

**Executive Office of Public Safety & Security
State 911 Department**

**Telecommunicator
Emergency Response Taskforce
Operations Standards/Policy Manual**



September 2022 – Version 1.0

Dedicated in memory of Blake T. Haskell

Blake was a member of several TERT upstart attempts in the Commonwealth, and most recently served as the Chairman of the steering committee. Blake was instrumental in formulating the Massachusetts program. Blake was passionate about TERT and had helped lead the charge locally on Cape Cod to aid dispatchers when they needed assistance. Blake passed away before implementation of the Massachusetts TERT program, but his efforts do not go unnoticed.

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Record of Changes

This document will be reviewed annually or in conjunction with the Massachusetts Communications Unit (COMU) Governance. Revisions will be reviewed by the TERT State Coordinator, Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), and the State 911 Department.

Comments, suggested revisions, or additions/deletions to this policy and procedure should be submitted via email to: MA.TERT@mass.gov.

Individuals seeking Massachusetts state credentialing for a COMU position, are responsible for ensuring they have the most current version of this document which can be obtained by contacting the TERT State Coordinator at MA.TERT@mass.gov.

Version Number	Date of Change	Sections	Summary of Change	Change Made By (Title or Name)
1	9/21/2022	Entire Document	Initial Document Issued/Approval	F. Pozniak
2				
3				
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Introduction

This document was developed in conjunction with the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Emergency Number Association (MassNENA), the National Joint TERT Initiative (NJTI), the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO), the Massachusetts State 911 Department, the Statewide Office of Public Safety Interoperability and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS).

The TERT program is meant to assist 9-1-1 communications centers that need help. TERT deployments assist agencies that are stretched beyond their capabilities as the result of an unprecedented event. The TERT program helps provide much-needed relief to dispatchers.

TERT can be enacted in instances which include:

- Natural disasters such as hurricanes, large wildfires, tornados
- Coverage for line of duty deaths
- Augment staffing due to widespread illness in center
- Staff relief after major events, including for Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

The Massachusetts TERT program operates under the authority of the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS), State 911 Department. TERT is part of the Communications Unit Program (COMU), which is overseen by the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC).

In addition to the standards provided herein, the TERT program also incorporates all applicable [COMU Policy & Procedure Governance documents](#).

This document intends to establish operational standards to better prepare the Commonwealth to respond to major events affecting Emergency Communication Centers.

Acronyms/Abbreviations

AAR	After Action Report
AHJ	Authority Having Jurisdiction – The governing body of the communications center, which can be at the local, municipal, county, or state level. This body has oversight of the communications center and will have knowledge of the skills, knowledge, and abilities of employees at the center.
CISM	Critical Incident Stress Management
COMU	Communications Unit
EOPSS	Executive Office of Public Safety & Security
ECC	Emergency Communications Center
EMA	Emergency Management Agency
EMAC	Emergency Management Assistance Compact
EMD	EMD Emergency Medical Dispatch
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
ICS	ICS Incident Command System
MEMA	Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency
NIC	NIMS National Incident Management System
NJTI	National Joint TERT Initiative
POC	Point of Contact
PSAP	Public Safety Answering Point
PSAP Survey	Data collected regarding the type of equipment and training used in a PSAP, to best match the needs of a requesting PSAP with the skills of the responding TERT.
SIEC	Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee
SWIC	Statewide Interoperable Coordinator
TERT	Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce – A group of trained telecommunications operators and support personnel able to respond to and work with another agency to receive, process, dispatch, and monitor calls for assistance.
TERTAR	TERT Activation Request
TERT Liaison	Requesting PSAPs liaison who serves as the POC between the local PSAP and the TERT Team Leader.
TSC	TERT State Coordinator – Official responsible for managing and coordinating a TERT deployment at the state level.
TERT Team Leader	Deployed team's overall management authority. Serves as POC between the TERT and the TERT Liaison.
TERT Telecommunicator	A public safety dispatcher possessing the training and/or certification, and having the capability of functioning as both a TERT Calltaker and a TERT Radio Dispatcher.

TERT Components

Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce (TERT)

A TERT Dispatcher is a specially trained individual capable of providing mutual aid response in the aftermath of major events or other special circumstances. TERT members/teams typically respond to a PSAP/ECC deployments when an agency needs a team due to a major event or special circumstances. The purpose of TERT is to provide relief to personnel of a communications center that has experienced a major event to augment the staffing of that center. TERT members can respond to a PSAP, an EOC, Mobile Command Post, or a backup center.

Note: A TERT dispatcher is different than an INTD (Incident Tactical Dispatcher). A tactical or incident dispatch team typically responds to field deployments.

TERT Telecommunicator

A public safety Telecommunicator that can function in both the following capacities:

1. **Calltaker:** A public safety calltaker trained and/or certified in accordance with the AHJ policies in receiving, assessing, prioritizing, and classifying calls for service (police and/or fire and/or EMS) and operating public safety and/or ECC communications equipment.
2. **Radio Dispatcher:** A public safety dispatcher trained and/or certified in accordance with the AHJ policies in receiving, prioritizing, and distributing calls for service (police and/or fire and/or EMS) using a public safety radio system while coordinating, tracking and providing support to field units.

TERT Team Leader

A public safety telecommunications supervisor, as described above, who is also knowledgeable in the administrative aspects of a TERT deployment and is capable of managing human resources, work task distribution, liaison, and documentation needs of the TERT. The TERT Team Leader is assigned by the TERT State Coordinator.

TERT State Coordinator

An individual recognized as the single point of contact responsible for managing the TERT program and coordinating TERT deployments

TERT Liaison

A liaison to the TERT from the Requesting PSAP. The TERT Liaison is the single point of contact between the Requesting PSAP and deployed team. Responsible for assuring the TERT team has appropriate access and support to fulfill assigned duties. This component will be assigned at the time of the request.

TERT Membership

Criteria for TERT Members

All members should meet the following qualifications and skills taken from **APCO/NENA Standard ANS 1.105.2-2015**.¹

- ✓ A public safety background with a minimum of three (3) years of experience in dispatch operations.
- ✓ Pass a criminal background check performed by the Authority Having Jurisdiction
- ✓ Follow the vaccination/immunization guidelines outlined in the CDC guidance document titled "Immunization Recommendations for Disaster Responders."²
- ✓ Have a signed letter from the agency director acknowledging/approving participation in TERT on file with the TERT State Coordinator (Renewed by January 1 of even-numbered years).
- ✓ Possess positive interpersonal communication and leadership skills.
- ✓ Possess an excellent working knowledge of the appropriate public safety emergency response operation and equipment as it relates to the member's role.
- ✓ Possess an ability to adapt and be flexible with different policies, procedures, equipment, and geographic areas.
- ✓ Possess an ability to adapt to poor environmental conditions such as no beds, cold meals, and no running water.
- ✓ Possess excellent people and teamwork skills inclusive of cultural diversity.
- ✓ Possess excellent documentation skills.
- ✓ Apply and be credentialed through the COMU program

TERT Telecommunicators Requirements

In addition, all members must have completed the following online courses from the FEMA/EMI website *Note: All ICS Courses should be the most current version (within the last 10 years):*

- ✓ IS-100, Introduction to the ICS
- ✓ IS-144, Telecommunicators Emergency Response Taskforce (TERT) Basic Course
- ✓ IS-200, ICS for Single Resources, and Initial Incidents
- ✓ IS-700, National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction
- ✓ IS-800, National Response Framework (NRF)

Further, all members must have the following courses completed:

- ✓ Basic Public Safety Telecommunications Class that lasts 40 hours
- ✓ Massachusetts E911 course and certification
- ✓ CPR certification

¹ https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.nena.org/resource/resmgr/Standards/APCO-NENA_ANS_1_105_2-2015_T.pdf

² <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/disease/responderimmun.asp>

TERT Team Leader Requirements

- Understand local, state, regional, and national mutual aid processes and procedures
- Be able to coordinate work tasks and human resources in adverse and changing environments with minimal direction
- Possess the knowledge to identify, locate and obtain logistical support for the team
- Strong administrative skills, i.e., scheduling, timekeeping, cost tracking, etc.
- Possess the ability to effectively interface with the Incident Command Structure

All TERT Team Leaders must have completed the following courses in addition to that of a TERT member

- ✓ ICS-300, Intermediate Incident Command System (ICS) for Expanding Incidents
- ✓ ICS-400, Advanced ICS Command, and General Staff-Complex Incidents
- ✓ ICS-1200, TERT Team Leader Course

Application Process

In order to apply for consideration to the team, applicants must:

- Complete [COMU Application](#)
- Complete [COMU Home Agency Certification Form](#)
- Must have a signed letter from the agency director acknowledging/approving participation on department letterhead
- Provide proof of required certifications for the desired role
- Email all of the above-mentioned items to the current MA TERT State Coordinator at ma.tert@mass.gov.

Team leaders will be selected by the state coordinator based on credentials, experience, and commitment.

Credentialing

Once member applications are vetted and submitted to the SWIC (Statewide Interoperability Coordinator), they will be issued official credentials welcoming them to the COMU team as a TERT Member:

- They will then receive State 911 Logins for all PSAPS.
- TERT logins are only to be used for official TERT purposes. Any member found logging in during non-TERT business will be dropped from the team.
- Team members will be assigned geographically. The groups will be Northeast, Central, Southeast, and West.

Expectations and Commitment

TERT members shall:

- Ensure certificates are up to date and renewed as needed

- Participate in monthly meetings/trainings
- Commit to deploy when activated- time requirement will vary per incident
- Respond to requests from State Coordinator and Team Leaders promptly
- When on deployment, act in a professional manner and represent their home agency as well as the EOPSS and Massachusetts State 911.
- Adherence to the MA TERT Code of Conduct

Renewal

TERT members must stay current with all required certifications. It is the responsibility of the TERT member to provide the state coordinator with up-to-date certificates.

ICS courses should be the version within the last 10 years.

Members must renew their signed letter from their agency every other year in January, beginning January 2024.

TERT members must be compliant with State 911 and in good standing with their department.

In compliance with the COMU Governance, TERT members must renew their credentials every 3 years. To maintain current and consistent skill set of credentialed COMU personnel, Massachusetts requires COMU personnel to complete a continuing education program during their three (3) year credentialed period.

TERT Members must complete and submit the [MA COMU Applicant Credential Renewal Form](#)

Continuing Education

The TERT program will provide continuing education opportunities that will help meet the below-noted requirements for COMU. The TERT program will hold one training per month for 10 months out of a year.

Credentialed COMU personnel are required to complete thirty-six (36) hours of CEU, prior to the expiration date of their credentials in the following six (6) categories:

- Job duties as it relates to communications systems (voice, data, IOP planning) (4 hours minimum)
- Establish a communications system to meet incident operational needs (4 hours minimum)
- Workshops and/or seminars (6 hours minimum)
- Exercises (Functional and/or Full Scale) (12 hours minimum)
- Communications/ICS Related Training Programs (6 hours minimum)
- Communications Presentations/Teaching, including any new hire orientation, field training, and candidate PTB task work assistance. (4 hours minimum)

Massachusetts COMU personnel may participate in an approved classroom and/or online training, exercise (Communications Exercise, Functional and/or Full Scale), planned event, or actual incident to receive credit for continuing education.

Participation in an exercise, planned event, or actual incident must be in the role of the COMU credential being renewed to qualify for this credit. Completion of verified continuing education will be adequate for the renewal of COMU credentialing.

Failure to meet Renewal Requirements

Should a TERT/COMU member fail to complete a renewal packet prior to their expiration date, credentials will automatically expire. The credentialed TERT/COMU member will be removed from Local, State, and Federal databases, including CASM, and will be considered ineligible for deployment by the EOPSS/State 911 Department.

Deployment

Types of Deployment

At this time, the TERT program will only support intra-state deployments. Interstate deployments may be considered at a later time

Deployments can range from pre-planned events to last-minute major event coverage.

Some examples include:

- Natural disasters such as hurricanes, large wildfires, tornados
- Coverage for line of duty deaths
- Augment staffing due to widespread illness in center
- Staff relief after major events, including for CISM

Activation Steps

The Requesting PSAP will call the 24-hour notification point, MEMA, at 508-820-2000. In the event they are not available, the MSP-Watch Center (GHQ) will serve as the alternate and can be contacted at 508-820-2121.

The notification point will then notify the TERT Statewide Coordinator, who will identify what resources are needed and initiate an activation.

TERT Request

This form contains additional information that may assist the responding TERT State Coordinator and TERT Team Leader to staff and initiate a response. This form should be completed by an appropriate representative of the requesting PSAP. See Form: [TERT REQUEST](#)

Requesting PSAP Role

The Requesting PSAP shall initiate the request for activation through the primary or alternate state point of contact and provide guidance and direction to the responding TERT team members. PSAPs should complete an ECC Analysis prior to the need for TERT. See Form: [ECC Analysis](#)

- All PSAPs should complete an ECC Analysis for their center.

- Request TERT activation through MEMA 508-820-2000
(Once activated through MEMA, MEMA will contact the TERT State Coordinator)
- The requesting PSAP will provide specific information outlining the PSAP's need(s)
- The requesting PSAP will provide additional information, upon request, to the TERT State Coordinator
- The requesting PSAP will assign a TERT Liaison responsible for deployed teams
- The TERT Liaison will provide the TERT package to arriving TERT team leader. See attached form: [TERT PACKAGE](#)
- Assign and monitor tasks to the TERT team leader while they are working in PSAP, as necessary.

TERT Package

The TERT package is information and resources the requesting PSAP provides to the responding TERT. This package should be prepared in advance by requesting PSAP personnel and have the necessary information and supplies for the TERT to function while deployed. See Form: [TERT PACKAGE](#)

TERT Requesting Agency Deployment Review

The TERT Requesting Agency (ECC/PSAP) deployment review is a tool to be completed post-mission by the requesting PSAP Liaison. This instrument is used to ensure that the response was handled safely and efficiently and to provide lessons learned to improve future deployment. Completed reviews shall be provided to both the requesting and responding TERT State and Regional Coordinators. See Form: [TERT REQUESTING AGENCY DEPLOYMENT REVIEW](#)

TERT Deployment Responsibilities

TERT State Coordinator responsibilities

- Receive notification from control point
- Contact TERT Liaison to confirm needs
- Locate and assign available resources
- Assume responsibility for assembling a deployable team
- Assign TERT Team Leaders
- Coordinate transportation
- Ensure TERT Liaison receives verification of response
- Receives daily updates and disseminates to appropriate agencies
- Coordinates communications between deployed TERT and home agencies
- Ensure completion of all Deployment Review forms

Team Leader responsibilities

- Complete deployment checklist
- Ensure team member logins work appropriately
- Ensure responding personnel are appropriately equipped (Supply list)

- Establish and maintain communication with TERT Liaison
- Ensure the safety of team members insofar as possible
- Ensure team members are assigned an appropriate work task
- Ensure logistical needs are met (i.e., food, lodging, transportation)
- Ensure operational needs are met (i.e., scheduling, resource management, personnel issues, required reports)
- Request appropriate CISM resources, if deemed necessary
- Ensure financial needs are documented (timekeeping, associated costs)
- Provide daily updates to the responding TERT State Coordinator
- Ensure demobilization requirements are met
- Ensure completion of all after-action reports
- Notify MEMA/State Police after TERT resources have checked in and out

Team Member Responsibilities

- Follow directions from the state coordinator and team leader
- Give your best effort and attention
- Complete any necessary forms
- Complete tasks as requested
- Adhere to the code of conduct

TERT Database

TERT State Coordinator (or their designee) shall:

- Create & Maintain a Database of TERT Members
- Create & Maintain a Database of Agency information

Database Audit

TERT will conduct an audit of the member database to confirm TERT Member/Leader status annually.

Member Responsibility

TERT Members are responsible for staying up to date on their certifications and providing the coordinator with up-to-date copies of certificates. Members with expired certificates will be considered inactive members and illegible for deployment.

Massachusetts TERT Member Code of Conduct

As a member of the Massachusetts TERT team, I understand my role on the team and adhere to the following:

- Any unauthorized photos, videos, or audio recordings of the disaster site will be cause for immediate removal from the site and potential discharge from the team
- Sexual harassment will not be tolerated

- Use of illegal drugs or misuse of prescription medications is prohibited at all times and is considered "gross misconduct"
- Use/consumption of alcoholic beverages while deployed is prohibited
- All local laws and ordinances will be observed and respected
- I will respond timely to requests to call outs
- I will make every effort to attend training
- I will make sure my certifications are up to date and renewed appropriately
- I understand that these situations are fluid, and I will need to be flexible
- I am able to work in a team as well as in an independent environment
- I understand that the work environment I am assigned to can change vastly depending on the incident. This could include a PSAP, an Emergency Operations Center, a backup center, a makeshift operation, etc.
- I understand that as a TERT member, I represent not only my home agency but also the state 911 department and EOPSS.
- I understand that if I do not attend adequate training and deployments throughout the year, I may be removed from the team
- I understand that my TERT login credentials are only to be used for official TERT purposes and must be pre-authorized

Appendix A – TERT Package

Information requested below should be provided to responding MA TERT Team members upon arrival.

- List of CAD codes/commands
- List of call types
- List of radio frequencies and departments that utilize the same unit number or radio signature designations
- List of radio codes
- Local phone books
- List of commonly used telephone numbers
- List of other required access numbers
- Commonly used terms/names (utility company name, commonplace names) Local maps/ Cross-reference guides
- List of major public buildings such as schools, shelters, hospitals, public safety buildings, other government buildings, jails/prisons, etc.
- Jurisdictional boundaries (police, fire, EMS)
- List of agencies dispatched or supported
- List of key public officials and current organizational structure (chain of command)
- Facility Overview
- Overview of local and state laws
- Check-in/Check-out procedures
- Method of ID credentialing/electronic entry card

Appendix B – TERT Request Form

Date

- 1. Name of Agency:**
- 2. Contact Person:**
- 3. Telephone #:**
- 4. TERT Coordinator Notified (time/date):**
- 5. Nature of emergency and impact on PSAP:**
 - Work overload
 - PSAP evacuation
 - Adverse environment conditions
 - Localized pandemic
 - Other
- 6. Is the emergency isolated to a single PSAP or affecting other area PSAP's?**
- 7. What will be the anticipated deployment environment (PSAP, Field response)?**
- 8. Number and type of Personnel Needed:**
 - Call taker
 - Radio Dispatcher
 - Telecommunicator
 - Special Requests:
- 9. Anticipated length of time needed:**
- 10. Does TERT State Coordinator or appropriate official have PSAP Survey for each affected PSAP?**
- 11. Are there any roadblocks, flooded roadways, etc., that would prevent a team from reaching the PSAP?**
- 12. Are there any checkpoints that TERT personnel will have to go through?**
- 13. Staging area and contact information?**
- 14. Has COVID-19 compromised your agency?**
 - a. If the answer is yes, please indicate precautionary measures that have been taken (i.e., wearing of masks, gloves, hand sanitizer available, continuous cleaning of your communications center).
 - b. Are remote capabilities available (meaning dispatch has been or can be relocated to an alternate location to prevent the spread of COVID-19)?
- 15. Any special instructions?**

Appendix C – TERT Member Supply List

Supplies should be tailored to expected environmental and scene conditions, specific member needs, and guidance from the TERT State Coordinator, TERT Team Leader, and/or Incident Commander. The deployed TERT Team should ensure its members are able to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours when deploying to a major disaster scene.

All TERT members should understand that deployment requires commitment and flexibility. Basic comfort facilities may not be available, and only those willing and physically able to work in adverse conditions should become team members. TERT team members are responsible for their own comfort level and should bring whatever supplies they feel necessary, depending on the deployment.

TERT members should have a pack back ready to go with needed items.

1. Notebook
2. Pens
3. Sleeping Bag/Blankets/Pillows
4. Personal Hygiene Supplies
5. Washcloths/Towels
6. Toilet Paper/Tissue Paper
7. Snacks/Cooler with Drinks and bottled water
8. Cell Phone
9. Charges
10. Cash (Do not assume ATMs will work due to power outages)
11. Flashlight, including extra batteries.
12. Small portable radio, TV, or magazines for any downtime.
13. Clothes including Shirts, Pants, Shoes, Undergarments, Socks
14. Necessary Medication
15. Small alarm clock or Pager to be used as an alarm clock

Appendix D – TERT Requesting Agency Deployment Review

	YES	NO
Did you receive all the required information such as location, directions, contact name and number, and team leader's name?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When you arrived, were you briefed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you receive a TERT Package when you arrived?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did it contain the necessary resources for you to begin work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the equipment what you are currently trained on?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel that the right amount of resources was requested?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel you were welcomed by the agency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Were assignments clear and appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel that you were of help to the PSAP?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please provide suggestions on how to improve the program.		
Other Comments (Feel free to type a narrative for any of the above questions)		