom controlled as they were in the past</li></ul>	<p>*Photo removed by APCO Program Manager- the agency specifically disapproved of any photo views of the security cameras. Photo available on request.</p>

Description:	Photo No: 50
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Outside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Inside the equipment room</li><li>• A number of equipment racks are shown</li><li>• The SOW did not include a technology assessment, so not as much emphasis was placed on the equipment in this room</li></ul>	 <p>The photograph shows a long, narrow aisle in a server room. On the left side, there are several rows of black server racks. The racks are filled with various pieces of equipment, and a large number of colorful cables (blue, yellow, red, green) are visible, some hanging from the top of the racks. The floor is covered with a light-colored, perforated metal grating. On the right side, there are more racks and a wall with some equipment. A date stamp "April 10, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.</p>

**ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG**

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 51
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li> <li>• Outside of the ECC operations floor</li> <li>• Inside the equipment room</li> <li>• Photo of the display panel for 1 of 2 USP units</li> <li>• UPS unit is made by Eaton (Powerware 9390)</li> </ul>	


Description:	Photo No: 52
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inside FECC Headquarters building</li> <li>• Outside of the ECC operations floor</li> <li>• Inside the equipment room</li> <li>• Photo of the FM-200 clean agent fire suppressant cylinder for Class A, B, and C fires</li> </ul>	

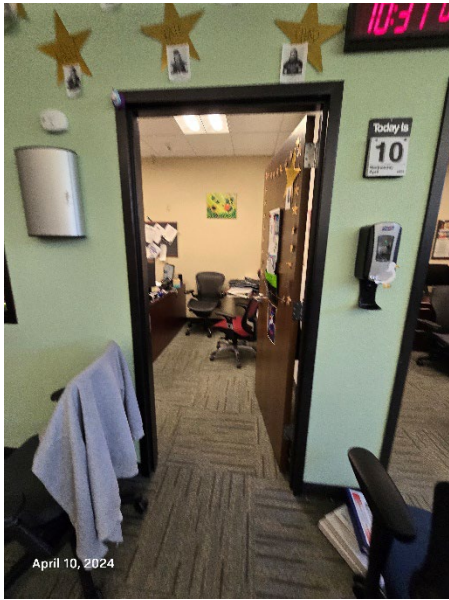


# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)




Description:	Photo No: 53
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Outside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Inside the equipment room</li><li>• Photo of the FM-200 clean agent fire suppressant tube</li><li>• We were advised of an activation of the system in this room. One can see the discoloration of the ceiling panels near the tube</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p> A photograph of a ceiling in an equipment room. A yellow arrow points to a vertical metal tube (the FM-200 clean agent fire suppressant tube) extending from the ceiling. The ceiling panels around the tube show signs of discoloration. A date stamp "April 10, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.


Description:	Photo No: 54
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of the 9-1-1 Training and Quality Assurance Coordinators office entry point</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p> A photograph showing the entry point to an office. The walls are light green and decorated with gold stars. A doorway leads into an office area with desks and chairs. A date stamp "April 10, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 55
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of the 9-1-1 Training and Quality Assurance Coordinators office - inside view</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p> A photograph showing an office interior. A person is standing behind a desk with two computer monitors. The room contains a large wooden cabinet, a desk with a red chair, and various office supplies. A date stamp "April 10, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.

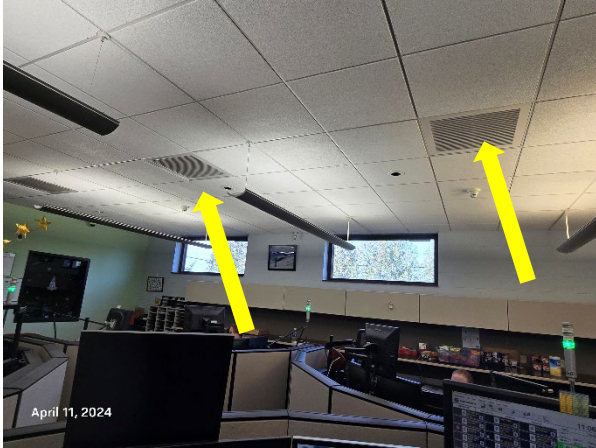
Assessment Date:	Photo No: 56
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of a vent cover located on the ceiling area of the ECC</li><li>• All vents in the ECC contained visible dirt on the surface and should be cleaned as soon as reasonably possible</li><li>• Not doing so could lead to allergies and colds experienced by the PST</li><li>• The ducts should be examined and cleaned, as applicable</li></ul>	 <p>April 11, 2024</p> A close-up photograph of a rectangular vent cover on a ceiling. The vent cover has a grid pattern and appears to have some dirt or debris on its surface. A date stamp "April 11, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.


Assessment Date: May 14 – May 16, 2024

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 57
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Another photo of the vent covers located in the ceiling area of the ECC</li><li>• All vents in the ECC contained visible dirt on the surface and should be cleaned as soon as reasonably possible</li></ul>	 <p>April 11, 2024</p> A photograph of the FECC operations floor ceiling. Two yellow arrows point to square vent covers on the ceiling. The room contains several computer workstations with monitors and keyboards. A date stamp "April 11, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.


Description:	Photo No: 58
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of the equipment cabinet for the dispatch work console</li><li>• Equipment cabinets view contained a lot of dust material on top and inside where computer hardware is located.</li><li>• This type of dust is not good for electronics or people</li><li>• All dispatch console equipment cabinets inside and outside should be cleaned at regular intervals satisfactory to FECC leadership</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p> A photograph showing the underside of a dispatch console. The equipment cabinet is open, revealing a dense network of blue and black cables and various electronic components. A date stamp "April 10, 2024" is visible in the bottom left corner of the photo.

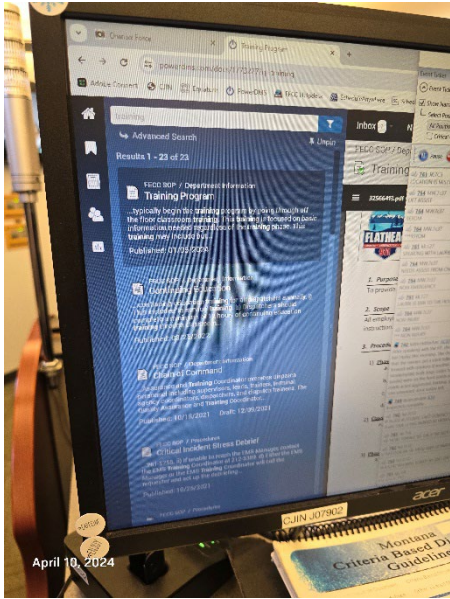


# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 59
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside the FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo of the equipment cabinet for the dispatch work console</li><li>• Equipment cabinets view contained a lot of dust material on top and inside where computer hardware is located.</li><li>• This type of dust is not good for electronics or people</li><li>• These equipment cabinets are located at every console position and should be inspected and cleaned.</li></ul>	


Description:	Photo No: 60
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside FECC Headquarters building</li><li>• Inside of the ECC operations floor</li><li>• Photo PowerDMS which is accessible at the PSTs workstation</li><li>• PowerDMS is used to house SOP and training information</li></ul>	


Assessment Date: May 14 – May 16, 2024

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)




Description:	Photo No: 61
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Photo of the backup ECC which is located close to the downtown area of Kalispell, MT</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p>


Description:	Photo No: 62
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Backup ECC which is located close to the downtown area of Kalispell, MT</li><li>• Photo of the entry door to the building</li><li>• Card reader was not working during site visit</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p>

# ACS ONSITE -- MASTER PHOTO LOG

Flathead County Emergency Communications Center (FECC)



Description:	Photo No: 63
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside of backup ECC</li><li>• The photo is of the door entry point into the ECC</li><li>• Access to the area marked 'Dispatch' is not badge access-controlled. The entrance to this area was by analog key. *FECC advised after this site visit that the analog key is no longer in use and has been integrated into the badge system</li><li>• Also consider having a site security assessment conducted of this facility and mitigate any potential risk identified</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p> A photograph showing a doorway leading into a room. On the wall to the right of the doorway is a fire alarm pull station and a sign that says "DISPATCH". The room beyond the doorway contains desks with computers and other office equipment.

Description:	Photo No: 64
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inside of backup ECC</li><li>• Photo is of the inside of the backup ECC</li><li>• The operations floor is being put together and this facility will be available soon</li></ul>	 <p>April 10, 2024</p> A wide-angle photograph of an office space. Several desks are arranged in the room, each with a computer monitor and office chair. The room has a carpeted floor and fluorescent lighting on the ceiling.

Assessment Date: May 14 – May 16, 2024