Fall 2016

Call Taking Basics for Emergency Services – Police Communications

Natalie (Tally) Wade
Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Alice Macpherson
Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Answering the Call

Call Taking Basics for Emergency Services
Police Communication

KPU

Table of Contents

POLICE CALL TAKER ROLES AND DUTIES

Roles of a Police Call Taker

Think about your own dealings with a company you have called on the telephone. Who is the first person that you speak with (when you're not dealing with voicemail)? The people on the other end of the telephone represent their company and the customer or client gets their first impressions about the company through these front line call takers.

Call takers in police agencies have to use many skills to be able to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands of being the first person to whom the public speaks when they call an emergency number.

As a call taker in any setting, you are not always going to talk to the most pleasant and cheerful telephone callers. Since most people call public safety communication centres to report emergencies, crimes or complaints, they are often emotional or angry when they call. Some emergency call takers describe their work as hours of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer panic. They can also view the work as hours of mundane complaints punctuated by the "Big Call".

Police call takers are the public's first contact with a police agency in both emergency and non-emergency incidents, and therefore must act in a professional manner, maintain conversational control and be empathic. They must obtain the correct address and other incident information in a timely manner so that police response units can be dispatched appropriately.

Often, calls received by a police communications centre constitute the beginning of an investigation. The accurate details obtained and recorded by the initial call taker can greatly assist the police officer in doing their jobs. A professional demeanour is of the utmost importance when dealing with the public and others over the telephone.

Duties of a Police Call Taker

When the police call taker reports for their shift, they must be ready to go on time and prepared to function. This means having the proper supplies (headset, pens, notebook etc.) and the knowledge to operate the communications equipment in the centre.

Use Appropriate Phone Manner:

- Answer phone promptly with agency name
- Display conversational control, empathy, flexibility
- Obtain validation to support the location provided by the caller, i.e. ANI/ALI information, Cross street, Call back telephone number, etc.
- Maintain a professional and calm demeanor throughout the incident.

Obtain Critical Information:

- Quickly and accurately determine the address or location of the event.
- Cross streets and other directions
- Obtain Third Party Information
- Callers Name, Phone Number, Address
- Interrogate the caller using effective questioning techniques to establish the risk to public and officer safety.

Information

Call takers are required to thoroughly interview the complainant / victim to gain additional information that may assist the dispatcher and field units in determining their level of response to the call. During incidents in progress, the call taker is required to keep the caller on the line in order to keep agency personnel continuously updated on the current status of events occurring at the scene, especially with regard to any change in, or escalation of, the incident.

The call taker, acting as a member of the communications team, will ensure that the information passed along to personnel attending at the scene is as complete and accurate as possible. The call taker will assist other communicators as required and be aware of the policies and procedures applicable to his or her agency. The call taker will accurately record information about individuals, incidents and support agencies involved in the call.

Pass Information to Dispatcher

Ensure that the information gets handed over to the dispatcher in a timely manner, either manually or electronically. In many cases this will mean sending the information as soon as you are aware that this is a high priority call, but before you have all the details. Supplementary information can be passed on to update field units responding to an incident.

Allocate Resources

It is necessary to determine, on an incident by incident basis, what information is "primary" or necessary in-order to "categorize" the incident for dispatch. You will need to do this quickly to minimize the delay in the initial dispatch of field units.

Initiate the "Incident for Dispatch" by categorizing the incident by the appropriate incident priority code that ensures sufficient response is sent.

- What needs to be taken care of right away.
- Where is the problem?
- Severity.
- Best use of resources.

Support Dispatcher/Field Units

Other people, such as the support dispatcher and the field units, are also part of the dispatching equation. Everyone must operate as a team to pass information and otherwise support the dispatcher and supervisor.

You are part of a team which consists of other call takers, dispatchers and supervisors within your work environment. Each person you work with, will have knowledge and skills unique to themselves. Team members can observe each other's techniques and learn from them.

Count on your team members during heavy workload, during times of stress or with difficult calls or callers. Never be afraid to ask for help in situations. Conversely, be there to help your co-workers. In emergency call taking, the consequences of incorrect actions can have tragic results. Do not let pride or ignorance stand in the way of asking for assistance. Do not let laziness stand in the way of helping others.

BASICS OF CALL PROCESSING

Flexibility Required of Call Takers

Flexibility refers to the call taker's ability to adapt to changing situations, environments and callers. These changes must be accomplished in an efficient, professional and swift manner. Flexibility is a crucial attribute in effective call takers. When dealing with the dynamics of an emergency call, you as a call taker will be required to adapt to difficult situations while under great amounts of stress.

Flexibility and an open mind allow you to recognize and respond to important circumstances. Consider a routine prowler call in which a caller hears noises outside his or her residence. This situation could escalate into a burglary or sexual assault. You will be required to obtain and disseminate all the pertinent information while keeping the caller calm, *yourself calm* and answering demanding questions from the dispatcher and field units. Without the ability to adapt quickly to dynamic situations, the call taker is ineffective and a liability to the section.

A call taker must also be able to rebound from an emotional priority call to handling a routine inquiry or complaint. The call taker must do this without showing signs of the previous turmoil. The caller with a routine call is worthy of the same level of professionalism and courtesy as those in life-threatening encounters. Each caller to your agency should be left with the impression that his or her call is as important to you as it is to them.

On occasion, a call taker may be particularly affected by a traumatic incident, or a situation for some reason may have a devastating effect on the call taker. Often these situations are unpredictable. It is important for the call taker to recognize that should this happen, co-workers should be immediately alerted to the situation and that arrangements may be made for the call taker to take a break if possible. However, there will be times when this is not possible due to immediate workload and centre demand. If the effect of an incident is such that a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing is required, it is important for all personnel to know that this kind of assistance is available in most public safety agencies. On occasion, the entire shift will be offered a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing.

The call taker's job is multi-tasked, and runs the gamut from the tedious to the full-scale disaster. The workload will vary greatly in volume and intensity. This work environment will contain its own internal stresses and challenges as each employee deals with the different personalities of their team of co-workers. Flexibility is a critical ability which enables the call taker to be an effective support in any situation and in any environment.

Empathy in Call Taking

Empathy is the ability to understand, as one's own, the feelings of another person. It is being aware of and sensitive to the feelings, thoughts and experiences of others. A call taker's capacity for empathy is the first link in connecting with the caller and the caller's emotions.

Most callers have never contacted 9-1-1 or an emergency service before, nor have they had the need to. Many are victims of a crime or situation beyond their control and are in a highly agitated emotional state. They have initiated contact to seek help or information and may be confused as to the service they require, or the information they need to provide. They want help but they may not know the process they must follow to get it. The call taker is expected to provide the answers they are seeking.

For a public safety communications call taker, empathy is the ability to understand the caller's situation at that moment, especially in an emergency 9-1-1 call.

- Did the caller just wake up from a deep sleep? Is he or she disoriented?
- Is the caller overcome by emotions? Has a car struck his or her child, or is the child ill, or lost?
- Is the caller in shock? Was he or she directly involved in the emergency situation? Assaulted? In a car accident?

Empathy is the ability to relate to the caller and to establish rapport. When you have established rapport, you will be better able to determine the reason for the call and to find a solution. Once the call taker to begins to understand the reason for the call, they can identify the problem behind it, and seek a solution to the caller's dilemma. Empathy is a vital link in establishing a line of communication with the caller to facilitate obtaining the information required to render assistance.

Professionalism in Call Taking

Professionalism is a standard of conduct within an industry. The call taker must maintain a standard that is equal to other groups within the system of which they are part. The call taker creates the first impression the caller has of the service they require. They may be the first contact the caller has with a law-enforcement agency and will be judged against those same high standards. The call taker is responsible for ensuring that the caller's initial contact with the police agency is a professional and positive one. The caller will judge the agency on the basis of his or her experience with the call taker. The call taker's professional conduct should reassure callers that their problems, whatever their nature, will be given the agency's full attention. Conversely, if callers perceive that they have been unprofessionally in any way, they may assume the entire organization to be equally unprofessional.

It is important to maintain high professional standards at all times. The caller has contacted the agency for help with a problem. Each caller deserves to have their problem taken seriously and given the call taker's full professional attention. If there

is any doubt about how to behave, ask yourself what kind of treatment you would appreciate if you were the caller.

A professional phone manner will help to calm the caller and, in doing so, enable the call taker to get the required information. Many callers are upset or confused and looking for reassurance that help is on the way or that a solution to their problem is imminent. As a representative of your agency, your initial phone contact may play a part, positive or negative, when contact is made between the field unit and the caller. Another point to consider is that the quality of the exchange between caller and call taker may affect the level of cooperation that the field units receive when they arrive on the scene.

For example, a rude or hostile exchange between the call taker and the caller may result in a lack of cooperation with the attending field resources. Always consider that a caller may be a witness to a criminal offence. The caller's cooperation may be required, not only at the scene, but later, by follow-up investigators or in court. Another point to consider is that the quality of the exchange between caller and call taker may affect the level of cooperation that the field units receive when they arrive on the scene.

Knowledgeable

A call taker should be knowledgeable about *equipment* and about *the job itself*.

The equipment used by a call taker includes the telephone, headset, CAD terminal, and other pieces. Knowledge of how to operate the equipment used by your agency is essential. Becoming familiar with all aspects of how to operate the equipment will prevent some panic when you need to do something fast. Know how to transfer calls, how to conference them, how to use speaker phones, how to hold calls, dialing capabilities, and so on. Know where the manuals for the equipment are and what to do in case of equipment failure, power loss or other interruptions.

Knowledge of the job itself includes geographical knowledge of the area your agency services, as well as of mapping, major streets, intersections, shopping malls, hospitals, other needed services, and how to direct someone. The professional call taker never makes assumptions. As a call taker, you must have information that is current and correct and be able to apply it correctly to the situation at hand. You will be required to be knowledgeable about the Standard Operating Procedures or Guidelines (SOP / SOG), and Policy and Procedure manuals of your agencies. There is also the need to know about local conditions, geography, bylaws, civil and criminal law as they relate to your department. The call taker must be able to answer questions with factual information, and direct callers to the appropriate agencies or departments. Respond to questions that you are qualified to answer within the scope of your duties, and pass on others to the appropriate persons and sections. You do not have to memorize all details, but if you do not know the answers, know where to find them. Do not make something up just to pacify a caller for the moment; your

misleading information may come back to haunt you or your agency. Do not misdirect someone out of ignorance or pride.

If you need to put a caller on hold for any reason, explain to him or her what you are doing and why, and then make the interruption brief. Do not be afraid to admit that you are not sure about something, but make it your mission to find out. If you do not know, ask. The caller benefits and you benefit by gaining more knowledge.

You will be required to perform with equal efficiency using both a manual or fully automated system. *To be an effective call taker, you must be an effective communicator!*

FRAMEWORK FOR WORKING TOGETHER

What Are We Doing?

Core Values

Your personal beliefs are the core values that affect and drive how you look at the world, your behaviour in the world and your interaction with others. They are how you do "business" with the rest of the world. In other words, they are the basis for everything that you are and do. These beliefs about appropriate behaviours, attitudes and strategies also guide every working group and need to be explicit and understood.

Mandate

It is useful to know what you are expected to do in a group situation. This is often delivered or requested from an administrative or political level and appears in the form of a "job description". The group which is mandated may not be able to effect the general outline of the mandate. The context in which the group operates has critical effects on what can be done.

Identifying a Mission Statement

A mission statement embodies the group's current purpose and intent and answers (within the mandate of the group) questions such as: What are we about? Why are we working together? What do we want to achieve? It describes the business that you are in. This may be a statement developed by the whole organization or it may be more localized in a department, program, class, work group or individually. It gives direction to actions. Without knowing your mission, you may not be able to get started.

Developing Shared Vision

Vision is a future oriented statement of a group's purpose in a task, project or work team. Having the members shared a vision that aligns with their personal values and aspirations is a solid basis for production. Time spent at the beginning in dreaming and discussing what the final result will be is time well spent. If it is not possible to have a shared vision of the end product and the goals and milestones that must be reached then the group may also have difficulty identifying whether they have accomplished their purpose.

Sometimes, when the project is open ended or ongoing, the final product cannot be totally "visioned" at the beginning. A shared vision will then be one that all of the group members agree are the elements of where they want to get at this time and the direction that they will start moving towards to achieve these elements.

Visions should be revisited and refined over time. If the group is not heading in the same direction, then it may not get anywhere.

Determining Appropriate Goals

What are the individual tasks and goals that will build to making your vision manifest? Goals lead towards the realization of the vision. It is important to develop appropriate goals, make them explicit and share an understanding of each one.

Goals have:

- Targets – where we expect to get to realistically balanced with time and resources.
- Objectives – identifiable, measurable and achievable steps.
- Tasks – ways of reaching the objectives.
- Indicators – ways of measuring progress.

Like our vision statement, goals need to be realigned with reality on a regular basis. Evaluation and adjustment drive this process.

Improving Continuously

Knowing where you are going and how you intend to get there is a good start. The final step is continuous improvement. Planning, implementation, and verification are tools for analysis and change as the process unfolds. Improvement is continual but the steps are small. Pick changes that can be made now that will have a positive effect – 1% is enough each time.

Cooperative Teams

There are many ways a group can work together well. This guide focuses on cooperative team building, to help individual teams and groups function more effectively.

Why Use Cooperative Teams?

- Industry requires people who can work together. The Conference Board of Canada has said that people need academic skills, personal skills and teamwork skills (see Appendix III). Colleges teach the academic skills, but personal and teamwork skills may be missed because they are seen as a home responsibility. With family life changing, many learners may not develop these skills at home.
- People often manage conflicts destructively. We tend to behave as we have been taught. Highly individualistic and competitive environments may lead to an inability to get along with others or resolve conflicts constructively.
- Researchers have found that 90 to 95 per cent of the people who lose their jobs do so because they cannot get along with other people on the job. Only 5 or 10 percent (depending on which studies) of people lose their jobs because they cannot do the work. Cooperative team building helps people learn communication skills and therefore increases the chances that they will be able to keep their jobs.

- We all bring with us our own negative attitudes and prejudices. Population diversity is becoming more the norm than the exception in many places. When there is a mix of learners there is the potential to diminish negative attitudes and to develop positive ones depending how interaction is structured. Cooperative teams can be used to develop constructive and supportive relationships.

Every time people work together a decision must be made about the strategies that will be used. In the college environment courses or classes may be structured so that:

- Learners compete in a win-lose struggle to see who is *best*.

- Learners learn on their own, individually, without interacting with other learners.

- Learners work in pairs or small groups to help each other master and complete the assigned material.

Knowing when to work competitively, individualistically or cooperatively is an essential skill we all need. Each style of working is useful at some time.

Definitions

Based on the work of done by D. and R. Johnson, and E. Holubec on Cooperative Learning published through the Interaction Book Co.

Cooperation: We Sink or Swim Together

Teams are structured so that members work together to maximize their own and each other's learning, production and to achieve shared goals.

- All members of the group strive for each group member's success.

- Teams are small groups that are usually heterogeneous.

- Joint success is celebrated.

- Achievement is evaluated by comparing performance to preset criteria.

Competition: I Swim, You Sink; I Sink, You Swim

Activities are structured so that learners compete with each other to achieve a goal only a few can attain.

- Learners work alone.

- They strive to be better than the rest of the group.

- What benefits self, deprives others.

- Own success and others' failure is celebrated. Rewards are limited.

- Learners are graded on a curve or ranked from *best* to *worst*.

Individualistic: We are Each in this Alone

Individuals work by themselves to accomplish learning goals unrelated to those of other learners.

- Learners work alone.
- They strive for their own successes.
- What benefits self does not benefit others.
- Own success is celebrated.
- Rewards are viewed as unlimited
- Learners are evaluated by comparing performance to preset criteria.

Operational Debriefings

Operational debriefings are normally held after any major incident in any public safety agency and it is the duty of all involved to attend. A debriefing involves a complete run-through of the call and requires each person to participate in the discussion. It is an excellent learning tool as it not only shows where mistakes were made, but also what went well and why. Its purpose is to improve the skills of those involved and to better prepare them for any such incidents in the future. Many emergency plans come out of debriefings.

In police agencies, the debriefing is a very important element in any critical incident or emergency situation. Because it is true that hindsight is 20/20, debriefings allow the agency to go back and decide what would be done if the situation were ever to be repeated. Much of the framework for future emergency plans is developed in this way. By debriefing all personnel immediately following a major incident, many of the long-term problems associated with stress can be avoided. A debriefing also affords staff the opportunity to relieve anxiety; to identify the emotional issues that are often connected with these types of incidents; and to discuss openly the reasoning behind some of the decisions made at the time.

If the effect of an incident is such that a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing is required, it is important for all personnel to know that this kind of assistance is also available in most public safety agencies. On occasion, the entire shift will be offered a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing.

Elements of a Debriefing

The knowledge exchange in incident debriefing and analysis includes some or all of the following:

1. Clarify the information surrounding the incident. What happened? What went right/wrong? Review:
   Individual involvement,
   Response team interaction,
   Interagency response/reception.

---

2. Positive/negative – strengths/weaknesses.
   Review:
   > Why things went wrong/right?
   > What would you change now?
   > Are these the only changes needed?

3. Review individual reaction:
   > How did you *feel*? How do you feel *now*? What do you *need*?

The best advice for surviving and benefiting from a debriefing is to learn to accept feedback (which may sound like criticism), because it will come. Ask intelligent questions, but do not make excuses. Remain positive. Debriefings give you the chance to find out how others were thinking during the process, and gives you the opportunity to let others know how *you* were thinking. Do not take any of the comments personally – learn from what you have been told. There is much to be gained from debriefings and they should be practiced within the group on a regular basis so that the group can become familiar with the process. Debriefings will become second nature, and the mention of one will not garner fear, but the expectation of productivity.

TEAM COMMUNICATION

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Giving Positive Feedback

It is easy to criticize and to think that we are helping a person deal with a situation. To give the right commentary, at the right time, to the right person, with the right reasons, in the right way, and to the right degree is **very difficult**.

You first need agreement to interact. If the other person is not ready to hear your comments, you set up a negative interaction that will cause them to block you and your opinions out. If you do not have permission to comment, you may be seen as aggressive and the other person may respond by being aggressive or defensive towards you.

Ask if the other person wants your feedback. If they say *no*, then you will have to discuss or problem-solve that before you say anything more, or you will say nothing at all.

Search out all the facts you can prior to giving your feedback. Ask the people involved about what they feel is happening and how they see the situation. This may solve or help to solve the problem.

Time the discussion so that you are all reasonably unstressed. Leave time so there is another chance to talk before a parting of ways. This will help to avoid or clear misunderstanding or confusion.

Be Positive. Try to begin and end your feedback with comments about what is working, correct, or right about the situation. No matter how *bad* you perceive things to be, there will be good points to comment on.

Avoid using absolutes or negative words, words like *always* or *never* or *don't*. Each situation tends to be many shades of grey rather than black and white. Actions taken are seen by each person in the light of his/her own experiences and perceptions. Use alternative positive words and phrases. Avoid comparing the person involved to other people in other situations. The *where, when, what,* and *who* of each situation are different. Comparisons tend to produce resentment and frustration.

Be Specific in your description of the problem. Avoid vague or misleading statements. If attitude seems to be a problem, show specific instances and then take one point at a time so as not to overload or overwhelm the other person. Make sure that it is something that can be changed.

When you tell someone that you feel they could improve or change, then also make suggestions on how you think they might go about making those changes, and what behaviour would be observed if the changes were made. Be prepared for no change.

Feedback can be Positive if it:

- is offered at the right time and place,
- is offered with comments on good points as well as changes,
- is connected to facts and not rumours,
- is directed to behaviour that can be changed,
- is specific and one point at a time, and
- gives information and possible solutions to change the situation.

Receiving Feedback

If another person offers you feedback, it may sound like *criticism*. It may be that they intend to be positive but may not know how to say something positively. It may also be that their self-esteem is low and they are being defensive or aggressive towards you. Most importantly, you may become defensive or aggressive if you see their feedback as critical or negative, **no matter what was meant**.

Attempt to suspend your reaction until you understand the information that is being given. Paraphrase what you hear. If it seems unclear, ask for clarification. Having it presented in other words or from another point of view may increase your understanding about what is being said.

Explore and discover the reasons for the comments.

- Is a change by you indicated?
- Is it an evaluation of the past or an indication for the future?

Think about and cope with your possible defensive reaction.

- Do you see wants as demands?
- Do you feel guilty or obligated?
- Are you hearing more than is being said?

Ideally, listen to his/her comments and find the positive side of them. Then, explain your position or point of view without feeling that you must justify yourself. Determine the importance of the message to you. You may choose not to change.

Any discussion will profit from more information. You can wall yourself away from information and change by being defensive. You may open new lines of communication by being open.

Encourage Constructive Communication
(and Avoid Destructive Communication)

We need information to function in this world. To get information we must communicate. The more effective our communication, the better our understanding.

- Be wary of communication breakdown. Keep the channels for productive communication open. Avoid comments or other behaviours that might jeopardize the open flow of information.
  - Let the other person speak, and do not interrupt.
  - Accept rather than discount the other person's statements.
  - Avoid purposely putting people on the defensive.
  - Stay with the subject.
- Practice good active listening. Listen intently and with an open mind. Remember, people tend to overemphasize or overstate their points when they feel they are not being listened to.
- Recognize *terminological tangles* or arguments about semantics. There is no ultimately correct or single meaning to most concept words. Do not demand that other people have the same meaning for words that you have. Give the other person specific examples of how you are using disputed words. Ask the other person for examples.
- Be careful about assumptions. Do not assume others have understood when you have explained something. Request feedback. Clarify meanings. Verify understanding with others.
- Discuss for clarification and understanding instead of for victory. If we do so, we shall probably find that ultimately, agreement and disagreement, approval and disapproval, are not so important.
- Train yourself to recognize misunderstandings. Do something about them as soon as you can. All too often the fact that misunderstandings exist is not apparent until deeper misunderstandings have already occurred because of the original one.
- When asking questions avoid all implications (whether in tone or wording) of skepticism or hostility. Questions should be motivated by curiosity about the speaker's view.
- Voice your opposition to ideas, not opposition to people.
- Be specific rather than general when giving feedback.
- Use *I* statements to express your own feelings.
- Do not make people guess where you're coming from.
- Acknowledge and respect the feelings and experience of others. Avoid letting personal animosity affect your dealings with others.
- Avoid snap decisions. Pause before responding. Refrain from agreement or disagreement with a speaker or from praise or censure of his/her views until you are sure what those views are. Do not be so intent on "shooting down" the other that you are no longer alert for new information.

- Avoid thinking in absolutes. Make sparing use of words like *all, always, everybody, every time, never, nobody*. Consider relative values in your evaluations. Beware of making generalizations about segments of the population.

- Avoid *either-or* thinking and expressions. Expressing things in polar terms (i.e. good vs. bad, pretty vs. ugly, smart vs. dumb) is part of our conditioning. Committing yourself to one polar position makes compromise difficult. Think of things as being on a continuum. Avoid stereotyping.

- Stay flexible. Be willing to consider alternate ways of thinking.

- Avoid over-committing yourself. Learn to say no.

- Avoid trigger phrases, those verbal expressions people may react to in a negative way. These include "That's a stupid idea," or "You are wrong about that."

- Give up needing to be right all of the time. Let the other person survive.

- Prevent or reduce adversary situations where opposing parties take up positions and proceed to bombard each other.

- Find humour in the situation when appropriate.

- Remove yourself from the situation for a time if needed; be aware if over tiredness, extra stress, or other external factors are affecting your interaction ability.

Building Trust

For effective communication to take place there must be trust between those communicating. We both need to trust that our intent is not misinterpreted and that the other person's intent is not to harm us, physically or mentally. Trust grows and is nurtured. Demands or threats will not bring it about. There are a variety of ways to encourage trust.

- Be reliable and trustworthy yourself.

- Embrace your risk at the level that you can handle. There is always a risk in trusting.

- Always support the person, however you define that person's behaviour.

- Ask, "How can I help?"

- Search out the positive. What is good in their words and deeds?

- Redefine the negative. How can good come out of it?

- Identify when people are *right*.

- Expect the best of others. Expect that the person's intent is good.

- Hear others. Listen carefully.

- Share your toys (tools, experience, skills, etc.)

As we go from day to day we are surrounded by change. This can be scary and undermining to one's self-esteem. By finding out where one is right, one can see where others are also right. The more risk one takes with others, the more one learns

and grows, and the more one is open to change. When one can see and examine change, one has the possibility of adapting to it and growing with it.

Shared Leadership

In Cooperative Teams, Leadership is a shared responsibility. The group must positively deal with both the task functions and group relation functions within the team. The more members of the team who are taking on and sharing these roles when the team needs them, the more smoothly the team will work.

Task Functions

Initiating

- propose tasks or goals
- define a group problem
- suggest a procedure or ideas for solving a problem

Information or Opinion Seeking

- request facts
- seek relevant information about group concerns
- ask for suggestions or ideas

Information or Opinion Giving

- state a belief
- provide relevant information about group concern
- give suggestions or ideas

Clarifying

- elaborate, interpret, or reflect on ideas and suggestions
- clear up confusions; indicating alternatives and issues before the group
- give examples

Summarizing

- pull together related ideas
- restate suggestions after group has discussed them
- offer a decision or conclusion for the group to accept or reject

Consensus Testing

- send up *trial balloons* to see if group is nearing a conclusion
- check with group to see how much agreement has been reached

Group Relations Functions

Encouraging

- be friendly, warm, and responsive to others
- accept others and their contributions
- regard others by giving them an opportunity for recognition

Expressing Group Feelings

- sense feelings, mood, relationships with the group
- share one's own feelings with other members

Harmonizing

- attempt to reconcile disagreements
- reduce tension, get people to explore their differences

Modifying

- when own idea / status involved in conflict, offer to modify position, admit error
- discipline oneself to maintain group cohesion

Gate-Keeping

- attempt to keep communication channels open
- facilitate the participation of others
- suggest procedures for sharing opportunity to discuss group problems

Evaluating

- evaluate group functioning / production; express standards for group to achieve
- measure results
- evaluate degree of group commitment

Both task and group relations need to be attended to, to keep the team working.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Why Things Do Not Get Done!

Once upon a time there were four people named **Everybody, Somebody, Anybody** and **Nobody.** There was an important job to be done and **Everybody** was sure that **Somebody** would do it. **Anybody** could have done it, but **Nobody** did it.

Somebody got angry about that, because it was **Everybody's** job. **Everybody** thought **Anybody** could do it, but **Nobody** realized that **Everybody** didn't do it. It ended by **Everybody** blaming **Somebody,** when actually, **Nobody** could accuse **Anybody**.

Individual accountability is critical to team functions. The person who is not responsible is not a good team member. There must be room for re-negotiation of responsibilities as individuals' situations change, to allow for continued accountability in some form.

Effective Problem Solving Negotiating

- Agree on a definition of the conflict.
- Describe your feelings.
- Listen carefully to other person's wants and feelings.
- Jointly define the problem as a mutual problem.
- Jointly define the conflict as being small and specific.
- Describe what you want and your interests.
- Make personal statements.
- Be specific about your goals and needs.
- Put the problem before your answer.
- Be concrete but be flexible.
- Acknowledge the other person's goals as part of problem solving.
- Be hard on the problem, but soft on the other person.
- Look forward, not back.
- Focus on the long-term cooperative relationship.
- Exchange reasons for positions.
- Express cooperative intentions for now and the future.
- Present your reasons, listening to other's reasons.
- Focus on wants and needs, not positions.

- Differentiate before integrating.
- Empower the other person.
- Understand the other's perspective.
- Check your perceptions.
- Paraphrase.
- Invent options for mutual gain.
- Avoid obstacles.
- Invent creative options.
- Reach a wise agreement.
- Meet the legitimate needs of all participants.
- Be viewed as fair.
- Operate on principles that can be justified on objective criteria.
- Ensure that agreement and process strengthen ability to work together cooperatively in the future.
- Try, try again.

This negotiation process must meet the legitimate needs of all participants. It must be viewed as fair by everyone. It should be based on principles that can be justified on objective criteria. The process should reach a point of agreement between the participants. It must also strengthen participants' abilities to work together cooperatively in the future.

PLAYING FAIR

How everyone can win:

Be willing to fix the problem.

Say what the problem is for you.

Listen to what the problem is for them.

Attack the problem, not the person.

Look for answers so everyone gets what they need.

FOULS

Name Calling	*Put Downs*
Sneering – Blaming	*Threats – Hitting*
Bringing up the past	*Making Excuses*
Not Listening	*Getting Even*

Troubleshooting in the Team

- Check to see that everyone is clear on the team goals.
- Make sure you have sufficient and correct information.
- Review the contract/guidelines for the group.
- Look at the process that is happening.
- Use the problem solving techniques for the group process problem.

Conflict Resolution

Not only is the work that you can expect to be doing in the future going to present you with a number of stressors, you can also expect that times in your personal life will be more stressful than they are now ... or at least different.

Common "pet peeves" or issues may include:

- Not keeping personal information confidential.
- People having lower standards than ones self.
- Lack of professionalism.

- Not being on time.
- Being lazy and not "carrying their load".
- "Back-stabbing".
- Not keeping their word.

The Problem Solving Process

Many of the stressors identified are the source/cause of most conflicts. People in the helping professions are usually highly motivated people and as a result examine problems from many perspectives before acting upon them. Not only do most of us try to think about the "roots" of the problem, we will hope to maintain a level of harmony in the work place, by not saying anything. We may hope that someone that is more out-going than ourselves will tackle the problem. However, this lack of action can lead to bigger problems in the future as the problem will not go away by itself. If it does not go away, you become more stressed.

Informal Conflict Resolution Model

The following model will assist in understanding of the problem. It will not always generate consensus!! As implied, this is informal. However, clear communication is essential even when dealing with small problems.

- Identify the problem in terms that can be measured
    - how many times they were late
    - how annoying the smell of their perfume is
- Look for possible solutions. Entertain **all** suggestions regardless of how far fetched
- Choose the best solution.
- Implement the solution. Both sides have to agree on the process.
- The solution has to be reassessed to ensure compliance.
- If it did not work, what is the next best solution?

Leave Work Problems and Emotions at Work

We have to be very careful to separate the "emotion" from the "message". Often informal conflicts end up focusing on the stress felt due to emotions. If the conflict is not solved at work, the common response is to take it home. How many dinner conversations have you had in your life which focused on a problem totally unrelated to your family or your circle of friends?" If you are taking your problems home with you, the problem may become "chronic" and may require mediation by a co-worker or supervisor. Try to resolve the problem where it started and not let it take over other parts of your life.

RECOGNIZING EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK

What Does an Effective Team Look Like, Sound Like and Feel Like?

1.   Members do not ignore seriously intended contributions.

Each member needs to know the effect of his/her remarks if they are to improve the way they participate in the team. When other members do not respond, the speaker cannot know whether:

- they did not understand her remark,
- they understood it and agreed with it,
- they understood it but disagreed with it, or
- they understood it but thought it was irrelevant.

When this principle is followed, the discussion is cumulative and the group moves together. When it is not followed, the discussion becomes scattered, the same points are made over and over and members feel no progress occurring.

2.   Members check to make sure they know what a speaker means before they agree or disagree with the contribution.

The question, *What is it?,* should precede the question, *How do we feel about it?.* For example, understanding is prior to evaluation. Thus, group members frequently use paraphrase, perception checks, and provisional summaries to clarify their assumptions of what others are saying and feeling.

3.   Each member speaks only for themselves and lets others speak for themselves.

Each member states his/her reactions as his/her own. They do not attribute them to others or give the impression they are speaking for others.

Each member reports his/her own reactions honestly. Group members recognize that unless they are true to themselves, the group cannot take their feelings into account.

4.   All contributions are viewed as belonging to the group, to be used or not as the group decides.

A member who makes a suggestion does not have to defend it as his/hers against the others. Instead, all accept responsibility for evaluating it as the joint property of the group.

5.   All members participate, but in different and complementary ways.

When some members fulfill task functions, others carry out interpersonal functions. While some members are providing information, others are making

---

sure it is understood and organized, or identifying points of agreement and disagreement.

Each member does not always participate in the same way. Instead, each one fulfills whatever function is appropriate to the group task, according to the information each has, and in line with the behaviour of other group members.

6.   Whenever the group senses it is having trouble getting work done, the members try to find the reason.

Some symptoms of difficulty include excessive hair-splitting, repeating points over and over, not considering suggestions, conversing privately in subgroups, two or three people dominating the discussion, members taking sides and refusing to compromise, ideas being attacked before they are completely expressed, and participating apathetically.

When such symptoms occur, the group shifts easily from working on the task to discussing its own interpersonal process.

Discussing interpersonal process prevents pluralistic ignorance. For example, each member of the group is confused but thinks they are the only one.

7.   The group recognizes what it does is what it has chosen to do. No group can avoid making decisions; it cannot chose whether to decide, only how to decide. Thus, an effective group makes decisions openly rather than by default.

When a group faces an issue, it must make a decision. It may agree openly to take action. It may agree openly to take no action. It may decide by default to take no action. Deciding by default not to act has the same impact on the problem as openly agreeing not to act. However, decisions by default are felt as failures by group members and create tensions among them. A group grows more by openly agreeing not to act than by not acting because they could not agree.

The group views each decision as a provisional trial which can be carried out, evaluated, and revised in light of experience. The group is aware each decision need not be everything or nothing, and need not last forever.

When the group makes a decision which it does not carry out, it recognizes the *real* decision was one not to act, although the *apparent* decision was to act. The group openly discusses why the apparent and real decision were not the same. They try to learn why some members agreed with the decision although they felt no personal commitment to carry it out.

The group makes decisions in different ways depending upon the kind of issue and the importance of the outcome. The group may vote, delegate the decision to a special subgroup, flip a coin, or require complete consensus. The crucial factor is the group has agreement on the way it makes decisions.

8.   The group brings conflict into the open and deals with it.

The members recognize conflict as inevitable. They know the choice is theirs as to whether the conflict will be open (subject to group control) or disguised (out of control).

9. The group looks upon behaviour which hinders its work as happening because the group allows or even wants it; not just as the result of a "problem member".

    A person who continually introduces irrelevancies can change the topic only if other members follow his/her lead. Instead of labeling them as the problem, the group considers this tactic a group problem. They determine why they all let it happen. Perhaps the other members welcome this digression as a way of avoiding the open conflict which would occur if they stayed on the topic.

    Likewise, the person who talks too much ... jokes too much ... continually attacks others ... or never participates, is a sign of a problem shared by the total group. The group needs to discuss it openly as "our problem" to eliminate the disruption. The group gives helpful information to individuals about the impact of their actions on the group. It does not, however, analyze, dissect, or work them over.

<div align="center">(adapted from material developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Oregon)</div>

Teamwork Lessons From Geese

1. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for others behind it. There is 71 per cent more flying range in V-formation than in flying alone.
    Lesson: People who share a common direction and a sense of common purpose can get there more quickly.

2. Whenever a goose flies out of formation, it quickly feels drag and tries to get back into position to take advantage of the lift of the birds in front.
    Lesson: It's harder to do something alone than together if we are all headed in the same direction.

3. When the lead goose tires, it rotates back in the group and another goose flies in front.
    Lesson: Shared leadership and interdependence give us each a chance to lead as well as support.

4. The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.
    Lesson: Make sure your honking is encouraging to others rather than discouraging!

5. When a goose gets sick or wounded and falls, two geese fall out and stay with it until it is able to fly, or dies. Then they catch up or join another flock.
    Lesson: Stand by your colleagues and team members in difficult times as well as in good ones.

Adapted from material by Milton Olson

Quality Team Checklist

Timelines

Punctual. All work presented on time as assigned and / or agreed upon

Cooperation and Teamwork

Willing to work, courteous, able to get along with group members

Responsibility

Able to complete work agreed upon, good interpersonal skills, willing to accept extra work

Adaptability and Versatility

Able to adjust as needed to suit changing group needs and timelines.

Quality of Work

Accurate and consistent standard of work produced, good ideas and research.

Initiative

Individual saw what needed to be done, initiated improvement, did good research.

Dependability

Able to work well with minimum supervision, always on time, trustworthy

Attendance

Was punctual, gave advance notice of absence, attended all meetings

Communications

Able to express ideas clearly and engage in positive and fruitful discussions

Contribution

Able to make high quality contributions to the group's effort

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Characteristics Required for Public Safety Communicators

Speed, recovery time, interrogative listening skills, multi-tasking, multi-levels of processing, assertiveness, balanced (home and work), knowledge, possess common sense/instinct.

The public expects a public safety communicator to be professional, empathetic, understanding and prompt (with results).

Communication

Transfer and understanding of information using whatever means (continuous, irreversible)

Elements of Communication Model

1. Sender – familiar with shared rules for communication

2. Message – issue, concept, situation that is being transmitted

3. Receiver – knows the rules for communication

4. Feedback – information about what was received

5. Filter and Barriers – exist and distort messages sent back and forth. You can imagine the gaps between the arrows getting larger or smaller depending on various internal and external influences.

MESSAGE   FEEDBACK

FILTERS AND BARRIERS

SENDER   **RECEIVER**

FEEDBACK   **GAPS**   MESSAGE

Limitations of Communication Model

This model suggests that at any given time, a person is either sending or receiving. It isolates a single act of communication from the events that precede and follow it. In reality most communication is a two-way situation in which we both send and receive at the same time.

Communication Gaps

The following items will influence and affect clear communication with others:

- The **sender's** past experiences, background, feelings and circumstances will influence the way they communicate.
- The **receiver's** past experiences, background, feelings and circumstances will distort what they hear.
- The **environment** interferes with the message due to noise, equipment failure, temperature, and other external factors.

Filters and Barriers to Effective Communication

Barriers to effective communication can be external or internal and include physical and emotional factors. Language, unfamiliar setting, physical discomfort, emotional distress are some examples.

We also filter our understanding through our values, beliefs and life experiences. Persons are unique and come from backgrounds or fields of experience that may either help or hinder their understanding of the communication of another. Misunderstanding can arise particularly from cross-cultural communications where underlying culture-bound values come into play in the interpretation of the other's message.

Complexity of Communication

As our world environment becomes more interactive, communication becomes more complex. Consider a few contextual differences between people that add to the complexity of communication.

- People belonging to different ethnic and / cultural groups
- People of different socioeconomic classes
- Differences in quality and quantity of life experience
- One person is rushing and another is passing time

Checking Assumptions

We make assumptions about meanings when others communicate with us.

Think about the truth in this statement:

> *I know you believe you understand*

> ***What you think I said,***
>
> ***But I am not sure you realize***
>
> ***That what you heard***
>
> ***Is not what I meant.***

For instance, when we make assumptions, a constructive suggestion can be taken as criticism or a joke can be taken as an insult. If the assumptions of meaning are not understood and are not accurate between the communicators they can become barriers to understanding. In other words, if an action that is normal and acceptable in one culture is considered rude in another, then the assumptions we make can affect our understanding of the intended message.

These and many other differences can be understood and mitigated to increase the quality of communication. When assumptions are checked out with the sender the communication gap is reduced, enhancing the accuracy and level of communication.

Three Forms of Communication

There are three basic forms of communication you need to be aware of when decoding messages from another person. As we go through them, instances may come to mind that exemplify the three basic forms. Take the time to jot them down in your journal so you can refer to them while going through this section. They can also be examples for us to work through during the interactive session.

1. Verbal

Verbal communication is an active form of communication that involves the use of words, both spoken and written. Words themselves have no judgmental or emotional quality. They are maps or indicators that convey information that may or may not be interpreted in a similar way by different people. It is our personal interpretation and use of words which gives them life and meaning.

2. Symbols as a Form of Communication

Symbols are passive forms of communication. Examples include signs, labels, maps, books, etc. Less obvious symbols are the clothes we wear, our hairstyles, watches, accessories, etc. that gives others messages about us.

Symbols often represent different things to different people. For instance, in some countries people wear black as a sign of mourning while in other countries people wear white when a loved one dies. Assumptions and generalizations we make about symbols may be incorrect, so it is important to check them where possible.

3. Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication is another active form of communication that includes

---

- body movements
- gestures
- posture
- eye contact
- facial expressions
- vocal cues
- spatial relations or proximity

WHAT YOU DO COMMUNICATES MORE THAN WHAT YOU SAY!

Perhaps you have had an experience recently where a person's non-verbal communication spoke volumes to you about how they were feeling. What was there body posture like? What were they doing with their eyes? What did the tone of their voice signal? Now, think about the non-verbal messages they may have received from you. Were you mirroring their messages or contrasting them? Finally, how did the transaction conclude?

People tend to use non-verbal forms of communication more intensely when they are emotionally affected either positively or negatively. Being able to accurately read these messages allows us to respond more intentionally to these situation.

Mixed Messages

Nearly all communication includes two or more of these three forms of communication. Communication goes awry when the messages in the different forms are incongruent with each other.

Language Community

- Group of people who know their rules of speech (Words, jargon, rules) e.g. – English spoken in Maritimes *vs* Prairies *vs* U.S. *vs* England
  i.e. "I'ze the b'y that builds the boat ... *vs* I'm the boy that builds the boat ...
- Any transaction that conforms to rules and conventions understood by members of the speech community
- The speaker will not know what the games or rules are until they are a full participant in a speech community

Custom (Social Practice)

- Two people of different backgrounds are having dinner and one person offers the other person some food saying:

    "You must try some of this." (Aggressive voice tone)
    "You should try some of this." (Suggestive/Assertive)
    "You may try some of this." (Offering choice)

Discuss and rank levels of perceived rudeness from your own background.

- Every community has ideas for situations in which various topics are OK – e.g. formal speech, dirty jokes.

- Communication is an important element in cultural interactions.

Ethnically/Culturally Sensitive Attitudes and Values

The following list is adapted from material by Mercedes Tompkins and Casea Myrna Vasques, from an interview with Elva Caraballo.

DO

Do with, Come alongside, Assist, Provide input, Facilitate, Provide additional resources, Encourage, Respect, Show concern, Empathize

DO NOT

Do for, Lead, Control, Advise, Determine, Impose additional requirements, Mandate, Condescend, Paternalize, Sympathize.

> (End of excerpt)

This is not very different from how most people want to be treated. The interesting thing is that many people believe that the process by which we interact with others should be different from how we want to be treated. It is often useful and always polite to respectfully inquire how a person wishes to be treated or helped.

What problems might you encounter with the Golden Rule (*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*.) if it is only based on roles and behaviors from a single culture? How does it become useful if it is based on mutual respect and attention to process?

Respectful Interaction

Respectful interaction is a key element to resolving and utilizing the immediate conflicts that may arise when the public safety agency's culture comes into contact with the diverse needs of the public. The communication skills of *active and empathic listening and paraphrasing* followed by *effective questioning and feedback techniques* are all elements of this interaction. Personal flexibility and adaptability to the caller's needs is a necessary trait for the public safety communicator to do his or her job well.

Active Listening Skills

Active listening is a learned skill. It means that, as a listener, you assume responsibility for ensuring that you understand what the speaker is trying to communicate, and demonstrate that you are genuinely interested in what is being said. In public safety communications, active listening is particularly important to ensure accurate information and appropriate responses.

Check for Total Meaning

When people speak, they convey two types of messages: content, and attitudes or feelings. When you listen actively, you need to listen not only for the facts, but also for the feelings behind those facts. For example, if someone says, "Well, I've finally finished that project I was working on last week," there is probably an underlying feeling such as fatigue or relief that needs to be recognized.

Use Questions to Clarify Meaning

During calls, you may find that you will need to clarify a message by asking a question or making a statement that is an implied question. The *way you ask* these questions often determines your success. Open-ended questions, that is, questions that require a sentence or more as an answer, encourage more discussion than closed questions which require a simple yes or no answer.

Open-Ended Questions

This technique is used when a general response is required. It allows the caller a greater opportunity to paint a picture for you and will supply you with more information than the caller may initially feel they have to offer. You must ensure the responses and information are on topic, otherwise the caller may tend to ramble. To keep the caller on topic, ask questions such as: *Could you describe the person for me?* This also allows you to prompt the caller. For example, *What color was his hair? Was he tall, short, was his hair long?*

Note: You are not leading the caller here, you are simply guiding him or her into giving the information you are seeking.

Perhaps a caller is watching a suspicious person hanging around his vehicle. He phones in stating, "There's a guy hanging around my car."

An open-ended question would have the call taker replying, "What does he look like?" or "Describe him to me." The caller would then go on to describe the male in question, "He's a white male wearing a really loud red shirt."

Closed-Ended Questions

This technique is usually used when only a yes or no answer is required or when the call taker needs the information quickly. An example of when this type of questioning would be used would be during multiple calls regarding a motor vehicle accident. To determine if there were any injuries, the call taker would quickly ask direct questions requiring no more than a yes or no answer. Secondly, they would ask if the callers had witnessed the incident. No further description of the accident would be necessary by each and every caller.

Questions can help or hinder the communications process. Most questions help by giving you the answers you need, and producing an atmosphere of trust and respect.

However, some types of question hinder the process of communicating effectively. They threaten, embarrass or annoy the listener.

- *Critical questions* or a critical tone reprimand a person, or express doubts about his or her abilities or motives. Such questions are likely to cause resentment.
- *Leading questions* may cause the caller to mislead you. For example, if you ask someone "You saw a person in a red jacket, right?" They may agree just to be accommodating.

Probe for Information

A probe is a request or question that asks individuals to explore or reflect on their thinking or actions so they can increase their awareness of alternative perceptions or ideas. Here are some examples of effective probes you might use to get more information or solve problems:

- Tell me what you did next.
- What do think might be causing this to happen?
- Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Effective Paraphrasing

The aim of paraphrasing is to get feedback from the sender to confirm that you have a solid understanding of their message. You can check that you understand the total meaning of the message by *paraphrasing* or restating the ideas in your own words. Your paraphrase can be as long or longer that the original message. More importantly, you can paraphrase the feelings behind the message as well as the words themselves. In doing so, you acknowledge that you have understood the caller and you check out the feelings underlying the message.

The use of key words shows the caller you are listening to them and you care about their call. This technique also helps to ensure accuracy in important details of the call. While employing this technique, call takers must be careful not to make assumptions on what was said, or impart their own perceptions or ideas to what the caller has stated. Be clear and concise in your paraphrasing.

Dealing with the other person's feelings shows empathy, that is, an understanding or concern about the effects of a situation. For example, if someone tells you about a situation that has made them angry, you might respond by saying, "I can see why you're angry. I'd probably feel exactly the same way if that happened to me."

Elements of Effective Paraphrasing

- **Direct** – focused
- **Specific** – no other information added
- **Non-evaluative** – no judgement or assumptions
- **Descriptive of Behaviour** – not looking for a motive only classification of facts

Blocks to Effective Paraphrasing to be Avoided

Blocks include behavior on your part that seems helpful, but actually prevents communication. Such behavior stops the victim from expressing problems and feelings, or puts the victim down in some way.

Example: You are talking to a victim of domestic violence. Her husband has just been charged. She says, "I love him, I know he really doesn't mean it."

Advising

"You ought to think of your kids."

"I think you should just leave him."

- She may resent your advice and spend her energy reacting to your ideas instead of developing her own solutions.
- The advice may give her the feeling that you do not trust her ability to find a solution.
- She may become dependent on you to solve her problems.
- What happens if the advice doesn't work?

Sympathizing

"I know just how you feel."

"I feel so sorry for you, poor thing."

- You send the message that she is helpless to change.
- You begin to "feel" her feelings rather than using empathy (expressing your understanding).
- You risk burnout.

Questioning

"How often does he do this?"

"Why do you stay in this situation?"

- She can get distracted from her problems while answering your questions.
- Questioning does not deal directly with her feelings and concerns.
- Questioning leads her.

Criticizing

"You must be encouraging him to do this to you."

"You're a mother – how can you let your kids live in this environment?"

- She can feel judged.
- She can feel as if you are trying to change them.
- She can feel defensive and inadequate.

Feelings and Empathy

Feelings

- Emotions are not always expressed in a clear way. They can be expressed in a few words if they are identified.
- Feelings are best described without extra qualifiers such as little, sort of, mostly, etc.
- Coded or indirect feelings can be misunderstood by others.
- Identify the context of the feeling by giving specifics rather than generalities.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to:

- re-create another person's perspective
- experience the world from the other's point of view.

Empathy is not to be confused with sympathy, which is compassion for another's situation.

How to Listen with Empathy

- Use good attending skills (look at the person, turn your body toward the person, pay attention to spacing).
- Listen closely to **what** the person is saying and **how** he is saying it.
- Watch for non-verbal clues to feelings.
- Remember the content (what the other person is talking about) and the feelings (how they feel about what they are talking about).
- Reply! Use words that describe the content and feelings in what you say. Respond to all you hear, but nothing more (time for that later). Give lots of attention to the person's feelings.
- Keep listening. If you want to help, give all your attention to the other person.

When to Listen with Empathy

- To begin a relationship of trust and caring.
- To help other persons understand themselves better and get more closely in touch with their feelings and attitudes.
- When you find it hard to understand what another person is saying, or don't know what they mean by what they say.
- To learn more about a person, especially feelings and reports of socially unacceptable behavior or ideas.
- When your ideas and the ideas of the other person are different, empathic listening will help you fully understand their views.
- To fill time when you are not sure what other kind of communication style to use.

When Not to Listen with Empathy

- When the other person is seeking information only, or needs immediate action.
- When the other person is **inappropriate** (abusive, seductive, aggressive).
- When the other person talks all the time so they can push you around, or so they can keep from talking about something important that should be discussed.
- When the other person is not in touch with reality, is suicidal, intoxicated, or, depressed.
- When empathic listening no longer produces new information (feelings or content) from the other person.

Open-Ended Questions

The following are examples of open-ended questions. Try to use as many different ones as you can.

- What does that feel like?
- Can you tell me more about ... ?
- How are you feeling right now?
- Would you like to talk about ... ?
- Where would you like to begin?
- How is that (specific) for you?
- How do you feel now about ... ?
- Can you tell me what that means to you?
- How would you like things to be?
- What do you imagine ... ?
- What have you thought of?
- What would it be like ... ?
- How do you see things changing?
- What would you like to do about ... ?
- I'm wondering ... ?
- What's that like?
- What can you think of?
- What's most important for you now?

Common Mistakes In Empathic Listening

- Sounding like a parrot or a robot.
- Talking about content only, ignoring feelings.
- Giving cheap advice.
- Using poor attending skills. You sound good, but you look like you couldn't care less.

- Shifting attention to yourself. Talking instead of listening.
- Having no energy. You must be as intense in your words and emphasis as the other person.
- Sliding into non-helpful replies such as joking, making judgments, reassuring, etc.
- Using Empathic Listening when it is **not** the best method.

Some Guidelines for Empathic Listening:

- Give undivided attention.
- Let the person set the pace – don't push faster or further than the person wants to go.
- Don't feel you have to solve the problem – the best solutions can only come from the person.
- You are listening to help the person get more **self**-understanding.
- Listen to what the person is saying and how it is being said.
- Watch for non-verbal clues to the person's feelings. Use your eyes as well as your ears for listening.
- Be aware of the content and the feelings in what the person is saying.
- Reply – use words to describe the content and feelings. Respond to all you hear and nothing more.
- Be honest – let the person know if you lose them or don't understand something they say.
- Keep focused on listening.

Eight Blocks to Effective Empathetic Listening

1. **Comparing** yourself or your experience to theirs while they talk.
2. **Mind reading** – deciding that you know what they are going to say or what they are really thinking or feeling.
3. **Rehearsing** – what you will say once they stop
4. **Filtering** – hearing only those parts you want to hear, perhaps even forgetting what else is said.
5. **Judging** – either the person or what they are saying while they are talking.
6. **Dreaming** – following your own associations and losing track of what they are saying, usually because you are detached or anxious.
7. **Derailing** – changing the subject or joking about it, tactics which may help your discomfort but rarely helps the communication between you and the other person.
8. **Interrupting** – not waiting for completion.

POLICE CALL ASSESSMENT MODEL

Police call takers must be able to gather information quickly and accurately in order to get the responding units to the scene of an incident as soon as possible.

Call Assessment Model

There are differing schools of thought around what questions should be asked by a call taker. One method is to start with the five W's and one H. They are: *Where?, What?, When?, Who?, Why?* and *How?* Other call centers utilize only five "W's"; *Where, What, When, Who, and Weapons* and *How,* theorizing that Why is not necessary and will be covered by the other questions.

The questions that are asked and the order in which they are asked, depends entirely on the incident. The application of these questions must become second nature if you are to be an effective and efficient call taker.

Where

The call taker will quickly, and accurately, determine the location or address of the event. The call taker will validate the incident location supplied by the caller using all available means, including: confirmation with the caller of the location given, multiple calls to the same incident, ANI/ALI, cross street, the cross reference directory, call-back number, PIRS, and so on.

- Where is the incident?
- Where are you now?
- Where is the victim?
- Where is the suspect?
- Where is the vehicle?
- Where do we go?
- Where do we contact you? Now? Later?

What

The call taker will quickly determine (by using caller interview techniques) exactly what is happening at the scene. The call taker will gather history (individuals/location), as well as information on weapons, and will use CPIC and/or records checks if it is available or applicable. The call taker will assign an incident code and priority to the call to ensure that the appropriate units, support services and outside agencies will respond.

- What is happening/what happened?
- What is the problem/emergency?
- What do you or the victim need?

- What do you know about the situation/victim/suspect?
- What did you see?

When

The call taker will determine if the incident is in progress or occurred earlier. The call taker will determine the call delay involved, that is, how much time has elapsed between the occurrence of the incident and the actual reporting of it. The call taker must be aware that establishing precisely *when* an incident occurred can greatly influence the priority, number and type of units assigned to it.

- When did this happen? Now? How long ago?
- When will this become a problem?
- When did the suspect leave?

Who

The call taker will determine who is calling, who needs assistance, who is injured and who the suspect is. The call taker will use CPIC/PIRS or caller/victim/location history in gathering as much information as possible about the parties involved.

- Who are you?
- Who is the victim?
- Who is the suspect?
- Who are you in relationship to the victim/suspect?
- Who asked you to call?
- Who should we see at the scene?

Personal information is also gathered under the *who* category. This information may include:

- How old the caller/victim/suspect is;
- A description of the victim/suspect/caller;
- The date of birth or age of the parties involved;
- The history of the parties involved;
- Witness information.

In the event of anonymous callers, the call taker will attempt to obtain the identity of the callers without bullying them. The call taker will apply the following techniques to obtain caller particulars:

- Advise the caller that the information will remain confidential;
- Advise the caller that the information is only for agency records;
- Attempt to determine why the caller is concerned/unwilling to supply his/her name.

If the caller still refuses to identify him/herself, do *not* threaten the caller by saying, "If you don't answer my questions no one will attend." It is not the call taker's place

to judge a caller, only to get the information required to direct an appropriate response to an incident. Remember that call takers are legally (and morally) obligated to take the appropriate steps to initiate action based on the information they are given, even if the caller chooses to remain anonymous. In addition, if the anonymous caller is the *victim* of a crime, the call taker must attempt through every available means (for instance by call tracing or ANI/ALI), to determine the identity of the caller.

Why

The call taker should quickly assess the need for attendance to the scene and determine from the caller why he or she is asking for assistance. If time and circumstances dictate, the call taker will attempt to ascertain why the incident occurred. You will ask this question more often as you gain experience in call taking. You might be responding to an intuition that there is more to the incident than the caller is letting on. For example, a caller requests police attendance immediately. Why? – What is happening? (This is a situation that includes *What* but may need more clarification.)

- Why are you calling?
- Why did you wait to call?
- Why do you think that this person is a suspect, or is acting in such a manner?
- Why are you worried/upset/scared?
- You may find that the caller is a source of information for the call. However, unless you ask, he or she may not be willing to volunteer the knowledge they have.

How

The caller taker will determine how the incident occurred, how the caller is involved, how their agency can assist the caller (or victim), how their agency can best serve the public and bring the incident to a safe conclusion.

- How many people are involved?
- How did this happen?
- How did you get this information?
- How do we get there?
- How did the suspect(s) leave the scene?
- How do we find you/the victim/the suspect?

Weapons

There is a sixth W, *weapons,* which is used in any situation that is volatile or has the potential to escalate into a volatile one, or that could pose a risk to the public or a field unit whether it is police, fire or emergency medical. It is also important to ask this question when there is a call about any incident "in progress."

The call taker will, without exception, in volatile or potentially volatile situations, ask the caller about weapons. The call taker will attempt to determine if there are weapons involved (produced, indicated or simulated), if someone has threatened to use a weapon, or if weapons are available. The call taker will also determine the location of any weapons involved. Remember that callers may not automatically volunteer this information, or may not think of it in their haste. Therefore, it is up to you as a call taker to ask these questions.

- Are weapons involved?
- Have weapons been mentioned?
- Are there any weapons in the residence?
- What type of weapon is it?
- Did you see the weapon or was it simulated?
- Where is the weapon now?
- Does anyone there have access to weapons?
- Has the suspect ever used weapons before?
- Where are the weapon(s) kept in the residence?
- Failure to ask these types of questions may result in your sending field units to a very dangerous situation for which they are under-prepared. If the caller is not sure about the presence of weapons, ask them to check, if it is safe to do so, or advise the dispatcher or field units that it is unknown if there are any weapons. The more information you pass on, the better prepared all responding units will be.

Person Descriptions

When recording the physical description of a person, *be specific*. It should include as much of the following information as possible. A rule of thumb to remember with descriptions is top to bottom; inside to outside.

- Age or approximate age.
- Sex of suspect.
- Height and weight of suspect.
- Race of suspect.
- Color, length and style of hair.
- Facial hair if any (beard, mustache).
- Indication if eyeglasses or sunglasses worn.
- Specific clothing description from head to toe, including color, style, foot wear, head gear.
- Any accent or speech impediment known.
- Indicate any jewelry noted on suspect. This may include earrings, visible wrist or neck jewelry.

- Distinguishing marks or tattoos. Be specific in their descriptions and location on the body if tattoos. Distinguishing marks may include pockmarks, acne or scars.

- Any information on a known criminal record or mental health problems, including known medication for a specific illness such as schizophrenia.

- WEAPONS – Was the suspect SEEN carrying one or was the weapon simulated? If the weapon was seen, supply a full description of the type of weapon.

- In any situation that shows the slightest indication of violence or risk, or escalation to either, ALWAYS include information about weapons whether or not seen or accessible.

Also include any known relationship between the suspect and caller or victim. If more than one suspect is involved, ensure information on each suspect is clearly identified with the correct individual.

Vehicle Information Broadcast

As with suspect information, be specific in describing the vehicle. A vehicle description should be done in a logical format. For example: 1996 Ford Mustang 2 door sedan, silver with BC license ABC123 relays all of the pertinent information in a simple format.

Y   Year of vehicle...........*(Specify year if known, or approximate age of vehicle as in "late-model Ford Taurus".)*

M   Make of vehicle..........*(Specify the make, as in Ford, and the model if known, as in Taurus.)*

M   Model of vehicle ....*(Specify the model if known, as in Taurus.)*

S   Style ....*(Mention whether it is a two-door, four-door, convertible or hatchback, to list four examples.)*

C   Color of vehicle..........*(If the vehicle is two-toned or multicolored, identify where the colors are on the vehicle as in white over black.)*

P   Province or State ....*(Name the province or state on the license plate.)*

P   Plate...........................*(Give the license plate number of the vehicle if known.)*

A   Additional Info ....*(Mention for instance any body damage, or unique features such as a tow package, stickers, markings or custom body work.)*

Vehicle information would include the vehicle location at the time of the call or if the vehicle had left the scene. If the vehicle has left the scene, determine the direction of travel and the time delay involved in the departure of the vehicle.

Rate of speed and type of highway can also be a factor in the location of the vehicle. Incidents that take place near a major highway or border crossing can radically change how and to whom you would direct your radio broadcasts.

It is essential that information on suspects and associated vehicles be relayed as quickly and completely to field units as possible. These details should be broadcast in a systematic and orderly fashion.

Pre-Arrival Instructions

Pre-Arrival Instructions (PAI) are instructions to the caller by the call taker about what should or should not be done prior to the arrival of the field unit. PAIs may serve a multitude of purposes including assisting the field unit in locating the incident scene in a more expedient manner. Pre-Arrival instructions may include any or some of the following:

"Turn the exterior lights on so we can find your house."

"Secure your dogs so they don't startle the police officer/ruin a track"

"Stay in the house until the police arrive or until I tell you to go outside."

"Keep an eye outside and tell me what you see now."

"Is the person/vehicle still there ?"

Often in emergent situations when the caller may be upset, giving the caller something simple to do, like turning on or off their lights, keeps him/her focused on your questions or instructions and reassures him/her that help is on the way.

Termination of Calls

When ending a call, ensure that the caller is clear the conversation is about to be terminated. The communications operator should give the caller any pre-arrival instructions and then state, "The police are on the way, so I'm going to let you go now," or a similar phrase. Be polite and thank the caller if appropriate. On calls when the caller is kept on the line until police arrival, the communications operator can state, "The police are outside your residence now, Mrs. Smith. I'm going to hang up so you can let them in the front door," or "Put the phone down to answer the door, and I'll make sure that you're OK.", or something similar.

During calls when there is a chance the situation may change or new information may assist the field units, always tell the caller to "call back if the situation changes/escalates/vehicle/ person leaves." etc.

Finally, for all calls, remember to:

- Obtain nature of incident
- Obtain appropriate pertinent information
- Ask all Specific Questions

- Obtain other appropriate information
- Thoroughly question the caller to gain additional information, to assist the responding field units with routing directions, or hazards they may encounter on arrival.
- Keep "in progress" callers on the line for constant updates to the dispatcher and other attending agencies or units.
- Reassure caller police unit(s) are responding
- Instruct caller to call back if conditions change

LIABILITY

Civil Liability of Public Safety Communicators

Liability Concerns

The issue of liability has come to the forefront in recent years as lawsuits have been initiated against individual public safety employees with regard to alleged negligence of duty. A certain standard of care is required by those employed in emergency services. Police communicators must always perform in a professional manner and be aware that their actions and recordings of information may be a matter of record during any court proceedings associated with the call or dispatch. Negligence of duty on the part of the communicator may result in serious consequences, the least of which may be a law suit launched against them and their department.

The likelihood of a civil action for negligence is small. However, it is imperative that the police communicator always act within the parameters of the department's policies and operating procedures and guidelines. Standard operating procedures and guidelines are step by step ways of doing things for a particular set of circumstances. They have been specifically developed to address the needs for both the agency and the public. For example, a call for a break and enter would include the location, time delay, point of entry, complainant's particulars (name, address, telephone number etc.) and items taken, if any. The standard operating procedures or guidelines will vary with different types of calls and with different agencies.

These SOPs are developed for the protection of both police personnel and the public. An individual employee who follows these prescribed procedures to the best of his/her ability and training is not likely to be held personally responsible for negligence by the courts.

Avoiding Liability

Agency Methods

Agencies can mitigate their liability risks by:

- Clearly documenting all employee job descriptions so that they are explicit and well defined.
- Identifying and using specific standards for screening and hiring employees.
- Using a comprehensive program of training that includes practical and written applications and assessments.
- Ensuring that all employees complete this training and that their assessments are authentic and frequent.

- Regularly conducting a review of agency policies and procedures to ensure that they are current in the areas of:

  a) education and certification

    – quality assurance

    – department program management

    – incident response

Individual Methods

Strategies to decrease liability for the individual employee include:

- Familiarity with and following all Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines.
- Participating in upgrade training on a regular basis.
- Reporting any problems in writing to the immediate supervisor as soon as possible following any incidents.

In order to prepare themselves in the event of a liability issue, police communicators should be well versed in their department's SOPs and be prepared to question or challenge any direct orders from a supervisor or fellow worker that deviate from those procedures. This may require the order to be in written form or having been witnessed by another employee, noting that it was in direct conflict with department policy.

PRIORITIZING CALLS

Prioritizing calls is one of the call taker's most important functions. It is your responsibility as a call taker to ascertain facts from the caller and determine the level of response required of you and your agency. This responsibility cannot be overstated. Incorrectly assessing a call can have dire consequence on the caller, the field units and you. In addition to facing ethical and emotional repercussions, you could be held civilly or criminally responsible along with your agency.

Depending on the agency, different priorities assigned will produce different levels of response. For example, personal-injury accidents will require the attendance of a police officer, often a medical crew such as an ambulance and possibly a fire truck. Motor vehicle accidents without injury and under a specified amount of damage (apparent damage) will require the drivers to either exchange information or report to a local accident reporting centre, insurance-claim assessment centre, or the like.

Most agencies prioritize calls into four categories: priorities 1, 2, 3 and 4. Depending on the priority assigned, the dispatcher will react to have resources sent immediately, as soon as possible or not at all. Each agency will have its own set of procedures for determining how calls are prioritized and for dealing with specific types of call. This guide will provide you with a sense of how public safety agencies assign priority.

Priority 1

This priority refers to a call that is in progress and/or a situation in which there is immediate danger to life. Some examples of a priority 1 call would be a life-threatening situation, a natural disaster, a bomb threat, an armed robbery or any call involving weapons that could potentially harm another person. Units dispatched to a priority 1 call would use full lights and sirens and emergency response.

Priority 2

A call of this nature, while serious, does not present any immediate danger to human life. Typically these calls would involve incidents that have just occurred or occurred a short time ago, but are not in progress at the time of the call. Examples include sexual assault in which the suspect has left, a robbery that has occurred but is now over, a motor vehicle accident with non-life-threatening injuries. It is still extremely important to have units attend to calls of this nature as soon as possible, but a lights and sirens response may not be necessary.

Priority 3

A priority 3 call is sometimes termed a non-emergency call or a "cold call". While it may be necessary to send a unit to this type of call, there is no urgency as to how soon they arrive on the scene. Examples include: B&E or theft that occurred at an

unspecified time, a shoplifter who is in custody by security, or a property damage type of incident.

Priority 4

Many agencies consider a priority 4 call to be for information purposes only. It often does not require the physical attendance of a member of the agency, and can often be dealt with over the telephone. Many insurance type claims that require a police-report file number fall into this category. The call taker simply fills out the information required, issues an occurrence number and then files the report into the records-keeping system for future reference.

Examples of Varying Priority

Depending on the types of questions and their answers, the following types of calls may be assigned different priorities according to the situation and how the situation changes. Situations can range from non-reportable to a full tri-service call out. Areas of questioning will determine the priority given.

MVA

- Injuries.
- Hazardous material.
- Fire.
- Trapped inside.
- Location.

Child Custody

- History.
- Court order.
- Terms of custody.

Domestic

- Weapons.
- History.

B&E

- Someone still inside.
- What was taken.

Other situations will require other questions. Police communicators develop common sense over time based on the accumulated experience, critical thinking and protocols, rather than on rigid checklists.

Determine, on an incident by incident basis, what information is *primary* or necessary in order to categorize the incident for dispatch. Do this quickly to minimize the delay

in the initial dispatch of field units. Supplementary information can be gathered and will be important to a subsequent investigation.

PREPARE REPORTS FOR DISPATCHING

Information to Dispatch a Call

Police dispatching is different from other types of dispatching, including that of other emergency services. To dispatch a typical police report you will need to have recorded and supply to the field units the following information:

Location of Incident

For the purpose of attendance by police personnel, this may include an address, cross streets, a physical description of the site to further identify it, or perhaps a lay out of the building or its surroundings to identify points of entrance, entrance codes if applicable, exits or any hazards associated with it.

Details of Incident

The information from the call taker should supply all the needed information and incident details. It is important that field personnel be supplied with all pertinent information to ensure both their safety and the safety of the public.

Dispatchers must never send field units in *blind*. Give them the information you have, as accurately and briefly as possible. This allows the officers to respond in an appropriate manner.

Name of the Contact Person

The report for dispatching should make it clear which person should be contacted at the scene. The protocols with regard to the broadcasting of the contact person's name will differ from agency to agency.

Dispatch Information Procedures

Once a call enters your agency, it may be recorded on a dispatch form or ticket, an occurrence report, as well as in an incident log book. These may be electronic on CAD or paper if there is a computer failure.

The form is generally filled out for the dispatcher and will contain all the necessary information to assign a field unit to the call as well as indicate any support or specialty sections that may also be required at the scene.

Most agencies record caller information, telephone conversations and radio broadcasts on audio tapes. Always be aware that your communications are recorded and may become part of a transcript, trial or evidence.

Being professional at all times in conversations, interoffice communications and while broadcasting, even if on a scrambled or protected channel, will prevent possibly embarrassing or awkward situations for both call takers and dispatchers.

Efficiency is dependent on the ability of communicators to exercise a number of skills, such as emotional control, rational analysis, verbal communications skills, conflict resolution, keyboarding, listening skills. Effective police communications is dependent on both *accuracy* and *speed*; one cannot be sacrificed for the other.

Reports for Dispatch

The call taker is responsible to ensure that the information gathered is **Complete, Concise, Clear**, and **Correct (The four Cs)**. Call takers need to evaluate the reports they generate. An incident report must be self explanatory since it is often directed to a person removed from the source of the incident. The recipient depends on the thoroughness and accuracy of the report to obtain the facts. If any part of the communication requires further explanation, the report has failed to serve its purpose. In evaluating the report, the following questions should be asked:

Complete

- Does it contain all the information necessary to accomplish its purpose?
- Does it answer all the questions the reader may have?
- Does it answer the appropriate questions *where, when, who, what, why*, *how* and *weapons?* (as required by the police agency)

The report must incorporate all the facts and information available, which pertain to the problem or the case. Partially stated facts should not be incorporated in a report as they are misleading and may cause the reader to reach wrong conclusions and make wrong decisions.

Concise

Being long winded is the curse of many writers. The elimination of superfluous words and phrases that contribute to the wordiness of a report will save the readers time and unnecessary work.

Clear

The first objective of any written communication is to convey ideas so that they cannot be misunderstood. The selection of words will influence the effectiveness of the report. The words used should be simple and not ambiguous. A barrier to quick understanding is the unnecessary use of complex or unusual words.

Correct

Reports must be factual. Errors reflect upon the ability and, at times, the integrity of the writer. In police communications, errors could mean life or death. The content must consist of a true representation of the facts.

Summary

The information in a report depends upon the purpose of the report. The purpose of the report is to inform the recipient/reader of certain activities and the outcome of these activities. In an investigation, the object is to secure the information, which explains an occurrence. Therefore, in processing an incident a communicator should always bear in mind that the primary purpose for processing the incident is to inform.

It is not enough to ask the right question; the communicator must accurately record and quickly process the information. The communicator relates the circumstances of a reported incident to responder personnel. In preparing the narrative account of the circumstances, the communicator cannot assume that the recipient will have any knowledge of the incident. The communicator cannot expect the recipient of the information to fill in any details. He/she must assume that the recipient's only information about the incident will come from the report generated. Reports which demonstrate the four Cs reflect the ability and the attitude of the communicator and the efficiency of the communication centre. The following steps will help to ensure accuracy.

- Document the call manually or on CAD.
- The call taker relates the circumstances of a reported incident to responder personnel via the dispatcher.
- Ensure that the information you gather is **Complete, Concise, Clear**, and **Correct**.

Dispatch Information Procedures

In a manual system, once a call enters your agency it may be recorded on a dispatch form or ticket, an occurrence report, as well as in an incident log book.

The form is generally filled out for the dispatcher and will contain all the necessary information to assign a field unit to the call as well as indicate any support or specialty sections that may also be required at the scene.

Most agencies record caller information, telephone conversations and radio broadcasts on audio tapes. Always be aware that your communications are recorded and may become part of a transcript, trial or evidence.

- Being professional at all times in conversations, interoffice communications and while broadcasting, even if on a scrambled or protected channel, will prevent possibly embarrassing or awkward situations for call takers.

EFFECTIVE INFORMATION GATHERING TECHNIQUES

Effective Call Taking Techniques

Assertiveness – Controlling vs. Leading

Assertiveness is the ability to take control of a situation and is an essential characteristic of an effective call taker. As an effective call taker you *must* establish control of the conversation in order to gain the information required. Experienced call takers will not allow the caller to ramble on or lead the conversation. You must be in charge. Remember the caller has contacted you because he or she requires assistance from you or your service. It is your job to render that assistance as swiftly and efficiently as possible. You must know what information *you* need and extract it from the caller. Callers under stress will often ramble on and it is your job to cut through unnecessary information to determine what is pertinent to the situation you are dealing with. You want to get the information you need in the least painful way for both of you. When we talk about assertiveness in the role of a call taker, we are not referring to bounding into the conversation with *just the facts, ma'am*! Nor does assertiveness mean aggressiveness. After all, there is some truth to the saying, you can attract a lot more flies with honey than with vinegar. *Use firmness without aggression.*

Be aware of your tone of voice:

"Give me your name," may sound too demanding.

It would sound better to ask, "Would you please give me your name, last name first?"

Think about an incident where you had to deal with someone who sounded overly demanding. Talk about it. Could anything have been done differently to make the exchange go more smoothly?

Know the difference between *leading* a call and *controlling* it.

Leading the caller is ineffective as many people will merely tell you what they think you want to hear. This can result in the gathering of inaccurate information. Consider examples of leading a conversation, where a call taker offers up information and the caller agrees with it. Why would callers agree to wrong information? Because they are not really sure that the information is wrong, because they feel intimidated by the call taker, or because they feel that they are helping out after a fashion. Asking leading questions can cause problems. For instance, imagine a call taker asking a caller, "Was the theft suspect wearing a red shirt?" The caller, out of nervousness, answers quite incorrectly that it seemed to be red. The call taker then forwards the

wrong information to the field units. There is no red shirt in sight, only a big red herring for the field units. Most likely the suspect will get away.

Controlling the conversation by asking pertinent questions, as opposed to leading it, will help to prevent incorrect information from being passed on to field units.

Voice Modulation for Conversational Control

As a call taker you must gather information as quickly and as accurately as possible. Using voice modulation in an effort to control the conversation allows you to develop a positive rapport with the caller rapidly and accomplish your goals. Each call requires judgement on the part of the call taker to determine which method would be most effective to gather information. Sometimes it will be a combination of techniques. An experienced call taker will develop their own style and be somewhat flexible in choosing what information-gathering techniques to use.

Understanding the difference between controlling a call and leading a call allows you to take charge of the situation. There are a number of techniques you can use for conversational control, which will assist you in obtaining the information you need as quickly and efficiently as possible. Regardless of the agency, be it a police, fire, emergency medical or other call-taking agency, you are the representative of your agency, and the expert who needs to ask the questions.

A list of techniques follows. When to use each of them will depend on the situation, your judgment and experience.

Businesslike

Some callers have had negative experiences with previous call takers or agencies and may assume they will again be victims of substandard service. Some callers may be strongly anti-emergency service. They may appear irritated or hurried on the phone. A businesslike tone will assure them that you are knowledgeable in your job and that you appreciate the time they took in calling.

An example of this would be a store owner whose business has been broken into several times. He *assumes* that when he calls he will have to wait and perhaps close his store. He may say, "Look, my front window's been smashed out again. Do you think the cops could get here before Tuesday this time?" The call taker would reply in a direct, but polite manner with, "I need to get some information from you first, sir, then I can assign an officer to attend to your call as quickly as possible." The businesslike tone of voice will be most effective with those who may have had a negative experience with call takers or agencies in the past. By taking control in a businesslike manner, you assure callers that you are knowledgeable and able to attend to their needs. You also send the message that you appreciate their call. After all, where would our jobs be without the public?

If a caller says something derogatory like *I pay your wages*, or *Do you think that they could get here before next week?* ignore the sarcasm and get straight to the point. "*Sticks and stones …*". Regardless of the insults – and you will hear all sorts – resist the impulse to respond in kind. Reply firmly and politely that you will be able to address their needs as soon as you get some information from them. Do not allow yourself to get into an argument with a caller. Reduce the risk of callers lodging complaints against your agency and yourself.

Clear and Concise

If you have established that you are dealing with an emergency or priority call, you need the information and you need it fast! Use a clear and concise tone of voice to gather the minimal amount of information you require to initiate an immediate response and keep the caller on the line to gather subsequent details from the call.

A 9-1-1 line rings and the caller is yelling, "Help! I need help!" You may have to direct the caller to keep him or her focused on providing the information that you require. Certain phrases may be used in order to control the call, such as: "Mr. Smith, I need you to take a deep breath and answer my questions so we can get help on the way" or "I really need you to listen to my instructions so you can be helped right away."

Imagine someone screaming into the phone, There's a bad accident here and people are trapped in the car! Imagine yourself as the call taker. What you could say is: Give me the location, and stay on the line with me while I get an ambulance, fire and police response started."

You can then go back to the caller to fill in the rest of the information that you need. This accomplishes two goals:

1. The caller knows that help is on the way and will be in a somewhat better frame of mind to give you the rest of the information you need. It shortens the response time.

2. You can continue updating the field units while they are on their way to the incident.

Reassuring Voice

This is often most effective when dealing with children or the elderly. Very often these people are frightened or intimidated by the thought of contacting an emergency service, regardless of the reason behind it. They need reassurance that they have done the right thing in calling. They are easily intimidated by an officious or authoritative phone manner. The use of a friendly manner and tone of voice will put the caller at ease. Reinforce the fact that calling the emergency service was the appropriate thing to do and assure them that you are there to help them.

Use this approach when you need to reassure or calm the caller. Callers need to know that they are doing the right thing by calling you. Consider a child home alone who sees a stranger in his yard. He is scared but he is not sure if calling the police is the right thing to do. Perhaps he feels he is overreacting and will get in trouble. He has never called 9-1-1 before. He calls up crying, "There's a stranger in my yard." A soft, consoling voice replies, "Don't worry, Joey, we're on the way to help you." Such a response will reassure the child that: (1) help is on the way; and (2) he did the right thing in calling.

Elderly people will often apologize for calling and say things like, "I'm sorry to bother you but ..." You may say something like "You're not bothering me at all; what can we do to help? What can I do to help you?"

Quiet Voice

The quiet voice can be effective in getting the attention of a caller who is out of control or having difficulty focusing on the call taker's questions. When the call taker lowers the volume and tone of their voice, the caller is forced to concentrate on listening to what the call taker is saying.

Raising Your Voice

There will be times when the call taker will have to raise his or her voice, either to gain control of the situation or to be heard by the caller. Some callers may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol and will only listen to an authoritative voice. Voice elevation is sometimes required to get callers' attention focused on the purpose of their call, or to get them to communicate the desired information. Some callers have lost control due to anger, fear or panic. It is up to the call taker to get them on track to what is required.

An example would be the intoxicated person, calling from a noisy bar, who has just seen someone breaking into his car. He yells, "Some jerk in a red shirt is breaking into my car, I'm gonna kill him if you don't get here right now, hurry the cops up you idiot..." Call taker would reply, in a voice loud enough to be heard, "Calm down and listen to my questions. Where is the male in the red shirt now?" The caller needs to be refocused away from his anger to provide information.

It is prudent to gradually escalate the amount of volume or authority which you express in your voice. It is best to do this slowly and not during the initial contact – the caller might become defensive or uncooperative. Once you have established control by raising your voice, you can return to a normal speaking voice. An experienced call taker knows within a few seconds if this technique will be effective in gathering information.

Techniques to Gather Information

Voice modulation is not enough to get the job done. You need questioning techniques to extract the required information from a caller. Callers have contacted you for help, but you are the expert – you need to tell them what *you* need. Remember, you must do this as quickly and as efficiently as possible. Your job is to ask the right questions.

Use Active Listening

As covered earlier in this book, it is critical to use active listening skills to check for total meaning.

- Use questions to clarify meaning.
- Use open-ended questions.
- Use closed-ended questions sometimes.
- Probe for Information
- Use effective paraphrasing

Minimal Encouragement

While this is not a direct form of questioning, it is a technique used to keep the person talking, and confirms that you are listening: *Yes, uh huh, okay, mmmm* and so on.

The call taker uses this type of language toward the caller to reassure the caller they are listening to them and to encourage the caller to keep talking. This method is used only when the caller is on track.

If callers have a tendency to keep talking as opposed to passing on information, this technique can be used to re-focus the caller on the purpose of his or her call. The victim of the theft-from-auto says, "Yeah, this guy in the red ... He's breaking into my car ... And I just got a new stereo... My jacket's in the car." The call taker would re-focus the caller by saying, "Right, so the male breaking into your car has a red shirt. Okay, what else is he wearing?"

Building Rapport through Self-Disclosure

This is when the call taker attempts to establish a relationship with the caller by empathizing and/or sharing a personal experience with him or her. It takes a certain measure of experience and good judgment to develop the technique for rapport through self-disclosure. This technique works best when a basic relationship has already been established between the caller and call taker. It is also a useful tool for obtaining information from a difficult caller and getting them on the call taker's side. Used appropriately, the practice can reflect positively on you and your agency; creating good public relations. Use self-disclosure cautiously, however. This technique is generally not used in emergency situations because it elicits personal information and can generate too long a call. When using this method, the call taker

must be careful not to overshadow or negate callers' emotions or situations by focusing too much on his or her own experiences.

Examples for effective use of self-disclosure:

Stolen car*: You might say: I've had my car stolen before too. If you could try to remember something about the person you saw hanging around the parking lot, it could really help in the investigation.*

Lost child: *You might say: I have a five-year-old at home, too. I know how you must be feeling right now. Tell me what he was wearing, and we'll get this out right away. Maybe you can find a recent picture of your child while waiting for the police to get there.*

Momentary Pauses

Sometimes a pause in the conversation initiated by the call taker might prompt the caller to provide more information. This lull in the conversation may give the caller the chance to think further about the information they are providing and to remember more details. This technique must be used sparingly and not for long durations, otherwise the caller might feel that they have been ignored or hung up on.

Techniques to Avoid

Paraphrasing Blocks

Avoid the blocks to effective paraphrasing as they can shut down the flow of communication.

- Advising
- Sympathizing
- Questioning
- Criticizing

Multiple-Answer Questions

An effective call taker must focus their questions to a single response from the caller. Otherwise the caller may become confused, and may still be answering your first question while you are already on your third. Such a situation can result in incorrect or inaccurate information being relayed.

Ask questions in order of priority. Go on to the next question based on the information you have received. For example, "Where is the incident?" and "What's happening?"

Instead of asking, "Where is your car parked and what color is his shirt and is the male still there?" ask each question individually and tailor your subsequent questions

to build on the information given. Otherwise, the caller will be confused as to which information you require first.

Caller Cross-Examination

Cross-examining the caller questions their credibility and may put him or her on the defensive, or he or she may become uncooperative.

As an example, assume that the caller's vehicle is being broken into late at night. Because it is dark outside, the call taker is unsure of the description's accuracy. If the call taker says, "Are you saying you can tell his shirt is red in the dark?" the words indicate disbelief in the caller's information.

If you are in doubt about the information being given to you by a caller, move to clarification. Say for example: "You had said the suspect's shirt was red previously. I would just like to confirm what the colour is?" Such an approach is less confrontational. The call taker should always be aware of their use of spoken language and the consequences of its incorrect usage.

Leading Questions

If callers are confused or panicked, they are easily led into supplying answers that are not always correct. People may try to come up with the answers they think you want. If you start leading the call, they may try to pick up on clues and answer accordingly. An experienced call taker can extract information from a caller by making him or her *focus* and participate in solving his or her own problem. As stated above, people often will anticipate or assume the answer you are looking for. Some callers feel inadequate at not being able to provide the answers you seek and will look to your questions for clues. If the call taker is *controlling* the call, the caller will be supplying actual information, not simply giving you the answers that he or she thinks you want.

The following example illustrates how leading questions can result in misinformation. When the caller says, "Someone is trying to break into my car," the call taker asks, "What color is his shirt?" The caller replies, "I don't know. It's dark out." The call taker then *leads* the caller into an answer by asking, "Could it be red?" The caller answers, "Yeah, I think so. Yeah, red."

Remember the shirt is not red unless the caller has said it is from their own observation. Your job as a call taker is to focus the caller's attention, not to suggest answers. It is the call taker's responsibility to pass on information that he or she *believes* to be accurate, not *assumes* to be.

MANAGING EMERGENCY CALLS

Set high personal standards of proficiency on your job, and work hard to maintain them. A professional attitude *towards* the job, every day, will minimize errors *on* the job. Every call you answer will require that *you* make a judgment based on your application of common sense, experience and the following principles:

Control the Call

Always remember that the caller has contacted *you* for help. You must be in control of the conversation. Do not allow the caller to ramble or get off topic. Time is of the essence in emergencies, and you cannot afford to waste it by allowing the caller to lose focus. Ask pertinent questions and insist on answers. Do not let the caller tell you what to do – it is your job to determine the action to take with each call. Be authoritative in your directions or instructions to the caller.

Keep the Caller on the Line

Keeping a caller on the line serves a number of purposes. It allows you to be in a position to constantly update the dispatcher and field units about any new information that may assist them. Any potential new dangers or situational changes can be communicated immediately, minimizing the risk to both the caller and agency personnel. After you have noted initial details, you can glean secondary information from the caller while the call is active. Consider landmarks that may more easily identify their residence, businesses or the scene in question. Supplemental information will assist field units in locating the scene. For example, you can ask the caller whether the caller's front porch lights are on, whether the house number is clearly visible from the street, whether there is a car in the driveway and what color it is, and so on. Units that may be searching a yard, or entering a scene, will want to know if there is a dog to contend with. If the call is in progress and your caller has a visual on the scene, he or she can immediately advise you on an escalation in the situation or, if there are suspects, which direction they go in when they leave the scene and what mode of transportation they use. This constant update of information can greatly assist the dispatcher and the field units in the decisions they must make in their handling of the call.

Keeping callers on the line is also effective in calming them: you can reassure them in this way that you are listening to them and that help is on the way. It enables you to keep the caller focused on the task of supplying details rather than on their injuries or other distractions at hand.

Remain Objective

Do not take on the emotions of the caller. This disables you from obtaining all the information you require. Remain calm even if the caller does not. Make no judgments or assumptions about the caller, the event, or its possible outcomes. Concentrate on the details you need and the appropriate actions you must take. Put aside your personal feelings and do your job in a professional, impartial manner.

Defuse Defensive Reactions

The language you choose could very well influence the way people will respond to you. "You" language can sound very strong and accusatory. Using "I" language can help defuse defensive reactions in people. This means being descriptive rather than evaluative. Ask the person for specifics about the situation to clarify what is happening. Paraphrase their information in a way that calms the caller while still acknowledging that there is a problem. Identify what the person wants and needs from you. Ask him or her what they want.

For example:
A break and enter victim tells you "I never used to have to lock my doors." Instead of negatively saying, "You are living in the past," a more positive and effective response would be to say, "It's a shame that times have really changed. Maybe I can offer you some suggestions on safeguarding your home...".

Use the Chain of Command

Each agency has its own chain of command. Understand how it works and the role each supervisor plays within it. Remember *your* role within this network and act appropriately within its parameters. Use the expertise and knowledge of your supervisors or senior personnel in dealing with difficult calls and callers. Solicit their advice or assistance regarding policy and procedures. Follow the guidelines of your agency with reference to the chain of command during an emergency. Know which of your superiors should be informed and at what point during an emergency.

Use Teamwork

You are part of a team that may consist of other call takers, dispatchers, supervisors and field units within your emergency service environment. Each person you work with will have knowledge and skills unique to himself or herself. Observe these people's techniques and learn from them. Count on your team members when you have a heavy workload, when you are under stress or when you are dealing with difficult calls or callers. Never be afraid to ask for help. In emergency call taking, the consequences of incorrect actions can have tragic results. Do not let pride or ignorance stand in the way of asking for assistance.

Communicate with Other Agencies

In many emergency situations, other agencies will respond along with your own. Communicate with them in order to gain information, and update them with information that may apply to their job. Make sure that you are aware of any direct lines available to these agencies at your job site and understand how they work. Know where telephone numbers are kept for other agencies and departments. Memorize all frequently used numbers. Use plain language when speaking to other responding agencies. Their codes may very well be different from those that your agency uses.

Use Outside Support Agencies

Language barriers can be minimized by using the services of the AT&T Language Line or an appropriate local service agency. Learn who speaks a different language in your communication centre or agency and what language or languages they are proficient in. Learn what language services are available to your own agency and how to access them. Know where the information is located regarding these services and be familiar with how they work, including any policies regarding their use. Be prepared with this information in advance. Your first call where language is an issue is not the time to figure out how these systems work.

React When You Have Necessary Information

Ensure that you have all the details you require to properly assess each call. Do not react without first practicing the five Ws and one H. Know what you are doing before you do it. Do not be pressured by either the caller or situation into taking action before you have gathered all the appropriate details. You can advise the caller in a polite but firm manner that you will be able to assist them once you have the required information. It is more important to assess a call properly than it is to record it swiftly on your screen or form. In situations where you have only sketchy information, or where the caller gives incomplete information and hangs up, or where the caller simply abandons the call, you will need to acquire information through other means. Try and trace the call, use call-back, use the reference directories for more information, or apply your knowledge of the neighbourhood from which the caller phoned and incidents that might occur there.

Enlist Assistance from Other People at the Scene

If your caller has difficulty with English or is in a state of panic or hysteria that creates a barrier to collecting all the details you need, ask him or her if there is anyone else you can talk to. There may be other people at the scene with a better command of the language or of their emotions who can fill in any missing details.

Involve the Caller

Many callers asking for assistance experience a feeling of total helplessness. They are in a situation completely out of their control. Many times giving them a little bit of control over *their* actions will ease their anxiety and calm their emotions. This does *not* mean allowing them to *lead* you through the call. Rather, it means getting them to participate in the assistance process. This can be as simple as asking them to turn on their porch light for the arriving units or calling their pets in before the police dog arrives. Commend them for accurate information or their calm telephone manner and stimulate their thought processes so they can remember more details. You can control the call and still leave a caller feeling that he or she had a hand in solving the problem at hand or in bringing a situation to a satisfactory conclusion.

Use Call Backs

There may be times when you get disconnected from a caller or he or she is unable to stay on the line with you at that particular time. Call them back, identify yourself and the reason for the call back. You may do so to gather supplementary information or simply to inform the caller of the status of their call. Call backs are also a means of satisfying callers who may have been shuffled aside for a more emergent situation. Call backs serve two purposes: one, they may supply more details to help you in assessing a call and two, they are an excellent way to promote your agency's image.

End the Call

Not every call that you take in a communications centre will require you to keep the caller on the phone until help arrives. In fact, most calls will probably be dealt with in 30 seconds or less. For the most part, you will probably rarely encounter the type of call that requires you to keep the caller on the line until help arrives. Once you have ascertained the information that you need to deal with the incident effectively, you can end the call. It can be as simple as telling the caller that someone will be attending and reassuring them that they have done the right thing to call or referring the caller to some other agency better equipped to deal with their problem. Some incidents will require you to give instructions to the caller prior to the arrival of the emergency responders. These instructions may include something like turning on lights, waiting for emergency personnel to arrive or assisting responders in some other way.

Remember, it is your job as a call taker to get the information as quickly and as efficiently as possible; to deal with the call effectively; and to ensure that the appropriate response is made to the incident. As the techniques of call processing become more familiar to you in your job, you will find yourself able to deal with calls quickly and process them effectively.

Practise Techniques of Call Processing

Develop a style and level of expertise in a variety of call taking techniques. Be flexible in their usage and realize that a technique that works on one caller may not work on another. Practice your communication skills and be open-minded to new approaches. Remember, each call and each caller present a new challenge to you. Never believe you know it all.

Be Proficient in Multi-Tasking

You will learn to screen multiple calls. Learn to quickly gather enough information to determine the priority of incoming calls in order to facilitate response to emergency calls. Be effective in handling more than one call at a time. Your skill involves being able to keep track of several calls at once, never forgetting the nature of each one and managing them in an appropriate manner. Keep detailed notes of your calls. It is impossible to memorize all the information you receive. Apply your common sense to determine which calls are of a higher priority. If your emergency lines are ringing, it is okay to put lower priority calls on hold and answer the other lines. Inform the caller that you are putting them on hold, tell them why you are doing so and assure them you will come back to their call.

All of theses techniques are part of efficient call taking and processing. Practice them until they are second nature.

Common Sense

Common sense is the total of your experience and how you apply it in a familiar context. It is not something that you are born with. Instead, it is an ability that you can develop through focusing on four key areas, Training, Limitations, Judgement and Resources.

Training

Training can be accomplished in a variety of ways. We experience formal training in a school or an institution. We learn procedures and policies and we can practice them in a controlled setting. Life also offers us training: "If I had known then what I know now, I would have acted differently." People say that education is a lifelong experience. Take that same approach in your career – in everything you do.

You will never know all there is to know. Nor will you ever see it all. Once you think you have seen it all, you will simply close your mind to new experiences. The more experience you gain in call taking, the better you will become, and the more you will be able to relate it to other experiences. Always keep an open mind and something might sneak in!

Judgment

Always, act in good faith. If you take the proper steps and follow procedures to the best of your ability, your superiors are less likely to find fault with your actions. If they do criticize you, you can justify your actions by saying that you erred on the side of safety. It is difficult to condemn someone for acting ethically.

In some cases, you may not know what to do. If you are not sure, ask. Verify the information that you give out or the actions you take. You may need to pose a lot of questions in the beginning. Ask them and learn.

Double check, be concerned and be prepared to answer for what you did. You are responsible for your actions – justify them. This helps you to develop your sixth sense. Develop your instincts, then learn to follow them. They will serve you well.

Limitations

There is a lot to know and do in this type of job. You cannot possibly know everything. Some days can be overwhelming. Know yourself, know when to ask for help, know when you have had enough. Your co-workers are there to work with you as a team and to pick up the slack.

You must also be willing to do the same for others. In public safety communications, you do not and cannot work in a vacuum. It is truly a two-way street, the ultimate in teamwork. When you are working in cramped quarters for twelve hours with someone else, you had better learn quickly how to get along just so you can co-exist with your colleagues. The job can be stressful enough without your having to worry about the space you are sharing.

Resources

There is a lot of information overload in this type of job. There are manuals, policies, procedures, laws, bylaws and so on. Your bosses will not expect you to be able to quote line and verse from every book, but they will expect you to know where to find the information in short order.

Keep a reference book close at hand. Make yourself a "cheat book" that lists procedures that are not routinely done, message formats and call-out formats. Review the books regularly: learn about dealing with a bomb threat *before* one actually occurs. If you are comfortable in flipping through procedures, you will know where to turn when a major emergency arises.

Start now by bouncing situations off your classmates as you walk down the hall. Start to develop the team. It will serve you well. Be familiar with what is going on in the world. Read the newspaper, listen to the news. Much of what happens in the world influences people's lives. Discuss a variety of topics: [Middle East bombing (how it can cause certain factions to become very upset, more militant, or how it can be used to point fingers at one group or another), volatile neighborhoods, marching on

consulate properties, and so on]. Do you work in an area with a diverse population? What are the issues that concern your neighborhood?

Summary

To be an effective call taker you must be an effective communicator. Use the skills you are comfortable with and practice the ones you have trouble with. Use the attributes of each skill and learn to combine each as the need arises. If you are proficient in all of them, you will instinctively apply them to each situation. Many of our examples illustrate how different techniques are used in combination to elicit accurate information.

Remember, there are exceptions to almost every written rule. Judgment calls are based on the application of common sense, experience and good faith. Be assertive and professional in your attempts to gain information. *Control the call*. To improve your skills, observe other call takers and the methods they employ on serious calls. Double-plug with experienced operators and observe their styles and applications of techniques.

Do not play to the audience. Other people will be watching you and it is tempting to try and make an impression. Do not fall into the trap of trying to amuse the other people in the room by mimicking your callers. You alone are responsible for your call. Act professionally.

Common sense is the ability to apply judgement and sound reasoning to the decision-making process. The application of these concepts is an essential requirement to becoming an effective call taker. Every decision and action you take will involve common sense based on your knowledge, resources, training and life experience. Many of the decisions you make as a call taker will be made instantly, with great consequences attached to them. Trust the procedures that you have developed and do not over analyze. Practice common sense. You have life skills that can be applied to effective call taking. Recognize them and observe them in others. Experienced call takers recognize that they can still learn from the callers, situations and other call takers.

Experienced call takers also recognize their own limitations. Communicators cannot be all things to all people. Know your own personal limits. Seek help when you need it, then find out why you did not know what to do and rectify the problem. Do not pass the buck and never lie to a caller because you do not know the answer to a particular question. Do not give information or directions without first being sure the information is correct. Act in good faith. In other words, always say or do what you believe is correct according to your department's policies and procedures.

To act in bad faith is to leave yourself open to discipline, or to civil or even criminal action. There are personal ramifications to acting in bad faith as well. Do not underestimate the emotional effect that some calls may have on you. It is easier to

deal with these situations if you are confident that you have performed your duties to the best of your ability and in good faith.

As a call taker, you are part of a team of emergency services providers. Depend on your team members and try to become someone who can be depended upon. Ask intelligent questions and be receptive to constructive criticism and comments.

Always remember, *you* are the one who is ultimately responsible for your actions. Never lose or misdirect a caller out of ignorance or pride. *Always* act in good faith.

TECHNIQUES FOR MINIMIZING ERRORS IN POLICE CALL TAKING

The call taker must be aware of how much the dispatcher and field units rely on the information relayed to them. They take action based on details that you, the call taker, provide. Those details must be as accurate as possible. As the call taker, you determine the priority of a call based on information you obtain from the caller. Once the call has been dispatched, a number of factors influence the outcome of the call. These factors are directly related to how well you did your job in obtaining accurate information. The safety of both the caller and the field units may depend on how effectively you have performed your function.

Call takers are human and will occasionally make mistakes. However, you can help to ensure that errors are kept to a minimum by doing your job to the best of your ability. Always act in good faith and remember your responsibility to the public and other personnel in your agency. Minimizing errors in assessing calls lowers the potential risk to callers, to the general public and to your field units. Safety should always be your primary concern when you assess and prioritize calls.

Practical Techniques to Minimize Errors

In a police communications center, no two calls are exactly the same. Although each call is unique, there are a number of factors common to different calls that can result in the call taker incorrectly prioritizing a call. It is essential that you learn to recognize the possible sources of these errors.

Factors Contributed by Caller

Caller Lacks Information

Sometimes callers are unable to provide information because they simply do not know the details. Perhaps the caller's information is secondhand and he or she is acting as a messenger for the actual complainant or victim. This is often the case in the reporting of motor vehicle accidents. A caller will say, "Apparently a car has just hit a pole in front of my house" or "I just heard a loud bang and it sounds like a bad car accident." In both these instances the caller is unable to supply more detailed information.

Caller in an Emergent Situation

Consider the caller whose home is being broken into and who is calling from another room within the residence. She cannot talk for long out of fear of alerting the suspect to her whereabouts. Or the caller may be a small child whose parents are fighting. The child believes he will get in trouble for contacting the police and disconnects

immediately after supplying the address. Someone calling from a burning house would need to exit immediately as not to put herself at risk.

Cultural or Linguistic Differences

The call taker may not understand certain callers because of *cultural or linguistic differences*. In such a diverse country as Canada, language barriers pose a significant challenge to effective call taking. The caller may not understand the importance of terms and circumstances referred to by the call taker. Moreover, people from certain cultures may not think highly of emergency service personnel and may thus be reluctant to supply information.

Callers are diverse, often coming from cultural backgrounds unfamiliar to the call taker. The call taker may not realize the importance of certain terms used by the caller; therefore, *language* can be a significant barrier to the call taker. Many callers do not have a full command of the English language and some have none at all. Many agencies employ the use of a translation service such as the AT&T Language Line, or keep a resource list of contact people with language skills.

Age can be a factor as well. Young children and seniors present challenges to the call taker in that they may not understand the procedures that a call taker has to follow to gather details of a call. Age also plays a part in the caller's willingness to supply those details. Children are often nervous about making the call, while seniors are often apologetic. Dealing with these types of situations require the call taker to be patient, using conversational control to obtain the necessary information.

There will be times when it is difficult to hear the caller. *Background noise* from a scene or the noise level in your own communication centre may affect your ability to understand what the caller is saying.

Influence of Caller's Attitude

Callers frequently seek immediate solutions or actions to their problems and are often *insistent* and *demanding* of the call taker. Often there are cases where the caller name drops to demand immediate action by an agency. Call takers who are not in control of the call often fall victim to allowing the caller to tell them what to do. They either become too anxious to please the caller, or want to disconnect from him or her. The end result it that they do not collect enough information. Without sufficient details the call taker cannot assess a call properly. Lack of information can compromise of officer safety, and also result in an inappropriate response from the emergency agency, or one that is contrary to policy. An example of such a situation would be the caller who demands emergency response for a routine call.

It is easy to get caught up in the emotions of callers who are distraught, injured or panicked. The call taker who panics along with the caller runs the risk of *overrating* the call. The caller with the strange male in their backyard may be completely

hysterical. But if the call taker remains objective and asks a few more questions, the caller may realize the prowler is just a neighbor retrieving a soccer ball from the caller's yard.

On the opposite end of the scale is the caller who is completely calm yet still involved in an emergency situation. The caller may be in shock, unaware of the danger of her predicament or simply someone who is in control of her emotions. The call taker who assumes that a calm caller is not involved in an emergency situation runs the risk of *underrating* the call. Never assess a call based on the caller's tone of voice. Assess a call based on the *details* of the call.

Caller is Disabled (Physical or Emotional Trauma)

A caller who is injured may be physically incapable of maintaining a phone conversation. Certain physical disabilities may prevent the caller from getting a point across or from sounding coherent to the call taker. Trauma may affect the emotions of the caller and influence his ability to communicate his problem or whereabouts accurately.

Caller is Offensive

Some callers will be extremely abusive and use distasteful language. This happens frequently and the word "distasteful" is an understatement of the language you will hear. Callers may attack you personally, challenging everything from your ability to do your job, to the sound of your voice.

You, as a call taker, may be so offended or intimidated by the caller's language, that you will hurry through the call or even disconnect from it. As soon as you take comments from the caller to heart, you run the risk of concentrating, not on your job, but on the *person* who is verbally attacking you. This, in turn, can drastically reduce your ability to get the necessary facts from the caller.

Once you have the information that you require, advise the abusive caller that help is on the way. If they continue to be abusive, inform them that you are now hanging up, and reinforce the fact that emergency services are en route to deal with the situation.

Caller Is Impaired

Many callers will be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. This impairment may affect their ability to communicate their problems, offer accurate details, or even form proper words. Callers under the influence can be obnoxious, uncooperative and demanding. They can also be over-anxious to help, difficult to keep on topic and a liability to the field units at the scene. Never *assume* that a caller who sounds drunk or stoned is supplying accurate information. You should assume however that he or she has a legitimate problem, at least until you find out otherwise.

Factors Contributed by Call Taker

Call takers are not only impaired by callers' inability to convey important information. They can also suffer from problems of their own that prevent them from doing their jobs effectively. Again, being aware of these potential pitfalls is an important first step towards being able to avoid them completely.

Liability Concerns

Though liability is an area of concern for the call taker, it can never be the primary consideration. Call takers who are fearful of litigation will misdirect their focus instead of attending to the job of gathering information. They will often miss important details or follow an inappropriate line of questioning because they are trying to function within self-serving or protective parameters. If you know your job and do it thoroughly, personal liability will probably not be very much of an issue.

Area Knowledge

Experienced call takers can immediately associate an individual to an address, or a previous incident to an individual. They are familiar with types of calls which often originate from certain bars or neighborhoods in their area. They use this history as a *guideline* in assessing calls, not as a way of assuming the outcome of a current call. Call takers who lack knowledge specific to their area may not realize the significance of a call to a certain location or the potential risk to the public or field units that are associated with that location.

Inexperience

Emergency call processing can be incredibly stressful. The callers can be extremely demanding. Inexperience in dealing with different types of callers or incidents often plays a part in underrating or overrating calls. For example, the inexperienced call taker may lack the communication skills needed to gather all the relevant information from some types of callers. Or, as a result of his or her inexperience with a particular type of incident, the call taker may be unable to accurately assess potential hazards that may put the caller, field units or community at risk.

An inexperienced call taker may be proficient in dealing with one emergency call at a time, but have no experience in dealing with multiple situations and the stress that accompanies them. Emergency calls bring demands not only from the callers themselves, but from other call takers, dispatchers, supervisors and field units as well.

You are constantly moving from routine to urgent calls and back. However, as you acquire experience in call processing, you will find that you can control your stress more and more. Much of what you do on a day-to-day basis increases your level of experience. You are likely to improve as a call taker with every call you handle.

Prejudices

Prejudice in call taking refers to formulating pre-judgements of callers and situations. In such cases, call takers make assumptions based on previous experiences. Such assumptions affect their ability to make sound judgements based on the current, unique information. Call takers should never become complacent to the point where they feel that they have heard it all.

Perhaps you noticed a stranger in your own backyard last year. The stranger walked around for a few minutes then disappeared out a gate into the alley. You watched your yard but the person never reappeared, so you forgot about it and never called it in.

This incident could have formed the basis of a prowler call, but for you, a stranger in the backyard turned out not to be such a big deal. Consequently, when the same situation is presented to you by a caller, you make *assumptions* on the outcome of the call based on your own experience. Instead of assessing the call on the information supplied, your *prejudice* may result in you underrating the call and putting the caller and field units at risk. In downplaying incidents based on your prejudices, you also negate the emotions of the caller and run the risk of not assessing the call properly. As well, you may alienate the caller and jeopardize the rapport that you need to establish with the caller.

On the other hand, if every prowler call you have dealt with has resulted in a more serious outcome, your prejudice may result in you overrating the call. Call takers may make assumptions about a call based on their experience of similar calls or callers. Such prejudgments can affect their ability to make sound decisions based on the facts. Such a pre-judgement could ultimately put the caller and the responding field units at risk. In addition, the caller may sense your conviction that their problem is not particularly important. Your lack of concern could alienate the caller, and could be costly down the line in terms of cooperation with field units. Remember, the caller could provide information that is vital to an investigation – do not prejudge them.

Remember to assess a call based entirely on fact. Each call should be judged on its own merits and its own set of circumstances.

Lazy or Hurried Call Taker

Routine calls are much easier to deal with than emergency calls. The call taker is at leisure to ask the right questions, the caller has the time to give out the information, and the stakes are generally lower. Such calls can be so relaxed that call takers may become complacent in fulfilling their duties. Such complacency is a mistake, even for routine calls. Lazy call takers will ask just enough questions to get a caller off the line and out of their lives. They do not like to be interrupted from what they are doing – especially when work is causing the interruption. However, in rushing through a call,

they could miss important information that could radically alter a call's significance. Lazy call takers work properly only when *they* are prepared to work.

Perhaps you are just sitting down to your work station after battling traffic to arrive at work on time. Maybe you need a few minutes to relax and get organized. The phone rings immediately. The woman caller has an unknown male in her backyard. It is eight o'clock on a Monday morning. You hurry through the call because you are anxious to get your desk in order, have a coffee, and find your notebook. You enter the call with a minimum of details as "routine".

You have not signed on to the computer. You cannot find a pen. You do not bother to get a good description of the prowler. After all, he is probably just some teenager taking a shortcut to school. You do not know he was wearing a red shirt and carrying something long in his hand. The dispatcher does not know either, so this information is not passed on to the attending unit.

The field unit arrives and finds the patio door smashed in. The caller is lying just inside the doorway, now a victim of a sexual assault. A passerby, wearing a red shirt, asks what is going on and is sent on his way. Later, the victim's neighbor finds a rusty crowbar in his yard and, thinking it has been there all winter, tosses it into the garbage.

A caller has been victimized, a potential suspect has escaped, evidence has been discarded and the field units have been put at risk, all because the call taker was too lazy to find a pen or sign-on to the computer. The number of detailed notes taken by a call taker could potentially be vital to an investigation. Each time you answer the phone as a call taker, you must be prepared, with all of the equipment required to do your job efficiently and effectively.

Workload Due to Volume or Situation

Over the past decade, people in the workplace have had to accomplish more and more with fewer resources. Busy communications centres face the same predicament. There may not be enough people on staff to cover for call takers who are on their breaks, on holiday, or on leave. As a consequence, call takers may find themselves having to deal with telephones that are constantly ringing. They may feel pressure to hurry through calls in order to answer all the lines. In some cases, call takers may have to deal with multiple calls associated with a single incident. Numerous people might call about a motor vehicle accident at a major intersection. If anything, the number of such calls is likely to increase as more and more people use cellular phones.

You may have a rash of break-and-enter complaints after a long weekend. The sheer volume of calls may result in the call taker being unable to answer and assess all incoming calls. Because of expectations from callers, supervisors, dispatcher and field units, the call taker may feel pressured to hurry through a call and not take the

time to gather the information necessary to properly assess and accurately prioritize it. The call taker may be tempted to not spend the time necessary to gather all of the information required from the caller. He or she may feel pressure to get the caller off the line and move on to the next call. Such haste, however, can be counterproductive, resulting in an improper assessment of the call.

Using the call assessment model each time you answer the phone will assist in eliminating this type of problem. Remember, most types of calls can be adequately dealt with in under 60 seconds using the proper questioning techniques.

DEALING WITH CRISIS

What is a Crisis?

A *crisis* is an unusual situation. People in crisis are not usually crazed persons wielding an axe. They are normal people thrust into an unusual situation. A state of crisis may cause a number of possible physiological and psychological reactions. You may feel that you are at your breaking point, stressed, unable to cope, or past your level of tolerance. You cannot process information, and you begin to feel a sensory overload.

Normal means established or dictated by society, a recognized way of life. *Abnormal* describes situations that are outside the norms or boundaries established by society and may be constantly changing (what we perceive as normal might be abnormal to others).

Equilibrium

Equilibrium for each person is a balance in mind, body and spirit that adds up to a sense of well-being. This equilibrium has elements of emotions, thoughts, feelings of safety, meeting of biological needs and personal health. When there is a rapid change, we may experience problems. We can reach a breaking point.

Every person has a breaking point. Most of the time people live in a state of balance or equilibrium, a steady state between emotions and thoughts. When this equilibrium is disrupted, a crisis can occur. The potential for crisis depends upon how completely the delicate balance has been upset. When equilibrium shifts rapidly, the person experiences a problem. If the problem is not resolved quickly, the person enters a state of stress.

Stress normally causes enough tension that the person works to resolve the problem and re-establish equilibrium, but if that does not occur within a reasonable time, crisis occurs. A crisis can happen to anyone at any time in life. Crisis is the person's *response* to a situation, not the situation itself. In other words, a crisis is self-defined. In this way, circumstances that may cause a crisis for one person will only cause a temporary disruption in equilibrium for another.

Loss in Crisis

Inherent in every crisis is a loss. Somebody has lost or will lose something.

Types of Crisis

1. *Immediate crisis:*
   – The victim has been robbed or beaten.

– Their safety is gone.
– They may feel a biological need (injury) as well as a psychological one.

2. *Long term crisis:*
   – Long-term crises involve periodic breakdowns when a person feels agitated or upset, or cries a lot.
   For example, people may experience a breakdown when they are waiting for a terminally-ill spouse or parent to die.

3. *Series of linked disasters:*
   – A person's whole life is a crisis (beyond the norm); for instance, someone who is constantly getting beaten up or robbed and being thrown in the drunk tank.

Characteristics of a Crisis

At some point every person will face a crisis. Most people can deal with a crisis if they get a little help or sufficient time to resolve it.

- The crisis is sudden. Usual patterns of life change and equilibrium breaks down.
- The change is too great for the person to handle using his or her normal coping mechanisms, such as a death or fire. The change has personal significance which adds to the crisis. For example, a person who is usually calm panics when he sees a car accident because his family died in a car accident. The problem may be new. A person's usual coping strategies do not work. For example, they have never been robbed before.
- A crisis may last from minutes to several weeks. People cannot and do not remain in a state of crisis for long because the mind and body cannot maintain that state.
- A crisis may trigger behavior that is dangerous, unacceptable or self-destructive. This includes homicidal or suicidal responses.

For most people with good coping mechanisms, crisis states are fairly infrequent. Many of the callers to emergency services, because of various dysfunctional backgrounds, may have inadequate coping mechanisms, or their coping mechanisms have failed because:

- the problem is too great;
- the problem has special significance to them that makes it overwhelming;
- the problem occurs at a time of particular vulnerability;
- the problem is a new one, so appropriate coping mechanisms have not been developed; or
- the person's usual social support network has failed.
- the person needs help and does not know who else to call.

People at the height of a crisis do not have normal coping abilities. They are under incredible stress, and rational thought processes are gone. Characteristics exhibited under these circumstances include:

- sensory overload,

- extraordinary fear,
- inappropriate anger,
- extreme anxiety,
- altered memory, and
- distorted perceptions.

Impact of Victimization

Before we become good intervenors in a crisis, we have to learn what is going on with the victim. Regardless of what form of crisis we are talking about (for instance, a death or crime), most people react in a predictable way. A victim goes through three definite stages of behavioral, emotional, and physical stages when something bad happens to them.

Try not to pigeonhole someone into a particular stage. We cannot predict what stage they will have reached in dealing with their issue, as everyone is different and has different life experiences. People may also tend to oscillate back and forth between stages. So think of a timeline with very general boundaries. The stages of crisis reaction as described by Bard and Sangrey (1979) are:

1. *Impact stage* – shock, disbelief, eating and sleeping disturbances, anger.

2. *Recoil stage* – understanding of what happened, feelings of revenge, self-pity, guilt.

3. *Reorganization stage* – learning to deal with the situation, and to move on; may become an activist for the cause.

Most call takers will deal primarily with the impact stage.

Some of the skills that you are going to need when talking to someone right after a crisis include:

- Practise *active listening* in a calm and encouraging manner.
- Avoid being judgmental or moralistic (do not say "I would never do that!"), or guessing or assuming what the person in crisis needs or wants.
- Do not try to rescue the person. (You have the power to send the police, fire, or ambulance to the aid of the person. However, you cannot save them from the event yourself. Remember, they called because something happened!).
- Be patient (not angry, impatient or critical) about their abilities or behaviors.
- You are going to have to be supportive and your questioning will have to reflect knowledge, intuition, and concern.
- Verbalize your concern. Check to see that they are okay. Let them express themselves. Listen to them.
- Give them information to help reduce their anxiety about the unknown. Let them know what will likely happen without being absolute.
- Reassure them that their reactions are normal.

VERBAL SKILLS FOR CRISIS INTERVENTION

Good crisis intervention relies heavily upon good verbal skills. When someone calls 9-1-1, you need to use your verbal skills to assess quickly what his or her needs are.

Provide a grounding in reality

- Identify yourself and your position.
- Use the person's name when talking to them.
- Be calm.
- Anticipate their concerns, and give truthful information.
- Give reasons for your questions.
- Assure them that the information they are passing on to you is confidential.

Listen and respond appropriately

- Let them talk and assure them that you are listening.
- Use the active listening skills of empathy and paraphrasing.

Ask simple questions

- Ask *how* and *what* questions.
- Ask one question at a time.

Control the speed of conversation

- "Slow down please," "What happened?"

Provide appropriate support

- If person seems to be suicidal, keep them on the line and assure them that help is on the way.

Send for help and assure them that you have done so.

- Let the caller know what you are doing to respond to their situation.

Normal Emergencies and Cultural Reactions to Crisis

People functioning *normally* will respond favourably to the approach just discussed. The fear or grief or terror they are expressing is caused by something awful, and they need to talk with a patient and levelheaded person who can help them to calm down.

People from various backgrounds and cultures, however, respond differently in crisis situations. In some cultures, the norms of behavior in crisis situations are different from others. For instance, people from some cultural groups may not want to talk about their feelings in a crisis, while others will not want to talk about anything else.

The experiences that new immigrants to Canada had in their country of origin may also influence how they respond to a crisis. For instance, you may receive calls from people who have lived through the Vietnam war or the conflict in Bosnia. These people may have extreme reactions to crises, or they may be unusually calm. These reactions may also occur among people who have survived violence here at home.

Characteristics of Good Call Takers

- Interest in and concern for others.
- Empathy for others – to feel what another person feels and to experience their emotions.
- Open-mindedness – not shocked or horrified or upset by people's feelings and values.
- Good listeners – able to focus fully and intently on another and to focus the caller.
- Multi-solution approach – to see the variety of ways in which people can solve problems without making judgements or believing in one right way.
- Not self-seeking – to not need other people to make self feel good.

Listening Skills

- **No self concern** – Attention is truly focused on the caller. Don't think of what you will say next, but what the caller is saying now.
- **Use Active Listening** – This means working to hear what the other person is trying to communicate, and requires practise.
- **Listen for feeling words** and unexpressed feelings.
- **Ask for more information.** Do not assume you know without specifics. Use phrases and questions such as: "Go on", "Yes", "Uh-huh", "Could you give an example?", "Could you tell me more?" and "Exactly what happened?"
- **Paraphrasing –** provides clarification and feedback to victim.
    - "You mentioned that ..."
    - "It sounds like you are feeling ..."
- **Listen to the speech pattern** and how it fits with what is being said. Sometimes this triggers a feeling that you can follow up on. Listen to your own speech patterns, too.
    - Speed – fast, slow
    - Volume – soft, loud
    - Tone – flat, emotional
    - Other emotions
- **Clarifying –** this means asking for more information (listening) or offering it yourself, "It sounds to me as if you are also very angry?"

- **Pointing out apparent contradictions or omissions** – this is not jumping on seeming errors but making the client aware of them. "I'm confused. You said _____ before. How does that fit in with _____?" "Can we back up a minute? I don't understand _____".
- **Summarize**

VIOLENCE IN THE HOME

Violent Incidents

Public safety communicators working for the police, fire, or ambulance regularly send units to scenes where someone is hurt because of an act of violence. Many of the fights will have evenly matched combatants, there may be substance abuse issues, and the police will usually treat it as a consensual fight, or charge both parties with assault. Most of the persons who call for assistance are witnesses to such fights and are usually motivated by not wanting to see someone get hurt or killed. They may also be intoxicated and may not cooperate with the call taker. They may be the girlfriend of the guy who is losing the fight. In these cases they may be upset and verbally abusive if you ask many questions, or questions which require more than an answer to "Who, what, where, and when?"

Domestic Assault

There has been a shift in thinking in recent Criminal Code legislation. As society has become more accepting of more diverse compositions of families and relationships, the deciding criteria for who is the *bad guy (or gal)* is no longer restricted to the stereotypical abusive male in a heterosexual relationship.

Even though a majority of cases of spousal assault involve the male beating his female partner (wife or common-law), one has to think beyond the concept of heterosexual intimate partner to that of the person who is in the position of power. Domestic violence is about power, plain and simple, and power is maintained through control.

The following circumstances are all domestic assault and violence.

- A son or daughter who abuses their mother
- Same sex or opposite sex couples who are violent against each other
- A boyfriend who abuses his girlfriend yet he does not live with her (or vice versa)

Effect of Family Violence on Children.

Children usually witness the violent episodes in the family. They may be the person who reports the violence. How will you deal with a child phoning in who says to you, "My mommy is hurt! Help me!" "Make my dad stop!"? What if the little person on the other end of the phone can barely speak English?

This will be very difficult for you to deal with emotionally. If you have your own children or still remember what it was like to be young, it may hit close to home.

Children who grow up in families where spousal abuse occurs often suffer severe and long-lasting problems. Even if they are not physically battered, they are

psychologically and emotionally abused by their exposure to the violence between their parents.

Children as Victims

It is only in the past few years that the children have been considered as victims too. The transition houses have child care workers to help deal with their issues, and Social Services is more apt to become involved in their protection.

Physical Abuse of Children

- Over half (53 per cent) of the men who batter their wives beat their children as well, as a means of discipline.
- Over one third of the women who are battered will at some point beat their children.
- Men who batter are frequently suspected of sexually abusing their daughters.
- When a pregnant women is beaten, the child may be miscarried or be born with birth defects or mental retardation.

    (Walker, 1983).

Effects of Family Violence on Children

People who live in a violent home lose some of their self-esteem. They may hide behind a tough facade that often masks feelings of insecurity, fear and vulnerability. They may be unable to trust someone else. They may suppress their feelings and suspend fulfillment of their own needs. They may use violence as a way to solve problems and have difficulty in expressing their feelings and problems verbally, and of coping with them in general. They participate in a dishonest conspiracy of silence shared with the abuser by denying or minimizing the violence. Children may also develop what is known as a *radar gaze*, as they attempt to block out the violence or avoid attracting attention to themselves – they may stare fixedly at the television or off into space.

Depression, stress and psychosomatic illnesses are common. Babies may exhibit apathy or a failure to thrive. Children may be behind developmentally, suffer from severe rashes, be overweight, have allergies to a large number of foods, or experience hair loss. They may have difficulty in developing a separate sense of identity because they are so caught up in the family conflict and preoccupied with it. This problem can lead to social and peer isolation.

Children may have problems in school, have difficulty in experiencing pleasure, develop poor impulse control and limited tolerance, or show a martyr-like suffering behavior. Both sexes will develop behavior in accordance with the role models available to them. Girls often become withdrawn and submissive. Boys may throw frequent and severe temper tantrums and use aggressive behavior: they may be cruel to animals or other children, or violent with inanimate objects. In addition, some

children believe that they are somehow the cause of family violence and experience guilt as a consequence.

(Boyd & Klingbeil; Wright, J., 1982, p.46)

COMMUNICATING WITH VICTIMS OF CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Victims' Reactions to Incidents

When people have been physically hurt or robbed, they will experience a variety of uncomfortable feelings. These feelings may range from mild to severe in intensity and may include:

- anxiety, fear, terror;
- shame, helplessness, a feeling of being overwhelmed;
- annoyance, anger, rage;
- unhappiness, sadness, grief;
- ambivalence, confusion, disorientation;
- control, adjustment;
- guilt, overcompensation for guilt.

These feelings make people more vulnerable and dependent. They may feel that they cannot cope or do not know what to do. These emotions lower a person's confidence and self-esteem.

Victim Telephone Contact

As a police call taker, you will probably be the first emergency service personnel talking to a victim of crime or violence. Once you have ensured that the appropriate emergency service is on the way, you want to help people return to their normal level of functioning as quickly as possible. You can help by allowing callers to vent their emotions by providing more details on what happened and by expressing their feelings about the incident. These details may go beyond what is needed to respond to the call. The victim may not feel comfortable talking to you at first. You may need to keep them on the line until assistance arrives, so it is important that you use your active listening skills to keep them engaged.

Special Problems

Every call taker needs to be aware of the following special situations:

- Getting overly involved.
- Callers you like too much.
- Callers you dislike.
- Difficult callers.

Remember to use your professional skills to assess the situation, assist the callers, and support them without becoming part of the problem.

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

Critical Incidents

A Critical Incident can be defined as any situation faced by individuals which causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions and which has the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the time of the incident or at a later time.

Critical Incident Stress (CIS)

Critical Incident Stress (CIS) is defined as the stress which occurs from dealing with these types of unusually distressing events. The emotional, physical, and cognitive reactions to a critical incident can lead to reduced performance, social stress, personality changes and a variety of other problems. CIS reactions are incident specific, and may be either acute or delayed. An acute reaction would normally begin while the person is still involved with the incident, whereas delayed reactions may begin minutes, hours, days, even weeks or months after the event.

Causes of Critical Incident Stress

Emergency personnel are by many people thought to be unaffected by the traumatic conditions they quite often encounter. This is a myth. No amount or type of training can prepare emergency personnel for some of the situations they encounter during their careers. Emergency personnel have simply learned to suppress the common emotions expressed by those not in emergency work.

Two factors influence a possible reaction of critical incident stress. The first is the general emotional state of the individual at the time of the incident. This is influenced by the individual's emotional and physical health, previous experience with handling stress, and how they have prepared themselves for the stressor incident prior to its occurrence. The second factor is the nature of the event that precipitates the stress reaction, and the role the individual plays in the crisis.

Events that can precipitate the critical stress include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Death or injury of co-worker.
- Death of a child, especially under unusual circumstances such as neglect or abuse.
- Death of a person caused by personnel.
- Knowing a victim or seeing a resemblance to someone you know.
- Unusual sights, sounds, or smells.
- A serious incident extending over a long period of time.
- Incident with profound emotion.

- Incident with significant media attention.
- Threatening situation such as shootings, hostage taking, storms, explosives.
- Major incidents with multiple casualties and/or where triage is required.

Note: The above list relates to professionals who work in the emergency service or health care professions. For the general public or others less exposed to traumatic events, any shocking incident could result in critical incident stress.

Reaction Severity

While each person will react in an individualistic way, some of the factors that affect the severity of the reaction are:

- Severity and nature of the event or incident.
- Involvement of individual, and degree to which they are connected emotionally to what happened.
- Level of responsibility associated with the incident. The greater the responsibility, the greater the potential for increased stress and guilt feelings.
- Physical and psychological proximity of the event (next door, or involve friends/associates).
- Individual's previous experience with personal crisis: could help through desensitization, or hinder through cumulative stress.
- Worker's life situation at the time: e.g., divorce, death, or job pressures all increase the impact of stress and reduce one's coping ability.
- Behavior of others at the incident: effective, or ineffective.
- Availability of appropriate support services, such as counselors, or peer debriefers.
- Degree of support by colleagues, family or general public.
- Media involvement.
- Management's attitude and knowledge towards traumatic stress.
- Personal involvement or identification with the victim(s).

Immediate Reactions to Critical Incident Stress

The symptoms of CIS exist in various combinations and are observable to various degrees. Their duration depends on the effectiveness of the intrapersonal and interpersonal process that occur.

Physical

- Appetite increased or decreased
- Agitation and pacing
- Disorientation and loss of coordination
- Disturbed sleep
- Heart rate and blood pressure increase

- Hyperventilation, chest pains, headaches
- Jumpiness and startle reactions
- Muscle soreness and fatigue
- Nausea, upset stomach, sweating and profuse tremors
- Overwhelming sense of fatigue

Cognitive

- Flashbacks, replaying of the event
- Impaired thinking and decision making
- Memory and concentration problems
- Poor attention span
- Preoccupation with the event
- Time distortion and perception alteration

Emotional

- Anger, resentment and scapegoating
- Anxiety, guilt and fear
- Grief and depression
- Fear of repetition of the event
- Feeling lost, abandoned and helpless
- Feeling numb, shocked and overwhelmed
- Lack of trust or security
- Loss of interest in something previously enjoyed
- Morbid sense of humor
- Withdrawal, irritability or anger

Delayed Stress Response Syndrome

Delayed CIS reactions may not show up until sometime after the incident. These responses may be identified through increased irritability, or feelings of depression and anxiety, and are characteristics of a condition known as *Delayed Stress Response Syndrome*. This condition can cause both physical (health disorders, isolation, inability to work) and emotional responses (hostility, difficulty forming or maintaining relationships, anxiety states and depression).

Reactions to CIS

Reactions to CIS include a variety of symptoms:

- Overwhelming sense of fatigue: Your body and mind are using the available energy to deal with the event. This is normal.
- Disturbed sleep or inability to sleep: The mind is using this item for processing your experience.

- Appetite increased or decreased: depends on the role food plays for an individual.
- Flashbacks: replaying the event whenever you experience any stimulus you associate with the event. These stimuli, or triggers, may be conscious or subconscious and may be sights, sounds, smells or touch. The purpose of the replays is to enable you to organize and process the event. This is another *piece of steak that is not yet digested*.
- Preoccupation with the event, as your mind tries to assimilate it. This preoccupation may cause:
- withdrawal, irritability or anger,
- loss of ability to focus or concentrate on other things, or
- loss of confidence in decision-making ability.

Recovery Process

Trauma can cause post-incident symptoms in anyone. Intrusive imagery, numbing, rage, grief, etc. are all normal. It is our way of dealing with *abnormal* stressors. It is normal to fear losing control post-incident and succumbing to rage, fear, etc. Symptoms usually worsen before they get better. It is more effective to work through the emotions than to block them.

Individuals recovering from post-incident stress do well to abstain from alcohol or drugs, to eat nutritionally, and to exercise. They may want to assess their chosen work and vocational path. Most importantly, it takes time to heal.

Early professional help may be needed to recover from Critical Incident Stress, as postponing talking about the incident makes recovery more difficult. Seeking support from friends and family is important. Sudden recall of past traumas (feelings, images, dreams) may be triggered by something in a communicator's current life that needs attention (stress, loss, fear, anger).

Some trauma survivors experience symptoms years or even decades after an incident. Some symptoms never go away. There are events both positive and negative that we literally never completely forget. What matters is that they don't interfere with normal functioning. Some good can come from any trauma. This includes hope, strength, learning, goals and growth. Looking for and finding the good has a healing effect.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefings

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

Stress can be positive. It helps us to be motivated, productive, and creative. Without stress, there would be no change, growth, or productivity. When Critical Incident Stress in encountered, all the coping skills or strategies may not be enough to enable someone to deal with the emotions they are feeling (guilt, frustration, helplessness, blaming themselves for people's injuries or death) as a result of a critical incident.

For a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) to be held, the incident will be a major one in terms of the duration or number of people involved, and it will have had a high degree of impact on those involved. Only the personnel who were ***directly*** involved in the case are eligible to attend. This would include the personnel who responded to the scene, and the dispatchers and/or call takers involved. Each emergency service debriefs its own people. For example, following a major plane crash, the police, fire, and ambulance would have separate debriefings for their people.

The CISD itself should occur between 24 and 72 hours after the incident, and usually last upwards of three hours. The debriefing has two goals,

- to reduce the impact of a critical incident, and
- to accelerate the recovery of personnel after the traumatic event.

A CISD provides opportunities to discuss how the situation has affected the emotions of those persons mandated to be at the scene, and is not to uncover procedural or technical mistakes, either individual or systemic.

Who Conducts the Debriefing?

A Critical Incident Stress Debriefing is a meeting between two groups, the CISD team and the participants, those people who were involved in the critical incident. The CISD team is a partnership of mental health professionals, and peer support personnel from the police, fire, and other emergency services. A CISD team may have between twenty and forty members, up to one-third of these being mental health professionals, and the rest being peer support personnel. From this team, four members are drawn to provide a debriefing when one is deemed necessary. The goals of the CISD team are to prepare emergency personnel to manage their job related stress, and to assist emergency personnel experiencing negative effects of stress after exposure to an unusually stressful event.

The debriefing is typically conducted by a trained leader from the same service being debriefed. They will have received *employee assistance* training. The leader will be backed up by a licenced clinician (a psychologist, for example.). The leader must ensure that a supportive environment is provided for individuals, and that they have opportunities to start dealing with their reactions to the incident.

CIVIL AND CRIMINAL LAW

Although all court cases travel through the same court system, the processes for initiating them, their purposes and outcomes differ.

Civil or Private Law Matters

Civil or "private" law matters involve disputes between individuals, corporations, and registered societies. For example, a homeowner could sue a landscaper for breach of contract; two spouses could go to court to resolve the division of their marital assets on divorce; a corporation such as John's Janitorial Service, Ltd. could sue a customer for an unpaid bill; a registered society such as the Main Street Senior Citizens' Society could sue a person who vandalized their club house; or a caller to the police may sue the call taker and/or dispatcher for negligence in their duties. In this case, the police agency would probably also be sued. There are many fields of law which fall under the civil or private law heading.

In order to initiate a civil law matter, the party with the complaint, usually called the plaintiff commences the process by drawing up a Writ of Summons. The document is served on the defendant who must then respond to the claims made by the plaintiff, and the civil process begins.

The purpose of a civil action is to seek a ruling from the court that the defendant was in some way liable for a loss suffered by the plaintiff, or has acted contrary to one of the several private laws. The loss may be a physical or emotional injury, property loss or damage, loss of income, loss of future earnings, loss of quality of life, a debt, the determination of child custody, etc. Upon a determination that the defendant is liable, the court then determines what loss or breach of law occurred and how best to restore the plaintiff to the condition or circumstances that existed prior to the loss or breach. Very rarely, the judge may order the return of an item that represented the loss, but most often the loss is irrecoverable, and can only be substituted by the award of money. In this case, the judge would be required to put a dollar value on the loss. Therefore, the outcome of a civil matter would be the determination by the judge that the defendant was not liable, or that the plaintiff and the defendant were each proportionately liable, or that the defendant was entirely liable. In cases where the defendant is partially or fully liable, the judge would determine the amount of the loss suffered by the plaintiff, and apportion that loss between the plaintiff and the defendant if they are both liable, or award the compensation to the plaintiff in full when the defendant is found to be solely liable.

In cases where compensation is not the goal, such as family matters or disputes over ownership, the judge may order the defendant or plaintiff, or both, to follow certain conduct or order that one party has not succeeded in their claim.

Criminal Law

Criminal law matters fall under the heading of public law, in which the state or government is a party to the legal relationship. The purpose of a criminal trial is to proceed against a person (and occasionally a corporation or registered society) for conduct that has been defined as criminal by statute, and, if the offender is found to have carried out the criminal act without justification, to punish the offender.

The purpose of the procedure is to protect society from such conduct by the offender and others in the future, and to assure society that it is safe. A convicted offender is sentenced and some forms of sentence involve efforts directed at the offender's rehabilitation. If successful, such rehabilitation should lead to a safer society. Other sentences lead to incarceration of the convicted offender, again to protect society for a time.

Differences

The terminology in civil cases differs from those in a criminal case. In a civil case, the person initiating the action is called the plaintiff. In a criminal case, the state initiates the action, and the agent of the state is the Crown prosecutor. In a civil case, the plaintiff "sues the defendant and in a criminal matter, the state "charges the accused, or assigns responsibility for the criminal act to the accused. The document which commences a civil action is called a Writ of Summons, and the document which commences a criminal action is called an Information (see Form 2 in Part XXVIII of the *Criminal Code*

The civil process determines liability and value of loss. The criminal process determines guilt. The civil process results in compensation or restoration of the condition of the plaintiff. The criminal process results in punishment of the offender.

The standard of proof resting on the plaintiff in a civil case is to prove the liability of the defendant "on a balance of probabilities. The standard of proof resting on the state through the Crown prosecutor in a criminal case is guilt "beyond a reasonable doubt. The standard of proof in a criminal case is much higher, due to the potential of finding an innocent person guilty of a criminal offence. Punishment can range all the way to life imprisonment for serious offences.

Both Civil and Criminal Actions can Occur

A civil trial and a criminal trial can both take place in regard to the same improper conduct. Some improper conduct is both a criminal offence and a private law or civil dispute.

An obvious, although not Canadian, example of this is the O.J. Simpson case. The criminal trial in which he was acquitted of the two murders took place in 1995. The civil case in which he was sued by the families of the victims for their wrongful deaths (a tort which falls within the private law field) followed. The judge and jury in

the second trial (the civil trial) did not consider the evidence or the outcome of the criminal trial, because the purposes of the two trials are different, as are the standards of proof, and admissible evidence. O.J. Simpson was found liable for the wrongful deaths of the two victims even though he was found not guilty in the criminal trial.

ROLES WITHIN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

It is generally accepted that there are five main components of the criminal justice system. They are: the public, the police, the prosecutors as agents of the Attorney General, the courts, and corrections. In any system, the component parts are expected to interrelate, with one common goal, and one main authority. When the criminal justice system is examined in this light, it can be seen that often the components do not interrelate, or even communicate with one another, that although there is one common goal, that of protecting society from crime, the component parts disagree with one another about how to carry out that goal, and that the authority which propels the criminal justice system comes from more than one main source.

The roles and the degree of interrelationship between the components of the criminal justice system will be discussed below. The criminal justice system's avowed goal is to protect the public from criminal conduct and to proceed against those who carry out such criminal conduct in order to deter them and those who may follow them. The problem appears to be with how this goal can be achieved. The police agencies believe that given more authority, personnel, and equipment, they will be able to protect the public. The police authorities will state that the other components of the criminal justice system often frustrate their efforts. The prosecutors and courts take the view that more authority, personnel and equipment may improve police effectiveness in detecting offenders, but it may also allow many people who are not offenders to enter the criminal justice process, even temporarily, and this is not appropriate. Corrections officials acknowledge that most offenders leave corrections facilities undeterred, and argue that better correctional facilities and programs, more sentencing options not involving prison, and more personnel for counselling would assist in releasing rehabilitated offenders, thus protecting the public. All components of the criminal justice system agree that prevention of crime through school and community and employment programs would protect the public, but the funds and knowledge necessary to establish these programs are not available.

There are also difficulties with the need in a system for one central authority. The criminal justice system is predominantly under federal control. However, the agencies which operate the system may be funded and directed by federal, provincial or even municipal authorities. For example, the R.C.M.P. is the federal police force. Each province has a provincial police force, and each incorporated municipality or city has a municipal police force. Most provinces have entered into contracts with the R.C.M.P. to provide provincial policing. The two exceptions are Ontario and Quebec. Most municipalities or cities outside of those provinces have also contracted with the R.C.M.P. to provide local policing services. However, many cities have their own locally trained police officers working in city or regional police agencies. Although

the criminal law is a federal responsibility, each province has laws which are enforced by the police. The most common provincial offences involve motor vehicle and liquor offences. Municipalities or cities also have bylaw offences, which may be heard in the court system. Larger jurisdictions employ bylaw enforcement officers to enforce these bylaws, but smaller jurisdictions rely on their police force. Corrections is also divided along government jurisdictional lines. Offenders sentenced to 2 years or more are sent to federal institutions. Those sentenced to 2 years less a day, or less, are sent to provincial facilities. And most cities have local "lock-ups" to hold accused persons for short periods. Young offenders must be placed in provincial youth facilities, as are adults held in custody awaiting trial. It can be seen that all three levels of government have some part to play in the administration of justice in Canada, and this lack of one central authority frequently causes difficulty and dissension in the system.

Public

The public, as the component which sits at the entrance to the criminal justice system has several roles. From the public are drawn the offenders, the victims, the witnesses and the employees who work in the criminal justice system. The purpose of the criminal justice system is to protect the public, so the public is the reason for the existence of the criminal justice system. However, the public, in general, is not knowledgeable about the criminal justice system, and this lack of understanding affects the effectiveness of the system. Members of the public are not aware of the functions and limitations of the criminal justice system, and, as a result, often make unreasonable requests of the system. Seasoned call takers will attest to this. Added to this is the emotional dimension that often accompanies the connections by members of the public with some other component of the criminal justice system, and the dissatisfaction by the public is magnified. Hence, we hear complaints that the police are slow in arriving at calls, that the obvious culprit was not arrested and "thrown in jail", that the prosecutor was not interested in the case, the courts were too easy on the offender, and the prison released the offender too soon, and without making any improvement.

The police call taker must recognize the lack of understanding in the public, when taking calls from people. Whether the call taker should or can provide a brief explanation for the perceived inadequate response by the criminal justice system to the caller, is probably a personal or employment policy choice. However, it must be recognized that cooperation by the public is absolutely essential for the effective operation of the criminal justice system. A study done by the federal government in the early 1980s indicated that "only 3 percent of criminal victimizations were discovered by the police without the assistance of the public" (Griffiths and Verdun-Jones, 1994, p.71). This means that the police rely on public reporting for 97 per cent of their law enforcement activities.

There are a number of reasons why members of the public do not report criminal activity or suspicious circumstances to the police. The same study reported that a

large number of incidents were not reported to the police because they were seen by the member of the public as too minor for police intervention, or because the member of the public believed that the police could not do anything about the matter. Another reason for not reporting a criminal incident was because nothing was taken or the items were returned, or no damage was done. Other members of the public chose not to call because it would be inconvenient to do so. Some victims of crime did not call because of fear of revenge, or of making their relationship with the criminal more difficult. Unfortunately, another reason for not calling the police involved the person's concern with the attitudes of the police and the courts. It is possible that those members of the public who have had what they perceive as negative experiences with the police or courts are less likely to contact the police about criminal activities. Some crimes are not reported to the police because the witness or victim wishes to protect the offender from police attention, or because the criminal act is seen as a personal matter. And those criminal acts in which all parties are voluntarily participating, such as drug use, gambling and offences involving prostitution would not reach the attention of the police through the public, except, perhaps through general complaints regarding an area of the community.

It is common knowledge that many sexual offences and domestic assaults go unreported. As well, older people tend to report crimes more readily than younger people, and, in one study it was found that women "were more likely (than men) to report incidents in order to stop or prevent them from reoccurring and to receive protection from the criminal justice system" (Griffiths and Verdun-Jones, 1994, p. 76). In property-related cases, the rate of reporting by the public is close to 100 per cent, due to the necessity of a police report to obtain insurance compensation.

Given the delicacy of the public's willingness to contact the police about criminal activities, and the immense importance of the public's support of the criminal justice system, it can be seen that the role of the police call taker is crucial to the detection and prevention of as much criminal activity as possible. Trained call takers have learned the most appropriate and effective approaches to use when dealing with members of the public who are reporting crime, so as not to frustrate or annoy the caller, who is usually affected emotionally at that time, and to create a perception in the member of the public that future calls about information useful to the police will be welcomed. In addition, the call taker needs a working knowledge of the applicable law, so as to recognize police-related concerns, and to direct the caller to other agencies or to a lawyer, when necessary.

Members of the public could have contact with other components of the criminal justice system if they become involved in a criminal matter. Their role in the criminal matter affects how and when they would come in contact with the other components. If the member of the public is the offender, and the offender is charged, goes to trial, and is convicted and sentenced, then there will be contact with all components. However, if the member of the public is a witness (as an observer or as the tort victim of the criminal act), there could be frequent contact with the police component, and

when the matter proceeds toward trial, there will be interviews conducted by the prosecutor or the defence lawyer in preparation. The member of the public will likely be a witness in the trial. If the suspect is convicted, the judge will impose a sentence. The member of the public may learn the sentence, and, perhaps as a family member of the offender or victim, have some input into the sentence. If the sentence involves probation, a suspended sentence, conditional discharge or prison, the corrections component will oversee the offender for some period of time for the purpose of carrying out the terms of the sentence. The member of the public will not have contact with the corrections component unless the person is a close family member, and makes contact with the corrections authorities for the better management of the offender. Or as the tort victim of the offence, the member of the public may be informed under federal legislation of the eligibility and release dates of the imprisoned offender, and perhaps the residential address of a released offender.

Police

Law enforcement agencies have evolved over the decades along with the public component of the criminal justice system, and will continue to evolve to meet public demands.

When the police encounter criminal activity that is to be proceeded with through the criminal justice system, it is necessary to direct their attention and communication to the prosecutorial component of the criminal justice system. In larger jurisdictions, the patrol officer is rarely in direct contact with the prosecutor, except for a pre-trial interview, and during the court testimony. Police officers working in investigation squads, have better access to the prosecutors, in order to obtain direction in their efforts to obtain evidence, and process the offender. In smaller jurisdictions, there tends to be a closer tie between the police and prosecutorial component.

Police officers have no direct contact with the judge, except in giving testimony in court, and little contact with correctional employees, unless the officer encounters an offender who is on probation, parole, or who is an escapee. In this case there may be conversations or reports between the police and the corrections component.

Prosecutor

The prosecutor (also called the Crown prosecutor) is an agent of the Attorney General, who is the top legal officer of the province. Depending on the size of the jurisdiction, there may be many dozens of prosecutors working in the court system. Some prosecutors have been designated as having federal jurisdiction to prosecute matters exclusively reserved to the federal government in addition to their provincial responsibilities. These matters include those falling under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, the *Food and Drugs Act*, and certain taxation laws. Federal prosecutors, while so acting, are agents of the Minister of Justice, the top legal officer of the country.

The role of the prosecutor is to act, on behalf of society, to accuse those properly suspected of criminal conduct, and to represent society in the trial which takes place to determine the legal guilt or innocence of the alleged offender. The prosecutor is not a "police prosecutor" and does not take the position that whatever the police allege is true. The prosecutor certainly causes the alleged offender to face the possible processes and sanctions of the criminal justice system, but is not there to "win the case". The prosecutor must make sure that the alleged offender's conduct meets the legal requirements of the criminal offence alleged, and that the process which brings the offender to court has been conducted fairly. The judge will be overseeing this, to ensure that the prosecutor performs this role correctly. The prosecutor cannot withhold evidence that may assist or exonerate the offender. The prosecutor must, according to law, prove that the alleged offender is guilty "beyond reasonable doubt in the mind of the judge, or jury if there is one.

In most criminal trials, the alleged offender has a defence lawyer, either privately funded, or provided through legal aid. The role of the defence lawyer is to "raise a reasonable doubt in the mind of the judge, or jury if there is one. The defence lawyer has no obligation to reveal evidence that may assist the prosecutor.

The prosecutor does not have any direct contact with the offender, except when they are both in court, and only when such conduct is compliant with the law. Any interaction between the accused and the prosecutor is done through the defence lawyer. Difficulties arise for this reason when the accused is not represented by a defence lawyer.

Courts

The courts are occupied by judges, who were once lawyers, and who have had significant experience in the practice of law prior to coming to the bench. The role of the judge is to be the overseer of the criminal justice system and its processes. It is open to a judge to make a ruling as a result of a matter which arose prior to the court hearing, such as the failure of the accused to have adequate legal advice, or after the court hearing, such as the changing of probation conditions, or the extension of the time to pay a fine. The judge is vigilant to ensure fairness to those involved in the criminal process. The judge is the trier of law in all trials, meaning that the judge constantly applies the law to the events taking place. In non-jury trials, the judge is also the trier of fact, meaning that the judge is weighing the likely truth and accuracy of the evidence of the witnesses testifying in court. See Section 2, Chapter 6 regarding the role of the judge and jury. In addition, the judge is often the official determining whether an offender should be released from custody pending trial. Judges also sit in Preliminary Hearings, Disclosure Court, and pre-trial hearings. After a trial has taken place, other judges may be involved in an appeal by the losing side

In a democracy, the judiciary must be independent and impartial. This means that there should be no attempt to influence judges' decisions by anyone, including the government which pays their salaries. As a result of this principle, judges tend to be isolated from most public activities, and especially from the participants in criminal matters which will or may come before them. Therefore, the contact of other components of the criminal justice system with the judges is minimal, and controlled to prevent even the appearance of influence.

Corrections

The role of corrections is to carry out the sentences handed down by judges. This could include arranging the assignment of a probation officer to a person sentenced to probation or a suspended sentence, or a conditional discharge, and the administration of the operation of the probation service. It could involve the classification of an offender to the most appropriate prison, and the administration of the prison sentence according to the judge's orders and the applicable federal or provincial legislation. When an offender is granted some form of conditional release from prison (temporary absence, day parole, full parole, statutory release), the Corrections branch must oversee the release, and if the offender is on full parole or statutory release, a parole officer must be assigned to the offender. Corrections attempts to create programs for offenders under its jurisdiction who are either in or out of prison to assist in rehabilitation.

Only members of the public with some particular interest in an offender, either as a family member or as the victim have contact with corrections agencies. Police agencies contact corrections in the course of investigations, or in order to notify potential or past victims of an offender or the offender's activities. Prosecutors may contact corrections for administrative purposes, and the judges would not have any contact. Corrections tends to have the least contact with the rest of the criminal justice system, which is reflected in its "end of the line" position as one of the five main components of the criminal justice system.

THE PROCESS OF LAYING CHARGES

Documents

The expression "laying charges" or "charges have been laid" means that a document called an Information has been completed and sworn before a Justice of the Peace.

The Information document can be seen in the *Criminal Code* as Form 2. It is usually the first document completed in a criminal prosecution, the only exceptions being when a search warrant is executed prior to charges being laid, or in cases where a person is issued an Appearance Notice or a Promise to Appear. In each case, the next document to be prepared would be the Information. A criminal matter cannot be proceeded with without an Information being sworn, and thus it is seen as the crucial initiating document in a prosecution.

An examination of the Information in Form 2 will show that it requires a great deal of detail to be completed. The "informant" can be the investigating or attending police officer, or an officer who has received information from the investigating or attending officer. Or, the informant may be the tort victim of the crime, meaning the person who was assaulted or robbed, etc. Or, the "informant" may be someone who personally witnessed the criminal act. This would usually only be the case when there was no police notification of the crime, and the victim was unable (or, perhaps unwilling) to act as informant.

The informant must either have personal knowledge of the crime (i.e. as police or non-police witness or victim), or believe on reasonable grounds that the crime took place (as non-attending police officer). The nature of the criminal act must be spelled out with great care. If the Information lacks enough information to allege a crime, it is a nullity, and may not be proceeded with. Or, if the Information contains inaccurate information, it must be amended, sometimes with the reluctant permission of the judge who may also refuse. Finally, the contents of the Information must be proved in its entirety, so, if information is included that ultimately cannot be proved, the case may fail. Because of the difficulties involved in drafting an Information, a set of "forms of charges" have been created. Each criminal offence can be described with little need for adjustment using the forms of charges. These can usually be found at the end of privately published copies of the federal criminal statutes.

Process

The party who wishes charges to be laid, attends at the Court Clerk's office and speaks to the Justice of the Peace. See Section 2, Chapter 7 for a discussion of the role of the Justice of the Peace. After a discussion with the Justice of the Peace, the decision is made by the Justice of the Peace either that there has been no adequate allegation of a criminal offence, or that there has. If the Justice of the Peace is

satisfied that a criminal act has taken place, the Information will be completed, and the party making the allegation will swear that the contents of the Information are true. The Justice of the Peace will take the oath of the informant and complete the Information document.

If a party swears to the truth of something that the party knows to be false, the party can be charged with the federal criminal offence of swearing a false affidavit, under s. 134 of the *Criminal Code*.

Once an Information is sworn, the criminal process begins, and the accused may be arrested or Summonsed, if the accused has not already been arrested or issued an Appearance Notice or Promise to Appear. The accused will be required to make the first of several court appearances, and make several decisions regarding the conduct of the pending trial.

CRIMINAL HARASSMENT LAW*: CANADIAN CRIMINAL CODE (1995)*

Section 264

(1)   No person shall, without lawful authority and knowing that another person is harassed or recklessly as to whether the other person is harassed, engage in conduct referred to in subsection (2) that causes that other person reasonably, in all the circumstances, to fear for their safety or the safety of anyone known to them.

(2)   The conduct mentioned in subsection (l) consists of:

(a) repeatedly following from place to place the other person or anyone known to them;

(b) repeatedly communicating with, either directly or indirectly, the other person or anyone known to them;1

(c) besetting or watching the dwelling-house, or place where the other person, or anyone known to them, resides, works, carries on business or happens to be;2 or

(d) engaging, in threatening conduct directed at the other person or any member of their family.

---

1   2(b) 'Directly or indirectly' means that the person harassing you is using his or her friends or family, or your friends or family, to contact you by any means. Also, he or she is phoning you, writing you letters, leaving notes for you anywhere, and so on.

2   2(c) "Besetting or watching the dwelling-house, or place where the other person, or anyone known to them, resides, works, carries on business or happens to be" means that the person harassing you is nearby, be it in a car, standing across the street, or across the food fair in a mall, and he or she is continuing to watch you and whomever you are associating with. This condition continues over a day, a week or longer.

Uttering Threats

Section 264.1

(1)   Everyone commits an offence who, in any manner, knowingly utters, conveys or causes any person to receive a threat

(a) to cause death or serious bodily harm to any person;

(b) to burn, destroy or damage real or personal property; or

(c) to kill, poison or injure an animal or bird that is the property of any person.

Reasonable Degree of Fear

As a call taker, ask yourself: "If you were the victim, would you be scared?" Trust your instincts but be aware that different people respond in different ways.

Elements of the Offence

To get a conviction, the prosecution must prove:

(1) That the accused was in fact the person engaging *knowingly* in the behavior;

(2) That the effect of the behavior was to cause the complainant to "reasonably fear for [his or her] safety or the safety of anyone known to [him or her]."

Risk Factors Involved with Criminal Harassment

The following items may indicate increased risk.

- An escalation in the behavior of the suspect; for example, calls on the phone or lurking around the victim's house and workplace.
- A history of previous violence by the suspect.
- Attacks against personal property or pets or friends of the victim.
- Bizarre occurrences: for example, the suspect steals garbage to gain insight into the victim's personal life (what the person is eating or reading, for instance).
- The suspect continues to follow the person despite being warned to stop by the police on an earlier occasion.
- The gender and age of the person being harassed: single females between the ages of 18 and 30 are most at risk..

None, some or most of these factors may be present in Criminal Harassment situations.

Delayed Reporting of Criminal Harassment

As public safety communicators, you may get calls from people complaining of being followed or stalked by a stranger or an ex-partner. They may have delayed calling the police for some time. They may not report because of:

- A fear of not being believed by police;

- A difficulty in accepting that someone they have been involved with could be capable of conduct that scares them;
- A feeling that they can handle the situation by themselves.

Your job as a public safety communicator is to let them know that they are believed and that you will initiate an investigation by sending a member to talk to them.

What a Victim of Criminal Harassment Can Do

If people are being stalked, harassed or threatened, they should know it is not their fault. Victims of harassment should report the incident to the police. They should explain how they have been intimidated. It could be *just a feeling*, but the fact that people are in fear for their safety, or that of their friends, family or pets because of a statement made by another person is reasonable grounds for suspecting there is criminal harassment. If the offender persists in harassing and threatening, the victim should continue to keep the police informed and keep a journal of what is going on as well. (The journal should be a detailed written record of the incidents that occurred, their dates and times, and the victim's emotions at the time.)

Be aware of the situation escalating, and if the situation is escalating, the person being harassed should consider doing the following:

- Staying at a friend or relative's place for a while;
- Moving to a different residence;
- Changing their phone number and making it unlisted. Once they have the new phone number, they should be very cautious about who they give it to.

Even if they have filed a complaint with the police, they will not be able to receive twenty-four-hour protection from them. As a consequence, it cannot be emphasized strongly enough that they need to know what to do to protect themselves.

People who feel they could be in danger or in harm's way should do some or all of the following:

- Keep any and all written notes the offender has sent them. It is preferable that they handle such communications as little as possible, and place such material in a plastic bag to be retained for investigative purposes.
- If they are receiving harassing phone calls, they should tape them on their answering machine, or buy a special recording device to do so, noting the date and time of each recording. (It is not illegal in Canada to tape your own conversations, even without the other person's consent. However, you need the consent of at least one of the parties involved before you can tape a conversation in which you are not participating.)
- They should keep a detailed journal of all contacts, calls, threats and related incidents. They should document all harassing phone calls, including content, in this journal.
- They should consider obtaining a *restraining order* (with enforcement clause), or a *peace bond* if appropriate.

- They should inform friends, family and, if necessary, co-workers and office security staff of the situation to enlist their support, and to prevent them from unintentionally making the situation worse by providing sensitive information to the harasser.

- They should limit their physical vulnerability. For example, they should try to vary their schedule and have others accompany them when departing and arriving at their residence or elsewhere.

- When they are alone and they must leave their cars in parking lots, they should tilt the driver's seat forward when exiting the car. This way, when they return, they can see if someone is hiding behind the front seats while they are still at a safe distance from the car. If they neglect this precaution, they should look into the back seat before entering the vehicle, even if the doors were left locked.

- While they are driving, people being harassed should be observant of any vehicles that pull away from their point of departure at the same time as they do, and if they notice such activity, they should note the license plate number. If they believe they are being followed and feel threatened, they should drive to the police station. They should not allow fear of embarrassment to cloud their judgment and place them at greater risk.

Although some cost is involved, they may also wish to:

- Change and unlist their phone number, and/or acquire call display or a cell phone.
- Purchase an alarm system, get a dog, or install extra security.
- Contact a personal security company, depending on the level of danger for themselves or their family.
- Relocate, either temporarily or permanently.

It is extremely important that they attempt to avoid a hostile confrontation with the individual who is stalking them. Stalkers and their reactions are highly unpredictable. They may respond violently to a confrontation.

PRACTICAL POLICE INCIDENTS

The following instructions are general. Each agency will have policies, procedures and by-laws unique to itself. Within that same agency, each watch or squad may differ in their actions to certain situations or in the responsibilities they give, or actions they expect from their call takers and dispatchers. Some dispatchers may expect more from their call takers than others. It is up to you to determine your responsibilities and level of accountability at your agency, within each of these parameters.

For every incident given, there are thousands more that could have been given. Every possible call cannot be covered within this manual. As well, every possible answer cannot be supplied. Practice common sense and the use of the five 'W's" and one 'H' with each call and chances are you will come up with the appropriate response.

Remember, officer and public safety is paramount. Never jeopardize your field units or the public through ignorance, laziness or ego. Always act responsibly and in a professional manner.

The term, "obtain complainant particulars", means that you are responsible for gathering:

- Name, address, phone number, date of birth (if applicable), sex and race (if applicable).
- If the complaint is generated by a business, the call taker is responsible for recording full particulars on the business as well as residence information of the caller.

The term, "suspect information", includes:

- Name, address, phone number, date of birth or age
- Full description regarding physical features, clothing description (head to toe, outside to inside)

The term, "vehicle information" includes the full description of a vehicle:
Year, Make, Model, Color, Body (style), Licence Number, All (all other descriptive info), Licence year.

Preservation of evidence means one or all of the following:

- Secure crime scene – tell caller not to touch, disturb or clean up anything,
- Don't throw out anything left at scene, used by suspect, clothing etc. from victim
- Victims of sexual assault should not have bath, shower, wash (may destroy physical / forensic evidence)

When obtaining description of residence \ location of suspects or direction of travel, do not use terms left or right, use proper directions, such as:

- Male breaking into window on north side of house

- Vehicle is southbound
- Suspects are located at the N.E. (north east) corner of the school.

In reporting B&Es or thefts, many people will report they have been "robbed." It is up to you to determine which it is.

Be creative, without overstepping your authority, in assisting and supplying investigators with additional information. For example, a suspect who broke into a residence through a window and fled the scene, may have injured his hand on the glass. A quick check with the local emergency ward or clinic may find your suspect receiving stitches or alert medical staff to call you if someone comes in with a cut hand etc. matching suspect description.

Often, suspects will leave the scene in a cab or via public transportation. Commit these numbers to memory so you can use these agencies when necessary. If you are looking for someone, for example a child who has wandered off, remember there are a lot more cabs and buses on the road than police cars. The more people looking for the child the better. In communicating with these agencies, remember not to violate rules of confidentiality or release protected information.

Many criminals will steal vehicles for the purpose of committing a crime then dump them. Pay attention to calls other people are dealing with. If one of your coworkers takes a call about a red Mustang stolen from a driveway, just minutes and a block away from a bank robbery, try and determine if the calls could be related. If you think they are, ensure that connection is passed on to the dispatcher and any applicable units.

An alert tone or crime beep is a warble tone that interrupts all radio traffic on all channels and alerts personnel that a serious or emergency situation is about to be broadcast. After the warble and dispatcher's broadcast, a beep will continue until the call is completed or the beep is removed by a supervisor. The purpose of this continuous beep is to notify members to keep unnecessary radio chatter to a minimum and that the emergency situation is still ongoing.

During serious, in progress or emergency calls, it is up to the dispatcher to keep the air clear and available to the units that require it. It is a good idea during calls of this nature to ensure that units know who is in charge at the scene. This helps ensure vital information is passed on to the right person (investigator) and establishes a chain of command for the call. As well, any new personnel attending the scene will know exactly who to report to.

Not all information will be available for each call. The point is to learn to gather as much complete information as possible and to take the appropriate action based on the information at hand.

Depending on the agency and the number of personnel working in the communication centre, some of the actions and duties listed may be done by both the call taker and dispatcher. For the purpose of the exercises, apply Priority or Response Codes as

dictated by your agency's Standard Operating Procedures / Guidelines and your trainers.

Ask questions about incidents to generate discussion with your trainer. In this type of work the call taker/dispatcher needs to think like an investigator, thereby anticipating the needs of the field unit(s) and addressing those needs before their request.

Agency Referrals

A Call Taker in a public safety communications centre must be aware of a host of government agencies and private companies to contact for particular services or equipment as required. Many of the calls received will have nothing to do with police, fire or ambulance. Callers will ask what they should do in a number of situations. Communications centres have extensive contact or call-out lists that identify other agencies and the help they can provide.

One such reference book is the *Red Book* directory of services for an area. In some areas, people call it a *Green Book*, a *contact list*, or a *call-out*. Books formally published for this purpose normally list a number of agencies followed by a short synopsis of their services, an address and a telephone number. Many contact lists are compiled in the aftermath of major emergencies, when the need for certain information has been identified.

INCIDENT TYPES

Criminal Harassment

As public safety communicators, you may get calls from people complaining of being followed or stalked by a stranger or an ex-partner.

Canadian Criminal Code (1995) **Section 264**

(1)   No person shall, without lawful authority and knowing that another person is harassed or recklessly as to whether the other person is harassed, engage in conduct referred to in subsection (2) that causes that other person reasonably, in all the circumstances, to fear for their safety or the safety of anyone known to them.

(2)   The conduct mentioned in subsection (l) consists of:

- (a) repeatedly following from place to place the other person or anyone known to them;
- (b) repeatedly communicating with, either directly or indirectly, the other person or anyone known to them;[3]
- (c) besetting or watching the dwelling-house, or place where the other person, or anyone known to them, resides, works, carries on business or happens to be;[4] or
- (d) engaging, in threatening conduct directed at the other person or any member of their family.

---

[3] 2(b) 'Directly or indirectly' means that the person harassing you is using his or her friends or family, or your friends or family, to contact you by any means. Also, he or she is phoning you, writing you letters, leaving notes for you anywhere, and so on.

[4] 2(c) "Besetting or watching the dwelling-house, or place where the other person, or anyone known to them, resides, works, carries on business or happens to be" means that the person harassing you is nearby, be it in a car, standing across the street, or across the food fair in a mall, and he or she is continuing to watch you and whomever you are associating with. This condition continues over a day, a week or longer.

Uttering Threats

Section 264.1

(1) Everyone commits an offence who, in any manner, knowingly utters, conveys or causes any person to receive a threat

- to cause death or serious bodily harm to any person;
- to burn, destroy or damage real or personal property; or
- to kill, poison or injure an animal or bird that is the property of any person.

Reasonable Degree of Fear

As a call taker, ask yourself: "If you were the victim, would you be scared?" Trust your instincts but be aware that different people respond in different ways.

Elements of the Offence

To get a conviction, the prosecution must prove:

- That the accused was in fact the person engaging *knowingly* in the behavior;
- That the effect of the behavior was to cause the complainant to "reasonably fear for [his or her] safety or the safety of anyone known to [him or her]."

Risk Factors Involved with Criminal Harassment

The following items may indicate increased risk.

- An escalation in the behavior of the suspect; for example, calls on the phone or lurking around the victim's house and workplace.
- A history of previous violence by the suspect.
- Attacks against personal property or pets or friends of the victim.
- Bizarre occurrences: for example, the suspect steals garbage to gain insight into the victim's personal life (what the person is eating or reading, for instance).
- The suspect continues to follow the person despite being warned to stop by the police on an earlier occasion.
- The gender and age of the person being harassed: single females between the ages of 18 and 30 are most at risk..

None, some or most of these factors may be present in Criminal Harassment situations.

Delayed Reporting of Criminal Harassment

Victims of criminal harassment may have delayed calling the police for some time. They may not report because of:

- A fear of not being believed by police;

- A difficulty in accepting that someone they have been involved with could be capable of conduct that scares them;
- A feeling that they can handle the situation by themselves.

Your job as a public safety communicator is to let them know that they are believed and that you will initiate an investigation by sending a member to talk to them.

What a Victim of Criminal Harassment Can Do

If people are being stalked, harassed or threatened, they should know it is not their fault. Victims of harassment should report the incident to the police. They should explain how they have been intimidated. It could be *just a feeling*, but the fact that people are in fear for their safety, or that of their friends, family or pets because of a statement made by another person is reasonable grounds for suspecting there is criminal harassment. If the offender persists in harassing and threatening, the victim should continue to keep the police informed and keep a journal of what is going on as well. (The journal should be a detailed written record of the incidents that occurred, their dates and times, and the victim's emotions at the time.)

As a police call taker, the following steps should be taken to properly assess and process this type of call

Assessment Criteria – Threats / Criminal Harassment

Call taker

- Generate call
- Exact nature of threats
- How many?
- What time received?
- Frequency?
- If via phone, were calls taped?
- Are tapes available?
- Was call display / *69 utilized?
- Full particulars on suspect
- CPIC check obtain particulars of suspect
- Nature of threats?
- Violence? / Weapons?
- Children involved
- Has telephone company been appraised / involved in calls?
- Determine level of threats
- Were they to life, property, about divorce etc.
- Access to weapons?
- Ensure preservation of any evidence (tapes)

Racism

Understanding Racism

Racism is a set of mistaken assumptions, opinions and actions resulting from the belief that one race is inherently superior to another. Racism may be present in organizational and institutional structures and programs as well as in the attitudes and behavior of individuals.

It has been suggested that there are four forms of racism including stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and systemic racism. Stereotypes and prejudice comprise social attitudes, whereas discrimination and systemic racism fall within the category of social action. Although legislation does not address social attitudes it does address social action.

Racist interactions may involve: individuals within a racial/ethnic group; individuals from different racial/ethnic groups; individuals and organizations; organizations.

According to a 1991 survey conducted by Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada:

- Sixty-six per cent of Canadians think that discrimination against non-whites is a problem in Canada.
- Fifty-four per cent of Canadians think society as a whole discriminates against some whites.
- Sixty-eight per cent of Canadians think that problems of racism and prejudice will not solve themselves over time without government intervention.

Racist Incidents

A racist incident is an expression, verbal or physical, of racial or ethnic bias; that is, any behavior, whether or not consciously motivated, that expresses a negative attitude, disparagement or hatred toward a person or group's race, color or ethno-cultural heritage.

Instances of unacceptable behavior may include racial/ethnic stereotyping, racial/ethnic slurs, racial/ethnic name calling, racist jokes, threats, verbal abuse, racist graffiti, intimidation, physical assault, repeated teasing or annoyance, discriminatory decisions with respect to evaluation and placement, different treatment of staff members from different racial or ethnic backgrounds (not including remedial or affirmative-action programs), use of materials that degrade, humiliate or ridicule people because of their race, color, religion or ethno-cultural heritage.

Assessment Criteria – Racist / Gang related incidents

Call Taker

- generate call
- Exact location (i.e. – North end parking lot, just east of exit etc.)

- How many people involved
- Alcohol involvement?
- Weapons? what kind? who's carrying them?
- Description of persons / vehicle involved (i.e. – The guy in the red shirt and cowboy hat just punched the guy in the wheelchair in the head and drove off in a blue Camaro, lic: ABC123)
- Are subjects known to caller? (names can be run on CPIC for addresses, wants, vehicles etc.)
- Any injuries? severity if known
- Is an ambulance required
- If subject / vehicle info supplied utilize CPIC
- Call back if situation escalates, subjects leave, any new information

MVA – Motor Vehicle Accidents

Motor vehicle accidents are incidents involving motor vehicles (cars, trucks, motorcycles, ATV's etc.). These can range from one vehicle with minor damage to multiple vehicle accident with injuries and/or fatalities. Many police departments will only attend MVA's if injuries are involved or if there is over a certain dollar value of damage to the vehicles or property.

Assessment Criteria MVA – No Injuries

Call taker

- Exact location of accident (i.e. Northeast corner of intersection)
- Approximate dollar damage to vehicles (to determine agency's attendance policy)
- if unit will be attending, determine exactly where the caller will be to meet with assigned unit
- Vehicles driveable?
- Contact wrecker
- Enter vehicle in tow book
- No attendance – if no attendance required, inform the caller of the actions they need to take to report the accident for the purposes of insurance. Advise caller to exchange full particulars with other driver
- advise caller of Occurrence/Report number if applicable
- obtain full caller particulars
- obtain full vehicle particulars

Assessment Criteria – MVA with Injuries / Fatalities

Call taker

- generate call

- start Fire and Ambulance – advise Fire if anyone is trapped, hose down
- obtain full caller particulars – did caller witness the accident?
- Hazardous Materials?
- Number / severity of injuries?
- Dangerous situation to public? / Attending services?
- Identification unit / Traffic Analyst required?
- Additional units required for traffic control

Robbery

Criminal Code Definition of Robbery

343. [302] Every one commits robbery who
(a) steals, and for the purpose of extorting whatever is stolen or to prevent or overcome resistance to the stealing, uses violence or threats of violence to a person or property;
(b) steals from any person and, at the time he steals or immediately before or immediately thereafter, wounds, beats, strikes or uses any personal violence to that person;
(c) assaults any person with the intent to steal from him; or
(d) steals form any person while armed with an offensive weapon or imitation thereof.

R.S., c C-34, s. 302

Robbery occurs when a theft, or attempted theft is accompanied by violence or threats of violence to a person. Very frequently, members of the public confuse the terms "robbery" and "theft". When taking a call in which the person claims he or she has been robbed, it is necessary for the call taker to clarify whether there has been violence or threats of violence to a person in the course of a theft, or if, for example, the caller has just arrived home from work and found their home has been burglarized, which means there has been a breaking and entering and theft or mischief, not a robbery.

Police Response

When the police respond to an armed robbery, something similar to the following events occur:

1. A tone is sounded on the radio for the police officers.

2. Quadrants or perimeters are set up in the event that roadblocks need to be established. Police cars refrain from rushing to the scene because the safety of the victims could be compromised by the suspects panicking when they see a police car.

3. Detectives in plain clothes enter the robbed premises first to ascertain if the suspects have left the scene of the crime. Plain clothes police officers ensure the

safety of the victims by lessening the chance that a hostage taking will be triggered due to the suspects seeing the police uniforms.

4. Communicators may be requested to contact the local cab companies and public transit to alert them to the prospect of the suspects utilizing cabs, buses, or Skytrain or subway. Usually taxicabs have radios, and bus drivers carry cellular phones enabling them to call relevant information in to the police very quickly.

Home Invasions

The phenomena of home invasions, in which people are deliberately targeted in their homes, is of increasing concern. When confronted by a person with a weapon, the expectation is that they want our money or property and will then leave. In the situation of a home invasion, criminals may also assault the residents, restrain children and/or sexually assault the women, despite having possession of whatever they initially came for. This is a fundamental part of controlling the victims through terror. It reduces resistance and can increase the time it takes to have the crime reported, making it more difficult to catch and convict the criminals. Invasion style robberies appears to be well planned in advance, with the perpetrators being familiar with the household routine. In order to ensure victim compliance and eliminate resistance, criminals will sometimes target a business person's home when the whole family is present.

Contributing Factors for Home Invasion:

- Target hardening of traditional targets – alarms, surveillance cameras, etc.
- Like car-jackings, it is a way to overcome technological barriers.
- Wide-spread use of house alarm systems and upgraded security.
- Gang activity may be part of the problem.
- Intimidating victims lessens risk of being caught.

Elements of Invasion Style Robberies

1. The invasion style robbery is usually well planned in advance with the suspects being familiar with the household routine.

2. Victims are isolated from helping resources such as neighbors, phone, and police during an invasion.

3. Robberies of family owned restaurants tend to occur at the end of the day when the staff are busy closing up and counting the money.

4. Industrial park robberies have also occurred early in the morning when arriving staff are taken by surprise. With this type of robbery, the escape routes usually are carefully chosen to ensure easy get-away during the early morning rush-hour traffic. The heavy traffic gives the criminals more time by ensuring a poor police response time.

5. The invasion style robbers may use violence. For example:

- Victims have been restrained with duct tape applied their eyes and mouths.
- Gun shots have been fired into ceilings to intimate victims.
- Employees have been intentionally shot in order to frighten off other employees.
- Large bayonet style knives have been used to poke and stab victims.

Business Invasions

When we think of an armed robbery, we think of a suspect with a gun or knife holding up a bank, a gas station, or a convenience store. These places of business expect to be robbed, and through the years they have accordingly improved their security by having time-locked safes on the premises, video surveillance cameras, and staff training on robbery prevention safety measures.

Businesses in industrial parks also assume they may have their products stolen. However, their expectations are that thefts will occur at night when no staff were in the building. Sophisticated monitored alarm systems and private police patrols are employed to effectively discourage such activity. This results in the shift of criminal focus to more vulnerable time periods.

Types of Businesses Targeted

1. Businesses with high tech equipment which could bring a high return when sold on the black market are vulnerable. This includes companies dealing in computer hardware, or companies which have specialized equipment to repair technical apparatus, or companies which stock unique equipment for a specialized industry.

2. Businesses located in industrial parks with excellent access to major roadways are at risk because it provides the robbers with an easy escape route.

3. Businesses located at a distance from the nearest police station are at risk because it creates a longer response time by the local police. Most police stations are located in more central and populated areas which are usually a considerable distance from a city's industrial area.

4. Businesses with offices in the front of the building give robbers an easy entrance via a loading dock in the back of the business.

Carjacking

Carjacking, a type of robbery, is theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle by force or threat of force. Carjacking occurs when a person in their vehicles is forced out of it or ordered to drive to a location by an armed suspect

Persons who are victims of carjacking should note what the suspects looked like, which direction they went in, and licence plate numbers of other vehicle(s) used while stealing your car. When the victim gets home, it is recommended that they have their

residence locks changed, inform others who need to know about the loss of keys, and cancel any credit cards that may have been taken.

Assessment Criteria – Robbery and Violence Related Crimes

Call Taker

- Time delay of call
- Where is caller now?
- Is the caller safe?
- Is caller hurt? / Is an ambulance required?
- Weapons involved?
- Produced or simulated
- What type of weapon
  - Description
- Full description of suspect
- Demeanor of suspect
- Alcohol / Threatening
- Direction of travel / mode of travel of suspect
- Caller particulars
- Description of items taken
- ID taken
- Current residence address on any ID
  - Any keys to residence? If so, advise caller to change locks
- Keep caller on line for updates and to calm

Common Issues and Reactions of Major Crime Victims

Complex issues face each major crime victim. A person's perception of an event is unique due to his/her individual life experience. A public safety communicator's response needs to fit the victim and the situation.

A person's sense of control may be lost during a robbery occurring at work or in a public place, but people tend to cope because they can return to the safety of their homes. In a home invasion, this home comfort zone is lost because the house was the scene of the crime. Victims often state, "I cannot stay here! Where can I go to be safe and get a good night's sleep?"

Some people focus on the *could haves*, *would haves*, and *should haves*. They may deny that they were scared and attempt to hide their emotions. In some cases they may be concerned with saving face and may try to deny that they were even involved. They may fear retaliation against them and their family for getting the police involved.

Other victims may be more emotional, focusing on the danger and fear of the event. When these people show their emotions at the crime scene, police, emergency people, and victim services workers may be more attentive to them because of their obvious distress. It is important for responders to be aware that those not displaying emotion may be traumatized as well.

If young children are in the house at the time of the attack, they may be withdrawn and clinging to their parents. They may also become hyperactive. If asked a question, they may or may not answer. If it is late at night, it may be difficult to get them to go to bed. They wish to stay with their parents. Children react to the emotions of their parents. For example, if a mother starts to cry, her children may start to cry as well.

Sudden movements and noises may elicit startle reactions from victims, and they may have a shortened attention span due to the trauma. They may be unsettled and uncomfortable while they are being questioned, examined, or debriefed.

The victims may express their feelings and thoughts using foul or violent language. They may also make racist comments. They may reflect upon the effectiveness of totalitarian measures of crime control such as execution and castration.

There is usually much chaos at the scene of the crime as the investigators try to take statements and the forensic people look for physical evidence like fingerprints, shell casings, etc.

If the news media become aware of the event and consider it newsworthy, they will want the story. The victims may not wish to see the media. If the media pursues the story persistently with the victims, it can lead to further frustration and victimization.

Assessment Criteria Break and Enter

Call taker

- Caller particulars
- Advise caller not to touch anything / not to disturb POE (point of entry)
- protection of POE, evidence (fingerprints etc.)
- What is missing?
- Particulars on items for CPIC entry
- Exact time frame of when B&E might have occurred or time lapse
- Any suspects?
- If so, full particulars
- CPIC
- Why are they suspect?

Assaults and Abuse Related Incidents

Child Abuse

Calls to public safety communicators involving or apparently involving child abuse will be a recurring theme. In some call centres, there is little chance a week can go by without a report on an incident in which a child has been abused, or policy or procedures are being debated. The incidents of child abuse can be broken down into four general types of abuse.

- Emotional abuse
- Neglect of necessities based on the standards set by our society
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

While this method of categorizing abuse may be useful, it is important to be aware that specific incidents will likely overlap these categories.

For public safety communicators it is important to be aware that not all abuse is necessarily criminal in nature, but provincial law may **require** that all complaints of child abuse be reported to the appropriate Ministry.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse or neglect does not constitute a criminal code offence, but its long term effects may be much worse than physical abuse. Teachers often note that emotionally abused children tend to be withdrawn, are unable to concentrate, and may act out in the school yard. These children tend to be sick more often and have more sleeping problems than their peers. There also seems to be a general lack of parental involvement in their lives.

These children have long been forgotten by our system, but, as an example, the new child protection legislation in British Columbia now recognizes them. When police officers investigate allegations of spousal assaults, the police officers and/or the police victim services unit need to consider if the children are involved. If the parents are embroiled in some form of conflict, the Ministry for Children and Families is notified to check the well-being of the children. Children suffering any kind of abuse will be traumatized.

Neglect of Basic Needs

In all communities, a considerable number of children are undernourished. Similarly, housing for many families is below what most of us consider acceptable. These situations are problematic for the children affected and have a long term impact on the continuation of the cycle of poverty. The children may not perform well in school academically and may develop socially inappropriate behaviors. In the long term, statistically there is a tendency for these children to have parents who have come

from similar backgrounds, and are at risk of parenting families who will suffer from similar stressors.

Child Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the term used to describe assault on a child. The difference between acceptable hitting to discipline a child and abuse is largely a function of the form, severity and frequency of the hitting.

An adult who constantly slaps, hits, and threatens a child may be considered an abuser; however, giving a child a smack on the behind for misbehaving in the mall does not, in and of itself, constitute abuse at this time. Regardless, if someone calls the police to report an incident, you need to respond according to the child protection legislation.

Beliefs about Physical Abuse

There was a time when the strap was used as the final line of discipline in our public schools. If a teacher was unable to handle a student, they were sent to the school principal for discipline. Children receiving the belt at home was also a common occurrence. Today, however, a parent seen using a belt on his child may be regarded as an abuser, and a school teacher using a belt could be charged with assault with a weapon causing bodily harm.

Today, a teenager who is punished with a belt by his/her parent might go to a Social Services office and complain of physical abuse by the parent. The teenager could be placed into care in a foster home, and the parent may be arrested for assault.

Parent Complaints

Disputes between parents sometimes result in complaints leveled by one spouse against the other, alleging one form or another of child abuse. One parent or the other may phone the police to make allegations of abuse, possibly in a bid to discredit the person. These complaints may represent honest concerns about the child's welfare or they may be motivated by a desire to get back at or get even with a former partner.

Other Information Sources

Child abuse may be reported by persons outside of the immediate family, including members of the child's extended family. School teachers and school counsellors see children five days in most weeks and are often the first to notice changes in behavior, or may notice physical indications of abuse. Family physicians are legally required to report any physical signs or symptoms that could be linked to abuse. Neighbors who see or hear abuse may also call in.

Definition of Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is defined as any sexual activity with a child under the age of 14, usually by someone who is in a position of trust or authority over the child. Sexual abuse may also be committed by someone who is a stranger to the child. The definition of sexual abuse ranges from exhibitionism to fondling to intercourse. By current reporting, half of all girls and one in three boys will be victims of unwanted sexual acts before they are 18 years old. Children with special needs are at higher risk of sexual abuse.

Child Abuse and Incest

What children know about their world and themselves is often learned from family members. This makes child abuse a serious social problem. In an abusive household, the nurturing function of the family is replaced with social forces that can be destructive to the child. It is important to everyone in the community for children to have a healthy social environment in which to grow and develop.

Adults have more power because of age, sex and physical size. In incest, this is aggravated by the child's dependence on the abuser for basic needs such as shelter, food, affection and security.

The power imbalance between adults and children is similar to the one between men and women. When physical battering happens to children, the batterer could be male or female. The issue is one of power and control over a weaker or more passive person. f a woman is battered, her children are often also battered. Children may accept this treatment as normal, because they have not known anything else. Besides battering, emotional and sexual abuse of children by family member may include being physically exposed to others, fondling, sexual penetration of infants as well as older children, forced oral sex, child prostitution and child pornography.

There is an apparent incest taboo in our society. In fact, the taboo is about discussing it. When children try to speak up, they are often not taken seriously or believed. Sometimes they have no words to describe their distress. Adults may not want to know. For example, parents may be unwilling to believe that their spouse would behave in such a manner. It is estimated that up to sixty per cent of ten children have been subjected to incestuous attacks. Often, the attacks continue over a period of years. Coercion and threats are often used to keep the child silent. The child's self-esteem will be undermined, they may be told that no will believe them. "I'll kill you," or "If you co-operate, I won't do this to your sisters," or "Your mother would be so upset" are common lines. The child may be told that it is normal for little children to do.

Reporting Child Abuse

The law currently requires all complaints of behavior of abuse (what a reasonable person would consider abuse) to be reported to the Ministry for Children and Families.

Courts are seriously considering the role of professionals regarding suspected child abuse, as indicated in a recent case in Alberta in which a physician was sued for $600,000 for not reporting indications of abuse discovered in a medical examination of a child.[5]

Adult Sexual Violence

Sexual assault is committed in various ways. While popular movies and literature features examples of women exercising power over men through sex, it is important to be aware that the vast majority of sexual assault is committed by men toward women.

Legal Definition of Sexual Assault

A victim has been sexually assaulted if she has been forced to kiss, fondle or have anal, oral, or vaginal intercourse with someone; or if she has been touched in a sexual way without giving consent.

Changes to Canadian laws in January, 1983, reflect a shift in cultural attitudes about sexual offences. The word rape (defined as forced sexual intercourse) was dropped from the Criminal Code and replaced with three levels of sexual assault which, like physical assault, are defined according to the degree of personal injury inflicted on the survivor.

Sexual assault laws now acknowledge the sense of personal violation experienced by the survivor, regardless of the nature of specific sexual acts. These laws emphasize the violent, rather than sexual, nature of the crime.

Canadian Sexual Assault Law

This is covered in the Canadian Criminal Code – Sections 271 – 278

Level 1 – Sexual Assault

It is a crime (*Level 1 – Sexual Assault*) if someone forces any form of sexual activity on someone else (e.g., kissing, fondling, touching, sexual intercourse, etc.) without that person's consent.

---

[5] *D. vs. University of Alberta Hospital*

Level 2 – Sexual Assault with a Weapon

It is a crime (*Level 2 – Sexual Assault With A Weapon*) if, during a sexual assault:

- someone uses a weapon or threatens to use a weapon, imitation or real.
- someone threatens to cause bodily harm to a third person, i.e. a child or friend.
- someone causes bodily harm to another person.
- more than one person assaults someone in the same incident.

Level 3 – Aggravated Sexual Assault

It is a crime (*Level 3 – Aggravated Sexual Assault*) if while being sexually assaulted someone is:

- wounded, maimed, disfigured, or brutally beaten up.
- in danger of losing their life.

Sexual Interference

It is a crime (*Sexual Interference*) if someone for a sexual purpose, touches any parts of the body of a child under the age of fourteen.

It is a crime if someone, for a sexual purpose, encourages a child to touch them with any part of the child's body or with an object.

It is also a crime if someone, for a sexual purpose, encourages a child to touch his or her own body or the body of someone else.

Sexual Exploitation

It is a crime (*Sexual Exploitation*)if someone, who is in a position of trust or authority towards a young person or is a person with whom the young person is in a relationship of dependency, commits the offences of *sexual interference* or *invitation to touching* described above.

Incest

It is a crime (*Incest*) if a blood relation has sexual intercourse with another blood relation (e.g., parent, brother, sister, half-brother, grandparent).

Exposure

It is a crime (*Exposure*) if someone for a sexual purpose exposes his or her genital organs to a person who is under the age of 14. If this happens to someone over the age of 14, this is still against the law if it happens in a public place.

Note: If the victim of any other of the above offences is under the age of 14, the accused may be found guilty where the victim consented to sexual activity or note, unless:

- the accused is between the ages of 12 to 16; and
- the accused is less than 2 years older than the victim; and

- the accused is not in a position of trust or authority or in a relationship of dependence with the victim.

Removal of the Term 'Rape' from the Criminal Code

Communicators for police or ambulance services may receive calls from distraught individuals who have been sexually assaulted. The word "rape" has disappeared from the Criminal Code of Canada in 1983.

Types of Sexual Assault Calls

Public Safety Communicators can expect three different types of sexual assault calls:

Survivor of a Past Sexual Assault

An individual may call and report an assault in the past. They may have been an adult when it occurred or may remember the traumatic event from when childhood.

Such victims are probably not in a state of crisis, but needs sensitive treatment. It may have taken all of their courage to call the police. They are in no immediate danger, so you could arrange for them to talk to a an officer of a morality (sex crimes) unit. It is better for detectives to handle these cases because the statements cannot be rushed. Convictions may be difficult to obtain in these circumstances as there is no forensic evidence and offenders from long ago can be difficult to find or may even be dead.

Sexual Assault has just Occurred

A caller phones 9-1-1 and reports they have just been sexually assaulted and that the suspect has left the scene. The first question to ask the caller is, "When did this happen?" If the suspect just fled the scene, there are the issues of:

- Officer safety – the suspect may be armed with a knife or a gun.
- Suspect description – a search of the area may be necessary.
- Preserving evidence – encourage the victim not to bathe and to keep all sheets or clothing worn during the assault for the police to test for forensic samples.
- Ask if the caller is hurt or needs an ambulance.
- The caller will be in crisis – keep him/her on the line and ensure them that help will be right there.

Possible Sexual Assault in Progress

A caller reports, "I am in fear of being attacked. He is breaking in!" A sexual assault could occur in the next few moments.

This is a crime-in-progress call. Respond according to your SOPs. The victim will probably be afraid, emotional, breathing heavily, hard to understand, and may not respond to long questions. Ensure the location identification and send help immediately!

Keep them calm, if possible. Suggest to them possible escape routes from the house, e.g., the back door or through a window. Survival is the issue.

Assessment Criteria – Assault in progress / just occurred

Call Taker

- Is medical attention required
- Extent of injuries to victim
- Advise ambulance
- Suspect information
- Was assailant known to caller or victim?
- Description
- Was he armed? with what?
- Mode of transportation if known / DOT (CPIC / RO)
- Is caller sure assailant has left scene?
- Any suspicious persons / vehicles seen in area (descriptions)
- Preservation of evidence
- Keep caller on line if possible
- Calm caller / Reassure re police and medical attendance
- Is there alcohol or drug use involved by either party?
- Obtain particulars for CPIC queries
- Does caller know if weapons are present
- Any background/history on domestic situation known by complaint
- Advise caller to keep you updated on escalation of violence/injuries/change in situation or subjects location Can caller keep watching? (if third party)
- Dependent on situation / Time / Caller to be kept on line (on view)
- Exact location of suspect / victim / description of house if exact address unknown
- Any children involved?

Crisis Intervention Checklist

- Remain calm.
- Ascertain whether you are the first person the caller has spoken to.
- Give emotional support.
- Reassure victim by telling them help is on the way.
- Ask if the victim is safe.
- Medical attention.

Reasons for Not Reporting

The victim of a sexual assault may not report this assault to anyone, including, family, friends or the police. There are many complex reasons for this, some of which include:

- Fear of blame for the incident.
- Concern about the attitude of police or the courts.
- Fear of revenge.
- Embarrassment.
- Belief that the police will not be able to do anything.
- Belief that the courts will not find the accused guilty.
- Belief that the best way to cope is to try to forget it.

Elder Abuse

Elder Abuse

Definition: Any harm to an older person that is caused by a family member, friend, or someone on whom the victim relies for basic needs, and occurs in situations in which the victim is under the control or influence of the offender.

Types of Elder Abuse

Physical Assault
- Locking the older person in a room
- Tying the victim to a chair
- Slapping, pushing, or beating
- Assault the person sexually

Financial
- Forging the victim's signature on pension cheques
- Stealing money or personal possessions
- Fraudulently disposing of property by a holder of power of attorney
- Forcing the victim to sell property

Neglect
- Denying a dependent older person food or health services
- Abandoning a dependent older person

Mental Cruelty
- Isolating or ignoring the older person
- Humiliating, insulting, or infantilizing the older person

- Frightening, threatening the older person

Possible Criminal Code Offences

1. **Physical** – assault, sexual assault, forcible confinement, murder or manslaughter

2. **Financial** – theft, theft by a person holding power of attorney, fraud, extortion forgery, stopping mail with intent.

3. **Neglect** – criminal negligence causing bodily harm or death – failure to provide necessities

4. **Mental-Cruelty** – intimidation, uttering threats

Sudden or Accidental Death

Sudden Death Calls to 9-1-1

Public safety communicators working for the police can expect calls for service regarding sudden deaths in a number of situations.

Sudden death calls are often made first thing in the morning when elderly persons, who traditionally rise early, find their partner dead in the bed, the washroom, or on the couch. It is also a time when infants struck by Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) may be discovered.

During snowstorms, individuals who are out of shape and attempt to clear heavy wet snow away, may die of heart attacks.

Sudden death calls also originate from the airport or local hotels when elderly people may die on their way home from holidays. For example, it is quite common for people from the Orient or Australia to have a stopover in Vancouver on their way home from the east coast or Europe.

Accidental Death Calls to 9-1-1

Accidental death is the number one cause of death among people ranging in age from fifteen to thirty-four years old. This type of death is sudden, unexpected, and often also premature. A survivors who calls to report an accidental death maybe in a traumatic set of circumstances and may be in shock, completely unprepared, and feel both deprived and vulnerable.

Poor road conditions contribute to car accidents that kill many people every year. Communicators in an area with a narrow or winding highway can expect many fatal head-on collisions. Many examples of such areas are found in mountainous regions of the country.

High school graduation parties may lead to accidental deaths due to reckless drinking and driving. In the large cities, more accidental deaths happen around *Welfare*

Wednesday due to drug overdoses and/or acts of violence escalated by substance abuse.

Accidental death also happen on job sites in certain occupations. Some high risk occupations are logging, mining and fishing, but death or injuries happen in other occupations as well.

Death Notification

Police officers and victim services workers are often tasked with the job of notifying the next of kin when a death has occurred. Communicators should avoid inadvertently giving out such information over the phone. One of the important goals of the death notification is to make the news bearable. It is difficult to deliver such devastating news, but there is protocol to help the survivor receive the information in the least traumatic manner.

Suicide Intervention

Some of the most difficult situations professional communicators have to deal with involve suicides or attempted suicides. Little can be done to prepare for being present at any death, and suicide calls are more difficult in that there is little warning, and having only the phone to work with does not allow for a great sense of control over the situation.

Suicide intervention is intervening in a life or death situation and by doing so giving hope to a potentially suicide victim. A suicidal individual is not in a permanent state, and the thoughts of suicide can be changed.

Public safety communicators with a suicidal person on the phone must prepare for the possible implications of their part in the situation, regardless of whether the agency is police, fire, or ambulance. When intervening with a suicidal individual, one must be aware of risk factors, warning signs, questions to ask the caller, how to assess the risk and ways of providing safety. A communicator may not know some of the information about a specific caller, but needs to know that these areas exist.

Why?

People attempt or carry out suicide attempts for many reasons. Some of the key factors contributing to suicide include:

- Interpersonal conflict
- Financial problems
- Mental illness
- Inadequate support systems
- Personality variables
- Physical illness
- Loss

- Anger
- Substance abuse

Risk Factors

A variety of situations and times increase the chance of suicides or suicide attempts. These are sometimes based on the time of year or connected to individual or societal events.

- Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years Day: the increased pressures of social interaction and on finances can lead some people to respond to their sense of hopelessness or guilt by taking their own life.
- End of the month: The lack of money at the end of a pay period or when there is nothing left from welfare cheques can precipitate suicide.
- Anniversary of the death of a significant person such as Kurt Cobain, John Lennon, Martin Luther King, or other notable figures.
- Job loss.
- Loss of a companion.
- Release from mental hospital or other institution.
- A *suicide pact* with another person or persons.
- Previous suicide attempts.
- Recent traumatic loss (for example, a loved one may recently have committed suicide)
- Previous history of physical and/or sexual abuse which may contribute to feelings of low self esteem and self blame.
- Recent car accident or conflict with the law.
- Chronic physical illness.
- Increased isolation.

Warning Signs

Some of the warning signs of a potential suicidal include:

- Talking or writing notes about suicide.
- Direct or indirect statement about suicide (Example: Talks about wanting to die or wanting to go away).
- Increased use of alcohol and/or drugs (poor coping skills).
- Giving away personal things or possessions, making a will or saying good-byes.
- Depression (Example: cries easily, sleep and appetite disturbances, lack of energy, weight gain, general loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities, difficulty in concentrating).
- Anxiety.
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness or worthlessness.
- Sudden changes in behavior or mood (Example: moodiness, recklessness, changes in sleeping or eating habits or a change from being talkative to being withdrawn).

- Feeling confused and overwhelmed and believing they are in a crisis that can never be resolved.

Suicide is much more common than one might expect, with the average annual rate of suicide in Canada being 3500, or about 13 to 14 out of every 100,000 people.

Public safety communicators should be familiar with the warning signs of suicide, and must take all of them seriously.

Adult Victims

For most adult suicides, multiple and complex reasons lead to the final decision to act, when major stressors in the individual's life escalate in severity and/or increase in number. Some examples of escalation:

- Heavy workload: colleague becomes ill and workload increases.
- Destructive relationship: child is injured in a car accident.

Child Victims

Children have less experience and are more likely to see the world as black and white. Their repertoire of options is smaller. Death, while not totally understood, is seen as an option. Other factors for children include:

- High impulsivity due to lack of understanding of alternative strategies.
- Physical abuse.
- Emotional abuse, neglect and/or isolation.
- Physical illness.
- Relationship conflicts.
- Personality variables (tendency to internalize or externalize pain).

Adolescent Victims

Teens are very susceptible to stimuli that lower their self-esteem.

- Relationship disappointments and rejection by peers.
- Conflicts with parents.
- Substance abuse.
- Copy-cat suicides.
- Inability to see hopeful outcome.
- Career hopelessness.

Suicide Profiles

Referred Suicide

Potential *referred suicides* regard themselves as a failures, are concerned about what others think of them, feel they are not living up to other's expectations, and do not maintain relationships. Persons who fit this profile may still have a spark of hope, particularly if they make a call for help.

Surcease Suicide

A *surcease suicide* victim wishes to be released from pain. For example, an ALS patient may not want to endure long term pain. There may still be hope in such cases.

Cultural Suicide

Some cultures adhere to the values that it is better to die than be dishonored, or that it is better to die than to tax the scarce resources of the family. These are examples of cultural perspectives that tend to predispose people to end their lives voluntarily.

Psychotic Suicide

The psychotic profile fits a person who has a weak or unreliable connection to reality and who might see death as an option.

Sub-intentional Suicide

Some apparently accidental deaths in traffic or due to drug overdoses are in fact suicides. They are rarely recorded as such, but there is general agreement that the occurrences are considerable. Due to the circumstances, it is quite difficult to determine if there was conscious or unconscious intent.

When the Call Comes to 9-1-1

Some of these above profiles are easier to deal with and may result in stopping the suicide attempt. The *surceased* and the *referred* are most positive because there is still hope. Public safety communicators have the chance to be able to talk such callers out of attempting suicide. Techniques include asking them questions about their life, attempting to build up their sense of self worth, and so on. There is a chance with such callers.

The most difficult profiles of potential suicides are the *cultural* and the *sub-intentional* because they rarely call for help. Calls about such suicides typically report slashed wrists or a gun shot to the head (cultural) or a single vehicle fatal MVA (sub-intentional).

Psychotic persons threatening to kill themselves will test communicators' wits and patience. The most profound aspect of such calls will be the sudden mood swings between happy laughter and periods of crying and put-downs. Communicators have *no* predictive power with a psychotic persons. The most useful action is keep the caller on the phone as long as possible, in the hope that the emergency response people arrive while the caller is still on the phone.

Suicide Calls

Suicide calls take several forms and offer different challenges for the communicator. Calls come from

- someone who is trying to kill themselves or threatening to,

- someone who has found a person dead or nearly dead, or
- someone who has received a call from a friend who is trying to kill themselves.

Establish the caller's motive for calling. Are they doing it to themselves? Or are they reporting it only? Can you fully understand what they are doing? Seek clarification. Before you can stop someone from carrying out a threat of fatal violence against themselves, you must first understand the meaning behind their act.

When a communicator suspects they may be dealing with a suicidal individual, the first step is to establish rapport with the caller. If the caller does not trust the communicator, they probably will not tell him/her anything that will be beneficial in assisting them. It is important to listen to the caller.

The number one priority is to maintain contact with the person until help has arrived at the source of the call. It is essential to keep the caller on the phone. If it is necessary to make small talk or promise them things which are unrealistic, do it.

The communicator must stay in control, and not let the caller go on and on, but at the same time must give them a chance to talk. You must be able to ask the caller questions about suicide. You will need information, so be prepared to ask questions. For examples, if a caller says, "I have just taken a whole bottle of Tylenol!", you may start with:

- What is your name?
- Where are you?
- Are you alone?
- What strength were the Tylenol?

One of the first priorities with suicide calls is to help ground the person in reality. The communicator is there to help such callers by trying to talk them out of committing suicide.

Things look hopeless to suicidal persons, but calls from them tells you they are looking for solutions to their problems. Suicidal individuals may not be totally committed to dying, only part of them wants to die. Someone who is suicidal just wants their pain to go away and suicide seems to them to be the best way to make this pain disappear.

Provide Safety

A major part of a communicator's job is to ensure the caller's safety. When dealing with a suicidal individual, the major concern for call takers is to use their knowledge and training in detecting when a caller may be suicidal, and responding to the call appropriately. The goal is to help the suicidal person get help for themselves and their problems without killing themselves. Establishing rapport and providing support is a good start. All suicidal callers need help, regardless of whether they are in a high, medium, and low risk group.

Listen carefully to the caller, and talk about feelings of suicide openly and frankly with the caller. Be objective to the caller, but also show concern and understanding. Keep reassuring the caller that they are not alone that you want to help. It is important to stay on the line until help arrives.

When taking a call from a potentially suicidal individual,

- suspend judgmental attitudes,
- listen to what the caller is telling you, and
- get help immediately.

Let the caller know that they are not alone and continually tell them that there are other options than suicide. Try to help them focus on their strengths rather than on their weaknesses. Think about and plan how to keep the caller on the phone talking to you until help arrives.

Survivors of a Suicide Victim

It is usually a close family member, personal friend or employees who finds the suicide victim and who calls to report the suicide. The victim is often found first thing in the morning or between 1500 and 1800 hrs when people are coming home from work.

A communicator who receives a call from a survivor of a suicide victim will attempt to support the caller emotionally until help arrives, or if the victim is still alive, to help him/her provide emergency first aid to the victim. Unfortunately, many people who call in suicides or suicide attempts are too shocked to be of much assistance.

The death of someone you care about is a heart-shattering blow, no matter how much preparation is done, but survivors of someone who commits suicide have had no opportunity for preparatory grieving. Everything is left unresolved and unsettled, and questions are left unanswered. Local or regional Victim Assistance Services provide important back-up support for such victims.

The Disabled Community

It has been said that the biggest hurdle faced by the disabled in a community is the errant behavior of others based on their pre-judgment of what they see or hear. These pre-judgments are not necessarily malicious, nor the acts of those who are ignorant. More likely, such acts are based on incorrect assumptions about the ability of the person.

Public safety communicators typically have only voice communication with the caller, which may be an advantage in that they do not *see* the caller which might bias their perceptions of what is happening. On the other hand, it may be a disadvantage in that there are fewer stimuli to base an analysis on.

The call taker needs to ascertain the needs of the disabled caller and to identify situations where the person's condition affects his/her ability to communicate clearly. The communicator needs to clarify what abilities are possible when talking to the person. Most people are capable of identifying what they can or cannot do if asked and given a chance to respond.

Differing Abilities

Some who are challenged because of a physical impairment may be constrained to a wheel chair and restricted to what can be reached from a sitting position if they are paraplegic. Most public telephones are mounted out of reach unless heroic – and potentially dangerous – exertions are made. Quadriplegics have more difficulty and may need personal assistance for the most basic tasks. Any impairment of the ability to move freely may mean that a person is less able to remove themselves from a dangerous incident or to help another person who is injured. Blindness, deafness, injury, amputation, and various congenital conditions are only a few of the possibilities.

Chronic Illness

Chronic illness is another condition that affects an individual's ability to cope in a society that is primarily set up for fully functioning individuals. Arthritis, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, fibromyalgia, and other diseases and syndromes can have severe effects.

Diabetics

For diabetics, the normal chemical functioning of the human body is a matter of maintaining a balance between activity, food intake and insulin injections. Problems exist if the ratio of sugar/insulin is too high or to low. Severe imbalances can result in insulin shock or diabetic coma, either of which can result in death if not treated appropriately. Unfortunately, a person who is slipping into one of these conditions may sound like they are drunk and assumptions about their condition can affect how the call is handled.

Medical Apparatus

A variety of medical conditions may affect the caller and the call response. Even if a person can move themselves, the need to also move a medical device such as an oxygen bottle may slow or stop them in some cases and affect the situation. If they need assistance, ensure that the information is part of the report that will be dispatched to the field unit, so that assistance will be sent.

Assisting People with Differing Abilities

Communication Devices

Life Line Communication System is a program available for people with certain disabilities through the medical community, based primarily in the hospitals. An individual who uses the system is required to wear a *beeper* device around his/her neck, with a button to push in the case of an emergency. The person's phone is programmed to dial the monitoring center automatically. The phone is a highly sensitive speaker phone, which is capable of picking up breathing or groaning if the person cannot generate speech.

If it sounds serious, an ambulance is dispatched immediately. While the ambulance is en route, the monitoring center tries to reach one of three contacts previously designated, who may meet the ambulance at the house or at the hospital. If the matter is not perceived as life or death, the contact person may be required to check on the patient before an ambulance is dispatched.

The program is reserved for persons with chronic health problems requiring immediate medical attention. This could include persons prone to heart failure and kidney failure. Other individuals having difficulty moving around, such that if they fell down they would need assistance to get up, are also eligible.

Persons with severe spinal cord injuries and serious cerebral palsy are also included in such programs on a limited basis. It is recommended that these persons have a personal care attendant with them 24 hours a day rather than relying on monitors. Disability pensions and social services usually fund this type of care so the patient can maintain an independent life, rather than being confined to an institution.

In some areas where services of this type do not exist, disabled persons will have to rely on others from their family or community to check on them periodically. If someone, such as a home care worker, reports that when they attended the residence, the door was locked and no one came to the door or answered back, it would be appropriate to dispatch someone to check on the person's well being.

Generating Speech Difficulties

Due to stuttering and conditions like Cerebral Palsy or advanced Parkinson's Disease, some persons have problems speaking clearly over the phone. They may have a problem holding the phone steady and do not have the luxury of a speaker phone. Being upset may aggravate the situation.

Appropriate Response

- If the caller's speech is slurred, do not assume you are dealing with a drunk individual. Ask them if they have a medical condition.
- Be patient. If you do not understand them, ask them to repeat what they just said. Most will readily tell you their problem.

- Do not be sympathetic, be empathetic.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Calm them down. Give them questions that can be answered with simple "yes" and "no" responses if their speech is labored. For example: "Are you hurt?" "Are you in any danger right now?" "Are you alone?" "Do you need an ambulance?" "It says on my screen that you live at 555 Elm Street, is this true?"

Hearing Impairments and the Message Relay Center

The message relay system has been developed to serve the deaf and hearing impaired communities. It is available to most persons with hearing difficulties. The system is quite simple. The person with the hearing problem has a keyboard and monitor linked to their telephone. When they dial a number, they are automatically patched into the Message Relay Center before the number they have dialed is reached.

An operator acknowledges contact with the user by typing back to them that their call is being placed. The operator then speaks to the person the deaf person is trying to get hold of, and then types the response back to the deaf person.

If you are taking calls for the police, fire, or ambulance and are contacted by the Message Relay Center, be aware that the relay operator has to type your responses to the caller. They also need time to process what the caller is sending back to them. Talk slowly and deliberately. Be patient. Ask simple questions, perhaps those types requiring "yes" and "no". It may not sound empathetic, but you need to focus on being efficient.

Limited Comprehension

Some persons may have contact with 9-1-1 who have a diminished IQ or ability to comprehend. Their condition could be genetic. For example, they could have Down's Syndrome due to having an extra chromosome. Or they could have a condition called Phenylketonuria, which produces a physical appearance similar to Down's, yet it is due to the lack of a gene which produces an enzyme essential to normal metabolism.

The severity of their impairments vary from individual to individual. Some hold high functioning jobs. For example, the Edmonton Oilers Hockey Team employed a Down's person as their equipment manager for nearly 20 years. Thus, do not automatically assume that the person on the other end of the phone is not smart enough to understand you.

Realize that if they have called 9-1-1, they are high functioning. Obviously, they have a problem and need help. If they are excited and panicked, their speech may be hard to understand. Speak politely and choose language which is jargon free and ask questions which require simple responses.

Confused Callers

- Be calm. Be patient. Ask simple questions.

- If the caller's speech is poor, ask them politely to repeat what they have said or to use other words.
- If information is still unclear, send help ASAP.
- If you can ascertain their name, check for similar calls under their name.
- If there are previous calls, check to see whether or not calls were founded.
- If there are previous call files, check to see if there are any family members or next of kin indexed on the file. If so, give them a call because they may be able to verify the potential seriousness of the call. They may also wish to attend the scene.
- Ask if they have a Medic Alert bracelet. If so, obtain their name from the bracelet and run the name. If there is a reference, connect with the contact person and inform them of the situation.

Psychiatric Emergencies

There is a difference between a *psychiatric emergency* and a *crisis induced reaction*. A person who is triggered by a crisis situation and who is able to focus on that situation is having a crisis induced reaction. The person who sees it all as a plot may be having a psychiatric emergency. This distinction may not be clear. You may need to talk for a while with a person before you can ascertain whether or not they need medical intervention as well as the investigation of the event.

CANADIAN POLICE INFORMATION CENTRE (CPIC)

CPIC is a complex on-line query computer system that provides the police community with a rapid and multifaceted information source. Information may be queried, entered, modified and removed. Messages can be transmitted from one end of the country to the other in a matter of seconds.

Access

Access to CPIC is limited to:

- Police agencies such as, RCMP, provincial police agencies and other police agencies
- Agencies with limited law enforcement roles such as Canada Customs and Immigration, Railway Police agencies, Correctional Services, etc.
- Agencies with a role complementary to law enforcement.

Information contained with the CPIC system is **CONFIDENTIAL** and must be protected to prevent disclosure to unauthorized agencies or individuals. You as a call taker or dispatcher are responsible for ensuring any information or data is disseminated to only accredited agencies or personnel. Security breaches have occurred over the phone by individuals impersonating police officers or secondary agency personnel. If in doubt about the identity of your caller, refuse access and obtain a call back number for confirmation.

The security of the CPIC system and your responsibilities associated to its use cannot be over stated. It is tempting to use the system for personal gain or even to satisfy simple curiosity. **DO NOT**. A **breach** of the CPIC system entails *disclosure* of information; a **violation** of the system entails *contradiction* of Policy. You are accountable for its use and risk possible criminal or civil action against you if you violate its confidentiality. Do not be talked into releasing or supplying any data off the system by friends, coerced by individuals, or non-accredited agencies, or the media.

Before being permitted access to CPIC at his/her agency, call takers/dispatchers will be security cleared by the RCMP, prior to employment, through the submission of fingerprints for a criminal record check. Non-police repair technicians are not security cleared and must be monitored during any visit to an agency and the terminal alternate routed during repairs. All hard copies of CPIC printouts, input forms and manuals must be burned or shredded when they are disposed.

Known or suspected security breaches or violations are thoroughly investigated, and necessary action will be taken with the agency or individual involved if the breaches

are confirmed. ***You can be fired*** and may be charged criminally for breaching CPIC security.

Modes

CPIC operates in two modes: Operational and Instructional.

Operational mode is used to access the operational files of the system, and *Instructional* mode is used for training purposes, practice and demonstration.

Databases

CPIC is composed of the following databases:

- Investigational   Data supplied, supported and entered by police agencies. This database contains files on persons, vehicles, marine and property.
- Identification   Data entered and integrity controlled by the RCMP Identification Services. It contains files with respect to criminal records as well as CNI (Criminal Name Index) and CRS (Criminal Record Synopsis).
- Ancillary   Records supplied by non-police agencies such as Motor Vehicles Branch or Corrections who are responsible for data maintenance. This database contains the following files: Motor Vehicle Branch registrations (vehicles and drivers licenses), Federal and Provincial inmate records, aircraft registration and tracking systems, restricted weapons registration, a registry for wandering persons (for example: Alzheimer's patients), as well as information supplied through the Automated Canada United States Police Information Exchange System also called ACUPIES.
- Intelligence   Records entered by Police agencies specializing in the gathering of criminal intelligence. This information is accessible only through designated terminals and contains files pertaining to criminal intelligence, motorcycle gangs and surveillance information.

Reference Manuals

Because CPIC is so complex and continues to evolve, communicators need to refer to the applicable reference materials available to them. The CPIC Reference Manual is an essential tool in utilizing and understanding the system. It contains information, policy and direction concerning matters of administrative and operational nature. Two other publications of reference are the CPIC National Directory and CPIC Bulletin. Information is also contained within administrative and operational manuals. ***Know where these references are kept*** and how to use them. Be aware of any policies or procedures regarding CPIC use unique to your agency. Read the updates supplied to you through the Bulletin system to keep abreast of any changes to the system that may affect your job.

CPIC Query Information for Persons (QPERS)

The *persons* file stores, records, searches and retrieves data related to specific individuals and person categories.

The prime categories are:

Wanted Person (WANT)

A person for whom a warrant has been issued or is arrestable. Local, provincial, Canada wide and extridictable warrants outstanding on individuals are recorded here. AWOL personnel and military deserters may also be recorded on this file.

Accused Person (ACCD)

Refers to a person against whom legal proceedings have commenced in relation to a Criminal Code or Federal Statute offence, and who is awaiting disposition. Refers to a person charged but who has no Warrant of Arrest outstanding for the offence.

Prohibited Person (PROHIB)

A person who has an order of prohibition in effect against them with regard to firearms, driving, liquor, hunting, deportation or any other Court Statute imposed prohibition.

Refused (REF)

Refers to an individual who has been refused a Firearm Acquisition Certificate or a Restricted Weapon Certificate, or from whom a Restricted Weapon Certificate has been revoked.

Parolee / Inmate (PAROL)

This file is maintained by Corrections Canada and contains data on inmates or persons on release from federal penal institutions. Only accredited police agencies may receive information from this category.

Probation (PROB)

Refers to an individual who has been convicted of a criminal offence and has been given a suspended sentence, conditional discharge or has been released on probation. This file also contains individuals on a peace bond (recognizance) or restraining order. Young offenders on open custody are also entered under this category.

Missing Persons (MISS)

This file contains individuals reported missing and/or for whom a police agency has undertaken to assist in locating on or for compassionate grounds.

Body (BODY)

Physical description of an unidentified body, body part, unidentified coma or amnesia victim.

Special Interest Police (SIP)

This file contains information on persons who may be of interest to police.

Surveillance (SURV)

This file contains information on persons with regard to surveillance or intelligence gathering.

CPIC Query Information for Vehicle

The CPIC Vehicle file stores, records, retrieves and searches data on the following types of vehicles.

- Automobiles
- Trucks (including semi tractors)
- Motorcycles (including motorized bikes)
- Snowmobiles
- Trailers (including commercial and recreational)
- Aircraft (including piloted balloons)
- Other (vehicles not included in above, as in farm tractors,
- Amphibians, All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs)

There are ten categories in the Vehicle file.

1.   V – Stolen Vehicle

All vehicles reported stolen are entered on CPIC.

2.   ABAN – Abandoned Vehicle

This is a record of a vehicle in an agency's possession through abandonment, seizure or impoundment. Bailiff seizures are also allowed entry into this category.

3.   CRIME – Crime Vehicle

This refers to a vehicle connected to or with a criminal act.

4.   SURVV – Surveillance Vehicle

Information regarding this category is restricted to persons who have been granted appropriate security clearance from an accredited police agency.

5.   LP – Licence Plate

All licence plates that have been stolen, lost or seized may be entered.

6.   VALTAG – Validation Tag

All stolen, lost or recovered vehicle validation tags are entered here.

7.   VINPL – VIN Plate

All lost, stolen or recovered Vehicle Identification plates are entered here.

8.   PART – Vehicle Parts

All stolen, lost or recovered vehicle axles, transmissions, doors, bumpers, hoods, motors, identified by a manufacturers serial number.

9.   PNTRV – Pointer Vehicle

This refers to vehicles that are entered only *to point to* another record in CPIC files. For example, a subject wanted for armed robbery on CPIC would have his vehicle entered as a tool to link the two records together. The PNTRV file is a secondary record. All the other vehicle categories are prime records.

10.   PLUS – Plus Record

Plus Records are used for additional remarks or conditions that do not fall into any of the other categories.

Query Log File

Whenever a vehicle is queried on CPIC, *always* include the licence and province data. This data must be entered to ensure the vehicle will show up as a *no hit* query. CPIC will automatically store the query information on the vehicle for 120 hours. If during that time another agency adds the same vehicle as stolen, that agency is advised that the vehicle has already been queried and which ORI (agency) queried it.

Investigators and personnel may access the Query Log file (QL) to determine if a vehicle has been checked or queried within the last 120 hours.

This feature *will not work* if province data is not entered.

The *remarks* field is mandatory in every query you make in all categories or files. Ensure that you have entered enough information to identify who made the query and the reason. It may be necessary to justify a query months later.

Police Automated Registration Information System (PARIS)

PARIS

PARIS is the system in British Columbia and Ontario that allows CPIC access to Motor Vehicle Registration and Driver's Licence information. Each province has different data available to it, so check with your agency or the CPIC-RM (CPIC Reference Manual) to determine availability in your area.

A *licence query* is used to identify the registered owner of a vehicle, the RO (registered owner) particulars, ODN (owner driver number), vehicle description and licence status.

Simultaneous search of PARIS and CPIC will supply all the above information as well as a search of the CPIC Vehicle file.

A licence history query will provide current owner and vehicle information as well as all vehicle registration numbers associated to the licence since it was first issued.

Registration number query refers to the unique number that is assigned to each vehicle registered in British Columbia. Query response will show current vehicle / owner information, all licence plates and owners associated to the vehicle since registration and all registration numbers associated to the current plates since the date of issue.

ODN – owner driver number is the driver's licence number of the owner of the licence plates. It will provide the driver's name, address, DOB (date of birth) and all vehicle licence numbers associated to the subject. A full query on a drivers licence will also show previous addresses and any convictions registered.

VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) query refers to the unique number that is assigned to each vehicle registered. Query response will show current vehicle / owner information, all licence plates associated to the vehicle since registration and all registration numbers associated to the current plates since the date of issue.

An exact match on a VIN QUERY will provide full registration data including history. Partial VIN queries provide all vehicles on file with exact match of the partial VIN queried. The system will supply up to 30 possible responses. After that you will need to contact the MVB (Motor Vehicle Branch) or MOT (Ministry of Transportation) to obtain responses over 30.

Property

There are three categories to CPIC's property file. They are GUNS, SECURITIES and ARTICLES.

There are four types of transactions associated with the Property files:
QUERY, ADD, MODIFY and REMOVE.

No LOCATE or SPECIAL QUERY transactions are allowed within the Property file.

Gun Category

GUN refers to a device that incorporates a barrel for the discharge of projectiles. The term GUN includes any of the following:

- Revolver
- Pistol
- Rifle
- Shotgun
- Flint/cap/matchlock muzzle loader

- Rocket or gas guns
- Air gun
- Air rifle
- Air pistol
- Automatic weapons (machine guns, pistols)

CRIMINAL AND OTHER RECORDS INFORMATION

Criminal Records

Criminal records are compiled and maintained by the RCMP Headquarters in Ottawa. They are based on a subject's fingerprints. You cannot add to this file, only query it. In your query you may obtain either the full criminal record (CR II) or a criminal record synopsis (CRS). Release of this information is strictly regulated and must be made in accordance with the CPIC Reference Manual. Like all aspects of CPIC, information contained within the system is not for public broadcast or consumption. There are consequences to individuals who violate the privacy and security of the CPIC system.

CR II File – Full Criminal Record Query

- Q CR FPS:_\LANG:_\LVL:_\REM:
- Q   Query
- CR   Criminal Record
- FPS   Unique series of numbers assigned by RCMP Ottawa to a subject fingerprints
- LANG   English or French (E or F)
- LVL   There are three LEVELS available to you. The LEVEL keyword is used to obtain:

  > LVL:1 – Subject's conviction history for court purposes.

  > LVL:2 – Subject's conviction and non conviction history.

  > LVL:3 – List of police agencies contributing to the FPS.

- REM   Here you may enter your name or ID, field unit requesting information by name or ID, reason for query etc. *always* use the remarks field in each query on the CPIC system.

Metric and Imperial Measures

The universal system of measure is the *metric system*. However, a majority of callers will probably supply measurements in *imperial* units (feet, pounds, miles, and so on). Hence, you should always have a conversion chart handy for quick comparisons. You will not necessarily have to memorize these conversion charts, but you should be familiar with the general process.

Many communicators still *broadcast* using the imperial system but, in Canada, all *reports* must now be written using the metric system.

Height Conversion Table

NOTE: *To convert height above or below the table, multiply the feet by 12 to get the total number of inches, add up the inches and multiply by 2.54, or divide the cm by 2.54.*

FT– IN	CM	FT– IN	CM
4-11	150	5-11	180
4-11 ½	151	5-11 ½	182
5 – 0	152	6 – 0	183
5 – 0 ½	153	6 – 0 ½	184
5 – 1	154	6 – 1	185
5 – 1 ½	155	6 – 1 ½	187
5 – 2	157	6 – 2	188
5 – 2 ½	159	6 – 2 ½	189
5 – 3	160	6 – 3	191
5 – 3 ½	161	6 – 3 ½	192
5 – 4	163	6 – 4	193
5 – 4 ½	164	6 – 4 ½	194
5 – 5	165	6 – 5	196
5 – 5 ½	166	6 – 5 ½	197
5 – 6	168	6 – 6	198
5 – 6 ½	169	6 – 6 ½	199
5 – 7	170	6 – 7	201
5 – 7 ½	171	6 – 7 ½	202
5 – 8	173	6 – 8	203
5 – 8 ½	174	6 – 8 ½	204
5 – 9	175	6 – 9	206
5 – 9 ½	177	6 – 9 ½	207
5-10	178	6-10	208
5-10 ½	179	6-10 ½	210

Weight Conversion Table

NOTE: *Convert weight above or below the table amounts by multiplying the kg by 2.2 or dividing the pounds (lb.) by 2.2.*

KG.	LB.	KG	LB.	KG	LB.
43	95	63	139	83	183
44	96	64	140	83	184
44	97	64	141	84	185
44	98	64	142	84	186
45	99	65	143	85	187
45	100	65	144	85	188
46	101	66	145	86	189
46	102	66	146	86	190
47	103	67	147	87	191
47	104	67	148	87	192
48	105	68	149	88	193
48	106	68	150	88	194
49	107	68	151	88	195
49	108	69	152	89	196
49	109	69	153	89	197
50	110	70	154	90	198
50	111	70	155	90	199
51	112	71	156	91	200
51	113	71	157	91	201
52	114	72	158	92	202
52	115	72	159	92	203
53	116	73	160	93	204
53	117	73	161	93	205
54	118	73	162	93	206
54	119	74	163	94	207
54	120	74	164	94	208
55	121	75	165	95	209
55	122	75	166	95	210
56	123	76	167	96	211
56	124	76	168	96	212
57	125	77	169	97	213

APPENDIX I
ALPHABETIC LETTERS, NUMERALS, CLOCK TIMES AND DATES

All police agencies use recognized standards for the transmission of letters, numbers and time. Call takers must be able to use these standards within the police environment to effectively communicate. Call takers must also recognize that the public may not be aware of this terminology, and be comfortable in going back and forth between the different methods.

Alphabetic Letters and Numerals

Phonetic alphabet refers to a system of associating a specific word with each letter of the alphabet. Phonetic alphabets are used in radio broadcasting and voice communications to promote consistency among personnel and minimize errors in the understanding of verbal messages By using the phonetic alphabet, people can convey without ambiguity, letters that are easy to misinterpret on the phone. In this way, "Sierra" and "Fox trot" are much easier to distinguish than S and F, which tend to sound alike over the telephone or radio. It is also more effective to convey difficult names with the phonetic alphabet. Also, the string of individual letters or numbers (alphanumeric code) which make up a *model number*, *part number*, *vehicle identification number* or *serial number* can be more accurately transmitted via radio or telephone through the use of a phonetic alphabet translation.

The I.T.U. (International Telecommunications Union) Phonetic Alphabet or International Phonetic Alphabet, is the system most commonly used in Canada.

It is important to use this system as printed and not substitute alternate words. You must become so familiar with the system your agency uses that you begin to *think* in terms of the phonetic alphabet instead of individual letters or numbers.

It is common practice when broadcasting or speaking over the telephone, to first state the common pronunciation of the word, followed by the spelling of it using the phonetic alphabet. For example you would say, "The surname is *Smith*, spelled: Sierra, Mike, India, Tango, Hotel." *Never* repeat the letter followed by the phonetic such as "S-Sierra, M-Mike, I-India, T-Tango, H-Hotel." It does not flow, and becomes confusing to the person listening or trying to copy ("Is it 'Smith' or 'Ssmmiitthh' or something else altogether?"). If you are unable to pronounce a name, state the other name and then, "Last name I spell...november, golf, uniform, yankee, echo, november" [NGUYEN].

With practice, you will be able to *think* in terms of the phonetic alphabet.

I.T.U. Phonetic Alphabet

A – ALPHA .... *(**al**-fah)*

B – BRAVO............... *(**brah**-vo)*

C – CHARLIE .... *(**char**-lee)*

D – DELTA................ *(**dell**-ta)*

E – ECHO.................. *(**eck**-oh)*

F – FOX TROT.......... *(**foks**-trot)*

G – GOLF .... *(golf)*

H – HOTEL .... *(hoe-**tell**)*

I – INDIA................... *(**in**-dee-ah)*

J – JULIET .... *(**jew**-lee-**ett**)*

K – KILO................... *(**kee**-low)*

L – LIMA................... *(**lee**-mah)*

M – MIKE................. *(mike)*

N – NOVEMBER ...... *(no-**vem**-bur)*

O – OSCAR .... *(**oss**-car)*

P – PAPA................... *(pah-**pah**)*

Q – QUEBEC .... *(kee-**beck**)*

R – ROMEO .... *(**row**-me-oh)*

S – SIERRA .... *(see-**air**-rah)*

T – TANGO............... *(**tang**-go)*

U – UNIFORM .... *(**you**-nee-form)*

V – VICTOR.............. *(**vik**-tar)*

W – WHISKEY .... *(**wis**-key)*

X – X-RAY .... *(**ecks**-ray)*

Y – YANKEE .... *(**yang**-key)*

Z – ZULU .... *(**zoo**-loo)*

Transmission of Numbers

Numbers zero through nine should be pronounced as follows:

0   *(zee-ro)*

1   (wun)

2   (too)

3   (thu-ree)

4   (fu-or)

5   (fa-ive)

6   (siks)

7   (sev-ven)

8   (ate)

9   (nie-yen)

(or *NIN-er* as per the Industry Canada Study Guide for Radiotelephone Operator's Restricted Certificate – Aeronautical)

Use *Zero* instead of *Oh,* which is ambiguous.

Always enunciate clearly and do not group numbers together. All numbers except whole thousands should be transmitted by pronouncing each digit separately. Whole thousands should be transmitted by pronouncing each digit in the number of thousands followed by the word "thousand".

Examples:

10 becomes.................. one zero

75 becomes.................. seven five

100 becomes............... one zero zero

5,800 becomes............ five eight zero zero

11,000 becomes.......... one one thousand

68.009 becomes.......... six eight zero zero nine

A street address would be stated as follows:
"One four zero zero Bargen Drive, bravo, alpha, romeo, golf, echo, november." (1400 Bargen Drive)

Broadcast vehicle plates as follow:
"Bravo Four, suspect vehicle is a late-model, four-door Jeep, red in color. BCL: whiskey, charlie, x-ray, one, seven, three" (WCX173).

When broadcasting alphanumeric information, state each numeric carefully with each alpha character followed immediately by its phonetic word.

For example, to broadcast "1B2G36T4", state:
"One, Bravo, two, Golf, three, six, Tango, four." Each number and letter is pronounced separately, in other words you would not say "One, B-Bravo, two, G-Golf, *thirty six*, T-Tango, four."

Numbers containing a decimal point shall be transmitted as above, with the decimal point indicated by the word "decimal".

Example: 121.5 becomes one two one decimal five

Monetary denominations, when transmitted with groups of digits, should be transmitted in the sequence in which they are written.

Examples:

> $17.25 becomes.......... dollars one seven decimal two five

> .75 becomes................ seven five cents

Use of 24 Hour Clock

All times used in dispatching and in writing reports will be given in military time. This is also referred to as the *twenty-four hour clock system*. Public safety communicators commonly use the 24-hour-clock for dispatching and writing reports. This minimizes errors in reporting, and removes the need to add "a.m." or "p.m." after the time.

Midnight is both the starting and ending point on a twenty-four hour clock.. Time measurements are displayed as four digit numbers. Midnight is referred to as 2400 (twenty four hundred hours), but one minute after is 0001 hours (zero, zero, zero, one hours). The two rightmost digits register *minutes* (00 to 59), while the two leftmost digits register *hours* (00 to 24). For example, 3:15 a.m. is 0315 hours (pronounced "zero three fifteen"), 2 p.m. is 1400 hours (pronounced "fourteen hundred hours"), and 7:25 p.m. is 1925 hours (pronounced "nineteen twenty five hours").

Like the phonetic alphabet, military time is used for consistency and to minimize errors during radio transmissions and in written reports. In order to become an efficient call taker, you must be thoroughly familiar with this system of time keeping and learn to think about the passage of time in terms of a twenty-four hour cycle rather than a twelve hour one.

The quickest and easiest way to learn this system is to set your watch to military time and use it every day.

The following is a list of military times, including a few examples using minutes:

Standard Time	Military Time	
1:00 a.m.	0100 hours	*(zero one hundred hours)*
1:20 a.m.	0120 hours	*(zero one two zero hours)*
2:00 a.m.	0200 hours	*(zero two hundred hours)*
3:00 a.m.	0300 hours	*(zero three hundred hours)*
4:00 a.m.	0400 hours	*(zero four hundred hours)*
5:00 a.m.	0500 hours	*(zero five hundred hours)*
6:00 a.m.	0600 hours	*(zero six hundred hours)*
6:15 a.m.	0615 hours	*(zero six one five hours)*
7:00 a.m.	0700 hours	*(zero seven hundred hours)*
8:00 a.m.	0800 hours	*(zero eight hundred hours)*
9:00 a.m.	0900 hours	*(zero nine hundred hours)*
10:00 a.m.	1000 hours	*(ten hundred hours)*
11:00 a.m.	1100 hours	*(eleven hundred hours)*
12:00 p.m.	1200 hours	*(twelve hundred hours)*
1:00 p.m.	1300 hours	*(thirteen hundred hours)*
1:45 p.m.	1345 hours	*(thirteen forty five hours)*
2:00 p.m.	1400 hours	*(fourteen hundred hours)*
3:00 p.m.	1500 hours	*(fifteen hundred hours)*
4:00 p.m.	1600 hours	*(sixteen hundred hours)*
5:00 p.m.	1700 hours	*(seventeen hundred hours)*
6:00 p.m.	1800 hours	*(eighteen hundred hours)*
6:30 p.m.	1830 hours	*(eighteen thirty hours)*
7:00 p.m.	1900 hours	*(nineteen hundred hours)*
8:00 p.m.	2000 hours	*(twenty hundred hours)*
9:00 p.m.	2100 hours	*twenty-one hundred hours)*
10:00 p.m.	2200 hours	*(twenty-two hundred hours)*
11:00 p.m.	2300 hours	*(twenty-three hundred hours)*
12:00 midnight	2400 hours	*(twenty-four hundred hours)*
12:01 a.m.	0001 hours	*(zero, zero, zero, one hours)*

Calendar Dates

Three calendar date formats are used in automated systems and in report writing. The most common format is year, month, day (YYMMDD). December 14th 1998 would be written as follows: 981214. The second system is month, day, year (MMDDYY). December 14th 1998 would be written as: 121498. These numeric systems use two digits to represent the year, the month and the day. The last two digits of a year ("19*79*") are used in this system. For example, "00" would indicate the year 2000, unless it was a date of birth. It is always wise to check what format the person is referring to. You can tell the day and the month apart if the number for the day is 13 or higher: 99-12-21 is self-explanatory. But what about 02-03-04? The situation may be harder to decipher for dates in the first thirty-one years of the twenty-first century.

APPENDIX II
GLOSSARY OF TERMS
FOR POLICE COMMUNICATIONS

1 AWAY .... Unit is one block away from call/incident

1 FOR COVER .... One vehicle between police car and followed vehicle (surveillance)

214.................................. 24-hour roadside suspension

29................................... Warrant check

29/CNI............................ Warrant/criminal record check

9-1-1 .... North American emergency number

A...................................... Armed and dangerous (caution flag)

ABAN 9-1-1..................... A hang-up/abandoned 9-1-1 call

ACCI............................... Accident investigation squad (pronounced A-K-I)

ACD .... Automatic call distribution

ACUPIES .... Automated Canada/USA Police Information Exchange System (CPIC)

ADD................................ CPIC entry

ADMIN .... Administration, administrative

AFFIRMATIVE.............. Yes, okay

AKA .... also known as (alias)

ALI.................................. Automatic location identification 9-1-1.

ALTERNATE ROUTE.... Re-route CPIC to another station

ANI .... Automatic number identification 9-1-1.

ANI/ALI.......................... Automatic number identification/automatic location identification

AOD................................ Absent on duty

AOI .... Address of importance/interest

AOL .... Absent on leave

APB................................. All points bulletin

APCO.............................. Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials

AR .... Armed robbery

ARTICLES .... Items for CPIC entry, such as tools, radios, and so on.

ASD................................. Alcohol screening device

ASSIST GP .... Assisting the general public

ASSOCIATED................. CPIC word, associated with

ATTN .... Attention

AUDIBLE........................ Audible alarm

AUTH .... Message sent on the authority of

AWOL............................. Absent without leave

B&E .... Break and enter

BCDL.............................. British Columbia driver's license

BCL................................. British Columbia license (license plate)

BE & T............................ Break, enter & theft

BEAM .... Radar gun

BOLO/BOLF .... Be on lookout/be on lookout for

BR .... Branch

BTA................................. Breathalyzer testing analysis or breathalyzer technician analyst

BTA OPERATOR .... BTA machine operator

C...................................... Contagious (caution flag)

C & E .... Customs and excise

C/M .... Civilian member

CAD .... Computer aided dispatch

CALL CONTROL .... Feature that allows the E-9-1-1 Call taker to maintain physical
control of call regardless of the caller's actions

CANCEL.......................... Cancellation

CB .... Citizens band (radio)

CCB................................. Commercial crime branch

CCC................................. Canadian criminal code

CCS................................. Commercial crime section

CCTV.............................. Closed circuit television

CCU .... Crowd-control unit

CD .... Chief dispatcher

CH .... Concluded here

CHGD .... Charged for a crime (CPIC term)

CIB .... Criminal investigation branch

CID .... Criminal investigation division

CIIDS .... Computerized integrated information dispatch system

CIS .... Criminal index section, or criminal investigation section

CLEC .... Competitive Local Exchange Carrier

CLEU .... Coordinated law-enforcement unit

CM .... Civilian member of RCMP

CNI .... Criminal name index, or criminal number identification

COFT .... Communication operator field training

COM .... Complainant

COMM/OP .... Communications operator

COMMS .... Communications division

CPIC .... Canadian Police Information Centre

CPL .... Corporal

CPO .... Crime prevention office/officer

CPSIC .... Canadian Police Services Information Centre

CRT .... Cathode-ray tube

CRT .... Court

CRTC .... Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission

CSIS .... Canadian Security Intelligence Service

CST .... Constable

D & D .... Dine and dash

D/L .... Driver's license

DEA .... Drug Enforcement Agency (USA)

DECAL .... Tag/valtag on vehicle

DET	Detachment or detective
DET	RCMP detachment
DETACH	Detachment
DETOX	Detoxification centre
DHQ	District headquarters
DICTAPHONE	Tape recorder
DIPP	Drunk in public place
DIR	Director
DIR	Directorate
DISP	Dispatcher
DIST	District
DIV	Division
DL HISTORY	Driver's license history
DLN	Driver's license/driver's license number
DMV	Department of Motor Vehicles (USA)
DND	Department of National Defence
DOA	Dead on arrival
DOB	Date of birth
DOC	Department of Communications
DOGMM	Police dog handler
DOH	Department of Highways
DOJ	Department of Justice
DOMESTIC	Domestic violence
DOT	Direction of travel
DUI	Driving under the influence
DWI	Driving while impaired
E	Escapee (caution flag)
E & R	Eat and run
E 9-1-1	Enhanced 9-1-1
EHS	Emergency health services (ambulance)
EMS	Emergency medical service

EMT .... Emergency medical technician

ERA .... Emergency response agency

ERT .... Emergency response team

ESCAPE LAWFUL
CUSTODY .... Person who has escaped while in custody

ESZ .... Emergency service zone

ETA .... Estimated time of arrival

ETNS .... Emergency telephone number system

F .... Family violence

F .... Female

FAC .... Firearms acquisition certificate

FAMILY TROUBLE .... Domestic dispute

FATAL MVA .... Motor vehicle accident with a deceased person

FBA .... False by attendance

FBI .... Federal Bureau of Investigation

FIS .... Forensic identification section

FLOATER .... Body in water

FM .... Frequency modulation or from

FP .... Freeway patrol

FPC .... Fingerprint classification

FPS .... Fingerprint section

FPS .... Fingerprint series

FT .... Field trainer

FTA .... Failure to appear

FTR .... Failure to remain or failure to report

GB .... General broadcast

GCU .... Gang-crime unit

GD .... General duty

GHQ .... General headquarters

GIS .... General investigation section

GITS III .... Generic intelligent terminal system (CPIC terminal)

GIVEN 1,2,3 .... First, second & third names of persons

GOA .... Gone on arrival

GRC .... Gendarmerie royale du Canada (French for RCMP)

GRS .... General radio service

H&R .... Hit and run

HARDLINE .... Wired in telephone (non cellular)

HC .... Hit confirmation (CPIC)

HEAT CHECK .... Suspect is looking to see if he is being watched or followed

HIN .... Hull identification number (boat)

HOLD SIPP .... Hold – state of intoxication in a public place (drunk)

HOOK .... Tow truck (slang)

HP .... Highway patrol

HP(I) .... Hold pending (investigation)

HQ .... Headquarters

IC .... Integrated circuit

ID .... Identification

IDENT .... Identification section

IED .... Identification explosive device member (bomb squad)

IHL .... Incident history listing

IIM .... Individualized instruction method courses (training)

ILEC .... Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier

IMM & PASS (I&P) .... Immigration and passport

INFO .... Information

INSP .... Inspector

INT .... International

INTERPOL .... International police

INVOLVED .... PC involved in MVA (as in "1A12, we're involved at Third & Blundell")

J3 .... Prisoner (slang)

JAWS .... Equipment used to free trapped people

JFO .... Joint forces operations

JI .... Justice Institute (B.C.)

JP .... Justice of the Peace

JUMPER .... Suicidal person (that is, a subject who is preparing to
jump to
his/her death or who has done so)

JUV .... Juvenile

JV .... Juvenile

KENNELS .... Police dog kennels

KEYHOLDER .... Owner of business, or emergency contact person

KHZ .... Kilohertz

KING AIR .... RCMP fixed-wing aircraft

LANDLINE .... Telephone call

LES-TO .... Law enforcement support – telecommunication officer
(RCMP)

LIC .... License number

LIEU STAT .... Day off in lieu of a statutory holiday

LIQUOR SEIZURE .... Liquor seized by police

LKA .... Last known address

LMD .... Lower mainland division

LNU .... Last name unknown

LOCATE .... CPIC transaction to locate

LP .... License plate

LP CHECK .... Licensed premise check (bar walk)

LS .... Day off in lieu of a statutory holiday

LTO .... Lieu time off (banked hours)

M .... Male

M .... Mentally unstable (caution flag)

M/V .... Motor vessel

MARK .... CPIC word for marks, scars, tattoos

MBR/MEMBER .... Any member of the RCMP

MCS .... Major crime section

MDT................................ Mobile data terminal

MHA .... Mental Health Act

MHZ................................. Megahertz

MICROSTAT .... Vehicle/member status computer

MOCOM .... Mobile communications vehicle

MOT................................ Ministry of Transport

MOTH............................. Ministry of Transportation & Highways

MP.................................. Military police

MRDS .... Mobile radio data system

MSS................................ Ministry of Social Services

MUN .... Municipal

MVA .... Motor vehicle accident

MVB .... Motor Vehicle Branch

MVC .... Motor vehicle collision

MVI................................. Motor vehicle incident

MVI................................. Motor vehicle incident (same as MVA)

NATB.............................. National Auto Theft Bureau

NCA (3.1) .... Narcotics possession

NCIC............................... National Crime Information Centre

NCIS .... National Crime Intelligence Service

NCO .... Non-commissioned officer

NEG/NEGATIVE............ No, none

NENA .... National Emergency Number Association

NFA................................. No fixed address, or no further action

NICAD............................ Nickel cadmium battery

NIP .... Narcotic in possession

NOK................................ Next of kin

NT .... Narrative traffic

OBS................................. Observation

OCC .... Operational communication centre

ODN............................... Operator drivers license (DL)

OIC	Officer in charge
OP	Overpass
OPS	Operations
ORI	Originating agency identifier
OSR	Operational statistics reporting
OTA	On the air (monitoring the radio)
PARIS	Police automated registration information system
PART NO	Part number from an engine
PBAX	Private business automated exchange
PBX	Private business exchange
PC	Police car/police constable
PC MVA	Police car motor vehicle accident
PD	Police department
PD MVA	Property damage motor vehicle accident
PDS	Police dog service
PED MVA	Pedestrian motor vehicle accident
PEP	Provincial emergency program
PIC	Police information counter
PIN #	Personal ID number or police identification number
PIRS	Police information retrieval system
PNTRP	Pointer person
PNTRV	Pointer vehicle
POCC	Provincial operational communication centre
PODN	Principal operator driver's license
POE	Point of entry
POI	Province of issue
POSSIBLE	Possible suspect or possible suspect vehicle
PR	Property reference
PROHIB	CPIC term for prohibited (driving/weapons)
PS	Police service (PD)
PS	Public servant

PSAP	Primary / Public safety answering point
PSD	Police service dog
PSP	Possession of stolen property
PTA	Promise to appear
PW	Policewoman
Q	Qualified (caution flag)
R	Residence
R/M	Regular member – peace officer (RCMP)
RCC	Regional communications centre, or regional correctional centre, or report to Crown Counsel
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RDE	Regional District employee
REG #	Regimental number
REPO	Repossession of property
RES	Residence
RO	Registered owner
ROUTINE	No lights/no sirens
RSD	Roadside screening device
RTO	Regular time off, or return(ing) to office
RTS	Return(ing) to service
RUN	Check [as in, "Can you *run* a plate (on the computer)?]
RUNNER	Property reference, or person who is an escape risk
S	Suicidal (caution flag)
S/SGT	Staff sergeant
SAG	Street address guide
SAR	Search and rescue
SD	Sudden death
SEARCH	Search on-line off-line in CPIC data banks (CPIC term)
SEC 24	Person who is mentally ill (caution flag)
SECURITIES	money, bonds, stocks (CPIC term)
SER	Serial number

SERVICING .... Filling up with gas

SETTING UP .... Refers to a radar trap

SGT .... Sergeant

SIERRA .... Suicide (medical)

SIP .... Subject of importance, special interest to police

SLIM JIM .... Tool used to open locked vehicle doors

SLO .... School liaison officer

SNME .... Surname

SOG .... Standard operating guidelines

SOP .... Standard operating procedure

SPILLSBURY .... Call check recorder

SR .... Selective routing of 9-1-1 calls based on location

SSAP .... Secondary safety answering point

SUB/DIV .... Subdivision

SUI .... Still under investigation

SUPT .... Superintendent

SUS .... Suspect

SUSP .... Suspect

SWAT .... Special Weapons and Tactics (USA)

TA .... Transactional analysis

TACT TROOP .... Tactical troop used for riots

TAG .... Threat assessment group (major events)

TAG .... Valtag/decal on vehicle license plate

TBW .... Traffic bench warrant

TCE .... Temporary civilian employee

TCH .... Trans-Canada Highway

TDD .... Telecommunication Device for the Deaf

TO2 .... RCMP telecom operator level 2

TO3 .... RCMP telecom operator level 3 (shift supervisor or com centre supervisor)

TO4 .... RCMP telecom operator level 4 (com centre supervisor)

TOP .... Temporary operating permit

TOW .... Tow truck

TRANNY .... Transvestite

TRF .... Traffic

TRS .... Telecommunications relay service

TTY .... Teletypewriter for the deaf

U/F .... Unknown female

U/K .... Unknown

U/M .... Unknown male

UAL .... Unlawfully at large

UFN .... Until further notice

UNMARKED .... Police vehicle with no markings

V .... Violent (caution flag)

VALTAG .... Decal/tag on vehicle license plate

VCB .... (Surveillance) visual contact broken

VDT .... Video display terminal

VEH .... Vehicle

VIC .... Victim

VICAP .... Violent Criminal Apprehension Program

VICLAS .... Violent crime linkage analysis system

VIN .... Vehicle identification number

VIP .... Very important person (security)

VSA .... Vital signs absent

WAGON .... Paddy wagon

WALK THROUGH .... Spot check, usually of a bar

WANTS .... Warrants on person

WARRANT .... Written document requesting the arrest of someone

WATCH NCO .... Watch commander of shift

WIT .... Witness

WRECKER .... Tow truck

YDC .... Youth detention centre

Appendix III Employability Skills Profile

The Critical Skills Required of the Canadian Work Force

Personal Management Skills

The combination of skills, attitudes and behaviours required to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results.

Canadian employers need a person who can demonstrate:

Positive Attitudes and Behaviours

- self-esteem and confidence
- honesty, integrity and personal ethics
- a positive attitude toward learning, growth and personal health
- initiative, energy and persistence to get the job done

Responsibility

- the ability to set goals and priorities in work and personal life
- the ability to plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals
- accountability for actions taken

Adaptability

- a positive attitude toward change
- recognition of and respect for people's diversity and individual differences
- the ability to identify and suggest new ideas to get

Teamwork Skills

- Those skills needed to work with others on a job and to achieve the best results.

Canadian employers need a person who can:

Work with Others

- understand and contribute to the organization's goals
- understand and work within the culture of the group
- plan and make decisions with others and support the outcomes
- respect the thoughts and opinions of others in the group
- exercise "give and take" to achieve group results
- seek a team approach as appropriate
- lead when appropriate, mobilizing the group for high performance

In consultation with today's employers, the Conference Board of Canada has developed this profile. It can help Canadians identify the skills they have and those they need to find and keep a job in today's competitive workplace.

Reprinted with the permission of the Conference Board of Canada.

Academic Skills

- Those skills which provide the basic foundation to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results.

Canadian employers need a person who can:

Communicate

- understand and speak the languages in which business is conducted
- listen to, understand and learn
- read, comprehend and use written materials, including graphs, charts and displays
- write effectively in the languages in which business is conducted.

Think

- think critically and act logically to evaluate situations, solve problems and make decisions
- understand and solve problems involving mathematics and use the results
- use technology, instruments, tools and information systems effectively
- access and apply specialized knowledge from various fields (e.g., skilled trades, technology, physical sciences, arts and social sciences).

Learn

- continue to learn for life