

training areas. To help minimize liability, an agency should have written policy and procedures that conform to the national standards.

Lack of accountability falls into many different areas, but one that stands out the most is quality assurance and/or quality improvement. All employees are responsible for their own actions or inactions, but how are agencies making them accountable? A true QA/QI program will ensure that every telecommunicator is following the same standards and that potential mistakes are caught and corrected early. Implementing this program is an indication that an agency is proactive rather than reactive. By implementing this program, every telecommunicator can be held accountable in a fair and precise manner.

Complacency happens before anyone realizes it. Someone who has been in the business for years doing the same thing time and time again is most likely to fall into this trap. In this industry, we don't have room for complacency. The fact that we have processed a specific call the same way for the past 10 years does not mean that this time when the call for service comes in it should be treated the same way. Every call should be handled on

its own merits. Treating every call for service as a call you have never received will help minimize your liability, because you are apt to do everything that is supposed to be done.

Lack of supervision concerns shift supervisors, managers and directors, and agency budgets affect this area tremendously. Some agencies operate without any supervision on each shift, and this practice is very dangerous. Someone who is physically inside the communication center needs to be in charge. People can't supervise from cars in the field or from their living room couches. A supervisor needs to know what is going on every minute of the shift. Shift supervisors are the link to the managers and directors who are ultimately responsible for the day-to-day operations in the communication center.

The question has been raised several times: "Can a telecommunicator be sued personally?" Some states offer immunity for public safety agencies and personnel against liability lawsuits. However, once a special relationship has been established, the immunity is negated and the agency and/or individual will be held responsible for any negligent acts performed in the

commission of their duties. In a communication center, there are several ways to reduce liability:

1. Follow the policy and procedures.

Abiding by the policy and procedures set forth by the agency mitigates the risk for the telecommunicator.

2. Identify and report outdated policy and procedures.

As a telecommunicator, you are responsible for identifying and reporting outdated agency policy and procedures to your supervisor. Having done so, it is then the agency's responsibility to make any necessary changes to them.

3. Report policy and procedures that do not meet agency goals.

Telecommunicators are in the best position to know what works best for everyone. Choosing not to make your voice heard can put you in the hot seat in a court of law.

4. Attend all training opportunities.

Telecommunicators are ultimately responsible for themselves. If telecommunicators want to put on a shield of armor, then they should attend any available training. If telecommunicators miss a training opportunity, they should find another option for participating in the training. They should



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