
SENATE BILL 5555

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2022 Regular Session

By Senators Van De Wege, Hunt, Mullet, and Randall

Prefiled 12/17/21. Read first time 01/10/22. Referred to Committee on State Government & Elections.

1 AN ACT Relating to public safety telecommunicators; amending RCW
2 38.52.520; and adding a new chapter to Title 38 RCW.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature acknowledges that a
5 primary responsibility of government is to ensure public safety and
6 that almost always an emergency response begins with a request to 911
7 for assistance. Requests to 911 and subsequent emergency response
8 communications are managed by public safety telecommunicator
9 professionals. These first responders are essential workers who
10 continue public service throughout the pandemic, who are essential to
11 triage requests for emergency responses and provide lifesaving
12 instructions and guidance to those who call 911, ensuring the
13 appropriate response for the situation; law enforcement, behavioral
14 health, fire, and emergency medical. The public safety
15 telecommunicator also dispatches, tracks, processes, and transmits
16 information from the public and continually communicates with
17 responders providing an additional layer of safety. The legislature
18 takes special note of the contributions made by public safety
19 telecommunicators whose tasks are arduous and whose working
20 conditions may be contributing to the high and often critical
21 turnover among the principal cadre of professionals who receive and

1 process requests from the public for emergency response and provide
2 emergency communications with public safety responders.

3 (2) The legislature also recognizes that public safety
4 telecommunicators are the only public safety professionals who are
5 not required to be certified and do not have standard initial
6 training requirements to perform their critical public safety
7 function. Further, employers of public safety telecommunicators face
8 challenges in attracting suitable candidates, training, and retaining
9 of staff due to the high demand and high stress environment of this
10 critical public safety profession.

11 (3) The legislature finds and declares that:

12 (a) Public safety telecommunicators must have a formal system of
13 training, and certification and recertification standards, to ensure
14 a standardized response is given when the public seeks assistance
15 during an emergency and that standardized communications are in place
16 to support public safety responders within Washington state.

17 (b) The quality of emergency response in most cases begins with
18 the competence of public safety telecommunicators. To ensure the
19 availability and quality of trained public safety telecommunicators,
20 the legislature recognizes the need to adopt and implement
21 standardized training programs and certification and recertification
22 requirements.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The definitions in this section apply
24 throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires
25 otherwise.

26 (1) "Certification board" means the voluntary public safety
27 telecommunicator certification board.

28 (2) "Public safety answering point" includes primary public
29 safety answering points that receive enhanced 911 calls directly from
30 the public and secondary public safety answering points that receive
31 enhanced 911 calls only on a transfer or relay basis from the primary
32 public safety answering point.

33 (3) "Public safety telecommunicator" means a first responder,
34 regardless of title, who has successfully completed the training,
35 certification, or recertification standards established in the state
36 of Washington. This includes an employee of the state, a local public
37 agency, or an independent governmental agency whose primary
38 responsibility is to receive, process, transmit, or dispatch 911
39 emergency and nonemergency calls for law enforcement, fire, emergency

1 medical, and other public safety services by telephone, radio, or
2 other communication devices and includes an individual who promoted
3 from this position and supervises individuals who perform these
4 functions.

5 (4) "State-approved training program" means a public safety
6 telecommunicator certified training program approved by the
7 certification board to meet the requirements of a state-approved
8 public safety telecommunicator training, certification, and
9 recertification standards. For community colleges, vocational-
10 technical institutes, skill centers, and secondary schools as
11 described in chapter 28B.50 RCW, public safety telecommunicator
12 certified training programs shall be approved by the certification
13 board in cooperation with the board for community and technical
14 colleges or the superintendent of public instruction.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The certification board is established in
16 the state enhanced 911 coordination office to create a certification
17 and training program for public safety telecommunicators throughout
18 the state.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** Duties of the certification board include:

- 20 (1) Adopting bylaws for the certification board;
21 (2) Adopting rules, with the advice and assistance of the
22 enhanced 911 advisory committee, to implement the provisions of this
23 chapter including, but not limited to, rules to implement a state-
24 approved training program for process, policy, and procedure;
25 (3) Reviewing and approving state-approved training programs
26 biennially. State-approved training programs should be consistent
27 with industry standards;
28 (4) Setting all public safety telecommunicator certification,
29 registration, and renewal fees, and to collect and deposit all such
30 fees in the enhanced 911 account established under RCW 38.52.540; and
31 (5) Establishing recertification requirements.

32 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** The certification board shall represent
33 diverse stakeholders of the 911 system and shall consist of the
34 following volunteer members:

- 35 (1) The chair or vice chair of the enhanced 911 advisory
36 committee;

1 (2) Two public safety answering point directors or 911
2 coordinators, one from the eastside and one from the westside of the
3 Cascade mountains appointed by the 911 advisory committee, who must
4 be an association of public-safety communications officials/national
5 emergency number association member;

6 (3) Two labor union representatives from labor unions
7 representing public safety telecommunicators;

8 (4) One representative appointed by the Washington association of
9 sheriffs and police chiefs;

10 (5) One representative appointed by the Washington state fire
11 chiefs association;

12 (6) One representative from the Washington state association of
13 counties appointed by the Washington state association of counties;
14 and

15 (7) Two public safety telecommunicators from a public safety
16 answering point, one from the eastside and one from the westside of
17 the Cascade mountains appointed by the 911 advisory committee.

18 **Sec. 6.** RCW 38.52.520 and 2010 1st sp.s. c 19 s 15 are each
19 amended to read as follows:

20 A state enhanced 911 coordination office, headed by the state
21 enhanced 911 coordinator, is established in the emergency management
22 division of the department. Duties of the office include:

23 (1) Coordinating and facilitating the implementation and
24 operation of enhanced 911 emergency communications systems throughout
25 the state;

26 (2) Seeking advice and assistance from, and providing staff
27 support for, the enhanced 911 advisory committee;

28 (3) Providing staff support and assistance to the certification
29 board established under section 3 of this act that includes, but may
30 not be limited to:

31 (a) Establishing forms and procedures necessary to administer
32 chapter 38.--- RCW (the new chapter created in section 7 of this
33 act);

34 (b) Issuing a public safety telecommunicator registration and
35 certification to any applicant who has met the requirements for
36 certification under chapter 38.--- RCW (the new chapter created in
37 section 7 of this act); and

38 (c) Maintaining the official record for the department of all
39 applicants and persons with registrations and certificates under

1 chapter 38.--- RCW (the new chapter created in section 7 of this
2 act).

3 (4) Recommending to the utilities and transportation commission
4 by August 31st of each year the level of the state enhanced 911
5 excise tax for the following year;

6 ~~((4))~~ (5) Considering base needs of individual counties for
7 specific assistance, specify rules defining the purposes for which
8 available state enhanced 911 funding may be expended, with the advice
9 and assistance of the enhanced 911 advisory committee; and

10 ~~((5))~~ (6) Providing an annual update to the enhanced 911
11 advisory committee on how much money each county has spent on:

12 (a) Efforts to modernize their existing enhanced 911 emergency
13 communications system; and

14 (b) Enhanced 911 operational costs.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** Sections 1 through 5 of this act
16 constitute a new chapter in Title 38 RCW.

--- END ---