

65 PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

625 EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMUNICATIONS BUREAU

**Chapter 5: STANDARDS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF EMERGENCY FIRE DISPATCH PROTOCOLS**

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SUMMARY: This Chapter establishes standards for implementation and administration of emergency fire dispatch protocols by Public Safety Answering Points and other Emergency Fire Dispatch Agencies.

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§ 1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

A. Purpose

The purpose of this Chapter is to adopt and implement standardized dispatch protocols for answering fire 9-1-1 calls and to adopt and implement standards for training, continuing education, certification, recertification, compliance oversight, quality assurance, and management of Emergency Fire Dispatch Agencies and dispatchers certifying as Emergency Fire Dispatchers.

B. Applicability

This Chapter applies to all Public Safety Answering Points, Emergency Fire Dispatchers, and Emergency Fire Dispatch Agencies.

§ 2 DEFINITIONS

A. **Bureau.** "Bureau" means the Emergency Services Communication Bureau

B. **Commission.** "Commission" means the Maine Public Utilities Commission.

C. **Compliance to Protocol.** "Compliance to Protocol" means adherence to written text or scripts and other processes within the approved Emergency Fire Dispatch Priority Reference System (EFDPRS) except to the extent that deviation from the text or script is necessary for the express purpose of clarifying the meaning or intent of a question or facilitating clear understanding of a required action, instruction, or response from the caller.

D. **Continuing Dispatcher Education (CDE).** "Continuing Dispatcher Education" means fire dispatch relevant educational experiences in accordance with standards set forth in national standards established for the practice of Emergency Fire Dispatch.

- E. **Dispatch Life Support.** "Dispatch Life Support" means the knowledge, procedures, and skills used by trained EFDs in providing service through Pre-Arrival Instructions and Post-Dispatch Instructions to callers requesting fire service assistance.
- F. **Emergency Fire Dispatcher (EFD).** "Emergency Fire Dispatcher" means a person trained to provide Emergency Fire Dispatch and certified in accordance with this Chapter.
- G. **Emergency Fire Dispatch.** "Emergency Fire Dispatch" means the reception, evaluation, processing, and provision of dispatch life support, management of requests for emergency fire assistance, and participation in ongoing evaluation and improvement of the Emergency Fire Dispatch process. This process includes identifying the nature of the request, prioritizing the severity of the request, dispatching the necessary resources, providing safety related instructions to the callers and coordinating the responding resources as needed.
- H. **Emergency Fire Dispatch Agency (EFDA).** "Emergency Fire Dispatch Agency" means any company, organization or government agency that provides Emergency Fire Dispatch in accordance with the provisions of this Chapter.
- I. **Emergency Fire Dispatch Director.** "Emergency Fire Dispatch Director" means a management level employee of an EFDA or of the Fire Authority Having Jurisdiction, possessing primary responsibility for oversight and direction of the Emergency Fire Dispatch program.
- J. **Emergency Fire Dispatch Priority Reference System (EFDPRS).** "Emergency Fire Dispatch Priority Reference System" means a system approved by the Bureau with the following attributes:
1. A protocol for Emergency Fire Dispatch response to calls that includes:
    - a. Verification of address/location, phone number;
    - b. Chief complaint/incident type selection;
    - c. Systemized interrogation questions;
    - d. Post-dispatch instructions;
    - e. Pre-arrival instructions; and
    - f. Dispatch Code Selection
  2. A continuous quality improvement program that measures compliance with the protocol through ongoing random case review of each emergency fire dispatcher; and
  3. A training curriculum and testing process consistent with the protocol.

- K. **Emergency Fire Dispatch Protocol Vendor.** "Emergency Fire Dispatch Protocol Vendor" or "Protocol Vendor" means the vendor contracted by the Bureau to provide the approved Emergency Fire Dispatch Priority Reference System.
- L. **Fire Authority Having Jurisdiction.** "Fire Authority Having Jurisdiction" means the entity with Emergency Fire Dispatch process oversight, responsibility and accountability for the fire service operational aspects of an EFDA including: responsibility for the decision making process and instructions rendered by an EFD and the EFDA; approval of the operational EFDPRS; direct participation in the Emergency Fire Dispatch system evaluation, and continuous quality improvement processes. This entity could be, but is not limited to Fire Department(s), Fire Service Chief Officer(s), or Fire Service Board(s).
- M. **Post-Dispatch Instructions.** "Post-Dispatch Instructions" means case-specific advice, warnings, and instructions given by trained EFDs whenever possible and appropriate after dispatching field responders.
- N. **Pre-Arrival Instructions.** "Pre-Arrival Instructions" means telephone rendered, scripted instructions provided by a trained EFD to callers that help to provide aid to the victim and control the situation prior to arrival of fire personnel.
- O. **Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP).** "Public Safety Answering Point" has the same meaning as set forth in 25 M.R.S. § 2921.
- P. **Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Program (QA/QI).** "Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Program" means a program approved by the Bureau and administered by an EFDA for the purpose of insuring safe, efficient, and effective performance of EFDs in connection with the use of the EFDPRS.

### § 3. BUREAU AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

The Bureau shall approve and provide the EFDPRS; establish minimum training requirements for EFD certification and recertification; provide for the certification and recertification of EFDs; provide for the enrollment of each candidate for EFD certification or recertification in training courses or examinations for certification and recertification; ensure the provision of a certificate to EFDs setting forth that the EFD has fulfilled the requirements of EFDPRS training; and provide for oversight of all EFDAs.

### § 4. EFDA RESPONSIBILITY

Each PSAP and EFDA shall provide Emergency Fire Dispatch service in accordance with the EFDPRS, and shall ensure that the EFDPRS, including its questions, instructions, codes and protocols is implemented without modification; the EFDPRS is used for every request for fire and rescue assistance by certified EFDs; administering a QA/QI program consistent with this rule; and that certificates, training records, and CDE records of each

EFD employed by the EFDA are maintained and made available for inspection by the Bureau.

## § 5. EFD ELIGIBILITY AND CERTIFICATION

To qualify for certification by the protocol vendor as an EFD, an individual must: be at least 18 years old; possess a high school diploma or equivalent; be employed by an EFDA; and successfully complete an approved EFD training course.

To qualify for recertification as an EFD, the EFD must submit an application for recertification before the expiration of the certification to the protocol vendor and demonstrate that the EFD has completed Continuing Dispatch Education sufficient to meet the vendor's requirement for recertification.

Initial certification and timely recertification will be provided at the Bureau's expense only if the EFD is an employee of a PSAP. If failure to certify necessitates reexamination or other retraining, any associated expenses will be the responsibility of the EFDA.

In the case of a lapse in certification of less than six months, recertification fees will be paid by the EFDA. If failure to certify necessitates reexamination or other retraining, any associated expenses will be the responsibility of the EFDA.

In the case of a lapse in certification of greater than six months, any certification, reexamination, or retraining fees will be paid by the EFD.

The Bureau will recognize an EFD with a valid certification from an approved EFDPRS if the EFD provides the Bureau with an Emergency Fire Dispatch training completion certificate obtained within the last two years, and verification that the training course meets the requirement of this Chapter.

## § 6. CONTINUING DISPATCH EDUCATION (CDE)

All Continuing Dispatch Education courses completed by EFDs for the purposes of recertification must meet the CDE requirements of the protocol vendor.

## § 7. EFD DIRECTORS

Each EFDA must designate an Emergency Fire Dispatch Director who must ensure that:

- A. Each EFD is properly certified by the protocol vendor;
- B. EFD training and CDE is conducted as required by this Chapter;
- C. A QA/QI program is conducted as required by this Chapter;

- D. An EFD-in-training who has not received certification only processes calls using the Emergency Fire Dispatch protocol after the EFD-in-training has attended an approved certification course, and only under the direct supervision of a certified EFD. For purposes of this paragraph, direct supervision means that the designated certified EFD is contemporaneously listening to any call for fire assistance being processed by the EFD-in-training and is able to assume control of the call;
- E. Their EFDA is using the most current version of the EFDPRS; and
- F. An EFD interrogating a caller and coding an incident is the same EFD that gives Dispatch Life Support instructions.

**§ 8. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (QA/QI)**

A. Overview

Each EFDA shall establish a continuous quality assurance, improvement and management program. The Bureau will establish a single QA/QI Program to be used by EFDAs and EFDs. Any person engaged in a QA/QI review of EFDs must be properly certified by the protocol vendor as an EFD case reviewer.

B. Responsibilities

EFDAs must:

- 1. Participate in a Bureau approved QA/QI program;
- 2. Conduct the QA/QI program as required by Maine law and this Chapter; and
- 3. Designate a QA/QI Manager to oversee the EFDA's QA/QI program.

C. Levels

Each QA/QI program must comprise the following levels:

- 1. Field level—Direct Observation.
- 2. Administrative level—Case review, identification of positive and negative trends.
- 3. Management level—High-level coordination of fire oversight.

D. Scope

The goal of QA/QI is to ensure effective and efficient Emergency Fire Dispatch. Each EFD employed by an EFDA must be regularly and routinely evaluated to ensure compliance with Emergency Fire Dispatch protocol and operating policies and procedures. Evaluation, using the selected protocol vendor's standards and evaluation instruments, must be qualitative and quantitative and must include retrospective review of non-edited logged recordings of Emergency Fire Dispatch

calls and any associated documentation. Cases chosen for evaluation must be randomly selected and equitably representative of each EFD's work.

1. Tracking

The following variables must be tracked for each EFD:

- a. Address/location, phone number;
- b. Chief complaint/incident type selection;
- c. Systemized interrogation questions;
- d. Post-Dispatch Instructions;
- e. Pre-Arrival Instructions;
- f. Dispatch code selection;
- g. Overall or aggregate performance score; and
- h. Customer Service score.

2. Data Maintenance

Data must be maintained electronically at each EFDA and must include:

- a. Individual compliance;
- b. Shift compliance; and
- c. Service compliance.

3. Reporting

EFDA's must report compliance results monthly to the Bureau in the format requested by the Bureau by the 15th day of the month for the previous month.

4. Challenging Callers and Text Messaging

Challenging callers (*e.g.*, hysterical, speech or hearing impaired, developmentally disabled, non-English speakers, etc.) and persons requesting Emergency Fire Dispatch via text message are not exceptions to the Emergency Fire Dispatch requirements. Challenging callers must receive the same systematized and comprehensive approach to Emergency Fire Dispatch as any other caller.

5. Case Review

EFDA's will conduct random case reviews of a minimum number of Emergency Fire Dispatch cases according to the following schedule:

- By the end of the sixth month following its EFD go live date, the PSAP will conduct a minimum of 50 fire case reviews per month (or 100% of the cases if less than 50 calls per month)
- By the end of the ninth month following its EFD go live date, the PSAP will conduct a minimum of 75 fire case reviews per month (or 100% of the cases if less than 75 calls per month)
- By the end of the twelfth month following its EFD go live date, the PSAP will conduct a minimum of 100 fire case reviews per month (or 100% of the cases if less than 100 calls per month)

6. Follow-up on QA findings

- a. EDFAs must mitigate all noted deviations to protocol;
- b. EDFAs must emphasize retraining and behavior modification in their QA/QI programs; and
- c. EDFAs must provide regular feedback to EFDs.

**§ 9. TRAINING PROGRAMS AND INSTRUCTOR REQUIREMENTS**

A. Program Requirements

The Bureau shall approve all certification training for Emergency Fire Dispatch programs.

B. Training Requirements

All instructors for Emergency Fire Dispatch training courses must be properly certified by the protocol vendor and training course administration requirements must be consistently met, including reports to the Bureau of the following upon request:

- 1. Student attendance and performance records;
- 2. Identity and qualifications of the instructor(s);
- 3. Student Evaluation of the instructor(s); and
- 4. Student Evaluation of course content.

**§ 10. DISCIPLINE**

The Bureau may investigate any alleged violations of this Chapter and may take appropriate action, including action pursuant to the Commission's authority in Chapter 15 of Title 35-A of the Maine Revised Statutes.

**§ 11. IMPLEMENTATION**

Each PSAP shall designate an individual to be the point of contact with the protocol vendor in establishing phases of implementation and site visits.

Each PSAP must complete implementation of Emergency Fire Dispatch services by May 31, 2018.

**§ 12. WAIVER**

Upon the request of any person subject to the provisions of this Chapter, or upon its own motion, the Commission may, for good cause, waive any requirement of this Chapter that is not required by statute. The waiver may not be inconsistent with the purposes of this Chapter or any statute. The Commission, the Hearing Examiner assigned to a proceeding regarding this Chapter, or the Director of the Bureau may grant the waiver.

**BASIS STATEMENT:** The factual and policy basis for this rule is set forth in the Commission's Order Adopting Rule and Statement of Factual and Policy Basis, Docket No. 2016-00063, issued on August 8, 2016. Copies of the Order and Statement have been filed with this rule at the Office of the Secretary of State. Copies may also be obtained from the Administrative Director, Public Utilities Commission, 18 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333-0018.

**AUTHORITY:** 25 M.R.S. § 2927(3-C)(A).

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** This rule was approved as to form and legality by the Attorney General on August 26, 2016. It was filed with the Secretary of State on August 29, 2016 and will be effective on Sept. 3, 2016.