

**Bill (number?)** To recognize and reclassify Public Safety Telecommunicators (dispatchers and 9-1-1 operators) as First Responders in the State of Alabama.

**Synopsis:** The duties of public safety telecommunicators (PSTs) have changed significantly since the first 9-1-1 call in 1968, and the role will continue to evolve as the Next Generation 9-1-1 is fully integrated across the nation. The 9-1-1 community continues efforts to update classification of the Public Safety Telecommunicator from that of “Office and Administrative Support” to a “First Responder.” The passage of this bill will reclassify and recognize the work that dedicated 9-1-1 professionals provide every day to protect and save lives.

**Definitions:**

**First Responder**---Those individuals, who in the early stages of an incident, are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence and environment, including emergency response providers as defined in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. ss 101).

**Emergency Response Providers**---Federal, State and Local governmental and non-governmental public safety, fire, law enforcement, public safety telecommunicators/dispatchers, emergency response, emergency medical service providers (including hospital emergency facilities) and related personnel, agencies and authorities.

**Public Safety Telecommunicator**---A person employed by a public safety answering point (PSAP) or emergency service provider (ESP) as a public safety dispatcher or 9-1-1 operator whose duties and responsibilities include the answering, receiving, transferring and dispatching functions related to 9-1-1 calls.

The State of Alabama recognizes that a Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST) serves a critical role in public safety, homeland security and emergency response. They work alongside Law Enforcement officers, Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services to provide life-saving direction to callers. The PST position requires specialized training, skills and abilities to efficiently gather vital information and make split-second decisions. The ability of the PST to form the foundation of an effective emergency response, prevent worsening of a situation and provide situational awareness to responders exemplifies their specialized training. The PST works in a uniquely stressful environment and communicates with citizens and responders in great distress, harm, fear or injury. This environment can have adverse emotional and physical impacts.

The State of Alabama and its citizens, recognize that Public Safety Telecommunicators are emergency service providers and hereby support the national movement to reclassify Telecommunicators as First Responders, and accurately recognize the scope of work they do every day. This classification will also help qualify PSTs for mental health support and provide protections against civil damage liability when helping in an emergency.

Therefore, by the passage of this bill, let it be enacted by the Legislature of the State of Alabama, and ultimately signed into law by the Governor of Alabama, that Public Safety Telecommunicators be elevated and recognized as First Responders in the State of Alabama.