



PUBLIC SAFETY DISPATCHER & PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATOR

Test Information Guide for Candidates

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**Instructions are available at JobsQuest.org under Exam Guides and Registration.
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Test Information Guide Overview

Congratulations on your eligibility for the Public Safety Dispatcher and/or Public Safety Telecommunicator examination! The Personnel Board of Jefferson County (PBJC) is pleased that you are interested in a job as a Public Safety Dispatcher (PSD) and/or Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST) within the Jefferson County Merit System. The PBJC has created this information guide to familiarize you with the jobs of Public Safety Dispatcher and/or Public Safety Telecommunicator and the testing procedures for the job class(es). This guide is designed to provide you with an overview of Public Safety Dispatcher and Telecommunicator jobs; the competencies being measured by the exam; a description of the test components and the test administration; test results notification information; PBJC rules related to testing; what you will need to complete the exam; and how to prepare for the exam.

The Test Information Guide provides valuable information that will allow you to be more familiar with the Public Safety Dispatcher and Telecommunicator jobs and the examination process. It is strongly recommended that you thoroughly review this manual and utilize the information provided. Reading the entire guide will ensure that you understand what will occur during the examination. Reviewing and understanding the descriptions provided will ensure that you are prepared for the types of questions and scenarios that you will encounter. A thorough familiarity with the examination process will eliminate uncertainty and reduce anxiety that can sometimes be experienced in testing situations.

PLEASE NOTE: This guide is designed to help you *prepare* for the examination. Any referral or use of this guide or any unauthorized outside sources during the examination process is strictly prohibited.

Overview of the Public Safety Dispatcher and Telecommunicator Jobs

The following information is provided in order to assist you in determining whether you are able and willing to perform the job of a Public Safety Dispatcher and/or Public Safety Telecommunicator. An individual's expectations of the job before s/he is selected for the position often differ from what s/he experiences once on the job, which can result in low levels of job satisfaction. This information is designed to help applicants make more accurate judgments about their interest in working as a Public Safety Dispatcher and/or Public Safety Telecommunicator.

The following information was gathered through a process (known as job analysis) of interviews, meetings, and surveys with Public Safety Dispatcher and Public Safety Telecommunicator incumbents from various jurisdictions throughout Jefferson County. Through this effort, the PBJC explored what is typically done on the job, as well as the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) that a person needs to possess in order to successfully perform the work. Although not for everyone, a career as a Public Safety Dispatcher and/or Telecommunicator is both challenging and rewarding. If you decide to pursue a career in this field, you will be expected to perform the work behaviors described in this section.

The **Public Safety Dispatcher** job class is a Grade 18 position and is located in eleven (11) jurisdictions within the Merit System: Bessemer, Birmingham, Fairfield, Fultondale, Gardendale, Homewood, Hueytown, Irondale, Midfield, Pleasant Grove, and Tarrant. The **Public Safety Telecommunicator** job class is a Grade 15 position and is located in one (1) jurisdiction within the Merit System: Birmingham. Please note that salary ranges for each jurisdiction are subject to change due to cost of living adjustments. You can check current salary ranges at <http://www.pbical.org/employment/schedules.aspx>.

The major duties performed by **Public Safety Dispatcher** employees that were determined to be critical during the most recent job analysis include the following:

- Answers and manages calls to allow effective communication and response of emergency responders (i.e., police, fire, emergency medical services (EMS)) for citizens during emergency situations.
- Provides information and referrals to citizens, public safety personnel, media, etc. by responding to calls involving non-emergency situations.
- Operates technology-based work station that includes multiple video monitors, multiple software programs running simultaneously, a personal computer, phone lines, headsets, and alarm boards in order to receive, forward, and monitor calls for services.
- Dispatches public safety personnel (i.e., police, fire, and medical emergency) and informs responding units of pertinent information regarding emergency situations.
- Monitors responses of public safety personnel and activities of other dispatchers to track progress, maintain communications, and ensure personnel safety.
- Accesses and maintains suspect and/or incident information by running database queries, updating databases, completing reports/logs, and filing documentation.
- Trains new employees, interns, or temporary employees how to perform the job to ensure employees are able to appropriately handle emergency calls and provide citizen and emergency personnel with necessary information.
- Engages in activities designed to ensure professional development, awareness of developments in the field, and knowledge of relevant practices, rules, laws, policies, and/or guidelines.

The major duties performed by **Public Safety Telecommunicator** employees that were determined to be critical during the most recent job analysis include the following:

- Answers and manages calls to allow effective communication and response of emergency responders (i.e., police, fire, emergency medical services (EMS)) for citizens during emergency situations.
- Provides information and referrals to citizens, public safety personnel, media, etc. by responding to calls involving non-emergency situations.

- Operates technology-based work station that includes multiple video monitors, multiple software programs running simultaneously, a personal computer, phone lines, headsets, and alarm boards in order to receive, forward, and monitor calls for services.
- Completes and maintains information and tracking data pertinent to law enforcement operations.

Work is performed indoors and at times requires the performance of physical tasks that may involve sitting, standing, walking, or climbing stairs. The work is performed 24/7 to include nights, weekends, and holidays. Work may also require, on occasion, being in close proximity to inmates some of whom may be physically or mentally ill.

Competencies Being Measured

As stated previously, job analysis is a systematic process that the PBJC uses to collect, analyze, and interpret data about a job in order to identify the work requirements (i.e., work behaviors and tasks) and people requirements (i.e., knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics) for the job. The process results in a determination of the duties and tasks which are critical for job success and the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that are required to perform those duties.

During the test development process, the PBJC analyst clustered, or grouped, the KSAs determined to be critical for the Public Safety Dispatcher and Telecommunicator jobs into related categories, or competencies. The following are the competencies and KSAs that are being measured by the Public Safety Dispatcher and Telecommunicator examination process:

Adaptability & Flexibility

- Ability to adjust to changing work demands, procedures, technology, and/or priorities.
- Ability to assess the importance of, and consequences associated with, tasks in order to set priorities in light of competing demands.
- Ability to manage and allocate one's time in order to handle multiple tasks and/or meet pressing deadlines.
- Ability to shift attention back and forth between two or more activities or sources of information (such as speech, sounds, touch, or other sources).

Computer & Technology Operations

- Skill in typing text and entering data and/or information quickly and accurately using appropriate equipment (e.g., computer, calculator).

Customer Service*

- Ability to balance interests of clients and the department/organization and respond to pressing and changing client demands.

Learning & Memory

- Ability to learn unfamiliar material/information quickly and accurately.
- Ability to maintain mental stamina and focus over long period of work and/or during times of high stress.

- Ability to mentally store and retrieve work-related information for use at a later time.
- Ability to understand the implications of new information for both current and future problem-solving and decision-making.

Oral Communication & Comprehension

- Ability to attend to information presented verbally and actively ask questions to fill identified areas of missing or unclear information.
- Ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
- Ability to orally communicate information and ideas so others will understand.
- Ability to speak clearly so others can understand you.

Planning & Organizing

- Skill in organizing information, materials, and/or documentation in a systematic and logical manner.

Problem Solving & Decision Making

- Ability to analyze a problem from different perspectives and generate potential solutions that are practical and effective.
- Ability to investigate a problem in order to identify the root cause(s) and determine an appropriate solution.
- Ability to use logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems.
- Skill in selecting the most appropriate course of action in situations where information is unclear or unavailable and making high quality and effective decisions.

Professionalism & Integrity

- Ability to demonstrate honest behavior in all work tasks and responsibilities.
- Ability to follow safety procedures and practices in a variety of novel and everyday work tasks/situations.
- Ability to maintain confidentiality of information (e.g., applicant, client, customer, patient).
- Ability to work in an environment that requires strict adherence to instructions, standards, and/or procedures.
- Skill in conducting oneself in a calm and professional manner in stressful situations.

Researching & Referencing

- Ability to conduct research using various sources of information (e.g., databases, internet, books) in order to identify and compile needed information.
- Ability to identify appropriate materials and sources of needed information, to includes referencing, cross referencing, and evaluating the pertinence of information.
- Skill in maintaining records.

Reviewing, Inspecting & Auditing

- Ability to pay close attention to detail in order to ensure the completeness and accuracy of work.

Self-Management & Initiative

- Ability to perform work in a manner that is careful, attentive and vigilant.
- Ability to see a need for and take constructive action at work without being prompted or urged.
- Ability to work productively and effectively under conditions of high stress, such as tight deadlines, heavy workloads, or emergency situations.
- Ability to work without close supervision or significant amounts of direction/guidance.

Teamwork & Interpersonal*

- Ability to develop networks and builds alliances, engage in cross-functional activities, and collaborate across boundaries.
- Ability to manage and resolve conflicts with coworkers and/or customers.
- Ability to work collaboratively with a group or team in an effort to achieve a common goal.
- Skill in maintaining a positive working relationship through comfortable and appropriate interpersonal interaction.

Technical & Job-Specific Knowledge

- Knowledge of basic office equipment (e.g. telephone, smartphone, fax machine, copier, computer, calculator).

Written Communication & Comprehension

- Ability to communicate information and ideas in writing to a variety of audiences in a clear, concise, and organized manner, free from spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.
- Ability to read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.

*Indicates the competency is not evaluated by the computer-administered test, but is evaluated through the Minimum Qualifications screen.

Description of the Test Components

This section of the guide provides you with descriptions of the test components that you will complete during the Public Safety Dispatcher and Telecommunicator examination, as well as the Minimum Qualifications (MQs) that were used to determine which applicants were eligible to take the examination. The MQs and the computer-administered test were developed based on the job analysis data gathered from job incumbents and supervisors, referred to as subject matter experts (SME), by PBJC analysts. Multiple methods were used for gathering job data, including site observations, individual interviews, critical incidents, technical panels, SME meetings, and job analysis questionnaires. Through these methods, analysts were able to determine the critical duties, tasks, and KSAs for the Public Safety Dispatcher and Public Safety Telecommunicator jobs. The MQs and computer-administered test are designed to assess the KSAs that were deemed important and needed on day one of the job by Public Safety Dispatcher and Public Safety Telecommunicator subject matter experts.

Minimum Qualifications

Minimum qualifications (MQs) are descriptions of specific types of experience, education, and/or training that have been demonstrated to be job-related and that are both critical to job performance and needed on day one of the job for the Public Safety Dispatcher and Telecommunicator positions. MQs focus on those competencies that are so critical to job performance that without them a person could not perform the job even at a minimally acceptable level, regardless of the possession of other competencies. The MQs developed for these jobs are listed below:

- Experience in a customer service-oriented position (e.g., interacting with people, providing information and/or a service).
- No felony convictions or misdemeanors involving violent offenses or issues of moral turpitude.
- Willing to submit to a general and criminal background check.
- Willing to work an 8- or 12-hour shift on any shift or day (e.g., nights, weekends, holidays) and overtime as needed.

After the application screening process, if you have been determined to meet the minimum qualifications for Public Safety Dispatcher and/or Telecommunicator, you will receive an email with a link to watch a realistic job preview video. The video will provide an honest look at the Public Safety Dispatcher and Telecommunicator jobs by showcasing the daily tasks, work environment, challenges, and expectations, helping you determine if the role is a good fit for you. After you have watched the video, those still interested in the job(s) will receive an invitation to complete the online/computer-administered test. The test invitation will come from “TestGenius” and will include instructions and a link to access the online/computer-administered test. The link included in the test invitation will remain active for a limited time as specified by the deadline in your test invitation.

Online/Computer-Administered Test

The online/computer-administered test was developed based on a review of the job duties performed by Public Safety Dispatcher and Telecommunicator incumbents within the Merit System and the skills and abilities needed to successfully perform these duties.

Candidates will complete an online/computer-administered test consisting of several job-related exercises. The test will include data entry exercises that require candidates to listen to orally-stated information and type that information into the correct location in an electronic form on the computer. Speed and accuracy are essential to perform well on this portion of the test. Some data entry exercises will also require candidates to multi-task, meaning you will need to answer questions while completing the data entry exercises.

The online/computer-administered test also contains several exercises that evaluate the critical skills and abilities necessary to perform effectively as a dispatcher and telecommunicator. These exercises measure skills such as data entry, decision making, multi-tasking, cross referencing, attention to detail, recalling verbal information, memory, spelling, and writing

ability. Candidates will respond to various questions using a keyboard or clicking the mouse to select the most correct answer. There will be a specified amount of time to complete each of the test exercises.

Here is a description of the online/computer-administered test exercises:

Decision-Making

- This test exercise measures the candidate's ability to identify the most appropriate emergency vehicle to dispatch to hypothetical emergency scenarios based on relevant scenario details (e.g., man throws a lamp at his girlfriend's head).

Data Entry (Audio)

- This test exercise measures the candidate's ability to hear written data (such as name, telephone number, license plate sequence, etc.) and accurately enter that data using a keyboard.

Data Entry MT (Audio)

- This test exercise measures the candidate's ability to hear audible data (such as name, telephone number, license plate sequence, etc.) and accurately enter that data using a keyboard. Multi-tasking will also be measured using a decision-making task.

Cross Referencing (Audio)

- This test exercise measures the candidate's ability to locate information, requested vocally via audio, on a written list and to correctly/accurately respond using a keyboard. Candidates will be presented with an address book containing names, telephone numbers, and addresses on the screen. Using the address book list, they must answer audible questions by cross-referencing specific information, and then entering the correct response into the space provided on the computer screen.

Call Summarization

- This test exercise measures the candidate's ability to hear and comprehend audible information while accurately entering that information using a keyboard, and later be able to use that information. Candidates will listen to a simulated telephone call and enter detailed information into the computer. They must then respond to a series of multiple-choice questions about the information that they heard using the information they entered into the computer and/or their memory.

Memory Recall-Numeric (Audio)

- This test exercise measures the candidate's ability to hear data (e.g., seven-digit telephone numbers), retain it in memory, and then use a keyboard to accurately enter the data. Candidates will listen to a series of seven-digit telephone numbers and then be asked to enter the numbers from memory a few moments later.

Character Comparison

- This test exercise measures the candidate's ability to compare and contrast written data. In this multiple-choice test, candidates will be presented with a series of characters and text. They will then be asked to correctly identify the matching character sequence against a group of similarly phrased alternate characters.

Spelling

- This test exercise assesses a candidate’s ability to correctly spell words that sound similar, but are spelled differently and have different meanings depending on the context in which they are being used. These words, if misspelled, might communicate an incorrect meaning to the recipient, which could delay assistance. Candidates will listen to a target word spoken in a sentence and then must correctly spell that word according to the context in which it is used. For example, some words that sound the same when spoken have different meanings, such as -- “patients” or “patience.” The candidate will need to correctly spell the word based on a phrase that specifies the meaning.

Sentence Clarity

- This test exercise measures the candidate’s ability to select the sentence(s) that most clearly express a meaning. Candidates will be presented with two written statements and must choose the statement that most clearly communicates the meaning.

It is important that candidates take the time to thoroughly read the instructions provided at the beginning of each exercise. Candidates will also be provided with a practice session before they respond to exam items that will be evaluated.

Public Safety Dispatcher and Telecommunicator Test Administration

The Public Safety Dispatcher and Telecommunicator examination will be an online/computer-administered test that you complete remotely. Individuals deemed to meet the MQs and still interested after viewing the realistic job preview video will receive an email invitation with instructions and a unique link to complete the online test from **TestGenius**. This link will only be active for a limited time as specified by the date in your test invitation. If you receive an email indicating you meet the MQs, but do not receive a test invite from TestGenius within the next 24-48 hours, please check the spam or trash folders for your email account. If you still do not receive a test invite from TestGenius, please contact Sarah Freed at Sarah.Freed@pbical.org or 205-279-3599.

Items you will need to complete the exam:

- Test invite email from TestGenius with your test link. **IMPORTANT** - If you applied to both Public Safety Dispatcher and Public Safety Telecommunicator jobs, you will only receive and need to complete one TestGenius test.
- Desktop or laptop computer. (This test **cannot** be completed on a cell phone, tablet, or mobile device.)
- Internet Access.
- Chrome, Edge or Firefox browsers are preferred. (The test is no longer compatible with Internet Explorer.)
- A place to complete the test away from other people, noise, and distractions.
- Headphones or computer speakers. There will be sections of the test that will require you to hear audio. Before you begin, be sure your laptop/computer is not muted and you are able to hear sound coming from your device.

Important Test Instructions:

- After beginning the exam, do not use your browser's back, forward, or refresh buttons to navigate within the exam. You can use the built-in navigation buttons to go back to previous items, if allowed and if time remains.
- After you answer each question within the exercise, hit the "Next" button in the top righthand corner of the screen to go to the next question. **DO NOT click the submit button to go to the next question.** The question number for that exercise will be noted in the top middle of the screen. When you have completed all of the questions within an exercise, click "Submit" to go to the next exercise. **DO NOT** hit "Submit" until you have completed all of the questions within the exercise or once time has run out. Once you click "Submit" you will not be able to go back to this exercise.
- Each exercise has its own time limit. This timer is shown in the top righthand corner of the screen. When the time expires, your last answer will be recorded and any unanswered questions will not be scored.
- Be sure to read the instructions carefully before beginning each exercise. You will also be given at least one (1) practice question for each exercise. Use this practice question to familiarize yourself with the exercise. The time limit for the exercise does not apply to the practice question.

Remote Test Security Procedure:

You, as the test taker, must agree to complete this examination without assistance from outside parties or materials not provided by the Personnel Board of Jefferson County. You must also ensure all exam content remains confidential. The Personnel Board of Jefferson County reserves the right to require you to complete parallel versions of this exam in a proctored setting in order to confirm your identity as the original test taker if you are advanced to the next phase of the selection process.

It is important that you do not discuss the examination components or processes with anyone after completing the exam. Providing information about the examination with anyone would be unfair to yourself and to others taking the Public Safety Dispatcher and Telecommunicator exam. In addition, revealing information about the examination could result in your disqualification from the process and further disciplinary action as an employee within the Merit System.

How to Prepare for the Public Safety Dispatcher and Telecommunicator Exam

- ✓ *Read the study materials thoroughly.*

This Test Information Guide has been provided to you to help you prepare as much as possible for the various components of the Public Safety Dispatcher and Telecommunicator exam. This Guide can provide some insight into the testing process, what to expect when completing the exam, as well as the job duties, knowledge, skills and abilities that are important for the job(s).

- ✓ *Make sure you have all necessary equipment and instructions.*

Before the test begins, make sure you have everything you will need to successfully complete the examination process. Also, make sure you have all pages of the test instructions, and have read through the instructions so you understand what to do.

Instructions are available at JobsQuest.org under Exam Guides and Registration. Document Title: “TestGenius Instructions for Dispatcher & Telecommunicator”

- ✓ *Make sure you have a quiet place to complete the exam and have allowed enough time.*

To preserve the integrity of the examination and ensure your best personal performance, please ensure any computer you will be using for the test will be away from any other people, noise, and distractions.

In addition, make sure you have set aside at least one and one half (1 ½) hours to complete the entire exam. You may not require the entire time to complete all exercises of the exam, but you will want to make sure you have ample time to finish the entire exam once you start it.

- ✓ *Use the restroom prior to starting the exam.*

Ensure you use the restroom before you begin. Once the exam begins, any time taken to use the restroom will count against your test time and cannot be made up.

- ✓ *Read all instructions and utilize the practice sessions.*

Read all instructions contained in the test. You want to make sure you are performing the tasks correctly. Also, utilize the practice sessions provided to you during the exam.

Description of Rules Related to Testing

PROHIBITED ITEMS – You CANNOT use the following items during the test:

- Scratch paper
- Writing utensils
- Cell phones or other electronic devices including radios, smart watches, tablets, Bluetooth devices, MP3 players, e-readers, calculators, pagers, etc.

Cheating: Again, you, as the test taker, must agree to complete this examination without assistance from outside parties or materials not provided by the Personnel Board of Jefferson County. You must also ensure all exam content remains confidential. The Personnel Board of Jefferson County reserves the right to require you to complete parallel versions of this exam in a proctored setting in order to confirm your identity as the original test taker if you are advanced to the next phase of the selection process. The Personnel Board has a strict “no cheating” rule. If you are caught cheating during any portion of the examination, you will receive a zero and be immediately disqualified. In addition, you may be barred from taking any future merit system examinations (Rule 9.14). There are no exceptions to this rule.

Test Results Notification

Approximately one (1) week after the TestGenius link is closed/expired, you will be notified of your results by email. This phase of the selection process is pass/fail; therefore, you will not receive a score or rank. When you receive a notification of your results, it will indicate if your exam performance met or did not meet the minimum proficiency standard for the job(s).

What if I DO Pass the Exam?

If you receive a notification indicating your exam performance met the minimum proficiency standard for the job, then your application will be provided for consideration to the jurisdictions you selected when they request to fill a vacancy for Public Safety Dispatcher and/or Telecommunicator job(s). You may be contacted by the city or government agency with the vacancy if you are selected for an interview or any other selection procedure.

The various jurisdictions for which there are openings for Public Safety Dispatcher and/or Telecommunicator may conduct background checks, criminal record checks, or further selection procedures to review candidates. After the eligible register has been released to these jurisdictions, you must contact them for further information about your status in the selection process. Please note that in some cases, a specific jurisdiction may require you to participate in additional interviews or other selection processes before making an offer of employment.

What if I DO NOT Pass the Exam?

If you receive a notification indicating your exam performance did not meet the minimum proficiency standard for the job, then you will also receive instructions for how to deal with any questions or concerns about your results in the results notification email. The online/computer-administered exam is referred to as a hurdle. This means that in order to proceed through the rest of the hiring process, you must pass this online/computer-administered exam.

Four (4) business days from the date the notification of results is emailed constitutes the appeal period for this examination. If you have any questions about your results, please contact the staff member listed in the results email. If after speaking with this staff member you still have concerns about your results, you may submit a written appeal to the Personnel Board Director, outlining your concerns. All appeals are treated seriously and reviewed thoroughly before making a determination. Appeals related to the **content** of the test, however, are **not** considered. Procedural matters related to test administration, assessment, or calculation of results are legitimate areas for appeal. To be considered, an appeal must be received at the Personnel Board offices by the appeal end date listed in the notice. Appeals received after this date will not be considered.

If you do not pass the exam, please do not be discouraged. This does not mean that you have no hope of a career as a Public Safety Dispatcher and/or Telecommunicator. It simply means that for this exam period, you did not perform well enough on the exam to receive further consideration.

Contact Information

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this material or the examination process, please contact any of the individuals listed below.

Sarah Freed
Test Administration & Assessment Coordinator
Email: Sarah.Freed@pbjcal.org
Phone: 205-279-3599

Stacey Lange, PhD
Industrial & Organizational Psychologist
Email: Stacey.Lange@pbjcal.org
Phone: 205-279-3607

ADA Accommodations

If you would like to request special testing accommodations or have any questions concerning the test site or testing conditions, please contact Allysa Singer at 205-279-3603 or at singera@pbjcal.org.