

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 § 1.]