Fall 2016

Call Taking & Radio Dispatching Basics Trainer Guide

Natalie (Tally) Wade
Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Alice Macpherson
Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Answering the Call

Call Taking & Radio Dispatching Basics
Trainer Guide

KPU

Table of Contents

Foreword

The purpose of the guide is to support trainers in enabling learners to effectively assimilate and apply the accompanying material to a level acceptable to the industry. This guide is intended for the trainer who has experience and skill in conducting group learning and who is a current content expert in the subject matter. An understanding of the information as well as the process of implementing the content is fundamental to using this guide.

How to Use this Guide

Lessons are laid out in such a way that they may be changed and adapted to suit the participant group. The *Instructional Strategies* section gives suggested time frames for each activity. However these times will vary, depending on the skill level, experiences, size, and composition of the group. A commitment to lifelong learning and change is important because of the fluid nature of information and knowledge.

Facilitation Principles

A number of principles should be considered throughout the delivery of this material.

Continued Planning and Preparation

Planning and preparation are an essential part of instruction. The time required to plan and prepare should not be underestimated, particularly the time it takes for the material to be delivered. A trainer may choose to research and prepare other materials as a supplement to the course design and content.

Equal Importance of Content and Process

Content and process are equally important. The Trainer should attend to group and team dynamics, issues arising, and individual needs that may require attention. The learning activities are based on a suggested agenda, so a trainer may adapt the agenda according to participants' needs. Participants need to feel they have been heard when they express issues of concern to them. Concurrently, the group and Trainer need to modify their expectations or requirements as appropriate to the level of understanding and interaction of the group.

Balance within the Process

Attention to the process also means attention to the participants who dominate the group, and others who remain silent. The trainer should strive for balance in the level of participation among learners, encouraging quieter members to speak and politely telling more dominant members to give everyone a chance to speak. One technique that helps to achieve this balance is to ask various people to report back from small group and team activities.

Encourage Participation

Experiential learning is one of the foundations of adult education. It has proven to be a more effective method of mastering content than hearing a lecture, seeing a demonstration, or participating in a discussion. It is suggested that there be a balance of small group and team activities, triads, pairs, and whole group work. Trainers should note that there will be times when a short lecture is necessary. Simulations through lab work are built into the curriculum.

Acknowledge Prior Learning

Participants come to the course with different knowledge, skills and needs. This should be acknowledged at the outset. The learning activities should facilitate ways for group members to learn from each other, as well as to learn from the Trainer and the content. A good process rule is to move participants around so they work in small groups with different people. Mixing participants is also a good strategy for breaking up groups that may be too vocal or quiet.

Flexible Times

Flexibility is important. The Trainer must be flexible in adapting time frames and content to the needs of the group. An activity that is given a suggested time frame of 30 minutes may take over an hour if the group finds the subject thought-provoking enough to discuss in more depth. The Trainer must make some choices about time and adjust the agenda as necessary. At times the Trainer should consult with the group in deciding how to proceed.

Make Time for Issues

There will be occasions when the group identifies a question or content area that seems important enough to address, explore or research in more detail. When this occurs, the Trainer must try to address this need. One strategy is to gain cooperation and agreement from the group that this information is a priority; another strategy is to identify this as an issue and agree to return at a later time. Another strategy is to identify the issue as significant and agree to return to it at a later time.

Trainer Responsibility

The trainer must however, maintain a certain degree of control in managing and guiding the group so that the learning outcomes are achieved. This means balancing the individual needs of group members with the overall structure and content of the curriculum and the overall needs of the group.

Student Guide

There is a Student Guide that is required by the participants for this course. It contains up to date materials as they are currently available and which will assist the participants in meeting the learning outcomes. Other materials may be added by the Trainer to further enhance the course.

Introduction to Call Taking Basics

Activity – Icebreaker – Three Part, Four Step Interview

Organizer: Since we will be working together we need to get to know each other.

Objective: Interview each other and prepare an introduction of a person whose interview you observed.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: personal experience, flip chart, coloured pens

Process: In groups of three:

- Interview one person in the triad.
- Be interviewed by another person.
- Observe an interview.
- Prepare to introduce the person that you did not interview (your observation).

Group Success: Everyone in the group has participated.

Accountability: Introduce one other person to the rest of the large group.

Debrief: What did you learn about interviewing?

Course Goals

Distribute course materials and course presentation.

The course goals are:

- Call Taker Characteristics
- Call Taker Roles And Duties
- Call Taker Characteristics
- Communication Skills Skills For Call Takers
- Elements Of The Communication Model
- Ethnically/Culturally Sensitive Attitudes And Values
- Respectful Interaction
- Active Listening Skills
- Teamwork Skills
- Framework For Working Together
- Chapter 6 Cooperative Teams
- Receiving And Giving Feedback
- Call Processing
- Effective Information Gathering Techniques
- Basic Call Assessment Model

- Call Assessment Model
- Techniques For Minimizing Errors
- Practical Techniques To Minimize Errors
- Call Processing Techniques – Preparing Reports
- Canadian Radio Communications Regulations
- Radio Communication Protocol And Speech Techniques
- Radio Communication Model
- Professional And Proficient Radio Communications
- Radio Code Systems
- Alphabetic Letters And Numerals
- I.T.U. Phonetic Alphabet
- Transmission Of Numbers
- Use Of 24 Hour Clock
- Radio Communication Words And Phrases
- Plain Language/Clear Text
- Radio Dispatching Methods
- Describe The Person
- Vehicle Information

General Housekeeping

Ensure that everyone knows:

where the emergency exits are

washrooms locations

break procedures

other appropriate information

a short break might be taken at this time.

Duties of a Call Taker

Activity – Differentiate Duties Known

Organizer: To thoroughly learn material it is necessary to identify what you know and what you don't know.

Objective: Prepare a table and differentiate call taker duties that you are familiar with.

Time: 25 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: table and information, Monitor and support participation and the exchange of ideas.

Process: In pairs:

- Use the following table, fill in the information about which elements are known or unknown from the text material and personal experience.

	KNOW ABOUT	**DON'T KNOW**	**NOT SURE**
Use Appropriate Phone Manner			
Obtain Critical Information			
Pass Information to Dispatcher			
Allocate Resources			
Support Dispatcher / Field Units			

Accountability: Share the information with the whole group.

Debrief: How does clarifying what you already know help to clarify the course goals?

Basics of Call Processing

Call Taker Characteristics

Callers to any agency will not always be pleasant and cheerful, and some may be emotional or angry when they call. The following characteristics will help call takers to deal effectively with a variety of callers.

Activity – Brainstorm

Organizer: There are a number of characteristics that a call taker needs to be effective.

Objective: Identify qualities or characteristics that are important for an effective call taker.

Time: 10 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: flipchart, felt pens, Augment ideas to ensure comprehensive list.

Process: Using whole group participation:

- Brainstorm the various characteristics that typify a good call taker. This is an all ideas are welcome, no analysis session.

On a flip chart, allow space for five different sections. Record the suggestions made by the learners, placing the suggestions that relate to the following four headings in four sections of the flip chart, and recording other suggestions in the centre.
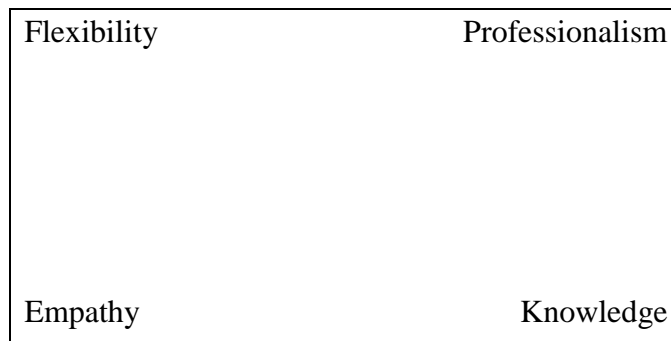
Flexibility	Professionalism
Empathy	Knowledge

- Use those examples and documented information to expand on ideas.

Accountability: Identify how characteristics identified fit into the categories given by the Trainer.

Debrief: What elements of information have you added?

Flexibility Required of Call Takers

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

Call takers must also be able to suspend their own reaction to a previous emotional call in order to handle the next incoming call. They must do this without showing signs of the previous turmoil. Every caller is worthy of the same high level of professionalism and courtesy, and should be left with the impression that their call is as important to you as it is to them.

The call taker's job is multi-tasked, and runs the gamut from the basic to the very complex. The workload will vary greatly in volume and intensity. The work environment provides its own internal stresses and challenges as call takers deal with the different personalities of their co-workers. Flexibility is a critical ability that enables the call taker to be an effective support in any situation and in any environment.

Professionalism in Call Taking

Professionalism is a standard of conduct within your industry. You must maintain a standard that is equal to other groups within the system of which you are a part. You the call taker are responsible for ensuring that the caller's initial contact with your agency is a professional and positive one, and that the caller gets a good first impression of the service they are contacting. The caller will judge your agency on the basis of his or her experience with you, the call taker. Your professional conduct should reassure callers that their problems, whatever their nature, will be given full attention. Conversely, if callers perceive that you have treated them unprofessionally in any way, they may assume the entire organization to be equally unprofessional.

Some callers may be confused and looking for direction and reassurance that they are calling the right place. How you represent your agency may affect the caller's sense of how accessible your services are. Your professional phone manner will assure them that you are prepared to help them, and will enable you to get the information you require to do that.

Activity – Discussion

Organizer: A caller may have witnessed something that could be vital in court at a later date. How well you cooperate with the caller may thus be very important. Think of the influence and power that you have as a call taker.

Objective: Discuss examples of positive and negative exchanges between a caller and a call taker.

Time: 15 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: Monitor and support participation and the exchange of ideas.

Process: In groups of three or four:

- Identify positive and negative exchanges that could occur between a caller and a call taker.
- Develop responses that might change a negative into a positive and a rationale for those responses.

Accountability: Share possible positive and negative responses and your rationale.

Debrief: How easy is it for you to be positive?

Empathy in Call Taking

Empathy is the ability to understand the feelings of another person as one's own. It is being aware of and sensitive to the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of others. For a call taker, empathy is the ability to understand the caller's situation at that moment, and is the first link in connecting with the caller and the caller's emotions. Callers' situations and emotional states will vary widely.

Most callers have initiated contact to seek help or information, but may be confused about the service they require or the information they need to provide. They want information and help, but may not know the process they must follow to get it. You, the call taker, are expected to provide the answers they are seeking.

Empathy is a vital link in establishing a line of communication with the caller to facilitate obtaining the information required to render assistance. Empathy gives you 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 offer information or service. Once you begin to understand the reason for the call, you can identify the reason behind it and seek a solution for the caller.

Knowledgeable

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

The equipment used by most call takers includes the telephone, headset, computer terminal, and other related 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 delay when you need to do something fast. Know how to transfer calls, how to conference them, how to use speakerphones, 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 product knowledge of the services your agency provides. The professional call taker never makes assumptions. As a call taker, you must have information that is current and correct and must be able to apply it correctly to the situation at hand. The call taker must be able to answer questions with factual information, and to direct callers to the appropriate departments or resources. Respond to questions you are qualified to answer within the scope of your duties, and pass others on 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 them 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 either a manual or fully automated system. To be an effective call taker, you must be an effective communicator!

Review Characteristics – Flexibility, empathy, professionalism, knowledge.

Activity – Classroom Research

Organizer: The Trainer needs to know what the learner has understood from the lesson.

Objective: Answer a question about effective call taking characteristics.

Time: 5 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: 3 x 5 cards

Process: Individually on 3 x 5 cards write down (pick one):

- The most important point.
- The most obscure point.
- One question that remains.

Accountability: Hand the card to the Trainer before you leave.

Debrief: Next session, go over the main points and fill in missing elements.

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 that 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.

Activity – Define Terms for a Team Framework

Organizer: The terms and concepts of teams build a frame for the team to work in.

Objective: Identify personal definitions for teamwork terms.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: Chart and personal experience. Monitor and support participation and the exchange of ideas.

Process: In pairs:

- Using the following table, composes a short definition of the terms.

Terms	Definition
Core Values	
Mandate	
Mission Statement	
Shared Vision	
Appropriate Goals	

Accountability: Sharing the information and linking with the whole group.

Debrief: In what ways did linking information to the model clarify the material?

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). Educational Institutions 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.

Activity – Think-Pair-Share

Organizer: How is effective teamwork useful and necessary to group projects?

Objective: Share information on and feelings about the relative effectiveness of groups you have been in. Discuss.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: Personal experience in teams and teamwork. Monitor and encourage participation.

Process: Individually:

- Think about groups you have been a part of.
- Pair up and discuss the relative effectiveness of groups you have been in.
- Identify elements that helped or hindered the groups' functioning.

Accountability: Share the information about your findings to the whole group.

Debrief: Identify how discussing the situation added to how well you could identify your feelings about the situation.

Definitions

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.

Activity – Think-Pair-Share

Organizer: Some teams work and some don't. What's the difference?

Objective: Share information on and feelings about how well teams you have been a part of worked or did not function.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: Personal experiences. Monitor and encourage participation.

Process: In pairs:

- Give examples of how teams you have been a part of have or have not worked.
- Speculate why.
- Identify elements that fit into the roles and duties of call takers.

Accountability: Share the information and personal feelings about the working elements of teams with others.

Debrief: Identify how sharing information added to how well you see where this material fits into call taking.

Team Communication

Activity – Develop Group Communication Guidelines

Organizer: To work together effectively, we need to communicate effectively.

Objective: Create a list of guidelines for effective communications in your current groups.

Time: 30 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: Flipchart, coloured pens. Monitor and encourage participation.

Process: In small groups:

- Discuss the question

"How do you want to receive information from team members?"

- Identify phrases, tone of voice, intent and methods they would like others to use in communications.
- Each group gives one guideline that the Trainer then transcribes onto a flipchart. Repeat until all ideas are captured.
- Clarification of phrases or values is done at this time.

Accountability: Share your small group list with the whole group to create a framework for communications that everyone can use.

Debrief: What were the differences that arose over using some phrases or concepts? How did you resolve them?

Follow-up: Revisit these guidelines at a later date to discuss if they have been useful or if the meanings have changed. This accountability element of the communication guideline development is the most vital part because it allows each member of the team to be involved with the process of creating shared meanings. It is important to complete the exercise by defining clearly what is meant by each of the suggested guidelines. *Confidentiality* may mean different things to different people. *Honesty with each other* may range from *nice* to *brutal,* depending on the individual. The *right to give information or not* may be vital to building a feeling of safety into the group.

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.

Base Groups

- Base Groups are heterogeneous in membership so that they represent a cross-section of the group population in terms of gender, ability, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- They last as long as the course does (a semester or year) and preferably even longer (such as from the freshman through the senior year in the case of learners). When a person knows that the cooperative base group will stay together until each member is finished, they become committed to finding ways to motivate and encourage their group mates. Problems in working with each other cannot be ignored or waited out.
- They meet and connect regularly through a variety of means.
- They personalize the work required and the learning experiences.

Base groups serve two purposes for members:

- To provide each other with the support, encouragement, and assistance needed to complete assignments and make good progress with tasks. This includes letting absent group members know what went on in the larger group and interacting informally, discussing with and helping each other.
- To hold each other accountable for striving to make progress.

In other words, base groups are long-term, heterogeneous cooperative learning groups with a stable membership. Their primary responsibilities are to provide support, encouragement, and assistance to their members, so that everyone can complete tasks effectively. Group members hold each other accountable for striving to learn.

There are several key ingredients in using base groups effectively. First, instead of assigning people to base groups on the first day of the larger group meeting, wait for a few days until you get to know the participants somewhat and the group membership has stabilized. Second, schedule frequent meetings of base groups. Third, plan an agenda for each meeting. Agendas for base groups can include:

- Support tasks, such as checking to see what assignments each member has and what help he or she needs to complete them. Members can give each other advice on how to meet personal goals and deal with problem areas. Members can share their areas of expertise with each other. Above all, members monitor each other's progress and make sure all members are achieving.
- Routine tasks, such as sharing perspectives and distributing materials.
- Personal support tasks, such as: listening when a member has difficulties with family or friends; having general discussions about life; giving each other advice about relationships and interactions; and helping each other solve problems about work and life.

Questions about assignments and information in larger group sessions may first be addressed in the base group. Base groups are intended to provide support to their individual members. If at some point members arrive late or leave early, the group can inform them about what they have missed and collect materials on their behalf.

Activity – Form Base Groups

Organizer: To do your best, you need support.

Objective: Form supportive base groups.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: Trainer-set groups, folders, pens. Monitor and encourage participation.

Process: In groups of three or four:

- Identify something they have in common.
- Choose an identifying symbol or name.
- Share how you can be contacted with your group.

Accountability: Produce a base group folder that can be used by the Trainer and the group.

Debrief: How does the support of others assist your learning?

There are probably as many styles of communicating and working together as there are people. As a consequence, it is important to take the time to get to know your group members. Negotiate how you would best like to transmit and receive information as you proceed.

Teambuilding

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.

Activity – Constructive Communication Strategies

Organizer: Constructive communication helps to get the job done.

Objective: Identify and give the context for constructive communication strategies

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: Information and personal experiences. Monitor and encourage participation.

Process: In base groups:

- Discuss and give examples of ways to encourage constructive communication.
- Experiment with positive communication methods and their effectiveness in the individual groups.

Accountability: Share effective communication strategies with the whole group.

Debrief: Identify how constructive communication assists in completing tasks.

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.

Activity – Trust Building

Organizer: Trust or lack of it affects how groups perform.

Objective: Identify ways to build trust in group and team situations.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: Information and personal experiences. Monitor and encourage participation.

Process: In the whole group:

- Identify trust as an element of communication by exploring trust-building skills and their application.
- Identify strategies to build trust.

Accountability: In base groups complete a group grid using suitable topic headings. (Topics should be related to activities or concepts that can be shared safely. As trust grows within the groups, the topics may become more controversial.)

Debrief: Explain to your base group members how the communication in your group helped each individual to participate.

Assignment

Read the material on Shared Leadership starting on page 23 of the text.

GROUP GRID

Base Group _____

	date	date	date	date
Individual Name	**Topic 1**	**Topic 2**	**Topic 3**	**Topic 4**

Call Taking Communication Skills – I

Communication Skills for Call Takers

The public expects call takers to be professional, empathetic, understanding, and prompt with results.

Effective call takers are quick, have a short recovery time between calls, have excellent listening skills, and are able to multi-task and process information on many levels at a time. They are also assertive, well-balanced (including having a good balance between home and work), they are knowledgeable, and possess common sense/instinct.

Activity – Teamwork and Communication

Organizer: The more prepared you are the faster and more effective you will be.

Objective: Demonstrate how practise, teamwork, clear expectations improve speed/effectiveness in communication

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: Stopwatch. Monitor and encourage participation.

Process: All participants:

1. Stand up and hold hands to form a circle.
2. Pass a "message" – hand squeeze received from the student on their left to the student on their right – until one complete "message" wave has traveled around the circle starting with the word "Go!"
3. On the word "Go!" the facilitator clicks the stopwatch and squeezes hand to their right, who in turn squeezes the hand to their right.
4. Facilitator transfers stopwatch to their right hand in preparation to receive "squeeze" from the participant on their left.
5. The time for one complete "message" wave is announced to group.
6. Repeat three or four times, noting the time it took to complete after each "message"

Accountability: Everyone takes part.

Debrief: Discuss the idea that tactile to tactile communication involves same process as speech to speech to tactile, etc. Why are speed and effectiveness important in Communications?

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:

<div align="center">

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.

</div>

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.

Activity – Verbal vs Non-Verbal Messages

In front of the class, two class members sit back to back. One member is a call-taker and the other is a caller. The caller is facing the class and the call taker is facing the front of the class. The caller is talking about "her friend" who is physically abused. She sounds all together. Yet she squirms and shuffles in her seat and every so often the pitch of her voice changes. The task is for the call taker to assess if she has a problem or is just calling to get information for "her friend".

Debrief: Compare the verbal vs non-verbal messages of the call.

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.

Call Taking Communication Skills – II

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 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 situation. 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

Activity – Paraphrasing

Organizer: Paraphrasing helps the assure others that they are being heard and ensures that what is heard is understood.

Objective: Practise accurate paraphrasing.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: personal experience

Process: Form triads:

Speaker

- Tell the listener where you went on your summer (or last) vacation.
- Spend four minutes communicating your thoughts and feelings about the experience.

Listener

- Spend four minutes actively listening to your partner.
- Use only paraphrasing.
- Add no new content.
- No questions, no advice, no opinions!

Observer

- Focus on paraphrasing skills of listener.
- Debrief your observations for three minutes.
- Sandwich your feedback (positive, negative, positive).

Rotate positions so that everyone does every role.

Accountability: Everyone participates.

Debrief: How accurate were you? What was easy? What was difficult? What helped?

Assignment

Read the material on Encouraging Communication and Building Trust starting on page 21 of the text.

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.

Activity – Identify Feelings

Organizer: We all have feelings, and our feelings affect how we communicate.

Objective: Identify ways to express feelings clearly.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Activity: Identify Feelings worksheet

Process: In groups,

- Clearly identify the apparent real statements in the statements on the worksheet.
- Analyze and compare your responses to the possibilities listed at the end of the activity.

Accountability: Restate the feelings so that they are clear.

Example: "That's the most disgusting thing I've ever heard!"

Analysis: The speaker is expressing disgust but not clearly stating what they are feeling.

Restatement: I'm uncomfortable and upset with this statement.

Debrief: How does identifying feelings assist in clearer communications?

Activity: Identify Feelings

Instructions

1. In groups, clearly identify the *apparent real statements* in the following statements.
2. Analyze and compare your responses to the possibilities listed at the end of the activity.
3. Restate the feelings so that they are clear.

Example: "That's the most disgusting thing I've ever heard!"

Analysis: *The speaker is expressing disgust, but not clearly stating what they feel.*

Restatement: *I'm uncomfortable and upset with this statement.*

1. "That was a great evening!"

Analysis: _____

Restatement: _____

2. "You're being too sensitive about that."

Analysis: _____

Restatement: _____

3. "I'm confused about what you want from me."

Analysis: _____

Restatement: _____

4. "I don't know what to do with him."

Analysis: _____

Restatement: _____

5. "I feel as if you are trying to get back at me."

Analysis: _____

Restatement: _____

6. "It can't be done!"

Analysis: _____

Restatement: _____

7. "I'm not sure how to tell you this . . ."

Analysis: _____

Restatement: _____

8. "What's up with you?"

Analysis: _____

Restatement: _____

9. "I feel as if my world is collapsing."

Analysis: _____

Restatement: _____

10. "You're hopeless."

Analysis: _____

Restatement: _____

Analysis

1. This statement implies positive feelings but does not state what they are.
2. Here the speaker is labelling someone else's feelings rather than his or her own.
3. This is a clear statement of the speaker's feelings.
4. Emotion is implied but not clear so that we do not know what the speaker is feeling.
5. Saying "I feel" is not necessarily expressing feelings, it is an interpretative statement.
6. How does the person feel about the situation – happy, sad, frustrated?
7. What are the feelings?
8. It could possibly be one of many feelings, but a clearer statement would help us to know better.
9. This statement is metaphorical; it does express emotion but may be misinterpreted.
10. This is interpretation of behavior and may evoke feelings but doesn't contain feelings.

Activity: Recognizing and Replying to Feelings

Instructions:

The following activity will give you practice in recognizing and replying to feelings. For each of the situations below:

- Identify and write down the main feeling(s).
- Write a formula reply; that is: "You feel [feeling] because [content]."
- Rewrite your formula reply in a more natural form.

1.   She says to you, "I just can't keep up with all the assignments. I wish the teachers would just lay off until I catch my breath."

She is feeling

Formula reply: You feel

because

Rewrite in a more natural style:

2.   A person says to you, "The doctor wants to run more tests before all the results are back from the first test. I'm not sure if that means there is more wrong than he had thought."

She is feeling

Formula reply: You feel

because

Natural response:

3.   She says to you, "I really trusted her and confided in her a lot. Now I find that she's blabbing about my business to everyone!"

She is feeling

Formula reply: You feel

because

Natural response:

4.   He says to you, "The exam results are posted and all of mine are in the top ten. That's the first time it's happened."

He is feeling

Formula reply: You feel

because

Natural response:

5.   "I wish that instructor would get off my back. It seems that I just can't do anything right by her."

She is feeling

Formula reply: you feel

because

Natural response:

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.

Activity – Practising Empathy

Organizer: Empathy needs practice to become comfortable to use.

Objective: Identify ways of being empathetic in the following situations.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Personal experience

Process: In small groups of two or three,

- Practise empathic responses to the following situations.

Situations:

1. **Angry caller:** (He has been waiting for five hours for a tow truck for a boost during a winter storm) "All you ever do is drink coffee and eat doughnuts."
   Possible responses may include some of the following: I understand your frustration; however, the trucks are tied up on priority calls right now. / Your call and problem is important to us sir and I assure you we will be there as soon as possible. This caller needs to be convinced that his call is not being ignored and that his call is important to your department. Do not patronize him. He needs to understand that calls are dispatched in order of priority and unit availability, but that lower priority calls are still important and will be dealt with.

2. **Lonely caller:** (This person may just call to talk to someone and to ramble on) "I don't need anything, I just need someone to talk to." (She won't take no for an answer.) .
   Possible responses may include some of the following: Is there something you need? / Is there a friend you can call for support? / Have you thought about volunteering in a service organization to use your conversational skills. The call taker needs to be polite yet firm that unless the call is directed to this particular service agency, there is nothing that can be done. Reassure her that if she needs a service that can be provided by your agency, that she should certainly call back, however, you cannot take time from other customers to talk on the telephone.

3. **Frustrated caller:** "I've been put on hold and transferred to about twenty different people. I don't want to stay on the phone and I want some service."
   Possible responses may include some of the following: Please tell me your problem. / Don't hang up. / I will find some answers for you. / Don't do anything right now. / If I don't know the answer, I'll find someone who does.
   The customer feels like they have been given the runaround and by now are not very happy with your agency. By taking responsibility for finding out the information they require, you can greatly improve the reputation of your agency with the customer.

Accountability: Each group reports back on one situation. Discuss the report and make suggestions for change.

Debrief: What was the hardest part of being empathic? Why is empathy important to a emergency call taker?

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.

Activity – Think-Pair-Share

Organizer: How does the concept of Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody give people excuses to avoid accountability.

Objective: Share information on and feelings about avoidance of accountability in teams.

Time: 10 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. Monitor and encourage participation.

Process: In the whole group:

- Read the piece "Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody"

Individually:

- Think about how this concept gives people excuses not to be accountable.

In pairs:

- Discuss these thoughts and their implications for teamwork.

Accountability: Share the information and personal feelings around the concept with others.

Debrief: Identify how discussing the situation added to how well you could identify your feelings about the situation. Identify how sharing information added to how well you know the material.

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.

Activity – Negotiating Compromise

Organizer: All teams have internal conflicts. The best teams identify and negotiate solutions to these conflicts.

Objective: Share strategies and best practices for internal team problem solving

Time: 10 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: Discussion, sticky notes, index cards, written materials. Monitor and encourage participation.

Process: Individually:

- Brainstorm types of internal team conflicts on sticky notes or index cards.

In groups of three or four:

- Group the types of conflicts into related clusters.
- Identify a number of strategies for negotiating a solution to a team problem with reference to the written materials. Transcribe these strategies in point form on cards.

Accountability: Share positive strategies with the whole group. The instructor collects the point-form strategies and has them word processed and distributed to the participants.

Debrief: What was one strategy you could use right away?

Equipment Familiarization

Equipment Lab

Identify the lab equipment and protocols, including rules for the lab and how the lab will be accessed.

Encourage discussion on how the lab will be used.

Demonstrate the phone system. Have the learners use phone functions.

Distribute and demonstrate the use of headsets. Ensure that the learners fit their headsets and use them in the phone system.

Demonstrate the voice recorder. The Learners should discuss the functions of the voice recorder in a public safety communication centre.

Demonstrate the computer network and the various options. Have the learners identify their personal knowledge of computer systems.

Demonstrate CAD functions and how they fit with emergency call taking. The learners should observe and ask questions. Encourage discussion.

Give an overview of lab practise within the course so that the learners will discuss lab situation and how they fit into it.

Assignment

Review the assignments for reading

- Phonetic Alphabet,
- 24 hour Clock,
- Glossary of Terms

Alphabet Letters, Numerals, Clock Times and Measurement

Date:

Instructor:

Bridge in: Many agencies use a standard form of broadcasting letters, numbers and times. They use a standard form to promote consistency in their operations and to minimize errors. It is important to be able to *think* in these terms as a public safety communicator.

Learning Objectives: Use the phonetic alphabet, the 24-hour clock, numbers and metric conversion in functional situations.

Rationale: These procedures are used across Canada, and are universally recognized as standards in industry. Their purpose is to minimize errors and promote clarity in communicating over the phone and over the radio.

Pre-Test: Determine the level of experience of the class in the phonetic alphabet, 24-hour clock, enunciation of numbers and decimals, calendar dates and metric conversion.

Resources: Call Processing for Public Safety Communicators, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*, RIC-21 *Industry Canada*.

Techniques: Classroom setting, whole and small group discussion.

Equipment: Classroom setting, overhead, flip chart, handouts

Instructional Strategy

Time	*Instructor Activities*	*Learner Activities*	*Techniques / Equipment*
15 min.	Deliver handout containing material on phonetic alphabet, numerals, 24-hour clock, metric conversion.	Read and review written materials.	Pair Reading
45 min.	Monitor and assist as necessary.	Practise materials with a partner.	Small groups
10 min	Debrief activity	Identify what help you the most.	Individually, whole group

Post-Test: Demonstrate the ability to use the phonetic alphabet, numerals, 24-hour clock and metric conversion, through practical applications in call taking, class discussion and testing.

(Such testing should be ongoing throughout the course. Instructors should assume that learners have acquired this knowledge by the time they complete the course.)

Phonetic Alphabet

Phonetic alphabet refers to a system of associating a specific word to each letter of the alphabet, so that each letter can be broadcast clearly and concisely. The purpose of this practice is to promote consistency and to minimize errors over radio and telephone communications. 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 lines. It is also more effective to convey difficult names with the phonetic alphabet. This alphabet is also useful in relaying long strings of alphanumeric characters such as VIN numbers or serial numbers.

The ITU (International Telecommunications Union) phonetic alphabet is the most common system in Canada. It is important to use this system as printed and not substitute alternate words. When using the phonetic alphabet, it is common practice to say the word as it is normally pronounced first, then to spell it using phonetics. 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?"). With practice, you will be able to *think* in terms of the phonetic alphabet.

Activity – Use Flash Cards

Organizer: The phonetic alphabet needs to be used naturally.

Objective: Memorize and use the phonetic alphabet.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: 5 x 7 cards, felt pens

Process: Have pairs of participants

- Prepare Flash Cards of Phonetic Alphabet.
- Use them with each other to rehearse material.

Accountability: Use the phonetic alphabet to spell out names.

Debrief: What made the biggest difference to your learning?

Use this activity with military time, numerals, conversions, etc.

24-Hour Clock

Many communication centres 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 referred to as 2400 (twenty four hundred hours), but one minute after is 0001 hours (zero, zero, zero, one hours). The best way to learn this way of telling time is to memorize the hour designations and to start thinking in terms of a 24-hour clock as a matter of habit. You can set many digital watches and clocks in this mode. Doing so can assist you in becoming familiar with the system.

The instructor can test for knowledge in this area on a day-to-day basis, asking the current time, and presenting class and assignment times in this way.

Transmission of Numbers

Call takers should always enunciate numbers clearly in accordance with Industry Canada standards. Do not group numbers together when broadcasting them ("fifty-four, forty"). Instead, say them individually for clarity ("five-four, four-zero").

Calendar Dates

Two formats are commonly used in automated systems and report writing. The most common is YY-MM-DD (year, month, day).

The second format is MM-DD-YY (month, day, year).

Both 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, "02" would indicate the year 2002, 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.

Metric Conversion

Although metric conversion is the universal system of measure, most Canadians tend to think in imperial measures when it comes to descriptions. When you talk about someone's height and weight, you normally do so in imperial measures (she is 5 feet 4 inches tall). It will thus be important for you to have a metric conversion chart at your work station, so that you can convert measurements into metric for the purpose of report writing or computer data entry. You will not necessarily have to memorize these conversion charts, but you should be familiar with the general process.

Basic Call Assessment

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

Bridge in: Call takers must quickly assess information for dispatch.

Learning Objectives: Quickly assess incoming calls for assistance by gathering information in an accurate and concise manner.

Rationale: The call taker must be able to assess a situation quickly and accurately in order to dispatch the appropriate units to the scene.

Pre-Test: What questions do you ask to assess the situation?

Resources: Call Processing Basics for Everyone, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*

Time: 100 minutes

Techniques: Classroom discussion, small group work, lecture.

Equipment: Classroom setting, overhead projector, flipchart, audiotapes.

Training Strategy

Time	*Trainer Activities*	*Student Activities*	*Techniques / Equipment*
10 min	Review call taker duties.	Identify information known about call taker duties	Whole group, flipchart.
15 min	Explain the basic call assessment model.	Discuss use of call assessment model in communication	whole group
15 min	Provide chart and information Guide Activity	Prepare a table and link information from incoming sources.	pairs, chart & information
10 min	Comment on tables Debrief activity	Present table Describe group process	Whole group
20 min	Describe the needed elements in a person description	Identify the elements of person descriptions	Whole group
20 min	Describe the format for vehicle description	Identify ways to make vehicle descriptions	Whole group
5 min	Identify use of pre-arrival instructions.	Discuss the benefits of pre-arrival instructions.	small group
5 min	Identify methods of terminating calls.	Discuss when calls would be terminated by the call taker.	small group

Post-Test: Describe call assessment in communications.

Trainer Notes

Using a Model

The fundamentals of call processing must be practiced each and every time you answer a call. This practice allows you to obtain the necessary information and to appraise each situation properly. Each call will have its own unique circumstances, but the basics of information processing will always apply. You cannot assess a call properly without first obtaining the appropriate details. This can be achieved by following the basic principles of the call assessment model.

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 four Ws and one H. They are: What?, When?, Where?, Who?, and How? The questions that are asked and the order in which they are asked depends entirely on the call. The application of these questions must become second nature if you are to be an effective and efficient call taker.

What

It is important to know the nature of the call in order to assess it properly for priority and to determine what resources are necessary. What is needed? This information should be apparent in the first few moments of most calls by asking the callers, "How can we help you?"

The call taker will quickly determine (by using caller interview techniques) what is needed. The call taker will gather information they need to provide service to the caller. The call taker will then assign a file to the caller (as appropriate) to ensure that the appropriate response is tracked from inception to follow-up.

· What is needed?

· What resources are you seeking?

When

It is important to establish when the caller needs the information or service. For example, if a caller tells you "I want to register for a course," you might assume that the course is coming up soon. You could be wrong, however. Ask the caller. It is possible that the caller wants a course next semester and is merely making a preliminary inquiry about how to go through the process.

· When do you want this to happen? Now? Later?

· When are you planning to use this service?

· When would you like to start?

Where

The call taker will determine the necessary location of the event. The call taker will also ascertain how the caller can be contacted with further information concerning their request.

·   Where do you want to access the service?

·   Where do we contact you? Now? Later?

Who

The call taker will ask for the name of the caller when registering any information for further follow-up.

·   Who are you?

·   How do I spell that?

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

·   Address and other contact information.

·   Application information necessary for processing.

How

The caller taker will determine how the service needs to be provided for each caller in order to deliver it effectively. Asking how the caller wishes to receive information may help you in determining what you need to do next. It also may be used in clarifying what is actually needed by the caller.

·   How would you like to receive this information? (offer options such as mail, fax, pick up or …)

Summary

Questioning callers according to the call assessment model, if you practice it as a matter of course, will reduce your chances of making a mistake or of missing information you need. By doing your job to the best of your ability, you increase the service to callers and reduce frustration for everyone.

Obviously, in the examples given above, not every potential question has been listed. More specific details will be covered as we deal with a variety of situations. Each call needs to be treated as a completely unique situation so that it can be assessed properly. However, it should be apparent that there are certain skills and techniques that should be used on each and every call.

Call takers are expected to always perform in a professional manner.

Activity – Link Information

Organizer: The elements of the basic Call Assessment Model affect how we respond to calls.

Objective: Prepare a table and link information from incoming sources.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Chart and information. Monitor and support participation and the exchange of ideas.

Process: In pairs:

- Using the following table, fill in the information and then compare categories.

Call Assessment Model	Information	Information	Information
Where?			
When?			
What?			
Who?			
Why?			
How?			
Other			

Accountability: Share the information and linking with the whole group.

Debrief: In what ways did linking information to the model clarify the material?

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. Situations 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 situation 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."

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

"Is the person/vehicle still there ?"

Giving the caller something simple to do, like turning on or off their lights, keeps them focused on your questions or instructions and reassures them 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 tow truck is on the way, so I'm going to let you go now," or a similar phrase. Be polite and thank the caller if appropriate.

Finally, for all calls, remember to:

- Obtain nature of situation
- 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.
- Reassure caller unit(s) are responding
- Instruct caller to call back if conditions change

Call Taking Practise I

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

Bridge in: As a call taker you must apply the basic elements of call assessment to each call as you are filling in the forms.

Learning Objectives:
Take calls.

Record information.

Give pre-arrival instructions.

Terminate calls.

Rationale: There are many different tasks that a call taker must be able to do simultaneously. Practise makes better.

Pre-Test: Are you ready to put the theory into practise?

Resources: Call Taking Basics for Everyone, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques: Interactive Lab, small group work

Equipment: Public Safety Communications Lab

Training Strategy

Time	*Trainer Activities*	*Learner Activities*	*Techniques / Equipment*
10 min	Set participants to fill in forms Guide Activity	Identify the elements of a dispatch forms.	Pairs, forms
10 min	Comment on forms Debrief activity	Present forms Identify aids to process	whole group
30 min	Set situations and observe process.	Practise taking calls, recording information, giving pre-arrival instructions, and terminating calls.	pairs of pairs
10 min	Focus debriefing	Identify strengths and areas for improvement	pairs

Post-Test: Demonstrate basic call assessment and processing in communications.

Trainer Notes

Dispatch Forms

Organizer: Peer editing increases completion levels.

Objective: Complete occurrence forms with another participant.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Occurrence forms and writing implements

Process: In the large group:

- Ask clarifying questions and review information required for occurrence forms.

Individually:

- Individually complete the occurrence forms.

In pairs:

- After three minutes pair with someone new and compare information on forms.
- Revise as necessary.

Accountability: Have each participant submit their revised forms at the end of the class. (Signed and dated)

Debrief: How does your level of completion before peer editing compare with how complete your information was after? What did your partner help you with?

Activity – Interactive Practice – Call Taking

Organizer: This is a chance for participants to work with safe and realistic situations.

Objective: Practise calling, call taking, observation, with giving and receiving feedback.

Time: 40 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Situations, phones, headsets, observation sheets

Process: In pairs of pairs:

- One pair will consist of a caller and an observer of the caller.
- One pair will consist of a call taker and an observer of the call taker.
- The call is made and taken realistically by the caller and call taker, using the information in the situations and the skills, knowledges and attitudes taught.
- The observers will observe the process without interfering.
- The observers will provide positive written and verbal feedback to their partner after each situation using the elements of feedback basics.

- Pairs of pairs will discuss problems that arise out of the situation and strategize around different approaches.
- Each pair will change roles between themselves and repeat the above process.
- Pairs will then partner with a new pair and reverse roles (the caller pair becomes the call taker pair and vice versa).

Accountability: Positive feedback will be given from the observer to the other partner after each situation. Share strategies for dealing with the problems that could arise in the situations.

Debrief: What was the best part of your practice with your partners? Identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Information Gathering Techniques – I

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

Bridge in: As a call taker in a communications centre, you may not be able to spend a lot of time with the caller. You will not be able to have a lengthy conversation. You will need to know fairly quickly what the problem is, and how you can help.

Learning Objectives: Recognize the difference between controlling and leading a caller, and why this is important as a call taker. Practise using questioning techniques.

Rationale: The call taker's task is to gather reliable and correct information from the caller. Most callers are contacting an emergency service for the first time. They may find the process quite intimidating. Call takers might consequently lead them into giving answers that are not entirely correct. Indeed, so as to speed up the conversation during busy times, the call taker may be tempted to assist the caller in providing the information, especially when multiple calls on one situation are coming in at the same time. *Act on facts, not assumptions.*

Pre-Test: What is the difference between controlling and leading a conversation?

Resources: Call Taking Basics for Everyone, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques: Classroom discussion, small group work

Equipment: Overhead, audiotapes, and videos

Training Strategy

Time	Trainer Activities	Learner Activities	Techniques / Equipment
10 min.	Ask if anyone has placed a call for service. Lead discussion on essential elements of calls.	Discuss the elements of placing a call for service.	Whole group
10 min.	Describe assertive communication techniques.	Identify applications of assertiveness and the appropriate use of techniques.	Small groups
10 min.	Differentiate between leading and controlling a conversation.	Give examples of leading and controlling phrases.	Small groups
15 min	Pose question as to types of situations where a call taker may lead the conversation Guide Activity	Exchange ideas and explain how leading situation happen and when they are likely to occur.	small groups
10 min	Encourage participation Debrief activity	Explain ideas discussed with the context of call takers Describe group process	whole group

Post-Test: Identify examples of questioning as leading or controlling.

Trainer Notes

Questions: has anyone ever placed a call for service? Received one? What are the elements required to send a service out?

The **location** is most important; even if you become disconnected for some reason, you can send help.

What type of help is needed? As a call taker, you may be dealing with a variety of calls.

Personal details: The caller's name, phone number, and his or her involvement in the situation.

What could have been done better? Anyone in the group who has made or received calls may relate his or her experiences.

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 situation 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.

Activity – Discussion – Comprehension

Organizer: While the call taker may try to speed up the call by leading the conversation, there is a risk in doing so of getting false or misleading information.

Objective: Exchange ideas and explain in your own words circumstances where a call taker may lead the conversation.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: information, personal experience

Process: In groups of three or four:

• Exchange ideas on the following situations

Some people may be slow-talking, or they may sound confused, intoxicated, or disoriented.

Multiple call situations such as an MVA at a major intersection.

• Identify and discuss other examples from personal experience.

Accountability: Explain your ideas within an the context of an effective call taker.

Debrief: How do the individual statements of understanding match the context presented in class?

Information Gathering Techniques – II

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

Bridge in: Conversational control is a necessary skill that allows the call taker to get vital information quickly.

Learning Objectives: Recognize and describe the value of conversational control to an effective call taker. Practise various types of conversational control.

Rationale: Using techniques in voice modulation, the call taker can assume control of the call and gather the information needed to find a solution to the caller's problem, either by sending help or by referral.

Pre-Test: How do we speak to people? Do we use the same tone of voice for everyone, or does it change depending on the audience and situation?

Resources: Call Taking Basics for Everyone, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques: Classroom discussion, small group work

Equipment: Classroom setting, overhead projector, flip chart, activity sheets

Training Strategy

Time	Trainer Activities	Learner Activities	Techniques / Equipment
(3 min. /item) 15 min.	Identify the primary voice modulation techniques: *soft & consoling*, *businesslike*, *clear & concise*, and *elevated*.	Discuss examples of voice modulation and suitable phrasing possibilities.	Whole group, Flip chart
10 min	Guide Activity	Identify what each example means personally	Think/ Pair/ Share
30 min	*Present Situations* *Guide Activity*	*Practise using voice modulations with situations* *Document observations*	*threes, situations*
5 min	*Collect activity sheets* *Debrief activity*	*Discuss techniques used* *Describe group process*	*whole group*

Post-Test: Identify the four voice modulation techniques and state in which situations you would use them.

Trainer Notes

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 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. Does anyone have children? Think of what we normally tell our children if someone is hurling insults. "*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 line rings and the caller asks for an urgent service response. 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 a 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 units while they are on their way to the situation.

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. You can assure them that they have called the right location and you are able to help them. Phrases such as "You've done the right thing to call," or "You did well to give me your exact location," reassures the caller that they will be helped.

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 is looking for a cab. Call taker would reply, in a voice loud enough to be heard, "Calm down and listen to my questions. Where do you need the cab right now?" The caller needs to be re-focused away from his anger to provide information.

It is prudent to gradually escalate the amount of volume or authority that 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.

Activity – Discussion – Application

Organizer: In what situations would you use various types of techniques?

Objective: Exchange ideas and apply voice modulation to caller situations.

Time: 10 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: information, personal experience, imagination

Process: In pairs:

- Identify situation in which to use various types of voice modulation with callers.
- Chose a style that would be appropriate to a given situation.

Examples:

What does "a businesslike tone" mean to you? Where would you use it? Where would you not use it?

One person to tell the other about something, anything at all. Direct the listener to make a businesslike response. Repeat the exercise, this time ask the listener to use other types of responses. What differences do you observe?

Accountability: Share information with other groups and identify situations that employ a variety of voice modulation techniques. Write down two examples for each form of voice modulation covered today and hand them in.

Debrief: Where and when could this application be useful?

Review the four points.

Activity – Interactive Practise – Voice Modulation

Organizer: Now that you have the theory, practise will enhance your ability to use it.

Objective: Practise voice modulation in a variety of situations.

Time: 30 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: situation cards

Process: Working in threes and using the following situations:

- Each person takes the role of caller, call taker, observer in turn.
- Ensure the call taker is aware of the situation in each situation.
- Utilize all four types of techniques to ensure the call is controlled appropriately through voice modulation.
- Observer takes notes and gives feedback on how the situation was played out.
- Everyone discusses how else it could be done.
- Repeat and rotate until everyone has done the cycle twice.

Accountability: Identify which techniques appear to most useful in these situations? Which ones are the easiest to use? Which ones need more work? Learners hand in group activity sheets for comments, which the Trainer can return to them at the next class.

Debrief: How did it feel to take on the different roles? What made it easy? What made it harder?

Situations: Make cards describing role and situation to be practiced. Shuffle the cards and have learners draw them from a hat.

Information Gathering Techniques – III

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

Bridge in: As a call taker you need to get all of the necessary information to respond to a problem as quickly and efficiently as possible. To do this, you need to develop a toolbox of interchangeable skills to enable you to accomplish this task effectively.

Learning Objectives: Use various conversational techniques to gather information in call taking effectively.

Rationale: Time is of the essence. If you can learn techniques to question callers in a limited amount of time, accomplishing the task in longer periods will be simple.

Pre-Test: What are the five types of voice modulation? Businesslike, clear and concise, reassuring, quiet and elevated. Is that all you need to do to get the information from the caller?

Resources: Call Taking Basics for Everyone, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques: Classroom discussion, small group work

Equipment: Classroom setting, overhead projector, flip chart

Training Strategy

Time	*Trainer Activities*	*Learner Activities*	*Techniques / Equipment*
10 min.	*Review open-ended and closed questions.*	*Give examples of open-ended and closed questions.*	*Whole group*
10 min.	*Review summarize and paraphrase techniques.*	*Give examples of summarize and paraphrase techniques.*	*Whole group*
10 min.	*Introduce encouragement techniques; give examples.*	*Respond with examples of encouragement techniques.*	*Whole group*
10 min.	*Introduce clarification techniques, and give examples.*	*Ask clarifying questions in pairs.*	*Pairs*
10 min.	*Introduce self-disclosure techniques – give examples.*	*Talk to partner about suitable examples of self-disclosure.*	*Pairs*
10 min	*Complete accountability Debrief activity*	*Write out two examples of each strategy and hand it in.*	*Individual*

Post-Test: Write down two examples for each form of questioning covered. Hand in.

Trainer Notes

Voice modulation is not enough to get the job done. You need questioning techniques to extract the information you need 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 (to hint. . .). How are you going to go about this?

Activity – Brainstorm

Organizer: What are the best techniques to get information from a caller?

Objective: Identify techniques to effectively get information from a caller.

Time: 15 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: flipchart, felt pens, Augment ideas to ensure comprehensive list.

Process: In small groups of three or four:

- Brainstorm ways of extracting information from a caller. This is an all ideas are welcome, no analysis session.
- Use those examples and documented information to expand on ideas.

Accountability: Identify how previous techniques fits into the expanded list of techniques. Trainer to document on flip chart.

Debrief: What elements of information have you added?

Gathering 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. The following is a list of the techniques that we have covered so far.

- Open-Ended Questions
- Closed-Ended Questions
- Summarize/Paraphrase

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.

Clarification

This technique is used to correct discrepancies in the information the caller has supplied. The call taker focuses on discrepancies made during the call and not on the inability of the caller to provide the correct information. The call taker states the discrepancy and then asks for clarification.

For example, if during the conversation the caller said the accident was in the westbound lanes, then later on said the eastbound lanes, you could say something like: "I have here, or I understood that it was the westbound lanes, can you confirm the direction for me?"

Sometimes the caller is confused or disoriented. Instead of putting the caller on the defensive by saying he or she made a mistake, you are just requesting clarification.

If you're not sure, ask for clarification! Not asking can cause loss of time as well as misinformation being passed on to units with potentially serious consequences.

Neutral Probing Questions

Some callers may be vague in their description of an situation or situation. They may use phrases such as, "I think I saw" or "It appears something happened". What is required is more information. The caller taker needs to use neutral questioning techniques to determine what actions or activities caused the caller to believe they "saw" or "thought" something occurred. These type of questions do not give information but ask for more information about the situation. "Tell me exactly what you saw ...."

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:

Towed car: You might say: *I've had my car towed before too. If you could try to remember the license place and where you parked it, it could really help us to locate it.*

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 crew to get there.*

Activity – Discussion – Application

Organizer: In what situations would you use various types of questions or techniques?

Objective: Exchange ideas and apply questioning types to caller situations.

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: information, personal experience, imagination

Process: In pairs:

- Identify situation in which to use various techniques with callers.
- Chose questions and phrasing that would be appropriate to a given situation.

Examples:

One person to tell the other about something, anything at all. Direct the listener to make no response, and only to look at the speaker. Repeat the exercise, but this time ask the listener to show attention and offer encouragement to the speaker. What differences do you observe?

In what kind of situation would you use open-ended questions? (When you need a description, for example, in a case of robbery, assault, or arson.)

What situation would require the use of closed questioning techniques? (Emergency calls requiring only a yes or no. More factual requirements.)

Using the example of your last vacation and with the same partner, ask clarifying questions that would have helped you with your summarizing/paraphrasing.

Come up with a couple of situations in which you could use self-disclosure.

Accountability: Share information with other groups and identify situations that employ the ideas. Write down two examples for each form of questioning covered today and hand them in.

Debrief: Where and when could this application be useful?

Techniques to Avoid in Call Taking

Date:	_____
Trainer:	_____
Bridge in:	In our efforts to get the information as quickly as possible, there may be a tendency to fall into some traps in call taking. Being aware of these traps can help you to not fall prey to these situations.
Learning Objectives:	Recognize pitfalls in call taking and apply appropriate alternative methods.
Rationale:	This practice returns the learner to the ultimate goal of getting accurate, factual information as quickly and efficiently as possible.
Pre-Test:	What actions on the part of the call taker can slow down the transfer of accurate information from the caller?
Resources:	Call Taking Basics for Everyone, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*
Time:	40 minutes
Techniques:	Classroom discussion, small group work
Equipment:	Classroom setting, overhead projector, flip chart

Training Strategy

Time	Trainer Activities	Learner Activities	Techniques / Equipment
5 min.	Identify how stressful situations can lead to call taking problems.	Identify why some situations lead to high stress for the caller and the call taker.	Whole group, Flip chart
5 min.	Describe problems with multiple-answer questions.	Identify ways to avoid using multiple-answer questions.	Think Pair Share
5 min.	Describe problems with using cross-examination.	Identify ways to avoid using cross-examination.	Pairs
5 min.	Describe problems with leading questions.	Identify ways to avoid using leading questions.	Pairs
10 min.	Summarize main problem areas.	List ways of avoiding these techniques.	Whole group
10 min	Debrief techniques to avoid.	Identify ways that you will use to avoid using negative techniques.	Individual whole group

Post-Test: List three types of call taking problems and ways to avoid them.

Trainer Notes

In high-stress situations for both the caller and the call taker, there is a tendency to use ineffective call taking techniques.

Paraphrasing Blocks Review

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 situation?" and "What's happening?"

Instead of asking, "Where is your car parked and how long were you there and what is the license plate?" 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.

Activity – Think-Pair-Share

Organizer: It would be easy to use multiple-answer questions inadvertently.

Objective: Identify situations where multiple-answer questions might creep into the call.

Time: 10 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: details of a case, situation or question

Process: Individually:

- Think about a situation where multiple-answer question might occur and it's implications.

In Pairs:

- Discuss the situation and your thoughts around it and how to avoid it.

Repeat with:

- cross-examination questions, leading questions,

Accountability: Share the information and personal feelings about how to avoid Multiple answer questions with others.

Debrief: Identify how discussing the situation added to how well you could identify your feelings about the situation.

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.

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.

Call Taking Practise II

Date:	_____
Trainer:	_____
Bridge in:	Practise makes better. Let's keep practising!
Learning Objectives:	Analyze audiotapes.
	Take calls.
	Record information.
	Give pre-arrival instructions.
	Terminate calls.
Rationale:	Multi tasking is an integral part of call taking.
Pre-Test:	How much better will you be this time?
Resources:	Call Taking Basics for Everyone, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*
Time:	110 minutes
Techniques:	Interactive Lab, small group work
Equipment:	Public Safety Communications Lab

Training Strategy

Time	*Trainer Activities*	*Learner Activities*	*Techniques / Equipment*
20 min	*Play audiotape* *Guide Activity*	*Identify appropriate and inappropriate responses to given situations*	*small groups, audiotape, tape player*
10 min	*Ensure appropriate response.* *Debrief activity*	*Report on responses* *Describe group process*	*whole group*
65 min	*Set situations and observe process.*	*Practise taking calls, recording information, giving pre-arrival instructions, and terminating calls.*	*pairs of pairs*
15 min	*Focus debriefing*	*Identify strengths and areas for improvement*	*pairs*

Post-Test: Demonstrate basic call assessment and processing in communications.

Trainer Notes

Activity – Analysis of Audiotape

Organizer: It is helpful to analyze audiotapes before you are an active part of the call.

Objective: Review an situation on audiotape and critique the response.

Time: 30 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: Audiotape, tape player, Monitor and support participation and the exchange of ideas.

Process: In small groups of two or three:

- Listen to appropriate audiotapes.
- Discuss the responses to the situation by the people on the audiotape.

Group Success: Everyone in the group has analyzed the responses.

Accountability: Describe various possible responses that were or could have been used by individuals on the audiotape.

Debrief: How do you feel about the responses that were used? Which responses that have been generated could you see yourself using?

Activity – Interactive Practice – Call Taking

Organizer: This is a chance for participants to work with safe and realistic situations.

Objective: Practise calling, call taking, observation, with giving and receiving feedback.

Time: 40 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Situations, phones, headsets, observation sheets

Process: In pairs of pairs:

- One pair will consist of a caller and an observer of the caller.
- One pair will consist of a call taker and an observer of the call taker.
- The call is made and taken realistically by the caller and call taker, using the information in the situations and the skills, knowledges and attitudes taught.
- The observers will observe the process without interfering.
- The observers will provide positive written and verbal feedback to their partner after each situation using the elements of feedback basics.
- Pairs of pairs will discuss problems that arise out of the situation and strategize around different approaches.
- Each pair will change roles between themselves and repeat the above process.

- Pairs will then partner with a new pair and reverse roles (the caller pair becomes the call taker pair and vice versa).

Accountability: Positive feedback will be given from the observer to the other partner after each situation. Share strategies for dealing with the problems that could arise in the situations.

Debrief: What was the best part of your practice with your partners? Identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Assignment

Read the text material on Prioritizing and Preparing Reports starting on page 51.

Read the text material on Techniques for Gathering Information starting on page 55.

Caller Errors

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

Bridge in: There are times when you will not have all the facts you need to prioritize calls correctly, due to circumstances beyond your control such as problems with the caller. It is important that you learn to recognize these situations and handle them appropriately.

Learning Objectives: Recognize situations where the caller is unwilling or unable to supply the information necessary to correctly prioritize a call for assistance.

Rationale: As a call taker, if you are aware of this type of instance, you are better able to prepare the dispatcher and field units to respond to situations, ensuring the safety of all involved.

Pre-Test: In groups, discuss the times when you got yourself into a situation that was different from what you had expected. How did the situation make you feel? Would you have acted differently if you had known all the facts beforehand? Would you have acted differently if you had some warning that the situation would not be as it seemed?

Resources: Call Taking Basics for Everyone, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques: Classroom setting, whole group, small groups.

Equipment: Classroom, overhead, flip chart, videos

Training Strategy

Time	Trainer Activities	Learner Activities	Techniques / Equipment
5 min.	*Present the situation of a caller who lacks specific information.*	*Discuss situations when this could happen – how would it affect the ability to prioritize?*	*Whole group*
5 min.	*Present the situation of a caller who cannot talk for long because he or she is involved in an emergency situation.*	*Discuss situations when this could happen – how would it affect the ability to prioritize?*	*Whole group*
5 min.	*Present the situation of a caller who is disabled or who is physically or emotionally traumatized.*	*Discuss situations when this could happen – how would it affect the ability to prioritize?*	*Whole group*
5 min.	*Present the situation of an offensive caller.*	*How would it affect the call taker's ability to prioritize?*	*Whole group*
5 min.	*Present the situation of caller's lack of understanding.*	*How would it affect the call taker's ability to prioritize?*	*Whole group*
5 min.	*Present the situation of caller's negative attitude.*	*How would it affect the call taker's ability to prioritize?*	*Whole group*
5 min.	*Present the situation of caller who is impaired (under the influence of some substance).*	*Discuss situations when this could happen. How would it affect the ability to prioritize?*	*Whole group*
15 min.	*Review types of caller problems.*	*Identify strategies to avoid these problems.*	*Small groups*
10 min	*Collect strategies Debrief activity*	*Share information discussed Describe group process*	*whole group*

Post-Test: List situations based on caller errors that could affect the call taker' ability to prioritize calls. Identify how caller errors can hinder prioritization.

Trainer Notes

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

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 callers who are not sure about the direction of their inquiry although they may know the topic or department. They can ask some questions, but may need more information to help them make further inquiries toward a final decision.

The Call Taker's Ability to Understand the Caller

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 could also result in an inappropriate response from the emergency agency, 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.

Activity – Discussion – Application

Organizer: There are many situations that might result in a lack of information from the caller.

Objective: Exchange ideas and analyze the types of caller situations that may limit the information available to the call taker.

Time: 20 minutes, interspersed between situation presentation

Techniques / Equipment: Discussion, personal knowledge, supplemental dispatch sheet

Process: In groups of three or four:

- Exchange ideas on the following question.

"What could happen to or around the caller that limits the information that they can give?"

- How might you as the call taker mitigate these effects?
- Create probable situations and discuss possible solutions.

Accountability: Identify ways that the situation could be aided.

Debrief: Where and when could this application be used?

Caller Taker Errors

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

Bridge in: There are hazards to be aware of in call taking that can affect your ability to gather the facts needed to prioritize calls correctly. It is important that you learn to recognize these situations and handle them appropriately.

Learning Objectives: Recognize situations where the caller taker may not be effective in obtaining information or prioritizing calls necessary for an appropriate response by field units.

Rationale: As a call taker, being aware of these potential hazards enables you to avoid them or to deal with alternate approaches, ensuring the safety of all involved.

Pre-Test: In groups, discuss times when you did not feel like doing something or found yourself feeling overwhelmed, and just hurried through a task in an effort to get it out of the way. Any regrets? Did you wish for a second chance to do it again? How about when you say, "If I had my life to live over again, these are the things that I would change"?

Resources: Call Taking Basics for Everyone, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques: Classroom setting, whole group, small groups.

Equipment: Classroom, flip chart, overhead, cassette player, video recorder

Training Strategy

Time	*Trainer Activities*	*Learner Activities*	*Techniques / Equipment*
5 min.	*Identify that call takers also have potential problems which impair their ability to do their jobs effectively.*	*Brainstorm on a list of potential pitfalls encountered by a call taker that would prevent them from doing their job effectively.*	*Small groups*
5 min.	*Identify liability concerns for communicators.*	*Discuss how and when liability would affect a call taker.*	*Small groups*
5 min.	*Present effects from lack of area knowledge.*	*Discuss how and when lack of area knowledge would affect a call taker.*	*Whole group*
5 min.	*Present effects from inexperience.*	*Discuss how and when inexperience affects a call taker.*	*Whole group*
5 min.	*Present effects from prejudices.*	*Discuss how prejudices affect a call taker.*	*Whole group*
5 min.	*Present effects from lazy or hurried call takers.*	*Discuss how lazy or hurried call takers affect a call.*	*Whole group*
5 min.	*Present effects from a heavy workload due to volume or situation.*	*Discuss how this would affect a call taker.*	*Whole group*
15 min	*Present the error factors contributed by call taker and caller.*	*Identify factors that lead to errors. Develop strategies to minimize errors*	*small groups*
10 min	*Collect best strategies* *Debrief activity*	*Share suggested strategies.* *Rank strategies in order of personal preference*	*whole group*

Post-Test: List common situations that impair the call taker in correctly assessing and prioritizing emergency calls. Identify ways to avoid them.

Trainer Notes

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.

Activity – Discussion – Analysis

Organizer: There are many situations that might result in a lack of information from the caller.

Objective: Exchange ideas and analyze the types of caller situations that may limit the information available to the call taker.

Time: 20 minutes, interspersed between situation presentation

Techniques / Equipment: personal knowledge, supplemental dispatch sheet

Process: In groups of three or four:

- Exchange ideas on the following question.

What situations may limit the information available to the call taker?

- Develop ideas both from the call and the call taker side of the situation and a rationale for those ideas.
- What techniques might you use to mitigate these effects?
- Create probable situations and discuss possible solutions.

Accountability: Balance the points of views and explain your analysis and suggested techniques.

Debrief: How does the rationale match reality as described by the industry?

Area Knowledge

Experienced call takers can immediately associate an individual to an address, or a previous situation 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 situations 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 situation, 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-judgments of callers and situations. In such cases, call takers make assumptions based on previous experiences. Such assumptions affect their ability to make sound judgments based on the current, unique information. Call takers should guard against becoming complacent to the point where they think they have heard it all. Treat all callers as unique individuals and rely on them to provide the answers you need to be able to help them with their unique situation.

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

Some 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. However, in rushing through a call, they could miss important information that could radically alter a call's effectiveness. Lazy call takers work properly only when they are prepared to work.

Call takers may be tempted to hurry through a call when they are not fully prepared to start work. They may have just arrived to work after battling traffic, and may not have had sufficient time to get organized for the shift, when the phone starts ringing

immediately. They may hurry through the call with a minimum of details to get time to put their desk in order, log on to the computer, have a coffee, etc.

To avoid some of the problems caused by being hurried, and to give each call the full attention it deserves, give yourself enough time to prepare yourself mentally and prepare your work station 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.

The sheer volume of calls may result in the call taker being unable to answer 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 and give the information necessary. The call taker may be tempted to not spend the time necessary to serve the caller. They 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 improper service.

Using the call assessment model each time you answer the phone will assist in eliminating this type of problem. Most types of calls can be dealt with adequately in a short time by using the proper questioning techniques.

Activity – Develop Strategies to Minimize Errors

Organizer: When you know a problem can arise it makes sense to be ready for it.

Objective: Develop strategies to minimize errors in call processing.

Time: 25 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: factor contributed by call taker and caller, personal experience. Monitor and encourage positive participation. This activity can be split into two parts – call taker factors and caller factors.

Process: In groups of three or four:

- Use the factor contributed by call taker and caller to outline types of strategies.
- Develop a strategy for the given situation that you would be willing to use.
- Change the strategy based on your own assessment and the feedback of others.

Accountability: Share your best strategies with the whole group. Receive feedback.

Debrief: Rank strategies in order of personal preference. Which ones could you use?

Radiotelephone Operator's Restricted Certificate (Aeronautical) – 1

Date:

Instructor:

Bridge in: A Radiotelephone Operator's Restricted certificate (Aeronautical) qualifies the holder to operate any Aeronautical or mobile station not exceeding 250 watts output.

Instructional Objectives: Identify the skills necessary to complete the oral and written components required to complete the certificate for Industry Canada.

Rationale: Many communications agencies require this license for all their communication centre employees.

Pre-Test: What types of radio licenses are available in Canada?

Resource: Industry Canada Information Circular

Techniques: Classroom discussion, small group work

Equipment: Classroom setting, overhead projector, flip chart

Instructional Strategy

Time	Instructor Activities	Learner Activities	Techniques / Equipment
15 min	Identify the Industry Canada regulations for a Radio Operator's Certificate.	Discuss regulations	Whole Group
5 min	Identify the priorities of communications	Give examples of priority communications	small groups
5 min	Explain secrecy of radio communications	Discuss why secrecy is important in radio	Small groups
5 min	Identify who controls communications	Discuss the need for control in radio transmissions	Whole Group
5 min	Define superfluous communications and interference.	Give examples of superfluous communications	Pairs
5 min	Define false distress signals	Discuss why false distress signals are prohibited	Whole Group
5 min	Discuss penalties for failing to follow regulations	Identify the penalties according to Industry Canada Regulations	Whole Group
30 min	Discuss Operating Procedures required for Industry Canada Certificate	Review the procedures for operating a radio system from the study guide	small groups

Post-Test: Operate radiotelephone equipment in accordance with regulations under the act. Practise practical and oral exercises.

Instructor Notes

Industry Canada Regulations for Certificate

Many agencies require that their communications centre communicators possess a valid Radio license or Radiotelephone Operator's Restricted Certificate as issued by Industry Canada. The holder of such a certificate may act as a radiotelephone operator on any Aeronautical or mobile station (except a station performing a maritime mobile service or a mobile station installed in on board a ship) and operate radiotelephone equipment at stations with a power output not exceeding 250 watts.

To earn a certificate, the student must successfully pass an examination consisting of written, practical and oral exercises. The candidate must satisfy an examiner that he or she:

- is capable of operating radiotelephone equipment;
- possesses a general knowledge of radiotelephone operation procedures, the international regulations applicable to radiotelephone communications between stations in the Aeronautical service, and specifically those regulations relating to the safety of life.
- possesses a general knowledge of the Radiocommunication Act and the regulations made thereunder

There are no nationality or age restrictions as to who may take the examination for, or hold a Radiotelephone Operator's Restricted Certificate (Aeronautical). Candidates must prove that they do not have a disability that would impair their ability to operate a radio station safely. Candidates must present identification when writing the examination. Radiotelephone operator's restricted certificates are issued for life and no revalidation is required.

Priorities

The priorities of Communications for Aeronautical Service are as follows:

- Distress communications
- Urgency Communications
- Safety Communications
- All other Communications

Secrecy of Communications

As the study guide states "Radio operators and all persons who become acquainted with RadioCommunications are bound to preserve the secrecy of correspondence. NO person shall divulge the contents, or even the existence of correspondence transmitted, received or intercepted by a radio station, except to the addressee of the message or an accredited agent, to properly authorized officials of the Government of Canada, to a competent legal tribunal, or to an operator of a telecommunications system as is necessary to forward or deliver the communication. These restrictions do not apply to a message of distress, urgency safety or to messages addressed to "ALL STATIONS" that is weather reports, storm warnings etc."

Any person who violates the secrecy of communications is liable, on summary conviction, in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding five thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year, or to both, or, in the case of a corporation, to a fine not exceeding twenty-five thousand dollars.

Control of Communications

The base station maintains control of all communications, and the mobile station will comply with all instructions given by the base station in matters relating to the order and time of transmission, the choice of frequency and the duration and suspension of work. This does not apply in cases of distress or urgency communications, where the control of the communications lies with the station initiating the priority call.

Superfluous Communications and Interference

All communications should be restricted to necessary transmissions of authorized messages only. Profane or obscene language is strictly prohibited.

Any person who violates the regulations pertaining to unauthorized communications or profane language is liable, on summary conviction, in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding five thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year, or to both, or, in the case of a corporation, to a fine not exceeding twenty-five thousand dollars.

Radio frequencies are licensed by Industry Canada and radio stations must be installed and operated as not to interfere or interrupt with the working of another radio station. The only case where this does not apply is when required to transmit a higher priority call or message such as distress, urgency or other priority calls.

Any person who without lawful excuse, interferes with or obstructs any radiocommunication is liable, on summary conviction, in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding five thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year, or to both, or, in the case of a corporation, to a fine not exceeding twenty-five thousand dollars.

False Distress Signals

Any person who knowingly sends, transmits, or causes to be sent or transmitted any false or fraudulent distress signal, message, call or radiogram of any kind is guilty of an offence and is liable, on summary conviction, in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding five thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year, or to both, or, in the case of a corporation, to a fine not exceeding twenty-five thousand dollars.

Operating Procedures

As stated in the study guide, the efficient use of the radio is largely dependent upon the method and articulation used by the radio operator. It is very important to speak at a steady pace and rhythm, taking care to enunciate works properly. Slurred speech or talking rapidly can cause radio transmissions to become muffled and unreadable. Voice modulation is also very important. This means keeping your voice on an even tone, not shouting or accenting

syllables. These things tend to distort over the radio. Even if you have loud background noises from where you are transmitting, it is better to speak in a normal tone of voice rather than shouting. There are a couple of points to remember when using the radio: Speed - constant - not too fast or too slow - You assume that those who are listening to you are writing the information down, but you don't want to put them to sleep!

Rhythm - Speak in a way that groups of ideas and sets of words make sense. Formulate thoughts in your mind prior to keying the microphone. This prevents words such as "er" and "um" from entering into your transmission.

Time and Date - Time is transmitted in the 24 hour clock in order to avoid confusion. It also normally reflects one time zone. In maritime and aviation, the standard time zone referred to is Universal Time Coordinated (UTC) or what was once known as Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) (referring to the time in Greenwich, England). It may also be referred to as "Zulu" time, especially in aviation.

For the purpose of radio transmissions and operations in strictly one time zone area, the local time zone would be used as the standard. Date is expressed as per the examples of the study guide, where day of the month is expressed before the hour.

Phonetic Alphabet - The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) phonetic alphabet is the standard for radio broadcast in Canada and is internationally recognized. The purpose of using this alphabet is to avoid confusion when transmitting difficult or unusual words. Call signs given over the radio should be spelled phonetically.

Radio Telephone Calling Procedures

Always listen to the radio prior to transmitting in order to avoid cutting off or interfering with the transmissions of others. Under normal circumstances a radio operator should wait for a break in radio traffic before transmitting. This is not the case in any station requiring to transmit a distress, urgency or safety communications. The identifier of the station being called is ALWAYS spoken first, followed by "THIS IS" and your own station identifier. For example, you were calling a station XJD354, and your station identifier was XGW379, this is how you would call a station:

> Xray Juliet Delta 3 - 5 - 4
>
> THIS IS
>
> Xray Golf Whiskey 3 - 7 - 9
>
> OVER

The reply would be transmit as follows:

> Xray Golf Whiskey 3 - 7 - 9
>
> THIS IS
>
> Xray Juliet Delta 3 - 5 - 4

GO AHEAD

If a station is not prepared to receive a message, the radio operator must reply with "STAND BY" followed by the number of minutes anticipated. For example, you might say "STAND BY - 1". Never leave a transmission unanswered. If a mobile unit is unable to establish contact with the base radio station, they should try another frequency if available appropriate to the operating area. If the base station is unable to establish contact with a mobile radio, they should attempt to have the information relayed through another station that is able to establish a communications link.

If there has been an error in transmission, use the word "CORRECTION" and broadcast the corrected version. It is not necessary to repeat transmissions unless requested by the receiving station. Requests for repetition of information should be stated as "SAY AGAIN" plus the information requested. For example: "SAY AGAIN all information before....."

As stated in the study guide, the radio operator should use the following procedures in transmitting radio messages:

a) deliver the radio message clearly and concisely using standard phraseology whenever practical;

b) plan the content of the message before transmitting;

c) listen briefly before transmitting to avoid interference with other transmissions.

The message generally consists of four parts:

1. The call-up

2. The reply

3. The message

4. The acknowledgment or ending

Signal or Radio Checks

When a radio is being turned on for the first time during a day, or shift, the operator should conduct a radio or signal check to ensure that the unit is transmitting and receiving. This is done using the following procedure:

Call another station and request a radio check.

The signal check consists of "SIGNAL CHECK 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. HOW DO YOU READ ME? OVER."

Your station identification (call sign) should be transmitted during such test transmissions.

Signal cheeks should not last more than 10 seconds.

When replying or receiving a reply to a signal check, the following readability scale should be used:

1. Bad (unreadable)

2. Poor   (readable now and then)

3. Fair (readable but with difficulty)

4. Good   (readable)

5. Excellent   (perfectly readable)

Activity – Radio Transmissions

Organizer: Techniques and procedures in radio transmissions must be practised in order to become proficient in operating within Industry Canada standards.

Objective: Operate radio within Industry Canada protocols.

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Radios, appropriate location

Process: In small groups of three or four:

- Transmit radio messages using appropriate Industry Canada protocols.
- All Groups share one channel.
- Each group member operates the equipment.
- Other group members observe transmissions.
- Group discusses transmission clarity and adherence to protocol.
- Each member operates and observes

Accountability: All group members can demonstrate effective and consistent radio transmissions using Industry Canada protocols.

Debrief: Where are you on this matrix? Share this information with your group.

	Not Conscious	**Conscious**
Not Competent	**1** can't do it and don't know	**2** can't do it but know this
Competent	**4** doing it naturally	**3** can do it and know this

Radiotelephone Operator's Restricted Certificate (Aeronautical) – 2

Date:

Instructor:

Bridge In:	In order to obtain the Radiotelephone Operator's Restricted Certificate, a student must pass an examination as set by Industry Canada in both a written and oral form.
Instructional Objectives:	Demonstrate the operating procedures required to earn a Radiotelephone Operator's Restricted Certificate (Aeronautical).
Rationale:	Students must familiarize themselves with the operating procedures in radio telephony in order to complete the requirements for an Industry Canada License.
Pre-Test:	What is the most efficient method of transmitting information over a radio system?
Resources:	Industry Canada Guide
Techniques:	Classroom discussion, small group work
Equipment:	Classroom setting, overhead projector, flip chart. Study guide from Industry Canada for each student.

Instructional Strategy

Time	Instructor Activities	Learner Activities	Techniques / Equipment
10 min	Discuss procedural explanation of times and dates	Identify appropriate usage of various times and dates	Whole group
10 min	Discuss the use of call signs in radio transmission	Discuss the sharing of frequencies between more than one user	Whole group
15 min	Discuss Emergency Communications and their protocol.	Discuss the instances where Emergency Communications procedures would be used.	Small groups
15 min	Discuss Urgency Communications and their protocol.	Discuss the instances where Urgency Communications procedures would be used.	Whole group task
10 min	Review procedural words and phrases from the study guide.	Use appropriate language in radio communications.	pairs
20 min	Coach students on radio procedures and scenarios.	Practise making various types of calls on the radio to Industry Canada standards	pairs

Post-Test: Review the operating procedures of radio transmission.

Complete oral and written exams before an examiner for the Industry Canada License.

Instructor Notes

Time and Date

As first learned in call taking, time should be expressed in the 24 hour clock or military time. Time is usually referred to in one standard time zone (Universal Time Coordinated). UTC was formally referred to as Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Reference to it as Zulu time (Z) is also accepted. When operations are conducted solely in one time zone, standard or local time may be used.

When the date and time is required, a six-figure group should be used. The first two figures indicate the day of the month and the following four figures indicate the time.

Example: 16th day of the month at Noon (EST) is: 161200 E

Time is transmitted as the example: 0920 Z - Zero nine two zero zulu

Call Signs

A distinctive call sign, consisting of a group of letters and numbers, is assigned to base stations for identification purposes and should be used at least when initial contact is being established and again when the communications is concluded. An example of call signs given by Industry Canada when issuing radio licenses would be: XJD376 or XJA60.

When two or more users share the same frequency, it is essential that correct identification be used at all times to ensure positive identification. For mobile stations and hand-held units, a readily recognizable identification number should be used. Examples of these would be 40Z23 or 1B14.

Emergency Communications

There are three types of emergency communications procedures used.

Distress Signal

- internationally recognized term for distress is the word "MAYDAY" (M'aider)
- indicates grave and imminent danger by the transmitting station
- has absolute priority over any other transmissions, and all other stations should stop transmitting
- control of distress traffic is the responsibility of the station in distress or of the station which relays the distress message.

The distress message should include the following elements:

- the distress signal "MAYDAY";
- the call sign of the station in distress (once);

- the nature of the distress condition and the kind of assistance required (i.e., what has happened);
- the intentions of the person in command;
- the particulars of its position (airspeed, altitude, heading);
- the number of persons on board and injuries (if applicable);
- any other information that might facilitate the rescue;
- the call sign of the station in distress.

Note: If the aircraft can transmit the distress message immediately after the distress call, then items 1 and 2 may be omitted from the message.

Calls for distress will be repeated by the station in distress in intervals until an answer is received or it is no longer feasible to continue.

Acknowledgment of Receipt of a Distress Message

Acknowledgment of receipt of a distress message shall be given in the following form:

- the call sign of the station in distress;
- the words "THIS IS";
- the call sign of the station acknowledging receipt;
- the words "RECEIVED MAYDAY".

Activity – Practise Distress Signals

Have students practise in pairs, sending and receiving distress signals.

Relay of a Distress Message

Distress messages that are repeated by a station other than the station in distress shall transmit a signal comprised of:

- the signal "MAYDAY RELAY" (spoken three times);
- the words "THIS IS";
- the call sign of the station relaying the message (three times);
- the distress signal "MAYDAY" (once);
- the particulars of the station in distress such as its location, the nature of distress, the number of persons on board, etc.

Action by Stations Other than the Station in Distress

An aircraft station that is not in distress should transmit the distress message when:

- the station in distress is not in a position to transmit the message, or
- the person in command of the station that intervenes believes that further help is necessary.

When a distress message is received and it is known that the aircraft is not in the immediate vicinity, sufficient time should be allowed before the distress message is acknowledged. This will permit stations nearer to the station in distress to reply.

Action by Stations Acknowledging Receipt of a Distress Message

- Forward information immediately to the appropriate search and rescue agencies or organizations.
- Continue to guard the frequency on which the distress message was received and, if possible, any other frequency that may be used by the station in distress.
- Notify any station with direction-finding or radar facilities that may be of assistance, etc.
- Cease all transmissions that may interfere with the distress traffic.

Action by Other Stations Hearing a Distress Message

- Continue to guard the frequency on which the distress message was received and, establish a continuous watch on appropriate distress and emergency frequencies.
- Notify any station with direction-finding or radar facilities and request assistance unless it is known that this action has been, or will be, taken by the station acknowledging receipt of the distress message.
- Cease all transmissions that may interfere with the distress traffic.

Imposition of Silence

- The station in distress, or the station in control of distress traffic, may impose silence on all stations in the area.

- Use the expression "STOP TRANSMITTING - DISTRESS" or the international expression "SILENCE MAYDAY" or "SEELONCE MAYDAY".

- Other stations imposing silence during a distress situation using the expression "STOP TRANSMITTING - DISTRESS" or the international expression "SILENCE DISTRESS" **or** "SEELONCE DISTRESS".

- During a distress situation, all transmissions cease except for those stations involved in distress traffic.

Cancellation of Distress

- When a station is no longer in distress, or when it is no longer necessary to observe radio silence, the rescue vessel or the station that controlled distress traffic shall transmit a message addressed to "ALL STATIONS".

- proper procedure for canceling a distress message is:

    1) the distress signal "MAYDAY" (once);

    2) the words "ALL STATIONS" (three times);

    3) the words "THIS IS";

4) the name or call sign of the station transmitting the message (three times);

5) the filing time of the message;

6) the call sign of the station in distress (once);

7) the words "DISTRESS TRAFFIC ENDED" or the international expression "SILENCE FINISHED" or "SEELONCE FEENEE";

8) a short plain-language description of why the distress situation is being cancelled;

9) the name or call sign of station transmitting the message;

10) the word "OUT".

> **Note:** The procedure outlined here is mainly for the benefit of other stations so they can resume regular service on the distress frequencies. To ensure that search and rescue stations are advised that a station is no longer in distress, a normal call to the nearest radio station detailing the reasons for cancelling the distress call MUST be made.

Activity – Relay and Cancel Distress Signals

Have participants practise in pairs, relaying and canceling distress signals.

Urgency Communications

- internationally recognized words for an urgency signal is "PAN PAN" spoken three times
- indicates that the station calling has a very urgent message to transmit
- urgency signal has priority over all other communications except distress.
- shall be followed by a message giving further information of the situation that necessitated the use of the urgency signal.
- the urgency message should contain as many as required of the following elements, in the following order:

  1) the urgency signal "PAN PAN" (three times);

  2) the name of the station addressed or the words "ALL STATIONS" (three times);

  3) the words "THIS IS";

  4) the identification of the aircraft;

  5) the nature of the urgency condition;

  6) the intentions of the person in command;

  7) present position, flight level or altitude and heading;

  8) any other useful information.

Activity – Practise Urgency Communications

Have participants practise in pairs, sending and receiving urgency communications.

Activity – Simulations – Urgency Radio Transmission

Organizer: Techniques and procedures in safety radio transmissions must be practised in order to become proficient in operating within Industry Canada standards.

Objective: Operate radio within Industry Canada safety (and other) protocols.

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Radios, appropriate location

Process: In small groups of three or four:

- Transmit radio messages using appropriate Industry Canada protocols in all modes.
- All groups share one channel.
- Each group member operates the equipment.
- Other group members observe transmissions.
- Group discusses transmission clarity and adherence to protocol.
- Each member operates and observes

Accountability: All group members can demonstrate effective and consistent radio transmissions in all modes. Testing will be then conducted in order to complete the requirements of a Aeronautical Operators' certificate from a certified examiner.

Debrief: Are you ready for the final exam?

Trainer Notes

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)*

Activity – Use Flash Cards

Organizer: The phonetic alphabet needs to be used naturally.

Objective: Memorize and use the phonetic alphabet.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: 5 x 7 cards, felt pens

Process: Have pairs of participants

- Prepare Flash Cards of Phonetic Alphabet.
- Use them with each other to rehearse material.

Accountability: Use the phonetic alphabet to spell out names.

Debrief: What made the biggest difference to your learning?

Use this activity with military time, numerals, conversions, etc.

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)*

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.

Assignment

Managing Calls

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

Bridge in: When a call comes in, who will be in control?

Learning   Identify a variety of ways to manage calls effectively.
Objectives:

Rationale: Calls must be managed effectively so that they can be responded to
                       effectively.

Pre-Test: What techniques and resources will you use to manage calls?

Resources: Call Taking Basics for Everyone, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques: Classroom setting, whole group, small groups.

Equipment: Classroom, flip chart, overhead, cassette player, video recorder

Training Strategy

Time	Trainer Activities	Learner Activities	Techniques / Equipment
15 min.	*Explain what it means to manage a call.*	*Identify the techniques and resources that could be used to manage a call.*	*Whole group*
20 min.	*Identify personal techniques for call management. Control the call, keep the caller on line, remain objective, defuse defensive reactions, react when you have necessary information, involve the caller, use call backs, end the call.*	*Discuss how and when various call management techniques would be appropriate.* *Match strategies with types of calls.*	*Think-Pair-Share*
15 min.	*Identify supports for call management. Chain of command, teamwork, other agencies, other people at the scene*	*Discuss how and when a call taker would enlist various supports.*	*Whole group*
10 min	*Collect and comment on ideas* *Debrief activity*	*Share strategies.*	*Whole group*

Post-Test: Discuss ways of managing calls effectively.

Trainer Notes

Managing a Variety of 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:

Activity – Think-Pair-Share – Strategies for Call Management

Objective: Share possible strategies for call management.

Time: 30 minutes (dispersed throughout the presentation).

Techniques / Equipment: text materials, instructor stories. Monitor and encourage participation.

Process: Individually:

- Think about call management in various situations.

In Pairs:

- Discuss strategies that could be used for call management in various situations.

Accountability: Share possible strategies for call management with others.

Debrief: Identify how discussing the situation helped you identify your feelings about call management.

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 situations 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. 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 situation 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 situations 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 situation. 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.

Practice 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.

Call Taker Practise – III – Managing and Prioritizing Calls

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

Bridge in: What priority will you give a call?

Learning   Prioritize a variety of calls.
Objectives:

Rationale: Police units must have information on response priorities.

Pre-Test: What questions do you ask to identify the priority of as call?

Resources: Call Taking Basics for Everyone, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*

Time: 90 minutes

Techniques: Classroom discussion, small group work, lab activity.

Equipment: Classroom setting, overhead projector, flipchart, audiotapes.

Training Strategy

Time	Trainer Activities	Student Activities	Techniques / Equipment
10 min	*Play audiotape(s).* *Guide activity*	*Assign appropriate priority to calls.*	*small groups, audiotapes*
10 min	*Comment on priority and responses* *Guide Activity*	*Identify appropriate and inappropriate responses to given situations.*	*small groups, audiotape, tape player*
10 min	*Complete accountability* *Debrief activity*	*Assign appropriate priority to information* *Discuss personal certainty*	*whole group*
20 min	*Set situations for practice.*	*Obtain critical information from callers, makes calls.*	*Small groups*
20 min	*Assess ability to obtain information.*	*Observe caller and call taking.*	*Small groups*
10 min	*Focus feedback session.*	*Give feedback to partner on observations.*	*Pairs*
10 min	*Focus debriefing.*	*Identify strengths and areas for improvement.*	*Pairs*

Post-Test: Manage and prioritize a variety of calls.

Trainer Notes

Activity – Prioritize Audiotape Calls

Organizer: Being able to quickly assign priority to a call is a critical call taker skill.

Objective: Listen to situations on audiotape and assign appropriate priorities.

Time: 30 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: call audiotapes, tape playback unit. Ensure accuracy. Monitor and encourage participation.

Process: In small groups of two or three:

- listen to audiotapes of police calls.
- discuss the police calls and assign them a priority.

Accountability: Describe various possible priorities and give reasons why they were chosen.

Debrief: How certain were you about your priority assignments on a scale of 1 (very certain) to 5 (very uncertain)? Why?

Activity – Interactive Practice – Call Management and Prioritizing

Organizer: This is a chance for participants to work with safe and realistic situations.

Objective: Practise calling, call taking, observation, with giving and receiving feedback.

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Situations, phones, headsets, observation sheets, occurrence forms, CAD system

Process: In pairs of pairs:

- One pair will consist of a caller and an observer of the caller.
- One pair will consist of a call taker and an observer of the call taker.
- The call is made and taken realistically by the caller and call taker using the information in the situations and the skills, knowledges and attitudes taught.
- Information will be documented on a written form or on a cad system.
- The observers will observe the process without interfering.
- The observers will provide positive written and verbal feedback to their partner after each situations using the elements of feedback basics.
- Pairs of pairs will discuss problems that arise out of the situation and strategize around different approaches.
- Each pairs will change roles between themselves and repeat the above process.
- Pairs will then partner with a new pair and reverse roles (the caller pair becomes the call taker pair and vice versa).

Accountability: The observer gives positive feedback to the other partner after each situation. Share strategies for dealing with the problems that could arise in the situations.

Debrief: What was the best part of your practice with your partners. Identify strengths and areas for improvement.

These exercises are to be repeated using a variety of situations and scenarios until the skills are automatic.

Common Sense in Call Taking

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

Bridge in: Common sense is something very important to effective call taking. But what is common sense? It is not something that we are born with, but happily it is something that we can learn and develop.

Learning Objectives: Explain how common sense in call taking is developed and enhanced.

Rationale: Experienced call takers can sense there is more to a routine complaint by way of a gut feeling or sixth sense. This is not necessarily an inherited trait, but rather one borne out of years of training and experience.

Pre-Test: Discuss a situation when you have gone on gut feelings or not felt right about something. How did you deal with the situation? What were your feelings at the time? Did you feel that you handled the situation well? Given a second chance, what would you have done differently?

Resources: Call Taking Basics for Everyone, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*

Time: 40 minutes

Techniques: Classroom discussion, small group work

Equipment: Classroom setting, overhead projector, flip chart

Training Strategy

Time	Trainer Activities	Learner Activities	Techniques / Equipment
5 min.	Define common sense using brainstorm with group.	Discuss situations in which you have used what you think of as common sense.	Flip chart whole group
5 min.	Review how the four characteristics of call takers help develop common sense – flexibility, empathy, professionalism, knowledge.	Give personal examples or experiences.	Whole group
5 min.	Identify how *training* develops common sense.	Discuss lifelong learning as a public safety communicator.	Whole group
5 min.	Identify how *judgment* develops common sense.	Discuss how judgment is developed through study and interaction with experienced communicators.	Whole group
5 min.	Identify *limitations* that communicators may experience.	Discuss methods to minimize limitations.	Whole group
5 min.	Identify *techniques* to utilize resources and expand information.	Identify resources and discuss current affairs topics.	Whole group
10 min.	Summarize call taker basics information.	Respond to questions about the module.	Whole group

Post-Test: Complete the criterion test for call taking with a partner and hand it in.

Trainer Notes

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. It is something that you can develop through focusing on four key areas.

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 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.

Activity – Discussion – Analysis

Organizer: You need to know what is happening in your area and in the world as it affect you, your caller and how you handle calls.

Objective: Exchange ideas and analyze a current affairs topic.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: Discussion, current events articles from local or world sources.

Process: In groups of three or four:

- Exchange ideas on a current volatile situation.
- Develop responses both in agreement and in opposition to this situation and a rationale for those responses.

Accountability: Balance the points of views and explain you analysis.

Debrief: How does the rationale match current reality and response from various sectors?

A written test on the elements of call taking can be given at this time to be completed in pairs and handed in at the next class. This acts as a reinforcement for the materials and discussions in this section.

Portable Radio Operation

Date:

Instructor:

Bridge in: Communications uses a variety of tools for communication. Portable radios are one of the most common tools.

Learning Objectives: Effectively operate a portable radio.
Analyze data gathered on radio operation.

Rationale: The portable radio is a common tool used in radio communications, and Communicators must be familiar with their purpose and operation.

Pre-Test: How many people have operated a portable radio before? What do you know about portable radios?

Resource: Radio Operating Manual

Techniques: Classroom discussion, small group work

Equipment: Classroom setting, overhead projector, flip chart

Instructional Strategy

Time	*Instructor Activities*	*Learner Activities*	*Techniques / Equipment*
10 min	*Identify portable radios and their purpose for different service agencies.*	*Group discussion to identify what is known about portable radios*	*small groups brainstorm on a flip chart*
5 min	*Explain radio frequencies .*	*Discuss how frequencies are controlled in Canada*	*whole group, flip chart*
10 min	*Define protocol*	*Brainstorm radio protocol and how it is necessary in public broadcasting*	*Whole group task*
20 min	*Demonstrate the procedures in operating a radio - turn it on, adjust squelch, and volume*	*Operate the radio*	*small group*
10 min	*Identify appropriate methods of speaking over a radio.*	*Discuss the methods of speaking into a portable, necessity to maintain a normal speaking voice for transmission*	*whole group*
60 min	*Guide groups in radio testing throughout the campus area*	*Conduct radio testing between the lab and other areas to discover range, clarity, coverage.*	*small group work*

Post-Test: Conduct radio testing to dispatch counterparts and determine the range of the lab equipment. Dispatchers type information into computer, detailing the testing results.

Instructor Notes

Portable Radios

Determine from the class, how many have used a portable radio in the past. Depending on the size of the experienced communicators, you can use a good mix of experienced and inexperienced students to do the group work. Due to the technical nature of much of the radio information, it is more productive to have a group interactive session, where each member of the class can share what they know about this particular topic. For example, one student was familiar with and interested in ham radio operation. Drawing on the interest of these students can make for more interesting discussions. Often these students have a lot to contribute toward the explanation of terminology.

Squelch is a feature on a radio that acts as a noise filter to adjust the amount of static received over the portable. It is important to adjust the squelch just until the static stops for maximum reception. Squelch is also used during long periods of quiet on the radio system to determine if the portable is still functioning.

The extension or remote **microphone** is a small speaker attached to a portable radio by means of a long curly cord attachment. It is often clipped to a leather tab attached to the epaulet of the uniform of the person carrying it. This allows the portable radio to be operated at a lower volume (when clipped to a belt) that the wearer can comfortably hear what is going on and can respond easily, even in a noisy environment.

PTT (Push to talk/Press to talk) This is the button found on the side of the portable radio or the remote microphone that "keys" the radio to talk. Some portables also have a feature called **RTT** (Request to talk). This is a button which sends out a signal tone to the dispatch centre, with an identifier code indicating which portable is waiting to call. The Dispatcher then responds to that request. The emergency button is a feature on some portables that allows the wearer to contact the dispatch centre without using voice transmission. This is especially important in emergency situations where it is not possible to speak, but imperative that help be sent right away. It is also important to note that use of this feature requires personnel to ensure that their locations are kept up to date at all times with the central dispatch. This feature is no good without knowing where the person is.

Radio Frequencies

Radio frequencies are licensed by Industry Canada and are public property in Canada. Each Public Safety Agency must possess a radio license for the frequencies they operate on. It is a federal offense to operate a radio without a license, or to use the frequency of another agency.

Protocol

Protocol is a standardized set of rules governing appropriate behaviours and procedures.

Radio Communication Model

*The **radio communication model** is a five-step model designed to ensure that radio transmissions are as brief and precise as possible. This model is a major element in the coordination of both routine and emergency incidents, and allows for confirmation and feedback between the sender (operator) and the receiver (field unit) in ensuring messages are relayed and understood. The proper use of the model also reduces the amount of unnecessary on-air transmissions.*

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Sender formulates the message      │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Sender establishes communication   │
│            with receiver             │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Sender relays the message       │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Receiver confirms the message and  │
│          provides feedback           │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│     Transmission is formally ended   │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
```
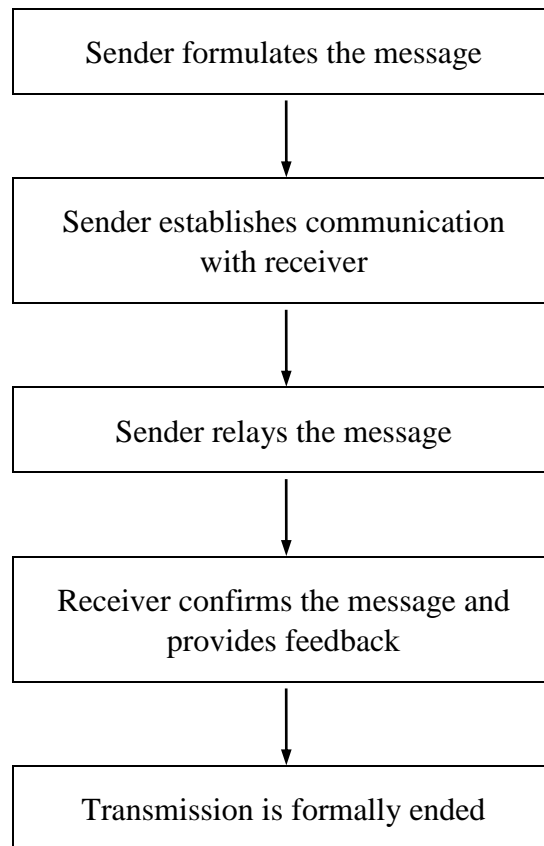
1. Sender Formulates The Message.

Before transmitting anything over the air, the operator needs to form a clear mental image of the exact information to send to the field unit. Messages must be clear, concise and as brief as possible. Information should be relayed in a logical and sequential method. On-air transmissions from the communications center should attempt to answer every question on scene personnel may have. Anticipate the information that will be required, or request and relay it as soon as possible. If you are still attempting to gather information, relay your attempts to the field unit and the approximate time delay involved in gathering it.

2. Sender Establishes Communication With The Receiver.

When the decision is made to transmit the message, the sender must first listen to the transmissions already in progress and determine the priority of his/her message. Listen long enough to establish that your communication will not interfere with ongoing communications, or those of a higher priority. Radio communication is frequently a matter of common sense. If you need to interfere with other radio transmissions, wait for the first break in ongoing transmissions (listening out). Failure to listen out before transmitting is one of the most common errors in radio communications. Communicators need to be aware that different agencies have unique procedures or language used to interrupt or override radio communications.

In order to send a message or relay information, you must first gain the attention of the receiver. This is done by identifying the receiver with their call sign, identifying yourself and then awaiting confirmation that they are ready to listen or copy. Each agency will have unique call signs or methods used to establish initial communications. Determine what they are and use them.

3. Sender Relays The Message/Information.

When the receiver indicates a readiness to have the message relayed, it must be done in the shortest time possible. Words or phrases that have no effect on the meaning of the message, or to the information, should be avoided. Choose words that are distinct, forceful and convey a definite meaning. If longer messages are necessary, the sender should break at a natural point. This can be done by saying break or stop check. Breaks in long transmissions allow personnel an opportunity to request a repeat of information that has been missed, as well as allowing other units to interrupt if they become involved in a situation of higher priority.

Differences in word or phrase meaning is a common source of radio communication failure. An example is the word yes. Yes has many different meanings or interpretations, depending on how it is communicated or conveyed. Yes may mean, Yes, I have heard what you said, as opposed to Yes, I will do what you say. All doubtful words or phrases must be double checked for accuracy and meaning.

4. Receiver Confirms The Message/Information And Provides Feedback.

Always ensure that the transmission was understood. If the field unit does not acknowledge receipt of the message or information, check to make sure it was received and understood. Do this in the briefest manner possible. Always keep in mind that on-air time is valuable. Do not repeat the entire message if a simple Did you copy? will suffice.

Along the same lines, if only part of your transmission was lost or misunderstood, it makes more sense to determine which part needs to be repeated and only transmit from there. Often the phrase, "I say again from… (last part of communication that was understood)" is used.

Example:

Field unit needs clarification only on the street name.

Unit: *"Say again name of street"*

There is no need to repeat the full address if the unit only needs the name of the street.

5. Transmission Is Formally Ended.

This important and final step in radio communication protocol is one of the most frequently forgotten.

The sender and the receiver formally acknowledge the end of their communications by stating:
10-4, Out, or whatever specific term applies to your agency.

This acknowledgment serves two purposes. It allows both the sender and receiver to determine that no further transmissions are required or forthcoming, and that all messages or information have been received and understood. It also determines for others who are listening and waiting to transmit that the air is now clear, and that they are free to transmit their communications without interrupting others.

Equipment Use

To ensure the best quality of sound, make sure your equipment is in proper working condition and properly adjusted If you use a headset, keep the microphone just below your mouth, about two inches away. Check to make sure that the connection is plugged in all the way. Make sure the end of your microphone is free from any debris. Avoid hitting the microphone with any objects or brush against it with your hand - the microphone is extremely sensitive and will pick up any sound.

If you utilize a table or boom microphone, be consistent with your distance from the microphone and its volume. The microphone should be held at approx. 2-3 inches from the mouth when transmitting. Whether you use a headset or boom microphone, distance is important: too close, causes distortion, too far away causes the voice to fade. Test your speech volume with the volume meter on your console.

Only push the transmit bar when you are ready to speak. Think before you speak. The microphone should be keyed first, pause, then begin speaking. Release the PTT when you have finished what you have to say. Failure to do this causes something called "clipping" - the words at the beginning or end of the transmission are cut off. Some radios give off a "beep" to indicate that an open channel has been reached.

Activity – Operate a Radio

Organizer:　You must be able to operate radio equipment to communicate effectively.

Objective:　Operate radio equipment effectively. Analyze data that has been gathered.

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Radios, appropriate widespread location,

Process: In small groups of three or four:

- Ensure all group members understand the safe operation of the equipment using the checklist as a guide.
- Conduct tests with the portables and base stations throughout the area.
- Groups share one channel to practise about brevity and protocol.
- Each group member operates the equipment.
- Each group member spends time in the lab typing information regarding the tests into the computer.
- Other group members observe operation referring to and completing the checklist.
- Group discusses and strategizes operation possibilities.
- Each member operates and observes

Accountability: All group members can demonstrate effective operations of radio equipment. Information is printed out and compared between groups to analyse the differences in radio equipment and strengths.

Debrief: Where are you on this matrix? Share this information with your group.

	Not Conscious	**Conscious**
Not Competent	**1** can't do it and don't know	**2** can't do it but know this
Competent	**4** doing it naturally	**3** can do it and know this

Use of Radio Protocol

Date: _____

Instructor: _____

Bridge in: How you communicate on the radio is essential to getting the message across and maintaining good working relationships.

Learning Objectives: Discuss the roles of radio protocol and cooperation between agencies in the professional operation of Public Safety Agencies.

Rationale: The primary purpose of communication is to establish a common understanding between the sender and receiver. True communication can only be achieved if both parties understand the information or message being sent.

Pre-Test: What is Protocol?

Resources: Radio Communications for Dispatchers Guide; Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Techniques: Classroom discussion, small group work

Equipment: Classroom setting, overhead projector, flip chart

Instructional Strategy

Time	*Instructor Activities*	*Learner Activities*	*Techniques / Equipment*
10 min	*Identify radio protocol needs in service agencies.*	*Discuss how radio protocol is important to personnel and for public safety*	*Whole group brainstorm*
20 min	*Identify effective communication with outside resources*	*Discuss when and how outside resources are used effectively.*	*Think, Pair, Share*
15 min	*Describe the levels of cooperation between agencies*	*Identify the connections between agencies*	*Think, Pair, Share*
10 min	*Collect and comment on information* *Debrief activity*	*Share information/feelings.* *Discuss aids to Process*	*whole group*
40 min	*Question the need for professionalism in Communications*	*Develop a position on both sides of the role of professionalism in Communications*	*Structured Controversy*
10 min	*Act as referee and timekeeper Debrief activity*	*Present both sides of the issue* *Discuss how process affects concepts and ideas*	*whole group*

Post-Test: Describe ways that various agencies apply protocol and cooperate with each other to provide communication services.

Instructor Notes

Activity – Brainstorm

Organizer: Protocol varies from agency to agency. Some items are common and others are quite different.

Objective: Identify ways that communicator roles are affected by agency protocol.

Time: 5 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Brainstorm, flip chart, felt pens

Process: In the whole group:

- Brainstorm the various ways that communicator roles are affected by agency protocol.

Accountability: Share ideas. Use those examples and documented information to expand on their ideas.

Debrief: Identify how what you knew already fits into the expanded materials.

Protocol Needs

Effective radio communication is the foundation for the exchange of accurate information among the communications center, field personnel, and other agencies. In an emergency situation, radio communications play a vital and active role in relaying information that may ultimately save a life, or lives.

Radio communication is only effective when it is a two-way process. The primary purpose of communication is to establish a common understanding between sender and receiver. True communication can only be achieved if both parties understand the information or message being sent.

During the early stages of an emergency response, a large amount of air time is used. The communications center is busy gathering and relaying information, and notifying appropriate personnel and agencies. Additional air traffic comes from fields units acknowledging duties or information, and communicating between themselves or with supervisors and the communications center. In addition, the operator and field units constantly relay updates from the center or the scene in an effort to keep all involved personnel informed of the status of the emergency. Unless correct radio discipline is maintained, critical information may get lost in the rush of on-air transmissions.

The operator's job is to maintain radio control. It is not an easy one. During most emergencies, most personnel's adrenaline and stress levels elevate. Each person with a radio believes the information he/she has to relay is more important than what the next person has to say. When many personnel try to talk at once, messages may not get acknowledged, transmissions may be cut off, and vital information may not be relayed to the person who requires it. The problem is compounded as personnel get angry or frustrated by being unable to perform their jobs because they are unable to

get on the radio or use it properly. Proper radio discipline is a vital component to ensure communication problems are kept to a minimum and do not interfere with the successful conclusion of an emergency situation.

Established radio communication protocols ensure that messages are received and understood, and promote

- personnel and public safety,
- effective use of outside resources,
- cooperation between agencies, and
- professionalism and pride.

Personnel And Public Safety

One of the greatest responsibilities of the communication operator is the safety of the field unit personnel and the general public. Effective radio communication allows the operator to know a field unit's location at all times. Personnel can then quickly be advised of any updated information regarding the need for additional services, safety hazards, and medical attention requirements. The relaying of new information assists agency personnel in making decisions or taking actions to ensure their own safety and those of the victim(s) or general public.

Activity – Think Pair Share

Organizer: Different protocols affect personnel in a variety of ways.

Objective: Discuss how protocol affects personnel in a service agency.

Time: 10 minutes

Technique/Equipment: Details of a case, situation or question

Process: In Pairs:

- Identify the importance of radio protocol to personnel.
- Identify their priority within service agencies.

Individually:

- Think about the scenario and it's implications.

In Pairs:

- Discuss ideas and thoughts.

Accountability: Share the information with others.

Debrief: Identify how discussing the situation added to how well you could identify your feelings about the situation.

Effective Use Of Outside Resources

Using standardized radio protocols simplifies communication with outside agencies in requesting their assistance, attendance or cooperation at a scene or situation. Other

service agencies or resources are as busy as yours and will appreciate receiving as much information as possible, in the briefest manner possible, to relay to their own personnel. It is imperative always to acknowledge and confirm requests for attendance by outside resources, with an estimated time of arrival (ETA), if possible. If an outside resource requests your assistance, extend them the same courtesy.

Cooperation Between Agencies

Effective radio communications make it easier for other agencies to understand your own departmental requirements. Using standardized radio protocol helps to eliminate costly and timely duplication of services among agencies attending the same emergency or situation.

Activity – Think Pair Share

Organizer: What promotes cooperation between agencies?

Objective: Analyze the elements that encourage cooperation between agencies.

Time: 10 minutes

Technique/Equipment: Details of a case, situation or question

Process: In Pairs:

• Consider the question

    "Why is cooperation between agencies important in any emergency?"

Individually:

• Think about the scenario and it's implications.

In Pairs:

• Discuss ideas and thoughts.

Accountability: Share the information with others.

Debrief: Identify how sharing information added to how well you know the material.

Professionalism

Using established radio protocols and discipline demonstrates an agency's commitment to a professional code of conduct within the industry. Each time a communicator transmits over the air, he/she in essence makes a public broadcast. Professional conduct will assist in developing a better rapport between public safety agencies and the public. The manner in which an agency's personnel communicate on the air may be the basis for how the agency is judged by the public and other industries. Professionalism is essential for communicators.

Activity – Structured Academic Controversy

Organizer: Is it "just a job"?

Objective: Debate the importance of professionalism as a Communicator.

Time: 20 minutes

Process: In groups of four, then split into pairs:

- Describe the process and leave the instructions on the overhead or write out on the flip chart
- Pass out the reference documentation Pose the questions
- "Is professionalism important in Communications?"
- Prepare in pairs (one pair yes, one pair no) – discuss with other pair
- Reverse positions with other pair
- Repeat process

Accountability: Build a case for both sides of the question.

Debrief: In your group discuss: "What happened with respect to your perception of professionalism and pride in your work through the discussion?" Debrief the individual groups with the whole class.

Radio Codes/Plain Language Transmissions

Date:

Instructor:

Bridge in: Information must be transmitted in a way that matches the Standard Operating Procedures of the agency.

Learning Objectives: Use various codes and forms of plain language to transmit information over a radio.

Rationale: Various agencies use different means of coding or not coding information for radio transmission. You need to be comfortable with all methods.

Pre-Test: What is the best way to transmit the information that you need to pass on?

Resources: Radio Communications for Dispatchers Guide; Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Techniques: Classroom discussion, small group work

Equipment: Classroom setting, overhead projector, flip chart

Instructional Strategy

Time	Instructor Activities	Learner Activities	Techniques / Equipment
10 min	Define radio communication codes	Discuss purpose for developing and implementing radio communication codes	Small groups
45 min	Present premise to be debated Guide Activity	Identify and explore various aspects of Radio Codes and Plain Language transmission	small groups, reference documents
10 min	Complete Accountability Debrief Activity	Achieve content Objective Discuss how process affects concepts and ideas	Whole group
20 min	Explain local use of Police Radio Ten Code	Practise Radio Ten Code - Police (local variation)	Small group task
10 min	Give examples of other codes used in communications	Differentiate Other Codes	Whole group activity
10 min	Review appropriate use of procedural words and phrases.	Demonstrate use of Procedural Words and Phrases	pairs
20 min	Describe the application of Plain Language / Clear Text	Use Plain Language / Clear Text in radio communications	small groups
20 min	Guide practise in appropriate radio communications.	Practise Combinations of radio communication styles	small groups

Post-Test: Practise transmitting information over a portable radio using both radio codes and plain language.

Instructor Notes

Activity – Structured Academic Controversy

Organizer: There are various elements of debate over the issue of Radios Codes vs Plain Language radio transmissions.

Objective: Identify and explore various aspects of Radios Codes and Plain Language radio transmissions.

Time: 45 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: Position reference documents on Radios Codes vs Plain Language radio transmissions. Describe the process and leave the instructions on the overhead or write out on the flip chart. Debrief the individual groups with the whole class.

Process: Start with groups of four, and then have the groups pair off:

- Using the reference documentation answer the questions

    "Which is a better method, Radios Codes or Plain Language radio transmissions?"

- Prepare in pairs (one pair Codes, one pair Plain Language) – discuss with other pair
- Reverse positions with other pair
- Repeat process

Accountability: Each participant is able to move from one position to the other position in their presentations.

Debrief: What happened with respect to your perception of the two types of radio transmissions through the discussion?

Radio Codes

The initial purpose for developing and implementing the use of radio communication codes was an attempt to shorten transmission of messages. It was believed that the use of the 10 Code afforded some degree of privacy. Over the years, emergency service agencies have implemented codes in radio transmissions in an attempt to relay information in secrecy to avoid unwanted detection by the public, the media or other interested parties.

The main concern with the use of codes is the variations from one agency to another. Communication between agencies is often confusing, and the potential for misinterpretation is greater when relying on a code for radio transmissions. Communication operators must always be aware that radio codes relayed from another agency even within their own jurisdiction may have a totally different meaning.

A communication operator who changes agencies or jurisdictions is often required to learn a different code for radio transmissions. During times of stress, this employee

runs the risk of reverting back to a former and more familiar code. The potential for risking the safety of department personnel may have severe consequences.

The use of codes in radio communications are widespread and vary considerably from agency to agency. They have almost become part of the language and culture of emergency services. For whatever reason, they have evolved to what they are today and are here to stay in radio communication.

Phonetic Alphabet, Numerals And Times

The phonetic alphabet is used to avoid confusion when transmitting difficult or unusual words. Numerals and time have specific forms that are used in radio communications.

The TEN CODE may change at any time. Different agencies may use a code system unique to themselves, or a combination of several. Communicators must be current and familiar with the TEN CODE used by their agency, and must keep up to date on any changes to it.

Other Codes

CODES 1, 2 and 3 may be used by the communications operator to indicate to the field unit the degree of urgency required in his/her response. The field unit may use the code to indicate to the communications operator how he/she is responding or wishes to respond to a situation encountered in the field.

CODE 1..........Routine

CODE 2..........Respond as quickly as possibly without using emergency equipment and complying with provisions of the Motor Vehicle Act

CODE 3..........Respond at once using Emergency Equipment

The International Hospital Standard uses the following codes:

CODE BLACK..........Bomb Threat

CODE BLUE.............Cardiac Arrest

CODE GREY.............Shock Trauma

CODE GREEN..........Evacuation

CODE ORANGE.......Disaster

CODE RED...............Fire

CODE WHITE...........Aggressive/Violent Patient

CODE YELLOW.......Missing Patient

Use of Codes

New and inexperienced communication operators often mix words or phrases with the use of codes. Usually the meaning of the code is repeated using additional or unnecessary words or phrases, defeating the reason for using the code. This should never be done as it is a waste of valuable air time.

Examples:

Incorrect: *"Please 10-9 (Repeat) that last part, I didn't get it all"*

Correct: *" 10-9 all after…"*

Incorrect: *"Please 10-12 (Stand by) for a minute, I'm extremely busy right now"*

Correct: *"10-12 for 1 minute"*

Radio Communication Words and Phrases.

Procedural Words and Phrases

Although it is difficult to set out precise plain language/clear text phraseology that is standard throughout all emergency services, slang expressions should not be used. Radio communicators are not air traffic controllers, amateur radio operators, or CBers and should not transmit as if they think they are. Refer to the Industry Canada Study Guide for the Radiotelephone Operator's Restricted Certificate (Aeronautical) for appropriate and current terminology and usage.

Word or Phrase	**Meaning**
ACKNOWLEDGE	Let me know that you have received and understood this message
AFFIRMATIVE	Yes, or permission granted
BREAK	Indicates the separation between portions of the message. (To be used when there is no clear distinction between the text and other portions of the message.)
CHANNEL	Change to channel _____ before proceeding
CLEARED	Authorized to proceed under the conditions specified
CONFIRM	My version is … Is that correct?
CORRECTION	An error has been made in this transmission (message indicated). The correct version is ....
DISREGARD	Consider this transmission as not sent
GO AHEAD	Proceed with your message
HOW DO YOU READ?	Self-explanatory

I SAY AGAIN ....Self-explanatory (use instead of "I SAY AGAIN REPEAT").

MAYDAY..............................The spoken word for distress communications

MAYDAY RELAY ....The spoken word for the distress relay signal

MONITOR............................Listen on (frequency)

NEGATIVE ....No, or that is not correct, or I do not agree

OUT ....Conversation is ended and no response is expected

OVER...................................My transmission is ended and I expect a response from you

PAN PAN..............................The spoken word for urgency communications

READ BACK........................Repeat all of this message back to me exactly as received after I have given "OVER" (Do not use the word "REPEAT".)

ROGER ....I have received all of your last transmission

ROGER NUMBER................I have received your message Number

SAY AGAIN.........................Self-explanatory (Do not use the word "REPEAT")

STAND BY...........................I must pause for a few seconds or minutes, please wait

SEELONCE ....An international expression to indicate that silence has been imposed on the frequency due to a distress situation. The aeronautical phrase is "STOP TRANSMITTING"

SEELONCE FEENEE ....An international expression to indicate that the distress situation has ended (The aeronautical phrase is DISTRESS TRAFFIC ENDED)

SEELONCE MAYDAY ....An international expression to advise that a distress situation is in progress. (The aeronautical phrase is "STOP TRANSMITTING MAYDAY")

THAT IS CORRECT.............Self-explanatory

VERIFY ....Check coding, cheek text with originator and send correct version

WILCO ....Your instructions received, understood and will be complied with

WORDS TWICE ....(a) As a request: Communication is difficult, please send each word twice
(b) As information: Since communication is difficult, I will send each word twice

From Study Guide for the Radiotelephone Operator's Restricted Certificate (Aeronautical)

Plain Language/Clear Text

More and more service agencies are using and relying on the use of plain language or clear text in radio communications. This method of transmitting messages involves simple and straightforward use of the English language in single words or short phrases. It is generally agreed that the use of plain language/clear text phraseology takes no longer than the use of codes and is more efficient as there is no need to memorize specific codes that may become confusing and easily forgotten under stress. Using plain language/clear text phraseology also eliminates confusion and misinterpretation between agencies.

Example (Fire Service)

Field Unit: *"Dispatch, this is Engine 3, Over"*

Dispatch: *"Unit 3, this is Dispatch, Go Ahead"*

Field Unit: *"Unit 3 has arrived, require hydro for wires down, Over"*

Dispatch: *"Unit 3 copy you've arrived, request hydro attend, Dispatch Out"*

Example (Police Service)

Field Unit: *"Radio, Bravo 4"*

Dispatch: *"Bravo 4"*

Field Unit: *"At scene, request hydro for wires down"*

Dispatch: *"Bravo 4, copy, will advise their ETA"*

Combinations

Some service agencies supplement plain language/clear text phraseology with the use of codes under certain circumstances. These combinations are often based on the standard 10 Code and / or the standard phonetic alphabet. Codes are often used to indicate injuries, deaths, bomb threats, arson or suspicious fires, or that a department member is in serious danger. Once these combination codes are transmitted, it is an indication that the situation is of a high priority and non essential radio transmissions are to cease until the situation is under control.

Closely related to code words are call signs which are used to identify field officers, on scene commanders, emergency and other agencies and units. This can provide an efficient way of organizing and monitoring department resources. The communication centre base station may also have a designated call sign such as Control, Dispatch, Radio or Base.

As you can see, there is potential for confusion caused by a lack of standardized codes or identifying call signs among emergency agencies. Communications can break down easily.

For this reason the use of plain language/clear text phraseology may have a distinct advantage over the use of codes, especially if secrecy is not an issue.

Activity – Practise Appropriate Words and Phrases

Organizer: *To get a message across clearly and within plain language guidelines requires practise with words and phrases.*

Objective: Practise using appropriate words and phrases over radios and telephones to simulate Communications transmissions.

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Radios, appropriate location

Process: In small groups of three or four:

- Transmit radio messages using appropriate words and phrases and plain language.
- All Groups share one channel.
- Each group member operates the equipment.
- Other group members observe transmissions.
- Group discusses transmission clarity and adherence to protocol.
- Each member operates and observes

Accountability: All group members can demonstrate effective and consistent radio transmissions in plain language.

Debrief: How does this mode feel in comparison to the more formal mode?

Trainer Notes

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

Bridge in: Common sense is something very important to effective call taking. But what is common sense? It is not something that we are born with, but happily it is something that we can learn and develop.

Learning Objectives: Explain how common sense in communications call taking is developed and enhanced.

Rationale: Experienced call takers can sense there is more to a routine complaint by way of a gut feeling or sixth sense. This is not necessarily an inherited trait, but rather one borne out of years of training and experience.

Pre-Test: Discuss a situation when you have gone on gut feelings or not felt right about something. How did you deal with the situation? What were your feelings at the time? Did you feel that you handled the situation well? Given a second chance, what would you have done differently?

Resources: Call Processing Basics for Everyone Services, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*

Time: 40 minutes

Techniques: Classroom discussion, small group work

Equipment: Classroom setting, overhead projector, flip chart

Training Strategy

Time	Trainer Activities	Learner Activities	Techniques / Equipment
5 min.	Define common sense using brainstorm with group.	Discuss situations in which you have used what you think of as common sense.	Flip chart whole group
5 min.	Review how the four characteristics of call takers help develop common sense – flexibility, empathy, professionalism, knowledge.	Give personal examples or experiences.	Whole group
5 min.	Identify how *training* develops common sense.	Discuss lifelong learning as a public safety communicator.	Whole group
5 min.	Identify how *judgment* develops common sense.	Discuss how judgment is developed through study and interaction with experienced communicators.	Whole group
5 min.	Identify *limitations* that communicators may experience.	Discuss methods to minimize limitations.	Whole group
5 min.	Identify *techniques* to utilize resources and expand information.	Identify resources and discuss current affairs topics.	Whole group
10 min.	Summarize call taker basics information.	Respond to questions about the module.	Whole group

Post-Test: Complete the criterion test for call taking with a partner and hand it in.

Trainer Notes

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. It is something that you can develop through focusing on four key areas.

Activity – Interact with a Guest Speaker

Organizer: Guest Speakers from industry are vital links to the real world. They hold their positions through competence and expertise in their particular area and are rich sources of information and opinion.

Objective: Identify and report on the main ideas presented on dispatching.

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques / Equipment: Guest Speaker with extensive experience in dispatching. Monitor and support participation and the exchange of ideas.

Process: Individually:

- Listen and take notes on the most important points.

- Ask clarifying questions.

In Pairs:

- Read and compare notes on presentation by Guest Speaker.

- Revise notes to identify the most important elements of presentation.

Accountability: Hand in copy of your revised notes to the Trainer

Debrief: What insights did your partner share that clarified any part of the presentation for you?

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 an important call, but before you have all the details. Supplementary information can be passed on to update responding units.

Support Dispatcher / Field Units

Other people, such as the support dispatcher and the 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 that 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.

Information to Dispatch a Call

To dispatch a typical report you will need to have recorded and supply to the units the following information:

Location of incident

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 unusual characteristics associated to it.

Details of incident

- The information from the call taker should supply all the needed information and incident details. It is important that units be supplied with all pertinent information to attend the call.

- As a dispatcher, you must give them the information that you have, as accurately and briefly as possible. This allows them to respond in an appropriate manner.

Name of the person to contact

The report for dispatching should make it clear which person should be contacted at the scene.

Can the Report Be Dispatched?

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 radio dispatch communications is dependent on both *accuracy* and *speed*; one cannot be sacrificed for the other.

The communicator is responsible to ensure that the information gathered is **COMPLETE, CONCISE, CLEAR**, and **CORRECT (The four Cs)**.

Communicators need to evaluate the reports they generate. A 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:

Is The Report 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 questions *who, what, where, when, why*, and *how*?

The report must incorporate all the facts and information available that pertain to the call. 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.

Is The Report 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.

Is The Report 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.

Is The Report Correct?

Reports must be factual. Errors reflect upon the ability and, at times, the integrity of the writer. 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. Therefore, in processing a call, a call taker 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 call taker must accurately record and quickly process the information. In preparing the narrative account of the call, the call taker cannot assume that the recipient will have any knowledge of the call. The call taker 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 that demonstrate

the four Cs reflect the ability and the attitude of the call taker and the efficiency of the communication centre. The following steps will help to ensure accuracy.

- Document the call manually or electronically.

- Relate the circumstances of a call to the appropriate department via the written report.

- Ensure that the information you gather is **complete, concise, clear**, and **correct**.

Assignment – Formulate Reports

Organizer: Reports must be clear, concise, correct and complete.

Objective: Formulate reports for police dispatching.

Time: 20 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Incidents. Ensure that information is accurate. Monitor and support participation.

Process: Working individually:

- Use the incidents and other resources for the appropriate information.

- Identify the critical elements from the information.

- Formulate a short report, using a police dispatch format.

In pairs:

- Read and comment on each other's report.

- Re-work the report.

Accountability: Share the report with the whole group.

Debrief: What were the challenges to be dealt with to complete the report?

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.

Activity – Formulate Report for Dispatch

Organizer: This is a chance for participants to work with safe and realistic situations.

Objective: Complete reports and formulate messages for dispatch, with giving and receiving feedback.

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: incidents, report forms, CAD system, headsets, observation sheets. Monitor activity for interaction and correct techniques.

Process: In pairs of pairs:

• One pair will consist of a call taker and an observer of the call taker.

• One pair will consist of a dispatcher and an observer of the dispatcher.

• The report is completed and relayed correctly and realistically to the dispatcher using the information in the incidents and the skills, knowledges and attitudes taught.

• The dispatcher will use the report to formulate a message for dispatch.

• The observers will observe the process without interfering.

• The observers will provide positive written and verbal feedback to their partner after each incident using the elements of feedback basics.

• Pairs of pairs will discuss problems that arise out of the incident and strategize around different approaches.

• Each pair will change roles between themselves and repeat the above process.

• Pairs will then partner with a new pair and reverse roles (the dispatch pair becomes the field unit pair and vice versa).

Accountability: Positive feedback will be given from the observer to the other partner after each incident. Share strategies for dealing with the problems that could arise in the incidents.

Debrief: What was the best part of your practise with your partners. Identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Information to Dispatch a Call

Date:

Instructor:

Bridge in: The content of radio communications must be clear and concise.

Learning Objectives: Demonstrate clear and concise transmissions of various types of service information.

Rationale: When using a radio time is of the essence. Radio transmissions must be short and yet contain all the pertinent information needed to effectively deploy resources.

Pre-Test: How do you keep transmission time down and still give all the information necessary?

Resources: Radio Communications for Dispatchers Guide; Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Techniques: Classroom discussion, small group work

Equipment: Classroom setting, overhead projector, flip chart

Instructional Strategy

Time	*Instructor Activities*	*Learner Activities*	*Techniques / Equipment*
5 min	Discuss the information required to dispatch a call over the radio	Brainstorm what information is needed to effectively dispatch a call over the radio.	Small groups
5 min	Identify location of incident as a primary piece of information required	Discuss the need for accurate description of locations to be given in a radio transmission.	Whole group task
5 min	Ask the question: "What details of an incident are important to a radio broadcast?"	Discuss the details required to effectively transmit information over the radio.	Small group task
5 min	Ask why the name of the person to contact is important to some calls for assistance.	Identify situations where a contact person would be valuable to responding units.	Whole group exercise
10 min	Explain the process of broadcasting a person description.	Practise formulating and broadcasting persons descriptions in a classroom setting.	pairs
10 min	Explain the process of broadcasting vehicle information using CYMBALS	Practise formulating and broadcasting vehicle descriptions in a classroom setting.	pairs
10 min	Explain dispatch procedures	Practise dispatch procedures	pairs

Post-Test: Demonstrate transmission call information, including suspect and vehicle descriptions over a radio.

Instructor Notes

Information to Dispatch a Call

To dispatch a typical report, you will need to have the following information recorded and forward it to the field units:

Location of Incident

In addition to the address, location information may include a physical description of the site, or perhaps a layout of the building or its surroundings to identify points of entrance, exits or any hazards associated with it, for the purpose of attendance by any emergency personnel. For the purpose of fire attendance, the material composition of the structure and any hazardous components, chemicals or risk-enhancing layouts would apply.

Details of Incident

The information from the call taker should supply all the needed information and incident details.

Name of the Person to Contact

The report for dispatching should make it clear which person should be contacted at the scene.

Suspect Description (police)

*In broadcasting the physical description of the suspect, **be specific**. It should include as much of the following information as possible.*

- 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 eye- or sunglasses worn.
- Specific clothing description from head to toe, including color, style, foot wear, head gear.
- Any known accent or speech impediment.
- Indicate any jewelry noted on suspect; may include earrings, visible wrist or neck jewelry.
- Distinguishing marks or tattoos. If tattoos, be specific in their descriptions and location on the body. 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 to the applicable 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 includes the vehicle location at the time of the call, or whether or not the vehicle has 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.

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

Depending on the system in use at an agency, the above information may be dispatched from a completed form or by reading a screen.

Call Information Dispatching

Information may be supplied to an agency through any number of methods. It may be received electronically, through phone, radio, pagers, facsimile, or E-Mail. It may

come into the agency manually through mail, courier or memorandum, or more directly by a caller attending the office.

No matter how the information enters the agency, it will have to be recorded in some manner. Once the appropriate forms, screens or logs are completed, it is assigned or dispatched as any other call would be. The field unit may or may not need to be apprised of the method in which the information was received, depending on the circumstances.

Call information is always dispatched under the criteria of an agency's SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures), utilizing appropriate codes and radio language.

Dispatch Information Procedures

In a manual system, when a call enters an agency it may be recorded on a dispatch form or ticket, in 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 or crew to the call, and will 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. Communicators need to be aware that their communications are recorded and may become part of a transcript, trial or evidence. Maintaining a professional manner in conversations, inter-office communications and while broadcasting, even if on a scrambled or protected channel, is always a good idea for communicators.

Activity – Interactive Practise – Basic Dispatching

Organizer: This is a chance for participants to work with safe and realistic situations.

Objective: Practise dispatching, being field units, observation, with giving and receiving feedback.

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: simple incidents, radios, headsets, reports, observation sheets

Process: In pairs of pairs:

- one pair will consist of a dispatcher and an observer of the dispatcher.
- one pair will consist of a field unit and an observer of the field unit.
- The dispatch is relayed correctly and realistically by the dispatcher and field unit using the information in the incidents and the skills, knowledges and attitudes taught.
- Information will be documented on a written form or on a CAD system.
- The observers will observe the process without interfering.
- The observers will provide positive written and verbal feedback to their partner after each incidents using the elements of feedback basics.

- Pairs of pairs will discuss problems that arise out of the incident and strategize around different approaches.
- Each pairs will change roles between themselves and repeat the above process.
- Pairs will then partner with a new pair and reverse roles (the dispatch pair becomes the field unit pair and vice versa).

Accountability: Positive feedback will be given from the observer to the other partner after each incident. Share strategies for dealing with the problems that could arise in the incidents.

Debrief: What was the best part of your practise with your partners. Identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Repeat this exercise until the responses are automatic. Increase the degree of difficulty as participants become more proficient.

Practical Competencies

Radio Operation

Demonstrate the operation of a simple portable radio – Turn unit on, adjust volume, adjust squelch, speak into the microphone, release the button and listen for a reply. Adjust headset when applicable and monitor the viewmeter for signal strength.

Practice voice techniques for radio communication.

- demonstrate appropriate voice pitch and volume
- use clear enunciation
- evaluate general voice impression

Forms

Demonstrate the completing of a call taking form by using an example of a scenario. Reference to examples of basic call taking forms for different services. Demonstrate the recording of status changes and any other relevant information on the form.

Activity – Interactive Practise – Formulate Messages

Organizer: This is a chance for participants to work with safe and realistic situations.

Objective: Organize radio messages formulated by a communicator into the briefest and clearest arrangement, and write the exchange of radio transmissions that would be relayed between the sender and the receiver.

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Situations, radio equipment, observation sheets

Process: In pairs consisting of a radio operator and an observer of the operator.

- The message is formulated and broadcast correctly and realistically over the radio using the information in the incidents and the skills, knowledges and attitudes taught.
- The observers will observe the process without interfering.
- The observers will provide positive written and verbal feedback to their partner after each incidents using the elements of feedback basics.
- Each pairs will change roles between themselves and repeat the above process.

Accountability: Positive feedback will be given from the observer to the other partner after each incident. Share strategies for dealing with the problems that could arise in the incidents.

Debrief: What was the best part of your practise with your partners. Identify strengths and areas for improvement. Play back a recording of radio transmissions so the students can identify as a group things that were done well and areas that need improvement.

Repeat this exercise until the responses are automatic. Increase the degree of difficulty as participants become more proficient.

Taxi

1. I want to let cab #142 know that there has been a report on the radio of a car accident near the location he is on the way to. Traffic is being rerouted four blocks north because the road is blocked by emergency crews.

2. I need to let #456 know that she needs to pick up someone at criminal court in twenty minutes. The court house is at the corner of Alpha Road and 5th Avenue. The fare's name is Bradley Smith. The run number is 01234.

3. I have telephoned the hydro electric company about the wires that are down across the road where #2115 is now at. The hydro electric company said they will be able to take care of the problem and will be there in 15 minutes.

4. I need to let #375 know that I have heard and I understand he needs the ambulance to come to his location at Delta and 4th, and that I will telephone and ask them to go.

5. I need to tell #605 that even though he is on the way to pick up a fare, there is another more urgent call at Rogers Ave. and North Street. It is more important that he go to this call.

6. I have to tell #793 that there is someone waiting to speak to him at the office. It is a police officer investigating a fare that the driver had last evening. There was a robbery at the jewelry store then and he wants a description of the passenger for his report.

7. I need to tell #8462 that even though they have asked that the fire department come to where they are, the fire department told me that there has just been a major fire at the local nightclub and it will take some time before they can get there.

8. I need to ask Car 35 to tell me again what the address is of where they are because the quality of the transmission was very poor. I hear part of the message up to Baker Avenue, but I couldn't hear or make out anything else after that.

Towing

1. I want to let Truck 7 know there is a serious accident at the corner of Main and Hastings. The police, fire and ambulance are all there and he needs to get there right away to clear the intersection. The vehicle being towed is a grey Honda, license ABC123. It is not drivable and he will probably have to use the dollies on it.

2. I have telephoned the hydro electric company about the wires that are down across the road where Truck 225 is now at. The hydro electric company said they will be able to take care of the problem and will be there in 15 mins.

3. I need to let Truck 7456 know that I have heard and I understand they need the ambulance to come to their location and that I will telephone and ask them to go.

4. I have just been called by the RCMP that they need a tow truck to pull one of their cruisers out of the ditch at Hwy 10 near 136 Street. I need to relay this information to Truck 453. They need this done right away.

5. The driver of Truck 8 is telling me that the license plate of the car that is on fire is LFC 250 and that it appears to be stolen. The fire department is there now. He wants me to tell the police they need to go to the scene. The driver needs to know how long it will be before the police can get there.

6. I need to tell Truck 25 that even though they have asked that the police come to where they are, the police department told me that there has just been a shooting at the local nightclub and it will take some time before they can get there.

7. I need to ask Truck 73 to tell me again what the address is of where they are because the quality of the transmission was very poor. I hear part of the message up to Baker but I couldn't hear or make out anything else after that.

Ski-lift Operator

1. I want to let "C" and "D" units know there have been a number of emergency telephone calls to the communication center about the avalanche they are on the way to. The callers are saying they saw a number of people on the hill just prior to the avalanche and that they are worried that there are many people buried.

2. I need to let Ski-doo Patrol unit 123 know that she is needed to do a patient transport from near the lift to the first aid hut at the bottom of the mountain. An ambulance will meet them there to take the patient to the hospital.

3. I need to let the supervisor know that I have heard and I understand he needs the police to meet him at his location at the chairlift, because he has a drunken client at that location. I will telephone and ask them to go.

4. I need to tell the ski-patrol units on duty that one of the main lifts is down due to a mechanical problem. It will be out of service for at least the next hour because I have to get a technician to repair it.

5. I need to tell Unit 32 that the call to assist the stranded skier near the Snowball Lodge has been cancelled and they are no longer required to go there.

Search and Rescue

1. I want to let the Operations Chief know that there has been a sighting of the lost hiker by the helicopter (Call sign: Chopper One) on the west side of Cypress Mountain near the picnic area.

2. I need to advise all searchers in section 4 that they need to report to the section chief prior to moving to another area. He has some information that he needs to pass on to each person and has a check off list to go through.

3. I need to tell the first aid attendant that a lost person has been located at the mouth of Kirby Creek near the old dam site and that her attendance is required to assess and treat a possible broken leg.

4. I need to notify the Operations Chief that the parents of the lost child that they are searching for have arrived at the communications trailer. They have a recent picture of their child and they want to tell him that he has asthma and does not have his medication with him.

5. I need to notify all members of the SAR team currently out on a search that the snowboarder they are looking for has been located at his home. He is not injured and wants to know what all the fuss was about.

Activity – Interactive Practise – Dispatching

Organizer: This is a chance for participants to work with safe and realistic situations.

Objective: Practise dispatching, being field units, observation, with giving and receiving feedback.

Time: 60 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: incidents, radios, headsets, reports, observation sheets

Process: In pairs of pairs:

- one pair will consist of a dispatcher and an observer of the dispatcher.
- one pair will consist of a field unit and an observer of the field unit.
- The dispatch is relayed correctly and realistically by the dispatcher and field unit using the information in the incidents and the skills, knowledges and attitudes taught.
- Information will be documented on a written form or on a computer system.
- The observers will observe the process without interfering.
- The observers will provide positive written and verbal feedback to their partner after each incidents using the elements of feedback basics.
- Pairs of pairs will discuss problems that arise out of the incident and strategize around different approaches.
- Each pairs will change roles between themselves and repeat the above process.
- Pairs will then partner with a new pair and reverse roles (the dispatch pair becomes the field unit pair and vice versa).

Accountability: Positive feedback will be given from the observer to the other partner after each incident. Share strategies for dealing with the problems that could arise in the incidents.

Debrief: What was the best part of your practise with your partners. Identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Repeat this exercise until the responses are automatic. Increase the degree of difficulty as participants become more proficient.

Informal Conflict Resolution Techniques

Instructor Supplement (as required)

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

Bridge in: **Stress on the job may have nothing to do with the work at all. The stress may be the result of conflict in the working environment.**

Learning Objectives: **Describe and demonstrate the informal conflict resolution model provided with personal and work relationships.**

Rationale: **Stress in the workplace can be caused by a combination of the job responsibilities and conflicts with fellow employees.**

Pre-Test: **How do you tell someone that you have a problem with their behavior?**

Resources: **Call Taking Basics for Everyone, Kwantlen Polytechnic University**

Time: **90 minutes**

Techniques: **Classroom discussion, small group work**

Equipment: **Classroom setting, overhead projector, flip chart**

Training Strategy

Time	Trainer Activities	Student Activities	Techniques / Equipment
10 min	**Identify importance of knowing one's own stressors.**	**Identify stressors that trigger personal conflict.**	**Small groups, pairs**
10	**Transcribe conflict issues.**	**Agree on the most and least**	**Whole group**

min		*common conflict issues*	
10 min	*Describe the connection between shared leadership and conflict solutions*	*Connect how shared leadership can minimize conflict*	*Whole group*
15 min	*Guide discussion on problem solving.*	*Discuss how you can solve problems.*	*Small groups*
10 min	*Describe informal conflict resolution technique.*	*Identify applications for individual techniques.*	*Whole group*
15 min	*Guide use of informal conflict resolution model to solve conflicts.*	*Practise informal conflict resolution with situations.*	*Small group/ whole group*
10 min	*Monitor and encourage participation.*	*Identify how you can best work to resolve conflicts.*	*Individual, whole group*
10 min	*Identify the importance of solving work problems at work.*	*Discuss how work problems can follow you home.*	*Whole group*

Post-Test: *Utilize the informal conflict resolution model to diffuse potential conflicts in the workplace and/or home.*

Trainer Notes

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.

Activity – Conflict Issues

Organizer: Identifying personal stressors that trigger conflict is the beginning of developing appropriate problem solving strategies.

Objective: Identify personal stressor issues that trigger conflict and how you deal with the issues.

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Personal Stressors activity worksheet (previously completed), personal experiences. Monitor and encourage participation.

Process: In groups of four:

1. Identify within their groups the stressors that trigger conflict for them.

- One thing about my level of income.
- One thing about an important relationship with another person.
- One thing about other people.

Common pet peeves or issues may include:

- Not keeping personal information confidential.
- People having lower standards than oneself.
- Lack of professionalism.
- Not being on time.
- Being lazy and not carrying their load.
- Back-stabbing.
- Not keeping their word.

Accountability: Everyone participates and discusses possible issues.

Note: It is pretty standard that most persons have a conflict with someone that causes them stress due to these above issues.

Debrief What are the most and least common conflict issues?

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.

Activity – Develop Strategies – Conflict Resolution

Organizer: If a problem can be identified, there is a possibility for a solution.

Objective: Develop strategies for problem solving.

Time: 40 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Personal experience. Monitor and encourage positive participation.

Process: In groups of three or four:

- Use the appropriate resources to outline types of problem-solving strategies.
- Develop a strategy for a given situation that you would be willing to use.
- Change the strategy based on your own assessment and the feedback of others.

Accountability: Share your best strategies with the whole group. Receive feedback.

Debrief: Rank strategies in order of personal preference. Which ones could you use?

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?

Activity – Practise Informal Conflict Resolution

Organizer: Conflict resolution skills become useful with practise.

Objective: Practise informal conflict resolution strategies in a supportive environment.

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Situations

Process: In groups of three:

- Practise several strategies for conflict resolution using the following situations (or other).

    1. A fellow call taker spends copious time on personal calls and does not take as many calls as you.

    2. A fellow public safety communicator wears perfume/after shave which you have an allergic reaction to.

Accountability: Share strategies that seemed best for each group.

Debrief: Which strategies would you prefer to use? What would affect this?

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.