

**Chapter 38.60 RCW**  
**PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATORS**

**Sections**

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**RCW 38.60.010 Findings.** (1) The legislature acknowledges that a primary responsibility of government is to ensure public safety and that almost always an emergency response begins with a request to 911 for assistance. Requests to 911 and subsequent emergency response communications are managed by public safety telecommunicator professionals. These first responders are essential workers who continue public service throughout the pandemic, who are essential to triage requests for emergency responses and provide lifesaving instructions and guidance to those who call 911, ensuring the appropriate response for the situation; law enforcement, behavioral health, fire, and emergency medical. The public safety telecommunicator also dispatches, tracks, processes, and transmits information from the public and continually communicates with responders providing an additional layer of safety. The legislature takes special note of the contributions made by public safety telecommunicators whose tasks are arduous and whose working conditions may be contributing to the high and often critical turnover among the principal cadre of professionals who receive and process requests from the public for emergency response and provide emergency communications with public safety responders.

(2) The legislature also recognizes that public safety telecommunicators are the only public safety professionals who are not required to be certified and do not have standard initial training requirements to perform their critical public safety function. Further, employers of public safety telecommunicators face challenges in attracting suitable candidates, training, and retaining of staff due to the high demand and high stress environment of this critical public safety profession.

(3) The legislature finds and declares that:

(a) Public safety telecommunicators must have a formal system of training, and certification and recertification standards, to ensure a standardized response is given when the public seeks assistance during an emergency and that standardized communications are in place to support public safety responders within Washington state.

(b) The quality of emergency response in most cases begins with the competence of public safety telecommunicators. To ensure the availability and quality of trained public safety telecommunicators, the legislature recognizes the need to adopt and implement standardized training programs and certification and recertification requirements. [2022 c 286 s 1.]

**RCW 38.60.020 Definitions.** The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Certification board" means the voluntary public safety telecommunicator certification board.

(2) "Public safety answering point" includes primary public safety answering points that receive 911 calls directly from the public and secondary public safety answering points that receive 911 calls only on a transfer or relay basis from the primary public safety answering point.

(3) "Public safety telecommunicator" means a first responder working in a primary public safety answering point, regardless of title, who has successfully completed the training, certification, or recertification standards established in the state of Washington. This includes an employee of the state, a local public agency, or an independent governmental agency whose primary responsibility is to receive, process, transmit, or dispatch 911 emergency and nonemergency calls for law enforcement, fire, emergency medical, and other public safety services by telephone, radio, or other communication devices and includes an individual who promoted from this position and supervises individuals who perform these functions.

(4) "State-approved training program" means a public safety telecommunicator certified training program approved by the certification board to meet the requirements of a state-approved public safety telecommunicator training, certification, and recertification standards. For community colleges, vocational-technical institutes, skill centers, and secondary schools as described in chapter 28B.50 RCW, public safety telecommunicator certified training programs shall be approved by the certification board in cooperation with the board for community and technical colleges or the superintendent of public instruction. [2022 c 286 s 2.]

**RCW 38.60.030 Certification board.** The certification board is established in the state 911 coordination office to create a certification and training program for public safety telecommunicators throughout the state. [2022 c 286 s 3.]

**RCW 38.60.040 Certification board—Duties.** Duties of the certification board include:

(1) Adopting bylaws for the certification board;

(2) Adopting rules, with the advice and assistance of the 911 advisory committee, to implement the provisions of this chapter including, but not limited to, rules to implement a state-approved training program for process, policy, and procedure;

(3) Reviewing and approving state-approved training programs biennially. State-approved training programs should be consistent with industry standards;

(4) Setting all public safety telecommunicator certification, registration, and renewal fees, and to collect and deposit all such fees in the 911 account established under RCW 38.52.540; and

(5) Establishing recertification requirements. [2022 c 286 s 4.]

**RCW 38.60.050 Certification board—Representation.** The certification board shall represent diverse stakeholders of the 911 system and shall consist of the following volunteer members:

- (1) The chair or vice chair of the 911 advisory committee;
- (2) Two public safety answering point directors or 911 coordinators, one from the eastside and one from the westside of the Cascade mountains appointed by the 911 advisory committee;
- (3) Two labor union representatives from labor unions representing public safety telecommunicators;
- (4) One representative appointed by the Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs;
- (5) One representative appointed by the Washington state fire chiefs association;
- (6) One representative from the Washington state association of counties appointed by the Washington state association of counties; and
- (7) Two public safety telecommunicators from a public safety answering point, one from the eastside and one from the westside of the Cascade mountains appointed by the 911 advisory committee. [2022 c 286 s 5.]

**RCW 38.60.060 Limitation of liability.** (1) No act or omission of any certified public safety telecommunicator or crisis call center staff or designated 988 contact hub staff related to the transfer of calls from the 911 line to the 988 crisis hotline or from the 988 crisis hotline to the 911 line, done or omitted in good faith, within the scope of the certified public safety telecommunicator's employment responsibilities with the public safety answering point and the crisis call center or designated 988 contact hub and in accordance with call system transfer protocols adopted by both the department of health and the emergency management division shall impose liability upon:

- (a) The certified public safety telecommunicator or the certified public safety telecommunicator's supervisor;
- (b) The public safety answering point or its officers, staff, or employees;
- (c) The clinical staff of the crisis call center or designated 988 contact hub or their clinical supervisors;
- (d) The crisis call center or designated 988 contact hub or its officers, staff, or employees; or
- (e) Any member of a mobile rapid response crisis team or community-based crisis team endorsed under RCW 71.24.903.

(2) This section shall not apply to any act or omission which constitutes either gross negligence or willful or wanton misconduct. [2023 c 454 s 14.]