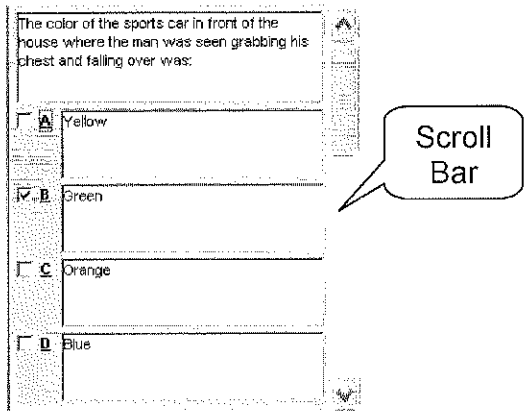
# Public Safety Communciations
# Pre-Employment Test Preparation Guide

The computerized pre-employment test used by this agency measures underlying skills and abilities a person needs to possess prior to any training they might receive if they are hired as a public-safety dispatcher and/or calltaker, including the ability to effectively navigate and use a computer. Because of this, a test taker does not need to possess any specialized dispatcher/calltaker knowledge or training to be able to read, understand, or answer the test items.

## General Notes

- Be sure to follow all of the instructions provided during the test.
- Practice test items are offered before each section of the test to help you determine if you are following the instructions correctly. Scores from the practice items are not included in your final test score. You are not required to take the practice items and you will be given an opportunity to bypass them during the test if you wish.
- During the test you will listen to spoken information heard over a headset and then must use that information to answer questions or input data. You will have the ability to adjust the volume of the information you hear over the headset.
- Many test takers find it helpful to have the computer's keyboard "Num Lock" (number lock) function turned "on" when taking the test.
    - *See **http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Num_lock** for details.*
- Do not be surprised when the computer allows you to enter information during many parts of the test using only UPPER case letters. This mimics computerized dispatcher systems, which also limit a dispatcher to enter information in only UPPER case letters.
- You will be penalized if you skip any questions during the test (unless you are informed otherwise during the instructions for that portion of the test.).
- At some points during the test you will need to select the correct response by clicking your mouse on a box to the left of your choice, or by pressing the **A**, **B**, **C**, or **D** key on the keyboard.

A "check mark" indicates your choice during multiple-choice questions. In this example, the check mark next to alternative **B** ("Green") was placed by either moving the pointer over the small box to the left of the letter **B** and clicking once, or by entering the letter **B** on the keyboard. You can change your response as many times as you wish before you move on to the next test item by either clicking on a different box or by entering a different letter.

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- You may need to use "scroll bars" that might appear on the right side of the computer screen during testing so that you can view those parts of the screen that might be hidden.

## Decision rules to be followed during testing

> **IMPORTANT!**
> For purposes of this test you should use only the decision rules shown below when responding to "emergency message" items during the test. Do not rely on any prior knowledge about either this agency or any other public-safety agency when responding to those items.

One of the important abilities needed by a public safety communication's employee is the ability to make decisions based upon structured rules. During the test, you will be asked to quickly and accurately indicate which type of agency (i.e., Police, Fire, Emergency Medical Service, or Public Utility Company) should be dispatched to the scene of an incident **according to the rules listed below**.

You should read and learn these rules before taking the test. Experience has shown that the better an applicant knows these rules, the better they will perform during the decision-making portions of the test.

- **Police**
  Police Department should be dispatched when someone is attempting or threatening to physically harm another person, or has actually physically harmed another person, or when a person causes or is in the process of causing harm to another person's property.

- **Fire**
  Fire Department should be dispatched when there are the immediate signs of a fire in progress (such as flames or smoke), when a fire alarm is sounded, or when a person who is trapped or confined needs to be rescued or released.

- **EMS**
  Emergency Medical Service should be dispatched when there is an emergency medical condition requiring intervention by medically trained personnel.

- **Utility**
  Public Utility should be dispatched when there is a problem associated with malfunctioning or broken public water systems, electric power systems (including, but not limited to, electrical power lines, streetlights, and traffic signals), natural gas systems used for home heating, or blocked sewer drainpipes.

Examples:

Based upon the decision rules shown above, if you were given the scenarios of:

- "Man is throwing rocks in an attempt to hurt children," you should select POLICE as the correct response since the man was attempting to physically harm another person.

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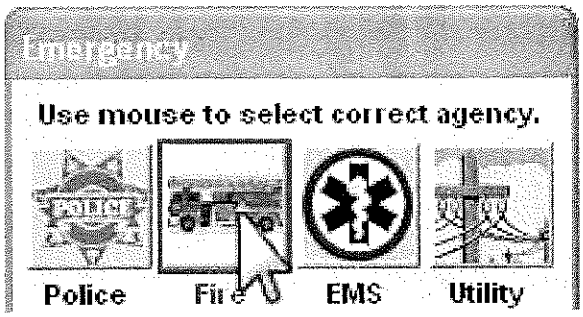
- "Electrical power lines knocked down during a severe hail storm," you should select UTILITY as the correct response because there is a problem with broken or malfunctioning electrical power lines.

Please note that sometimes you will be asked to respond to emergency-message test items *while performing other tasks on the computer*. For this reason you will need to be reasonably proficient at navigating and using a computer in order to perform both tasks as the same time.

To make your selection as to which of the four types of agencies should be dispatched in response to the "emergency response" messages that will appear on the screen during the test you will be required to:

- Move the cursor over one of the four symbols (indicating Police, Fire, EMS, or Utility Company) (an example of the four symbols as they appear during the test is shown to the right) and left-click the mouse once to make your choice. (The example to the right has the cursor placed over the "Fire" symbol).

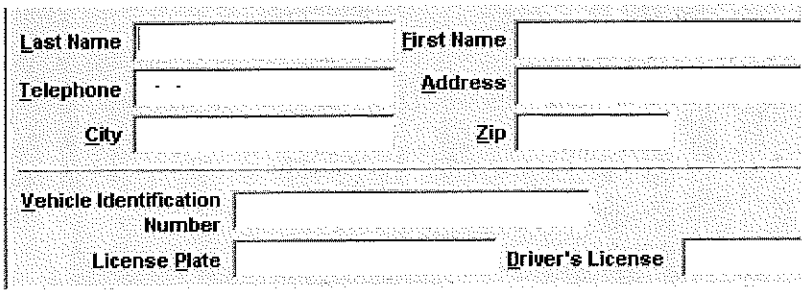



Note: Throughout the test you should use only single clicks of the left mouse button.

- You will have only **15 seconds** to respond to each of the "emergency messages" that appear on the screen during the test. Credit will not be given if an incorrect agency is dispatched or if your response is not made within the 15 seconds after the emergency message first appears.

## Entering information into the correct "fields" during the test

Communication Center employees must be able to accurately enter information they hear into the correct fields on the computer. The figure below shows the location of the fields that will appear on the computer screen during the test.




You can move from field to field by using the computer's mouse. Simply left-click the cursor in the field you wish to enter information into.

You can also press the **Tab** key or the **down-arrow** (↓) key to move the cursor to the appropriate field. The **Shift + Tab** keys or the **up-arrow** (↑) key moves the cursor in the opposite direction. Note that the side-to-side arrow keys (← →) on the keyboard will not move the cursor during the CritiCall test.

Note: The cursor always begins in the "Last Name" field whenever a new set of empty fields appears on the screen. The sequence the cursor moves as you press the **Tab** key or **down-arrow** (↓) key is as follows: Last Name; First Name; Telephone; Address; City; Zip; Vehicle

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Identification Number; License Plate; Driver's License (where it stops). The cursor will NOT move if you press the **Tab** key or **down-arrow** (↓) key while the cursor is in the Driver's License field.

Finally, you can also move to a specific field by pressing the letter key that is underlined on the screen for that field (such as **L** in **Last Name**) while simultaneously pressing down the **Alt** key. For example, if you press down on the **C** key and the **Alt** key at the same time, your cursor will move directly to the **City** field. (See below for all of the field shortcuts).

**Alt + L** = Last Name
**Alt + F** = First Name
**Alt + T** = Telephone
**Alt + A** = Address
**Alt + C** = City
**Alt + Z** = Zip or Postal Code
**Alt + V** = Vehicle Identification Number (also called a VIN)
**Alt + P** = License Plate
**Alt + D** = Driver's License

## Other Skills and Abilities That May be Measured During the Test

The following is a list of some of the other abilities that may be measured during the test.

- Follow rules and directions.
- Make decisions quickly and accurately based on rules you are provided.
- Enter data or information (such as names, telephone numbers, license plate sequences, etc.) you read and hear into a computer using a keyboard.
- Hear, comprehend, summarize, and/or answer questions about information told verbally in short story form.
- Identify written information provided on lists (such as finding a name on a list from an alphabetically-sequenced telephone book).
- Recognize if bits of information, such as addresses or names, are similar or different.
- Quickly learn and later recognize information that is shown in writing, such as descriptions (e.g., red car, blue boat, green shirt).
- Hear and remember pieces of information, such as telephone numbers or license plate numbers, for a very short period of time.
- Determine routes and/or locations using very basic maps. (No prior map-reading training or experience is required to correctly respond to these questions. However, candidates should know and be able to follow simple directions, such as "left" and "right.")
- Correctly spell commonly-used words which sound alike that might delay badly-needed assistance if misspelled (e.g., patience instead of patients).
- Communicate using sentences or phrases that clearly express the intended meaning.

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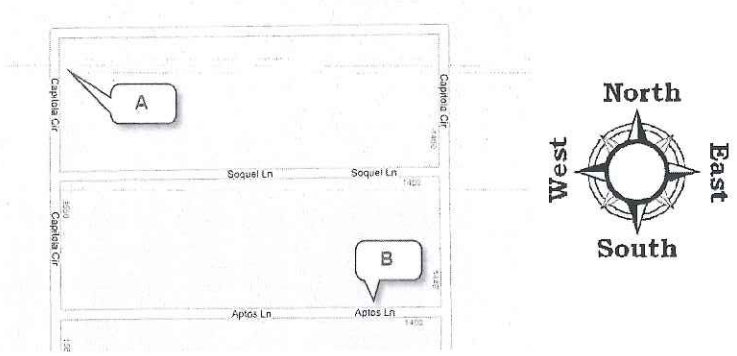
- Read and comprehend written passages.

## Test Preparation Hints

The following are some hints that may help you to prepare for the testing process.

- ✓ Practice moving your computer's mouse around the screen and left-clicking your mouse on specific targets. Keep in mind that during the test you will be required to only single-click the left mouse button.
- ✓ Read names, addresses, and telephone numbers and enter those into a computer using a keyboard. Build up your speed and accuracy.
- ✓ Have someone slowly read names, addresses, and telephone numbers to you while you enter those into a computer using a keyboard. Build up your speed and accuracy.
- ✓ Have someone slowly read a seven-digit telephone number to you (e.g., 555-1234; "five-five-five-one-two-one-zero"). As soon as they have finished reading the telephone number, enter that telephone number (without a hypen) from memory into a computer using a keyboard. Continue, listening and entering one set after another with approximately five seconds in-between each set of telephone numbers. Continue until you are very accurate.
- ✓ Learn the set of Decision Rules provided earlier in this Guide.
- ✓ Dispatchers must be able to read and write clearly. It may be helpful for you to practice your reading and writing to enhance your level of skill.
- ✓ Practice giving instructions from a very simple map. For example, using the terms "left" and "right," as well at "North," "East," "South," and "West" (as shown in the legend below), describe the quickest route from Point A to Point B on this map. You can make up additional maps to practice at http://maps.google.com/maps.




- ✓ Have someone read and spell a person's first and last name from a telephone book and then you find the address associated with that name. Enter the address into a computer using a keyboard exactly as written in the book. Practice one name at a time until you develop a high degree of proficiency at locating and correctly entering the information.

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