



# VERDUGO FIRE COMMUNICATIONS

## FCO RECRUIT – JOB PREVIEW

REV 08-15-14

**APPLICANT NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Experience has shown that some applicants for Fire Communications Operator (FCO) positions consider only the popular aspects of the job while ignoring some of its less attractive features. As a result, when new employees encounter negative job features, they sometimes react by leaving the job before training is completed or after only a few months on the job. Early resignations can result from lack of accurate job knowledge.

There are many satisfying, rewarding aspects to the FCO position. There is no question that FCO's make significant contributions to the welfare and safety of their fellow citizens. It is, however, important for all applicants to carefully consider both the negative and positive features of this career before deciding to test for this position.

The job factors listed below, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, are realistic features of the FCO position about which many applicants are unaware. If any of these items present problems for you, we strongly suggest you consider alternative career choices that may better fit your goals.

**Please initial at the end of each numbered paragraph to indicate you have read and thought about each item.**

### TRAINING

I. FCO's will undergo a rigorous, supervised on-the-job training program. Training requires frequent written, verbal, and performance testing. ***FCO trainees will receive--and must accept-- regular reminders of errors and mistakes.*** FCO's are on a one-year probationary training period (at will employee) from the date of hire. **Initial** \_\_\_\_\_

II. During training, FCO's must learn and correctly use an extensive vocabulary of Fire and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) terminology. FCO's must read and understand large volumes of written material (FCO Training Manual, Policies and Procedures Manual, Mutual Aid agreements, EMD manuals, Training Documents/handouts, Power Point presentations, webinars, maps, etc.).

FCO's learn and apply a large number of complex Fire and EMS policies and procedures for thirteen (13) contract-dispatch cities. Additionally, FCO's must learn, certify in and apply Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD), which is the process of providing pre-arrival medical instructions over the telephone (e.g. CPR, choking, childbirth instructions, etc.)

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III. In training, FCO's must develop eye-hand coordination sufficient to operate and view multiple monitors, computer keyboard(s), multiple human interface devices (mouse's) and complex communications equipment in rapid succession or even simultaneously. Systems include a computer aided dispatch system (CAD), radio communications switching computer (Centracom) and 9-1-1 telephone computer system (Vesta). The CAD computer system requires the memorization and quick, accurate use of command codes to obtain and input computer data.

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IV. Initial training is two-phase. The first, 14-week phase will begin with training and familiarization in the Computer Aided Dispatch system (CAD), general computer familiarization, Vesta telephone computer and center policies and procedures. The telephone position includes the following duties: General business lines; Fire and Law enforcement ring-down lines; notifications; 10-digit emergency lines; and 9-1-1 emergency lines. The FCO must qualify (work independently with minimal supervision), within the 14-week initial training period, on the telephone position before moving on to the radio position.

The second 14-week phase begins familiarization and training on the radio position which includes the dispatch and resource management of Fire and EMS apparatus for thirteen (13) contract-city fire agencies. The FCO must qualify (work independently with minimal supervision), during the second 14-week phase, on the radio position to continue training for the remainder of the one-year probationary training period. **Failure to qualify in the telephone and radio position will result in separation from the one-year probationary training period.**

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V. During the one-year probationary training period, you will be required to memorize the locations of 44 fire stations, fire station rosters and learn the geography of the thirteen (13) contract-city fire agencies.

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## WORKING CONDITIONS

- I. FCO's work within an organization structured on a "military" model. They must wear a uniform and headset on duty, are subject to inspection and are part of a formal chain of command. FCO's generally work a rotating 12-hour shift schedule (regardless of seniority), which consists of 2-day shifts followed by 24-hours off-duty and then 2-night shifts.

Schedule example:

SUN 16	DAY OFF	17	DAY SHIFT	18	DAY SHIFT	19	NIGHT SHIFT	20	NIGHT SHIFT	21	DAY OFF	SAT 22	DAY OFF
SUN 23	DAY OFF	24	DAY OFF	25	DAY SHIFT	26	DAY SHIFT	27	NIGHT SHIFT	28	NIGHT SHIFT	SAT 29	DAY OFF

FCO's may be regularly scheduled to work any shift schedule, day of the week, weekend or holiday(s). FCO's may be required to change regular work schedules on short notice due to communication center staffing needs. As a probationary FCO-trainee, your schedule WILL be changed, periodically, throughout the one-year probationary training period.

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- II. FCO's work on the third floor of a fire station with low lighting conditions (minimal natural light.) FCO's may not leave the Communications Center during their shifts. Lunch and rest breaks are not guaranteed. FCO's may have to eat their meals at their workstation. FCO's may not be able to take meal breaks or other breaks based on dispatch system activity.

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- III. FCO's work in an often noisy and distracting environment. FCO's must be able to concentrate on their jobs for extended periods of time while other FCO's are taking calls, people are standing around them and conversations are taking place in close proximity.

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## PERFORMING THE JOB

- I. FCO's attend a shift change briefing at the start of every shift. At shift change briefing, information regarding current incident status, apparatus status, center equipment status, etc. are discussed. FCO's are expected to retain and use this information as needed during the coming shift.

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II. FCO's rotate among three workstations, each with different duties and responsibilities during the work-shift. FCO's must qualify through each station during the one-year probationary training period. FCO's must be able and willing to serve each position, to adapt to each and accurately handle the types of calls and/or duties common to each station.

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III. FCO's must evaluate and weigh information continuously. FCO's must consider various factors in determining the appropriate response, among these are: the nature of the incident; the patient/victim condition; the proper response agency; availability of resources; and potential safety of the caller and response personnel.

FCO's must interpret information and make quick decisions (urgency of response, referral to other agency, etc.) on which one or more person's safety is at stake based on experience, policy and procedures. FCO decisions are under constant review, mistakes or errors in judgment may result in critique and/or formal disciplinary action.

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IV. FCO's must be able to quickly and accurately recognize letters, numbers, addresses, street names, city of origin, etc., received by radio, by land-line telephone, cellular telephone, text messaging or on a computer monitor.

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V. FCO's must quickly and accurately obtain information from callers necessary to determine the appropriate response. FCO's must control conversations and get needed information quickly. This may be complicated by callers who are often hysterical, aggressive, distraught, confused, profane, psychological or incomprehensible. Call entry must be completed within established call-entry time frames during the one-year probationary training period.

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VI. FCO's must maintain professional standards and attitudes when dealing with: belligerent persons; when obscene language is directed at them; in emergency situations; handling nuisance, hang up, or non-emergency calls.

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VII. FCO's must have sufficient verbal and written communications skills to efficiently relay relevant information via radio or computer system. Written communications must be concise and to the point while providing information the FCO determines may be important to the safety of the caller and responding personnel.

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VIII. Any call may require the FCO to perform several activities simultaneously. Examples include maintaining contact with a caller while typing; updating incident information while monitoring or talking on the radio; or speaking with a caller while typing and/or verbally relaying information to co-workers.

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IX. FCO's often work at a rapid pace over which they have little control. Due to workload, the nature of incidents or HIPPA regulations, FCO's are unlikely to be able to follow-up and learn the final resolution of calls received earlier in their shift.

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X. On a daily basis FCO's may deal with tragic incidents including but not limited to: deceased persons; crime victims (shootings/stabbings/assaults); incidents involving infants or young children; multiple casualty incidents; major fires; natural disasters; hysterical callers, etc.

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XI. While on-duty, FCO's will have minimal or no contact with other members of the Fire Department.

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## INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

- I. Being a Fire Communications Operator is not a job, but a way of life. This is due to the long shift hours; the team members you will work with for long periods of time; the nature of the incidents that you will be *exposed* to; working dayshifts and nightshifts in the same work week; working your birthday or a family member's birthdays; or working popular holidays such as Thanksgiving or Christmas; working consecutive weekends, etc.

During the one-year probationary training period, you will also be evaluated on the following, but not limited to: Your ability to foster a team work environment; your ability to work independently; ability to get along with your supervisors and co-workers, and other fire department personnel; ability to meet the goals and objectives of the dispatch center; ability to comply with the constant changes in policies, procedures, shift scheduling; working extended shifts; working overtime as requested or required; or otherwise not being able to meet the needs of the center.

**Failure to meet the requirements and expectations of the center, based solely on interpersonal relations, CAN result in separation from the one-year probation training period.**

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With my signature below, I state that I have read and considered each item on the job preview.

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_