



Introduction to ECOMM Call Taker Test

The test you will take consists of 38 multiple-choice situational questions presented on video. After each question is presented, you will have ten seconds to mark the answer you think is best before the next question is presented. If you mark more than one answer, you will get the question wrong. If you change an answer, erase it completely. You might as well answer every question as there is no penalty for guessing.

The following information is provided to help you understand how to take the test and what we are looking for.

This video test shows scenes from a typical but fictitious emergency communication center. Call takers answer the emergency lines. They talk with callers and enter information about the calls into the computer system. Most of the calls are for the police. Usually the only information an officer has when he or she arrives at the scene is what has been relayed by the call taker. Some callers need emergency medical help. The call takers in this video relay information to medical units and get help coming but they do not have medical training and are not allowed to give medical information over the phone to callers. Many callers need both police and medical help. Sometimes people call on emergency lines with things that are not police matters or medical emergencies. Although a call taker's main job is to respond to emergencies, call takers often make referrals or transfer calls. They have phone books and phone numbers for medical professionals, counselors, courts, government agencies and others who may be able to help callers.

Simulation of the Call Taker's Job

Multi-tasking

Call takers must be able to keep track of many things at the same time. Throughout this portion of the test, you will be working on two answer sheets: one testing your ability to accurately record calls, the other testing your response to callers.

Accuracy Recording Calls

Call takers must be able to provide accurate information for the responding units. During the test, when the caller's name is shown on the screen, take notes on the sheet entitled Call Taker Call Records. The name on the screen will match the name already filled out on the answer sheet. The first three calls are completely filled in as examples for you. If you are not sure of a piece of information, write down what you think it is and put a question mark by it to indicate that you are unsure. Write down important parts of the call, not irrelevant details. You will need to write as you listen. No extra time is given for writing. Accuracy is most important.

Responding to Callers

During the test you will also be presented with multiple choice questions asking what you think the call taker should do. Answer these questions on the multiple choice answer sheet. The questions test your common sense. You do not need special training to answer the questions. All the information you need

is contained in these instructions or on the test. You will have ten seconds to record your answer for each question. Here are some guidelines that will help you make good decisions.

Guidelines for Call Takers in this Test

1. Get the most important information first.

Any time you are talking to someone the communication could be suddenly cut off. Get the most vital information first.

1st priority - Where are you?

If you manage to get only one piece of information it should be, "Where are you?" Even if we don't know what's wrong, if we know where you are we can send help. With an address, we can have help on the way while the call taker continues to get more information.

2nd priority - Is medical attention needed?

Moments can make a difference between life and death in some instances. If medical help is needed, get it going right away as you continue to talk with the caller.

3rd priority - What will responding officers need to know about what's going on?

As the caller explains what the problem is, find out anything that could create a safety concern for the officer. Are there weapons at the scene? Is there a disturbance? Is the suspect there?

4th priority - What information will help resolve the case?

Additional information may help the investigation. Descriptions of suspects, vehicles, where people may have gone, etc., may help resolve a case. Sometimes the caller is the perpetrator of the crime. Confessions, admissions or other proofs of guilt that are recorded on your phone lines can help prosecutors with conviction. Officers will also be gathering this kind of information at the scene.

2. Think safety.

Officers count on you for accurate and complete information regarding any safety issues to be encountered at the scene. Regardless of the caller's feelings and circumstances you must insist on getting the information you need to protect the officer's safety and to best respond to the caller's situation. Sometimes you have no way of getting enough information from the caller. In a case like that, it is better to send too much help than not enough. Every time officers or medical help are sent out there is a cost to the organization. Always try to get the information you need to make good decisions about what to send.

Callers are often in situations that are or could be dangerous. Do not instruct people to do things that could cause them to be harmed. Be quick when you need to be. You can get medical help and officers going to a call even as you speak to the caller. You can update information to the responding units as they are driving. This may save critical minutes.

3. Don't waste time or resources.

Once you have enough information, unless there are other reasons to stay on the phone, get off and move on. There are many calls to be answered by limited staff. Also, it is important to keep the lines open and available for emergency calls.

4. *Try to solve and prevent problems if you can.*

If you can say or do something that would prevent a crime or injury, you should do so. If there is a chance that a problem may be repeated, do what you can to prevent that. One way that unnecessary problems can occur is when emergency lines become tied up with calls that are not emergencies. Making suggestions or referrals that will help callers resolve problems, even if they are not police matters, can often prevent problems from escalating and may save a lot of time in the long run.

5. *Listen carefully to the calls.*

Often people call emergency lines by mistake. Some calls are crank calls. Some calls are from people who have mental illness who are describing problems that are not real. You don't want to spend a lot of your time with these calls or send officers on false alarms. You want to handle the calls as quickly as you can without creating unnecessary problems. Sometimes, though, people calling emergency lines are in unusual or threatening circumstances and may not be able to talk freely. Listen carefully to what people say, to their tone of voice and to what's going on in the background of calls. Use your best common sense to decide how a call should be interpreted. It is a terrible thing to find out later that you dismissed a call from someone in trouble. Listen carefully and use your common sense.

6. *Work as part of a team with co-workers and supervisors.*

People who work in communication centers must be able to hear what's going on around them. Many calls may come in on the same incident. Situations change. Maybe help has already been sent. Maybe another call taker has more information than the person you have on the line. Earlier calls may be connected with later calls. Maybe a co-worker could use some help. Call takers should work together as a team, listening to what is going on around them, sharing information and helping each other. Supervisors are available to help when needed.

Dealing with Problems on the Test

Handling Problems Involving Co-workers and Officers

If call takers have interpersonal problems with other employees in the communication center or with officers, generally it is better to try to resolve the difference directly with that person first. If that doesn't work, call takers should then go to the supervisor for help.

Sometimes call takers become aware of serious problems involving co-workers or officers that should be handled by supervisors. If the supervisor isn't already aware of the problem, the call taker should tell the supervisor about it and let the supervisor handle it.

Following Policies

Almost all of the questions are meant to be answered using only common sense. Any policies that you need to know about are included either in these instructions or are in the test itself. If you hear an employee stating a policy to a caller, for the purpose of this test it is a true policy, even if the call taker is not using the policy properly. For the purpose of the questions, call takers in this video may be shown making poor uses of policies or not following policies, but they are not shown stating untrue policies. Once a policy has been stated, you will be expected to know it during the rest of the test. Do not assume any policies other than those presented. Do not use policies from somewhere else as the only basis for your answers. If something is not covered by a policy which you have been made aware of for this fictitious communications center, you should decide what to do based on common sense.

In the few cases where the situation involves a policy you have been given, remember that it is important to follow policy. For instance, one policy you will hear many times in the test is that we do not send out officers to resolve personal matters that do not involve a crime. Also remember that any situation can change even as you speak to the caller. For instance any call can develop into a police matter, even if it doesn't start out that way.

One policy that you do need to know is that if someone calls in and reports that a person in the home is threatening or committing violence against someone else in a home, that call cannot be canceled. In other words, the police will come even if the caller doesn't want the police anymore. Most locations have laws that specifically state that such "domestic violence" calls cannot be canceled. This is a policy in the fictitious communication center in this test.

Dealing With Emotional Situations

These are emergency lines. Many people are upset when they call. Do not expect them to interact with you on their best behavior. Your most important task is to get the information you need to help them and assure the safety of the responding units. You will need to help people calm down so that you can help them.

People who call may be experiencing the most difficult moments of their lives. Never make their situation worse if you can help it. If there is something that you can do to help a person in crisis feel less distress, it is worth doing. Although it is generally best to keep conversations short, there are circumstances under which it may be a good idea to stay on the line with someone after you have already gotten the information you need. It is also sometimes good to go out of your way to be helpful.

Public Relations

Although your primary job is emergency response, this is also a public relations job, just as any job is that involves interactions with the public. Some people call with requests that you can't meet. Often calls involve explaining things to people that they don't want to hear. In many cases you must insist that callers give information they are reluctant to give. Frequently people have to be told not to use emergency lines for calls that are not emergencies. Courtesy and showing consideration of peoples' situations and feelings go a long way.

When things are busy, callers may have to wait longer to get help, especially when there is no present danger. It is best to be honest and also to convey that, although necessary, the department regrets the delay.

In any job of this type, you will hear complaints about your department. You will hear complaints about police. Handle legitimate complaints seriously and straightforwardly. Some complaints are exaggerated because the caller is angry or trying to make a point. Try to handle these calls in a way that will make the situation better.

Callers form opinions about the whole organization based on their interactions with you. You are providing a service. You want callers to feel that they have received help from a competent, considerate and courteous professional. Try to make your interactions have a positive impact on the public image of the department.

There are no example problems for this test; as soon as the video starts please have your answer sheet ready. Listen carefully to the introduction; the test will start with the first scenario presented.

ECOMM Call Taker Test Part 2

You Must Take Notes on Each Call

As each call comes you will be asked to take notes on important facts about the call, including things such as the caller's address, phone number and description of the problem. You will be provided with a form to fill in these notes. Example notes are shown below.

Importance of Note Taking

When the video is completed, you will be provided with a series of questions that must be answered based upon your notes. For each caller listed in the Call Taker Call Records form, there will be one question about that call. The question may be about any one or more of the note taking fields: Caller location, Phone and Address, Reporting Problem at Location/Names, Weapons at Problem Location, Description of Suspect or Vehicle or What is the Immediate Problem. There will be no questions about calls not included on the Call Taker Call Record Form. After reading each question, it will be necessary to refer to your notes about that call to determine whether the statement being made is correct, incorrect or if you are unsure.

- Correct:** Mark a statement correct if you believe it to be true based on what you have written in your notes.
- Incorrect:** Mark a statement incorrect if you believe it to be untrue based on what you have recorded in your notes or if the information was not presented in the situation.
- Unsure:** Mark unsure if the information was given but you could not understand it so you made a question mark on your notes.

Marking an answer unsure is better than getting an answer wrong from guessing. However, if you believe you know the answer based on your notes or memory then you should mark the answer as correct or incorrect. You will get the most points for accurately hearing and properly marking what is correct and what is incorrect. If you cannot tell what was said, you can get some points for marking unsure. The worst strategy is to guess when you are uncertain. All of the questions will be possible to answer if you listen carefully and take good notes. None of the questions are trick questions and none ask about unimportant details. The note taking examples give you a good idea of how detailed your notes need to be.

Recommended Ways to Take Notes

Now that you know the importance of your notes you may want to consider a strategy for taking notes. You want to take notes that will be clear when you refer to them later. Here is a recommended way to take notes.

- Write information when you hear it, in the appropriate place on the form.
- Only record important information (see examples).
- Make a question mark by the information if you are unsure of what was said.
- Leave areas blank if no information is provided.

Example problems

Below are three examples that show how notes should be taken. These are the first three scenarios presented on the video. On the following page you can see example questions that test takers would have to answer after the video is over. These questions give you an idea of how you will need to use your notes to answer questions. At the end of the testing session your notes will be collected but they will not be scored. You will be scored on how you answer the follow-up questions.

Example Notes

Marlene Proudfoot	CR729
Caller Location: Phone and Address	532-7907 4108 North Elm Street
Reporting Problem at Location/Names:	4104 North Elm Street
Weapons at Problem Location:	guns
Descriptions of Suspect or Vehicle:	
What is the immediate problem?	Dog barking, disturbing neighbor, caller has guns and has threatened to shoot dog.

Jackson Carmichael	CR730
Caller Location: Phone and Address	633-3009 13 East Pacific
Reporting Problem at Location/Names:	
Weapons at Problem Location:	
Descriptions of Suspect or Vehicle:	
What is the immediate problem?	10:30 at night. Noise complaint about ongoing noise problem; jackhammer on a construction project. Complainant has called before. Construction group has permit; police have already checked out situation.

Linda Meloni	CR731
Caller Location: Phone and Address	621-1900 ??? Street
Reporting Problem at Location/Names:	
Weapons at Problem Location:	
Descriptions of Suspect or Vehicle:	
What is the immediate problem?	Apparent infant death. Woman alone. Tried to resuscitate.

Example Questions for Part II: CallTaker Notes Test

Here are example questions that would be asked about the situations recorded on the previous page.

	Correct A	Incorrect B	Unsure C
<p>Marlene Proudfoot CR729</p> <p>The caller's phone number is 532-7907.</p>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>Jackson Carmichael CR730</p> <p>The caller is reporting a noisy construction project across the street at 10 East Pacific.</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>Linda Meloni CR731</p> <p>The caller's address is 450 Greenwood Street.</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Answer Rationale

Question 1 is correct. The notes show the same phone number.

Question 2 is incorrect. The notes are blank indicating the caller did not give any address other than his own. You would also mark any answer as incorrect if the information is simply wrong, such as the wrong phone number or an incorrect description of the event.

Question 3 should be marked unsure. The notes indicate the address was unclear to the note taker. Therefore, 'unsure' is the most accurate answer to mark. The question marks help to indicate that the caller gave the information but the note taker is uncertain of what it was.

Note: The examples above are for the Notes Taking Test only (Part II). When you are taking the CallTaker Video Test (Part I), you must answer all 38 multiple choice items presented. There are no example questions for Part I.

