



## EENA Operations Document

# Managing human resources in a PSAP

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## Authors and contributors to this document

This document was written by members of EENA:

Authors	Organisation
Björn Skoglund	EENA Operations Committee Vice-chair SOS Alarm Sverige AB
Tony O'Brien	EENA

Contributors	Country / Organisation
Cristina Lumbreras	EENA
Li Guohui	Huawei Enterprise Business Group
Iratxe Gómez	EENA Operations Committee Co-chair Atos

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## 1 Executive Summary

Managing staff and staff related activities is an important function for any organisation, regardless of its size, scale or market. Most people agree that an efficiently and effectively run human resources department can provide structure and the ability to meet business needs through managing the company's most valuable resources -- its employees.

The management of human resources therefore is an essential part of how a PSAP operates and even though it is considered a support service (like finance, IT etc.), its importance cannot be underestimated. Whether it is a dedicated HR department with many employees or whether HR responsibility is given to Line Managers, the areas of recruiting new employees, training and developing staff, designing and implementing assistance programmes, retaining staff, managing performance, setting appropriate reward schemes and many other items are all part of the HR responsibilities.

This document aims to provide guidance on the management of the HR functions in a PSAP and support the Line Managers, Supervisors who may have HR responsibilities. Whilst national employment legislation differs from country to country, the document does not intend to analyse these very important employer responsibilities.

## 2 Introduction

The work as a PSAP operator means that you are subject to stress of different kind. There can be many emergency calls to handle during a short period of time, you often must deal with callers in shock and from time to time deal with terrible and tragic accidents. At the same time you're not supposed to have a bad day at work since an incorrect decision can have serious consequences. And at all times you have the eyes of the media and public on your work and that of your colleagues. Therefore the capacities and abilities of PSAP operators is highly important and the selection, training, retaining of suitable candidates for this almost superhuman work has to be thorough and accurate.

This document aims to give recommendations on the steps in the recruitment – selection – performance management chain. The PSAP operator is a key role with the scope to save lives, property and environment in case of an accident or sickness. Finding and hiring the right persons, to train them, to develop their skills so that a very high quality level always is maintained is therefore essential, both for giving the best effort possible in helping the public but also for the trade mark of the PSAP organisation which should be considered a most trustworthy and reliable organisation.

EENA plans to cover the topic of workforce planning and management in a separate document and so detailed items related to the planning of rosters and the strategies/tactics of managing resources and their day to day efficiencies is out of scope for this particular document.

"A chain is only as strong as its weakest link" is a famous saying that carries many meanings. Nowhere is it more important than in the PSAP where the faultless teamwork of colleagues is extremely important. But what are the key inputs to support this saying? Arguably one of the key inputs is the HR department and its functions, which is the focus of this document.



### 3 Recruitment process

#### 3.1 Selection:

It is important that the PSAP organisation beforehand decides clearly on what minimum qualifications, background, skills and personal qualities and profile the PSAP operator should have to meet its objectives. The desirable profile could of course vary depending on the role; for example if it is a call taker, dispatcher, supervisor etc which is required. Getting committed, motivated, and qualified employees with the right profile is essential and it doesn't happen without clear HR strategies and tactics. The right selection of human resources is also applicable when PSAPs operators belong to an emergency services organisation.

The HR department in the PSAP organisation should therefore carefully consider what requirements that are wanted and how to test and secure that the applicant matches those. It is important that the recruitment/selection is an objective and consistent process, done in a professional manner by trained (HR) personnel. The chosen criteria used to select the appropriate individuals must be well established and documented.

A good mix of employed staff is important and should reflect the society as a whole. After all, it is the whole of society that the PSAP is serving and therefore it should ideally mirror the society it serves.

Some of the questions the PSAP organisation would contemplate:

- What quality is needed for a call taker/medical expert/ dispatcher/supervisor/line manager?
- How important is a suitable background and if important, experience from what business is wanted; from health care, police, fire & rescue or similar, from call taking at commercial call centers or working with caring for elder or disabled people?
- Is a primary or secondary degree or diploma or national certification necessary and if so, at what level and what discipline?
- What personal qualities are important?; for example, stress hardiness and emotional intelligence, empathic ability, social awareness and capacity, ability to work in a structured manner, open mindedness, multiple task handling, quick decision making etc? Or are there other traits needed?
- What other skills are desirable? Are IT/computer skills needed? What about multilingual proficiencies?
- What other entry criteria and conditions should be mandatory? For example having no prior criminal record with the police may be necessary but what about age or level of maturity? Of course being setting conditions that are in line with national legislation is crucial but flexibility may be available with some of the above-mentioned criteria.

Staff vacancy announcements should be placed in suitable channels accordingly to the chosen profile and depending what role staff is wanted for. A good example is vacancy notices in trade or industry magazines. But also vacancy notices in for example other magazines such as daily newspapers, online, radio channels, on the subway and in social media should be considered. And do not underestimate the power of mouth to mouth recruiting – a satisfied and motivated PSAP operator in your organisation can spread the word and act as a recruitment ambassador. Indeed many commercial call centers often employ this tactic and reward their employees if a friend or relative is successfully recruited.

A PSAP organisation should therefore ensure that PSAP's **recruitment and selection** practices are the 'best in class' and in line with national legislation and are linked to the required skills of the role.



## **3.2 Basic requirements:**

### **3.2.1 Maturity**

The ability to be a successful and effective PSAP operator is likely linked to the overall maturity levels. This is not age related but is evident by such things like emotional intelligence, decision-making abilities and multi-tasking capacity. This is of course different from individual to individual and must be judged through interview and/or psychological evaluation.

### **3.2.2 Education**

To have an all-round education and a general knowledge is a valuable capacity for a PSAP operator since you are dealing with many different situations and people. It is also imperative that you can understand written text (instructions, action plans) and to write with correct spelling, which is particularly challenged during stressful and complex transactions. To have a solid and all round education foundation is therefore desirable. Since the education varies from country to country it is hard to recommend what is the appropriate educational level but as a guidance advice, having a post elementary school graduation is desirable.

### **3.2.3 Communication skills**

PSAP operators are normally required to have good communication skills and possess the ability to speak several languages, including their own the native language or languages fluently. Strong communication and interpersonal skills are fundamental since the job is so dependent on a good communication with callers, other PSAP operators in your/other organisations, with firefighters, police, ambulance, etc. It is also imperative to read fluently since the role entails constantly receiving, reading and interpreting instructions, action plans, on maps etc. Documenting the actions taken by you or a colleague is also very important and so that ability to capture these actions (e.g. searching on GIS and mapping programs for addresses etc) during an emergency call/incident in an effective and efficient manner is important.

### **3.2.4 Language skills**

Within Europe, given the many different languages spoken as well as several native languages and dialects, the power of the spoken word is a highly favorable skill in our globalised world. No matter how good the interpreter service is (if one is being used of course), the fastest way of communicating is when you can do it instantly. Therefore, PSAPs often demand that the PSAP operator master another language other than their own, which usually English. But other languages are also chosen depending on the profile of the tourists that travel to the region where the PSAP is serving or other similar reasons. The ability to speak other languages is also important when PSAPs are in contact with PSAPs in other countries to assist in an emergency situation. An example of this where the EENA transnational database is used to make contact with PSAPs in other countries which tends to be more and more often, even if still from a relatively low level of incidences.

### **3.2.5 Computer skills**

A PSAP operator who has good computer proficiencies and skills is of course much more efficient than someone who is not so proficient and the measurement of the applicant's computer skill levels can easily be tested. If a PSAP organisation therefore regards computer skills as a necessary requirement, the holding of the European Computer Driving License (ECDL) by the applicant or at least knowledge to that level is a good starting point.

### **3.2.6 Interview**

The interview is of course an important part of the recruitment process. All HR staff and managers involved in recruiting must be trained in interview techniques and the questions should be competence based. Careful consideration should be given to the interview process so that the appropriate records are maintained. This is effective when evaluating the applicant later so that there is fairness and balance provided. Moreover, interview notes are sometimes used retrospectively if for what ever reason the applicant doesn't work out.



Checking the notes may provide some clues if the interviewers had missed some key questions or if some answers indicated that the applicant wasn't suitable. A lot of time and resources are spent recruiting staff so making it as efficient as possible is vital.

### **3.2.7 Security clearance**

Having no previous criminal records is a mandatory requirement in many professions and having this requirement for a PSAP is no surprise. Some organisations provide flexibility in this scenario and whilst this understandable, the PSAP operator should be passed by a national security clearance agency and this clearance should be documented and updated and checked periodically and on a case-by-case basis. As the PSAP operator is often privy to sensitive and security related information, the organisation must take all reasonable steps to protect this information.

### **3.2.8 Requirements on health**

Like in most employment situations, health checks and drugs taking tests before an offer of employment is made should therefore be carried out and must be passed. Then testing should be done with regularity during the time of the person's employment with the PSAP.

If anything happens during that period, for example if the PSAP operator was injured in traffic accident, some organisations insist that back-to-work protocols are done before the employee is allowed back on duty. It should also be done after an extended period of sick leave to ensure that the duties can be fulfilled without any concerns.

In some cases where a PSAP operator does not fulfil the mandatory health requirements, many PSAPs insist that a deeper medical examination by a doctor is carried out to ensure the fitness to work is guaranteed. Equally, if the candidate or employee has not successfully passed the mandatory drugs test, many PSAPs rely on their program for rehabilitation with the goal to get the operator back in service.

As mentioned earlier, the ability to have strong communication skills is reliant on the good hearing and eyesight and this vital. However, it should be normal to permit the use of glasses, contact lenses or hearing aids as these would during the normal course of business not impact the ability for a PSAP operator to carry out their functions.

## **4 Testing of ability and capacities**

### **4.1 Psychological evaluation:**

It is important to test the individual to see that he/she is mentally fit. A PSAP operator must be an emotionally stable and robust person with individual capacities such as freedom from prejudice and the ability to treat all callers with the same level of service and empathy. Dealing with very stressful situations are everyday occurrences and so the evaluation of the capacity for dealing with stress, known as stress hardiness is crucial. This and other things does not always show in clinical tests but often are revealed in a deeper interview. A skilled psychologist can also bring out the soft values that a test probably cannot and it is of course important that this evaluation is handled by professional psychologists.

Another important thing is to check on from time to time is that the PSAP operator has not suffered or is not suffering from a personal traumatic event which could affect their ability. In this case, regular briefings between Line Managers, Supervisors and their PSAP operators can help identify such behaviors leading to swift support from the organisation. A previous EENA Operations Committee document<sup>1</sup> from 2012 entitled "Psychological Support for 112 call-takers" covers this topic in some more detail.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.eena.org/uploads/gallery/files/operations\\_documents/2012.10.22\\_3.3.2\\_psysupport\\_v1.0.pdf](http://www.eena.org/uploads/gallery/files/operations_documents/2012.10.22_3.3.2_psysupport_v1.0.pdf)



## 4.2 Testing of ability to make decisions

Since the ability to quickly get a picture of what happened and act instantly from this, some kind of testing is necessary. In Sweden WPT (Wonderlic Personnel Test) is used since 2008 to test general ability and problem-solving skills. It consists of 50 multiple choice questions of varying difficulty in 12 minutes. There is no possibility to answer all 50 in such a short time and the meaning is that the tested person quickly shall decide to leave a complicated question and move further to the next. An interesting notice is that those who pass the WPT test has a bigger chance of passing the test that tests stress resistance and multitasking ability.

## 4.3 Other cognitive and skill tests

To resist stress and handle many things at once are fundamental abilities for a PSAP operator. Therefore it is important to test the ability to instantly increase the pace of work when needed, to focus and to be responsive to what is said and analyse this directly in order to decide what to do and act based on this information. Scenario testing is often carried to measure this ability and PSAP operators can benefit from such tests in terms of feedback and learning.

Since writing and spelling is a vital part of the job, some kind of simple test of writing is useful. This might be done in an easy way with pen and paper (=no spelling program!) where the applicant is told to write a short essay after being shown a short video for example. Their ability to capture the most relevant and/or detailed information and write about it can reveal a lot about their writing ability and skills.

## 5 Training and professional development

There must be a constant adaption of education and training to internal and external demands. The surrounding world is in constant evolution both technically, when it comes to new areas of cooperation with surrounding organisations and when it comes to expectations and demands from the public. The PSAP organisation must constantly follow and meet this development to keep up, especially when it comes to training the staff in different roles to meet these expectations and demands.

Therefore it is important that the PSAP organisation has a good and structured external monitoring and that there are **Learning and Development** programmes linked to employee skills requirements and to the different roles in the PSAP.

It is also mostly important that the staff in the organisation that are responsible for the education and training are aware of the fact that there is a constant need for updating the developing learning and training tactics. It is also important that the tutors are up to date and therefore that the education of these are coherent and that there are tutors (specialists) covering all the areas that could be needed (operational system, map, methods, caller location techniques, medical protocols etc).

There are several ways of how the learning and training itself could be designed but a proposed best practice is to use blended learning; e.g. a combination of e-learning, classroom learning and tutoring. There are several systems for e-learning on the market. Training in a real environment is arguably the best environment but this is clearly not always feasible in a live PSAP where real-time emergency calls and incidents are being handled. A mirrored operational system with as real conditions as possible is of course a great advantage and therefore it is recommend that this is included in the requirement specification when getting a new operational platform. Some PSAPs follow this blended learning model and under guidance and supervision gradually let new PSAP operators handle real emergency calls. The supervision is gradually reduced as the PSAP operator becomes more competent and is eventually able to handle emergency calls on their own.



## 6 Performance management system and evaluation

There should always be a silver thread running through all parts of the organisation; system and process must always be held together, for example a revision of salary should always be connected to a dialogue with the co-worker on the motivations for setting the salary, on how achievement reflects on his/hers salary and what the individual can do to enhance his/hers performance and thereby raise the salary.

It should be noted that the driving force for the individual not always is salary. Therefore it is important to identify what incentives that may fit a certain individual; e.g. their career path to become a supervisor, develop a certain level or area of expertise, be responsible for a certain task, or maybe just to get appreciated for helping people in distress.

Programs for discovering and building on talent are important since there should be ways for the employee to a career step-up within the organisation as well as for the organisation to find suitable employees with talents for leadership. It is also most important that leaders in the organisation are role models for the rest of the organisation.

There must be a common method within the entire organisation to evaluate achievements, create clarity and a consensus in how leaders and employees should work together to develop the individual's achievements. A good tool to measure achievement should contain both the scope/target for goals to achieve for the employee but also the way how to get there. It should include the competences and values needed to achieve the goal. This altogether defines the whole achievement. The individual's goals should be driven by the ultimate goals for the entire organisation.

The aim should not only be to find leaders but also to develop the competence for the specialists within the organisation, for example to become a tutor in different areas. A PSAP organisation should therefore have a program for detecting and taking care of talented employees in order to give career opportunity and thereby keep good and experienced staff within the organisation.

### 6.1 Feedback

Defining relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPI) is essential for a common system of evaluation of achievements. Such KPIs should be relevant to overall targets for the organisation and is often the KPIs that the PSAP organisation finds important or has demands to fulfill from authorities/state/owner and/or cooperating organisations.

Examples could be:

- number of answered calls
- elapsed time to first measure taken
- elapsed time to alarming the first unit
- that the proper interview and protocol is followed with the proper advice given (according to INDEX)
- call handling time (given that a short but effective processing of the call is better than a unnecessary long interview)

It should be noted that KPIs should be measured over an extended period of time since there could be occasional events or specific once off incidents that may affect any of the KPIs. For example if a caller is hard to understand or the emergency call lasts for above the average time because of specific characteristics about the call (suicide, kidnapping, no caller location information etc).

Another recommendation is to primarily use the KPI for the PSAP operator to benchmark him/her to his/hers own results from the time of the last review. It is also therefore recommended to do KPI run through on a regular basis.

One of the PSAP operator's most valuable tools is the interview with the caller. An important follow-up is therefore to listen to actual emergency calls handled by the operator. This should also be done on a regular basis and the more often the better but at least two times a year to give the employee a fair chance to measure him-/herself to the previous time and thereby get a valuable feedback. Listening to calls therefore should be part of an overall call calibration and quality management programme.



## 6.2 Certification

To ensure the capacity and competence of the PSAP operator some kind of certification should be done a regular basis, at least on a yearly basis. If the operator has been absent for a longer period of time a new certification should be considered to ensure the capability of the operator.

A certification program could contain one or several parts:

- Written questions with multiple answers or answers
- Specific tests of the ability to perform certain tasks in the operational system
- Listening to and evaluating a number of handled (own) emergency calls
- Going through the documentation of handled calls to check that protocols are followed, documentation is good, the right measures are taken etc.

The certification must be done accordingly to the different roles that the PSAP operator might have. An operator which serves both as an emergency call taker and dispatcher from time to time must of course be tested in all of the roles to get one certificate per role.

The certification should not only secure the capacity but also ensure that the attitude of the operator is up to standards which should be done by listening to a number of randomly chosen emergency calls. The presence of the immediate superior is important and necessary to ensure the quality of the operators test and give immediate and relevant feedback.

Since the certificate is such a vital part for the operator it must be designed with a very objective and fair approach. It must not bring a sense of surveillance or injustice. It is also most vital that there is a decided way how to take care of the employee who fails the certification. There must be a training and education program to ensure that the poor performer can be brought back up to the desired capacity and competence level.

## 7 Quality

In any organisation recognising and managing quality is fundamentally important to a successful and thriving business. In PSAPs, the importance of quality cannot be underestimated. Quite simply, if the quality of service provided by the organisation is poor, then people may die. The quality aspect must be included in all areas and in all staff and there are systems to assist a PSAP organisation to deliver this.

The HR function does not often deal directly with quality but because the topic is so important, it is believed that HR should be aware of and support the overall quality management programs.

For example EENA has a program for certification of PSAPs, which was launched in July 2013, and it is the first such programme in the world to allow PSAP be benchmarked against specific criteria that matches their mandate. It is a unique programme and one that delivers a quality focus throughout the organisation.

There is also the ISO standards (ISO = the International Organisation for Standardisation, read more at [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org)) where applicable standards can be found in the ISO 9000 program. For example the ISO 9001 program sets out the requirements of a quality management system and can be certified to. According to the ISO website "This standard is based on a number of quality management principles including a strong customer focus, the motivation and implication of top management, the process approach and continual improvement." The ISO-standard is an accepted standard world-wide.

It is of course still needed that the PSAP organisation performs internal audits to check how its quality management system is working. ISO also writes on its webpage that: "An organisation may decide to invite an independent certification body to verify that it is in conformity to the standard, but there is no requirement for this. Alternatively, it might invite its clients to audit the quality system for themselves."

An ISO certificate means amongst other things that all documents should be version numbered and traceable, which is important in the PSAP where instructions and protocols for different kinds of events and accidents are vital.

Therefore, HR should be acutely aware of the need to have all if its employees engaged in a quality focused service delivery and support the organisation to achieve these goals.

## 8 Reward systems

To use rewards (not just financial) as a means to recognise good performance might be useful and encourage the appropriate individual and group/team behavior. But it is important to be clear about when, how why an individual/group is rewarded. Rewards therefore should be closely linked to the performance and achieved goals, well structured and consistent. There is always a risk that a reward which is not done in this way and more randomly administered in the end will become expected and therefore staff will automatically assume that is given without any extra efforts. That could of course decrease staff motivation and be counterproductive.

A well functioning employee reward system means that:

- employee rewards should be presented regularly and consistently;
- it must be properly administered, maintained and communicated;
- there are set of measurable objectives to accomplish and surpass and that these objectives are well known, realistic and possible to reach (often referred to as SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely)
  - it should reward an excellent job out of the ordinary and therefore be presented with a clear motivation;
  - it should create a sense of teamwork and should therefore also presented not just to individuals but (maybe mainly!) to teams/work groups;
- should inspire and motivate the staff to raise for a higher work level;
- the reward itself is something to strive for and sought after for the individual/group

A reward could be in form of:

- a monetary reward
- some extra time off for holidays etc
- a gift; tickets to a show at the theatre, a movie at the cinema, or a gift card to the gym
- a chance to competence/skill development, for example a chance to take a course, internal or external

The achievement of such rewards should be publicly announced for transparency purposes but also as a reminder to other staff that the organisation values exceptional performance.

Another incentive could be to link a long term reward for a larger group to a certain goal or several goals linked to quality. An example could be that an annual average answering time on 112 which is under the set goal results in a sum of money deposited in a fund. After a certain period, maybe 4-5 years, the employee is allowed to collect the money from the fund. The size of the reward can depend on how well the target is fulfilled. There can of course be several others goals to fulfill.

## 9 Unsociable hours

Every PSAP, as well as other work-places where there is the need for structured shift work, probably has experienced the same questions around how to fill the seats during nights and weekends to ensure the optimum level of staff are rostered for duty. It is no surprise therefore that discussions concerning work schedule are common.

The basic recipe is simple to state but hard to live by:

- see to that there always is a well-resourced organisation so that a stated number of nights/weekends are well known and possible to maintain;
- ground rules about work conditions concerning shift work are defined;
- be very clear early in the recruitment process that the role offered involves is shift work and how many nights/weekends the employee is supposed to work
- be also very clear that this situation can change rapidly depending on the number of staff rostered to be on duty, expected events such as approaching storm or other events that can affect the work load in a given moment in time
- see to it that the shifts outside office hours are well compensated and therefore attractive

The next challenge is how to you keep the motivation high in the middle of the night for the night staff and how to maintain their focus and attention. The perfect situation is an even and steady flow of incoming calls to handle. This is though seldom the reality however. A recommendation is therefore to have minor side projects for the PSAP operator to handle and be responsible for, maybe updating a list of database contacts, data analysis, planning events and exercises or similar.



## 10 Working environment

The most valuable asset for an organisation is its people and for PSAP, this is no different. As professionals, PSAP operators are highly trained, highly skilled and motivated individuals who work in very complex and pressurised environment. To see to it that the operator is healthy and well cared for is therefore a primary goal for the organisation. A good working environment with suitable premises, workstations with ergonomic chairs, furniture, keyboards, computer mouse and other devices designed and placed to prevent repetitive strain injuries and other musculoskeletal disorders is important to fulfil the goals of occupational health and safety and productivity. Focusing on these elements in the overall work environment will support the overall objective of the PSAP which is to serve its citizens in a highly effective way all of the time.

Therefore the organisation should start from a user centered perspective in order to achieve a good and healthy work environment for the PSAP operators. A good start is therefore to engage them in the work of surveying where the weak spots are in the existing work environment and also in creating a safe and adequate work place.

The job as a PSAP operator is by its very nature sedentary – the PSAP operator is supposed to sit in their chair at your their station and handle emergency calls for the whole shift. This sedentary position mixed with a stressful and pressurised environment can lead to a lot of strain and therefore a good working environment is highly essential for the PSAP operator to be able to focus on his/hers important job assignments.

There are a lot of things to consider and develop when it comes to the overall work environment and this document will only briefly go into this vast topic.

The basic questions that the PSAP organisation has to ask itself are for example:

- What does the business consist of?
- Who are working in the PSAP, with what and in which way?
- What is going well and what is not going well in the PSAP today?
- Which technical equipment, furniture, premises etc is needed and to what extent?

When you have mapped out this and has the answer to those questions, it is time to get into details.

Some of the bullet points you have to consider are in the areas of Workstations, Organisation of work, layout of the PSAP premises and Ergonomics and these are covered below.

### 10.1 Work stations

Since the actual work station in the PSAP is where the PSAP operator actually spends most of his/her working time, the design of it is most important. Also to be considered is the individualised needs of the PSAP operator in that some PSAP operators may need flexibility in how they set up their work station to suit their individual needs.

Some things to consider are:

- *viewing distance*

Consider the perfect distance between the PSAP operators eyes and the computer screens and ensure that matches the requirements of the PSAP operator

- *viewing direction*

The PSAP operator should be able to overview his/hers workstation and the surrounding colleagues as well as for example information screens in the room and other relevant matter.

- *back lighting*

A well planned back lightning can reduce tiredness in eyes and reduce strain. This is particularly so when the shift durations may be longer.



- *light intensity and contrast*

Also important factors to both reduce fatigue and to make the data on screen as readable as possible. If possible the colours used at the surrounding work station and room environment should be conducive to a mild calming atmosphere.

- *direct or mirrored glare in the field of vision*

It is crucially important to see that the PSAP operator has as little surrounding disturbances as possible and depending on the availability of natural light, there needs to be consideration given on the use of anti-glare shields. Glare also other work stations or other surrounding surfaces needs to be reduced as much as possible.

- *disposition of mouse, keyboard and other equipment*

Given that the PSAP operator is sitting for large periods of time, it is important to avoid problems/strain with neck, back, arms etc. Whilst not always feasible, some PSAP organisations only train their PSAP operator to use a keyboard and not a mouse. If several keyboards or other several screens and devices are used by the PSAP operator, this issue becomes particularly important.

- *noise or other disturbances*

Since the conversation between the PSAP operator and the citizen is essential in an emergency call, it is important to reduce any ambient noise to an absolute minimum in the PSAP. There should for example be no copying machines or printers in the same room as the PSAP as they can omit a lot of noise whilst operational and whilst noise-reducing panelling can be deployed, the elimination of as much noise-creating equipment should be done as a priority.

- *sanitation and cleaning*

Keeping the work stations clean, including screens, keyboards and mouse, is important for both avoiding disturbances and to not transfer germs from one PSAP operator to another between shifts. Also it is important to plan how cables and other equipment should be installed to make the cleaning of the work floor and work station area easy and efficient.

## **10.2 Organisation of work**

The PSAP organisation should:

- be clear to the PSAP operator about which unit he/she belongs to and who his/hers immediate superior is
- see to that there is always someone to turn to for the PSAP operator, if not the immediate superior is available, maybe another superior, line manager or HR personal – the nature of the PSAP calls can be chocking and a sudden need of debriefing might be needed
- analyse and consider what specialisation in the different roles in the PSAP brings and also be very clear on to the individual what his/hers role are before start the current work shift
- analyse and consider how communication/interaction between different individuals/roles/skills in the PSAP is done in the best way
- have clear instructions, action plans and work flows in place and well communicated
- consider different teambuilding events – important to know and to rely on each other in the PSAP team
- have a flexible scheduling that considers both the relevant number of PSAP operators needed at a work shift as well as the individuals need and wishes (might be impossible to achieve....)
- rules of conduct



### 10.3 Layout of the PSAP premises

The premises should be designed to:

- have a proper size for the business and have capacity for any extra manpower and equipment
- provide for good communication flow and visibility between the operators in the PSAP
- have an adequate overall lighting as well as proper individual lighting on each work station. Consider measures if no access to day lighting.
- provide a good climate control, not too cold or too warm (that can be varied during the hour of the day)
- have an adequate air ventilation system
- offer a good sound environment and acoustics (silencing material on floor, planning of walking routes in the PSAP, etc)
- plan for proper premises for the staff to rest, eat, change clothes etc

### 10.4 Ergonomics

To avoid PSAP operators getting repetitive strain injuries and other musculoskeletal strains, the PSAP organisation should consider:

- adjustable tables at the work station, both in height but also possibility to tilt the rack at which screens often are mounted on. In effect, it should be possible for the PSAP operator to stand up and work. Their headset of course may need to be adjusted to allow for this.
- the orientation of the work stations. For example, the organisation should not place work stations so that the PSAP operators is placed with their backs to doorways or walkways. The tendency for PSAP operators so they have to turn their heads to see which colleague is approaching and can lead to unnecessary twisting and turning.
- chairs that are ergonomically designed and adjustable in many ways, not just in terms of height. It should also be possible to choose a chair that fits the physical individual needs of the PSAP operator
- careful placing of the computer screens, keyboards, mouse and other devices used by the PSAP operator so as to ensure that they should not have to reach out to handle the equipment or to raise their neck too high. This applies to screens that should not be placed too high and especially if there is a need of a second row of screens above the first. All of these factors should be carefully considered how to avoid neck or back strain problems.
- the need for PSAP operators to be given sufficient and adequate breaks during their shift and to observe signs of fatigue and stress, particularly after a particularly difficult emergency call or incident
- consider use of application in administrative computer (if available to the PSAP operator) for a short ergonomic practice that can be done while working. This makes the PSAP operator stretch different parts of the body and change work position. An example how this works can be found at [http://www.pausit.se/Prova\\_gratis.html](http://www.pausit.se/Prova_gratis.html) (in Swedish, but there is a short movie illustrating how the actual one minute animation looks like).

Regardless of which measures the PSAP organisation eventually considers, it is important to involve the PSAP staff in the planning stage. It is also on the other hand also important to engage experts in the different



topics. And it is important to realize that it costs resources, time and money so create a safe environment, adapted to the individuals needs and to keep him/her healthy. But it is money well spent in the long run.

## 11 Uniform

One of many discussions, albeit that there it is tactical, is the debate whether the PSAP staff should wear uniform or not. The views are often quite divergent on the wearing of uniforms but there are some things to consider.

On the pro side there are some considerable advantages:

- a uniform clothing gives a sense of togetherness, identity and unity;
- when dressed in uniform staff often assume a specific role or function (which can be a part of mentally leaving a stressful work when you switch to civilian clothes after your work shift)
- the aspect of security; you can easily see who belongs to the PSAP
- when you are representing the PSAP organisation externally or when people visits the PSAP, a uniform gives a professional impression
- a PSAP works with other people in uniform (police, firemen, EMS personnel)

On the con side there are:

- it is a cost to equip all staff with a suitable uniform and there are costs in maintaining and replacing it;
- the administration of uniforms can be large
- A PSAP generally would need to have premises for changing rooms and lockers

EENA though believes that the advantages of uniform largely outweigh the disadvantages and therefore recommends the PSAP staff wearing a uniform. it can be a simple one but one that is functional, comfortable and affordable.

## 12 Retaining the staff

Keeping PSAP fully staffed can be a challenge for any agency. The cost of recruiting and training staff can often be high and therefore it is the organisations interests to ensure that staff attrition is low. The desire to keep PSAP console seats filled paired with the need to fill them with qualified and reliable employees is one of the more difficult tasks PSAPs can face.

There are of course many factors that affect the staff turnover. But a PSAP who has serious and structural programs and striving with the goal of being "best in class" (and following EENAs recommendations) should be in a good position to keep staff.

Some key factors are:

- basic principles and values that are clearly understood and supported by all the PSAP staff;
- leadership in the organisation that is consistent and accessible
- honest and structured feedback to the staff on work done, achievements, but also in case of poor performance
- structured ways of two way communication between management and employees
- ensure that staff have the ability to provide open feedback about the organisation of the PSAP (e.g Staff Representative Council)
- a safe and enjoyable work environment; e.g. where work stations with tables that can be elevated to allow for stretching and posture changing, silent surroundings with ambient temperature and lighting etc.
- an organisation that takes care of its PSAP operators especially if they have been subjected to traumatic calls or similar events so that the employee always can feel that he/she is supported by the organisation;
- having measures in place to monitor and meet staff turnover for a stable staffing
- meeting the internal and external development, demands and expectations with a constant and precise training of staff to become specialists in their field



A PSAP organisation should also have **Employee Assistance Programmes** in place that cover stress management as mentioned earlier in section 4.1, staff morale, advice on healthy diets, shift work; things that are very important for the staff as a whole and the individual in particular.

And of course, there must be a well functioning HR department within the PSAP organisation.

### 13 Recommendations

PSAP Human Resources/Staffing:

- Should ensure that PSAP's **recruitment and selection** practices are the 'best in class' and in line with national legislation and are linked to the required skills of the role;
- Should have **Employee Assistance Programmes** in place that cover stress management (Ref: EENA document), staff morale, advice on healthy diets, shift work;
- Should have **Learning and Development** programmes linked to employee skills requirements;
- Should have robust **Performance Management** systems linked to staff training and quality including transparent reward systems and staff attrition;
- Should have a programme for detecting and taking care of **talented employees** in order to give career opportunity and thereby keep good and experienced staff within the organisation
- PSAPs should have measures in place to **monitor and reduce staff turnover** and a process to ensure quick replacement with applicants that meet the requirements
- PSAPs should ensure that staff have the ability to provide open feedback about the organisation of the PSAP (e.g. Staff Representative Council)

European Authorities:

- Should carry out EU wide research programs on the management of stress incurred by PSAP staff and support the Standardisation work.

National Governments/Regional Authorities:

- Should ensure that their PSAPs have sufficient resources to ensure that workers are well protected and managed in line with EU and National legislation (such as Working Time Directive as an example). PSAPs, if appropriate, should adhere to recognised Standards of HR practices