

Sheboygan County Sheriff's Department Telecommunicator Job Preview

Experience has shown that many applicants for the Telecommunicator position consider only the positive aspects of the job while ignoring some of its less attractive features. As a result, when new employees encounter negative job features, they sometimes react by leaving the job before training is completed or after only a few months on the job. Early resignations which result from lack of accurate job knowledge contribute to a much higher than desirable attrition rate among Telecommunicator trainees.

There are many satisfying, rewarding aspects to the Telecommunicator position. There is no question that Telecommunicators make significant contributions to the welfare and safety of their fellow citizens. It is, however, important for all applicants to carefully consider both the negative and positive features of a new career before deciding to test for this position.

The job factors listed below are realistic features of the Telecommunicator position about which many applicants are unaware. If any of these items present problems for you, we strongly suggest you consider alternative choices which may better fit your career goals.

Please initial on the line provided to indicate you have read and thought about each item.

TRAINING

1. Telecommunicator trainees undergo a training program lasting up to 18 weeks or more. Included are one-on-one trainee and communications training officer hands-on training, ride-alongs, homework assignments, role playing and supervised on-the-job performance. Training requires daily and weekly evaluations and meetings, as well as frequent written, verbal and performance testing. Telecommunicator trainees must expect to receive regular reminders and performance evaluations of errors and mistakes. After successful completion of training, the Telecommunicator trainee is closely supervised for the remainder of their initial probationary period (one year). They receive a probationary period review and may have their probationary period extended to include refresher training or possible termination if the trainee is not performing at a satisfactory level.

2. During training, Telecommunicator trainees must learn and correctly use a vocabulary of ten codes, law enforcement jargon and plain text language. Telecommunicator trainees read, understand and apply written materials (employee rules and regulations, policies and procedures, etc.)

3. In training, Telecommunicator trainees must develop eye-hand coordination sufficient to operate and view multiple monitors, keyboards and complex communications equipment in rapid succession or even simultaneously. The Telecommunicator trainee must develop a "radio ear",

monitoring multiple radio talk groups, as well as carry on a conversation and obtain necessary information from a phone caller simultaneously. Systems include a Computer Aided Dispatch System (CAD), TIME system, in-house computer records, 800-radio system, E911 system, a PBX telephone system, alarm computer and multiple lighting and door controls. Each system requires the memorization and quick and accurate use of a number of commands and keystrokes to retrieve and input data. They are also required to understand and implement the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) correctly and proficiently. Telecommunicator's perform warrant entry on a daily basis.

WORKING CONDITIONS

4. Telecommunicators work within an organization structured on a "military" model. Telecommunicators wear a uniform and are part of a formal chain of command. The Telecommunicator position is a 24 hour a day/7 days a week position. Telecommunicators may sign for a permanent shift by seniority, but are subject to temporary shift deviations, shift extensions, changes in shift rotation, and cancellation of days off, vacation days and compensatory days. Telecommunicators work a shift rotation which requires them to work holidays and weekends. Telecommunicators may need to change work schedules on short notice regardless of personal considerations or childcare needs and must report for duty when called upon during an emergency situation. Telecommunicators are expected to maintain consistent attendance with minimal absences.

5. Telecommunicators work in an interior room with no outside windows. Telecommunicators are expected to stay at their workstation throughout their shift other than two 10-minute breaks and one 30-minute lunch break, all of which are paid, and the Telecommunicator is subject to call-back to their workstation at any time during their break. Due to the workload, breaks may need to be postponed.

6. Telecommunicators work in an often noisy and distracting environment. Telecommunicators must be able to concentrate on their jobs for extended periods of time while other Telecommunicators are taking calls, people are walking around them, and conversations are taking place in close proximity.

PERFORMING THE JOB

7. Telecommunicators receive information at shift change regarding pending calls, follow-up information from previous shift's calls, teletype review, procedural matters, and equipment status. Telecommunicators are expected to retain and use this information, as needed, during the coming shift and over the next few days, weeks and even months. Telecommunicators are also expected to pass on appropriate information to the next shift and to communicate with their partner throughout their shift to ensure accurate, smooth, and consistent flow of operations.

8. Telecommunicators evaluate and weigh information continuously. Telecommunicators must consider numerous factors in determining the appropriate response, among these are the nature of the incident, the proper response agency, availability of resources, potential safety of the caller and response personnel, geographic location of incident, emotional and physical condition of the caller, and criminal trends. Telecommunicators must interpret information and make quick decisions (urgency of response, referral to other agency) on which one or more persons' safety is at stake based on experience, policy and procedures, and "hunches". Telecommunicator decisions are under constant review; mistakes or errors in judgment may result in criticism, corrective action and/or formal disciplinary action.

9. Telecommunicators must be able to quickly and accurately recognize letters, numbers, addresses, names and license numbers received by radio, by telephone or on a computer monitor. Data are often presented simultaneously or in rapid succession. Data must be accurately compared with information from previous calls (suspect and vehicle descriptions, license numbers) to determine if it is new, and if so, should be reported as such.

10. Telecommunicators must quickly and accurately obtain information from callers necessary to determine the appropriate response. Telecommunicators must control conversations and get needed information. This may be complicated by callers who are often aggressive, distraught, confused, profane, or nearly incomprehensible.

11. Telecommunicators must maintain professional standards and attitudes when obscene language is directed at them, in emergency situations, and in handling large numbers of nuisance, hang up or non-emergency calls.

12. Telecommunicators must have sufficient verbal and written communications skills to efficiently relay relevant information via radio or computer system. Written communications must be concise and to the point while providing information (suspect description, incident type, caller name) the Telecommunicator determines may be important to the safety of the caller and responding personnel. Telecommunicator's may, at times, be subpoenaed to testify in court regarding a call they were involved with.

13. Any call may require the Telecommunicator to perform several activities simultaneously. Examples include maintaining contact with a caller while dispatching the appropriate response unit to include fire and/or EMS personnel, updating of incident information while monitoring radio traffic, and speaking with the caller while determining response unit availability.

14. Telecommunicators often work at a rapid pace over which they have little control. Due to workload and the nature of the incidents, Telecommunicators at times may not be able to follow-up on or learn the final resolution of calls received earlier in their shift. Telecommunicators must be able to work with a minimal amount of supervision.

With my signature below, I state that I have read and considered each item on the job preview.

Print Name

Signature