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Learning Tasks

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### Abstract

Government budget constraints had forced the Emergency Dispatch Center (EDC) at a military installation to work with less than the normal number of staff. A Program Proposal was developed previously that had determined that a learning gap existed in the researcher's work environment at a military installation. To counter this gap, Learning Tasks were developed to determine the best curriculum for dispatchers to instruct firefighters in becoming 911 Dispatchers when the need became available. The purpose of this study was to develop Learning Tasks to determine what firefighters would need to do to learn the content and accomplish achievement-based objectives. The data for this study were drawn from the dispatchers and firefighters at the fire department where the training would need to take place. The population for this study came from the EDC dispatchers and firefighters. A literature review was conducted through Google Scholar and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) where primary and secondary sources were located to support the curriculum. Results of the literature review and learning tasks indicated a very comprehensive and effective curriculum. The author suggests that the results provide for a very effective curriculum if collaboration exists continuously between dispatchers and firefighters.

### Learning Tasks

In the traditional or nontraditional classroom setting, both participants, the instructor and the students, have specific tasks they must accomplish in order for learning to take place. The instructor has the duty of providing the materials, environment, and their practical knowledge or expertise (Wlodkowski, 2008) and learning tasks (Laureate Education, Inc., 2010) to motivate students to learn. The learning tasks will determine what the students will do to learn the content and accomplish achievement-based objectives (Laureate Education, Inc., 2010). To accomplish these tasks, for which will be for a traditional medium and large size group, this paper will, (a) introduce the learning tasks to be demonstrated; (b) explain what the learning activities will be; (c) demonstrate how practice and feedback could be used; and (d) demonstrate how to produce an assessment and rubric.

### Introduction

In 2011, the Federal Government issued a hiring freeze for most of the Air Force bases in this country. MacDill AFB in Florida became one of the bases that would feel this affect (Danner-Jones, 2011). One of the departments within this base that would feel this influence would be the Emergency Dispatch Center (EDC). The EDC is located in the main fire department where all administrative and emergency calls are received and processed by its dispatchers. The dispatchers are all civilians who are Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) certified. These civilians answer all 9-1-1 calls that come into the EDC and read the EMD cards to determine the fate of each call (National Academy of Emergency Medical Dispatch, 2010). For this office to operate at its maximum potential, it must have all its personnel assigned to it. Normally the EDC is manned by five dispatchers (Gleason, 2008), but due to the hiring freeze, the EDC became short of one dispatcher. The absence of one dispatcher would automatically create overtime for the other dispatchers when one of the dispatchers would be unable to report

for duty. This overtime could also create the possibility of stress among the dispatchers if relieve is not provided within a certain amount of days.

Dispatchers who are assigned to the EDC, which happens to be conveniently located in the fire department, have been trained by EDC supervisors from their previous duty stations and also from MacDill AFB. All the dispatchers' education and eventually all the years of EMD experience allows these dispatchers to teach firefighters to become qualified as 9-1-1 dispatchers. According to Air Force Instruction 32-2001 (Gleason, 2008), military firefighters must become qualified as 9-1-1 dispatchers as part of their upgrade training. Having introduced the learning tasks, the instructor would begin developing learning activities for small and large groups of students.

### Learning Activity

#### Learning Task One: How to Teach 9-1-1 Dispatching to a Small or Medium Group

This first learning task provides a forum for a small group of firefighters who would be trained in the EDC. One certified dispatcher would provide training in the EDC. The EMD training session would take as long the firefighter would need to become EMD qualified.

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Purpose of tasks	To help dispatchers establish a teaching forum for firefighters to understand the operations of the EDC.
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Alignment of program outcomes and learning objectives	<p><b>Program Outcome:</b> Students graduating from the dispatch training will be able to collect components of emergency information.</p> <p><b>Learning Objective:</b> After the training period, students will be able to collect key entry questions within one minute and using 90% of the EMD card protocol.</p>
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Required prerequisites	None required
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Target population	Military firefighters who successfully graduated from basic training are not trained in EMD. When they arrive at their first base, they are put onto a personnel list to be chosen by their supervisor when the appropriate time comes to be assigned to the EDC.
Group size	Small or Medium
Time frame	EDC history at MacDill AFB, according to the researcher's experience, has shown that becoming 9-1-1 dispatched qualified has taken from one to two months.
Instructional Method	<p>Student-centered instruction: Teacher assesses firefighter's prior EDC training. This prior training would make it easier to transfer learning.</p> <p>Teacher-centered instruction: If firefighter has no prior EDC training, teacher takes over training. Teacher performs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching through "observing what they [firefighters] do, listening, providing feedback, and sharing experiences and knowledge" (Caffarella, 2010, p. 217).</li> <li>• Mentoring firefighters over an "extended time period with a less experienced person [firefighter]" (Caffarella, 2010, p. 217).</li> <li>• Face-to-face sessions with firefighters to ensure competence and professionalism are reinforced (Caffarella, 2010).</li> </ul>
Learning Accommodations	The EDC is set up where students can maneuver around the office to gain quick access to various resources and materials in order to perform their duties.
Resources & Materials	<p>Students would have full access to these resources and materials to guide them through their EDC training.</p> <p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baskas, R. (2008). <i>MacDill AFB dispatch center quick response checklist book</i>. This will help students understand how dispatchers perform their duty for all responses. Baskas (researcher and Ed.D. student) developed this book based on his EMD and firefighting experience.</li> </ul>

- Theodore, M. (2011). *MacDill AFB fire department standard operating guides*. This will help students understand how firefighters perform their jobs.

Materials: radios and computers

Instructor Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students need to have their identification card to gain access into computers.</li> <li>• Computers need to be on and in working condition before students arrive.</li> <li>• Ask students if they have had any prior EDC training as this will make learning easier and more meaningful.</li> </ul>
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**Learning Task Two: How to Teach 9-1-1 Dispatching to a Larger Group**

Since the EDC is not big enough to accommodate a large group of firefighters to hold EDC classes, the training method and training space would need to take place in the fire department’s training room. Holding these training sessions in the fire department makes it more convenient for firefighters as their equipment (fire vehicles and gear) is already located here. Since this training room is not equipped with the EDC equipment cable connections to allow for dispatching to be taught, the most logical and convenient way to provide this type of training is for dispatchers to take pictures of and make hard copies of the equipment to distribute to student groups for collaboration.

Purpose of tasks	To help dispatchers provide a forum to collaborate with firefighters in understanding what would be expected of them when becoming dispatchers.
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Alignment of program outcomes and learning objectives	<p><b>Program Outcome:</b> Students graduating from the dispatch training will be able to collect components of emergency information.</p> <p><b>Learning Objective:</b> After the training period, students will be able to collect key entry questions within one minute and using</p>
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	90% of the EMD card protocol.
Required prerequisites	None required
Target population	This population would include military firefighters who have successfully graduated from basic training with no EMD experience and those who have been active duty for some time and could have received some EMD training from another military base.
Group size	Large
Time frame	Regardless of the amount of training each firefighter comes to class with and what their learning styles may be, this four-hour training session is to just inform them of what to experience if and when they are assigned to the EDC as a dispatcher.

Only certified 9-1-1 dispatchers would provide the instruction for this type of group.

Seating arrangements would allow for collaboration between students, and between students and the teacher. Since additional EDC equipment is not available, picture handouts of equipment would be provided as an instruction.

Instructional method	<p><b>Teacher-centered instruction:</b> If firefighter has no prior EDC training, teacher takes over training. Teacher performs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Coaching</b> through providing scenarios of actual emergencies, asking them how they would respond to emergencies by “listening, providing feedback, and sharing experiences and knowledge” (Caffarella, 2010, p. 217).</li> </ul>
Learning resources	Handouts of EDC equipment would be produced and distributed to student groups.
Learning accommodations	Students would be paired to promote collaboration. Handouts would contain pictures of all equipment involved in EDC

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dispatching so that students understand how the EDC is structured. Seating arrangements would promote collaboration between students and student to teacher.

Instructor notes

Guide students as they learn how to process information.

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After having developed learning activities for students to become involved in, instructors would need to get the students involved, and instructors would need to produce feedback to determine the program's effectiveness.

### **Practice and Feedback**

For the learning process to occur, teachers must guide their students through practice and feedback (A4: Course Project, 2012). For both learning tasks, there are two forms of feedback that would best promote reciprocity between instructors and students in the EDC. A collaborative forum would work best for a small group while a discussion form would work best for a medium size group. Both forums have specific functions as well as how teacher and student roles contribute to both forms. This section will show how collaboration and discussion will work for two different size groups.

#### **Process of Providing Feedback: Collaborative Groups**

For the first learning task, collaborative learning would be most effective. To process emergencies more effectively within the EDC, there should always be at least two dispatchers where communication would always be a constant with each other in order to improve emergency functions for the customers. As two dispatchers constitute a small group size, collaborative learning would work most efficiently. Keast and Mandell (2009) explained that interdependent relationships exist between individuals who work together to address problems and deliver outcomes. This relationship is about systems change where the environment is high-



risk, high-stakes, and volatile that can produce results. Students explore or apply course material (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). This process has specific teacher and student responsibilities.

Depending on the situation, the teacher or student can begin the collaboration.

**Teacher responsibilities.** During collaboration, the teacher would take on the role as a facilitator (Harden & Crosby, 2000). If the teacher recognized a discrepancy a student made during an emergency, the teacher would wait until after the emergency had been terminated to talk to the student about it. The teacher would ask the student if the student had recognized any problems they may have made. If the student could not recollect, the teacher would recall the incident in question. The teacher would ask how that particular problem could have been resolved. If the student was unable to provide an answer, the teacher would hint at what resources the student could use to solve the problem. Gall and Gall (1993) explained that teachers serve as resource experts when students do not have the background to resolve their confusion. This supportive learning is where teachers reinforce, enrich, or enhance learning (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1997). Collaboration allows teachers to also observe students as they explain and explore how to resolve an issue to determine any additional collaboration that might be needed (Gall & Gall, 1993).

**Student responsibilities.** If the student recognized that they had created a deficiency during an emergency, they may initiate a question asking the teacher how to handle a situation. The student's role would most likely be one of a listener (Gall & Gall, 1993). They would listen to what the teacher would offer in solving the problem. Teacher and student responsibilities change as they become involved in discussions.

**Process of Providing Feedback: Discussions**

For the second learning task, a discussion form would work best for a medium size group of individuals. As this group is geared more towards discussing the best possible ways of how to handle emergency calls using handouts of EDC equipment and sharing what other firefighters have experienced as EMD dispatchers, a discussion would be the best forum. Galbraith (2004) pointed out that discussions work best with problem solving (understanding the nature of a problem and providing alternate solutions), concept exploration (revise concepts), and attitude changes (engender learners what teachers define as desirable attitudes). Teachers and students would assume unique roles during discussions.

**Teacher responsibilities.** During discussions, the teacher would assume various roles which can be accomplished in a particular order. To prepare for a discussion, the teacher would plan the lesson by developing the curriculum and organizing course materials, who would teach it, how many students would be attending, and the best location to have the discussions (Gall & Gall, 1993; Harden & Crosby, 2000). The teacher would then develop study guides with pictures of the EDC equipment being taught (Gall & Gall, 1993; Harden & Crosby, 2000). Once the students have arrived, the teacher would become the role of information provider (Gall & Gall, 1993; Harden & Crosby, 2000). The teacher would introduce themselves to the students, explain the purpose of the discussions, and explain what is expected of the students. The teacher should assess which students have EDC experience. The class would be divided into groups of three with one experienced EDC student per group to help guide the discussions. The teacher becomes the facilitator as they advise and/or tutor students' thought processes as students learn how the EDC equipment is used in the EDC and how to solve problem given 911 scenarios (Gall & Gall, 1993; Harden & Crosby, 2000).

**Student responsibilities.** For these group discussions to occur and be effective, students must be mentally prepared and report to class on time. Students listen to the teacher's instructions as to what will be done in class and how to conduct their lessons in group. Students arrange themselves into groups per teacher's instructions to utilize student knowledge more effectively (those that have EDC knowledge). Students give and ask each other information to clarify the EDC scenarios (Gall & Gall, 1993). They also restate each other's comments to reinforce the information (Gall & Gall, 1993). At the end of the discussion, students clarify, synthesize, and summarize all information (Gall & Gall, 1993). Once the students had participated in the activity and the instructor had provided feedback, the assessment process would need to be determined.

### **Assessment**

As firefighters are constantly learning various tasks that would lead them to becoming 911 Dispatchers or to become aware of what is involved in the process, they are constantly being assessed to determine if any learning gaps exist and how to correct any issues. Assessment is a continuous process where (a) expected outcomes are clarified and measured; (b) students have sufficient opportunities to achieve these outcomes; (c) evidence is systematically gathered, analyzed, and interpreted to determine if learning is meeting expectations; and (d) resulting information is understood and can improve learning (Suskie, 2009). The following two learning tasks will demonstrate how two different size student groups would demonstrate how assessment would be used to solve and evaluate the learning issue.

#### **Learning Task One: How to Qualify Firefighters to Become 911 Dispatchers**

This form of assessment is the most effective way of teaching and evaluating students for a small group as they become trained as 911 dispatchers. The EMD center contains all that the

student would need to become a fully trained dispatcher. The length of training depends on how long the student comprehends all the materials and learns how to use it to solve problems.

**Format** Traditional and Nontraditional teaching: Schwerdt and Wuppermann (2009) emphasized traditional teaching (a) fails to provide instructors with feedback about student learning while assuming students learn at same pace; (b) quickly diminishes students' attention quickly during lectures and information becomes short term when students become passive; and (c) allows lectures to become learning only by listening. Harris and Johnson (2002) emphasized nontraditional as (a) self-directed student learning; (b) cooperative learning; (c) teachers facilitate or guide; (d) problems, critical questions, and case studies are the organizational focus and stimulus for learning; (e) problems, critical questions, and case studies form the basis for a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter; and (f) acquisition of critical thinking, speaking, and writing skills.

**Objectives** Learners will be able to:

1. properly answer the 911 phone
2. use the Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) cards when handling emergencies
3. dispatch emergency personnel to emergencies

**Materials**

**Computers**

- Administrative: emergency log book to record emergencies, vehicle and personnel movement
- Monaco: to retrieve address of emergency
- 911 console: acknowledge and transfer emergency calls
- Radio console: announce emergencies and acknowledge movements of fire vehicles

**Manuals**

- Baskas, R. (2008). *MacDill AFB dispatch center quick response checklist book*. This will help students understand how dispatchers perform their duty for all responses. EMD supervisor requested Baskas (military firefighter and EDC dispatch veteran, current civilian EDC Night shift supervisor, and Ed.D. student) to develop this manual of how dispatchers should perform their duty.
- Theodore, M. (2011). *MacDill AFB fire department standard operating guides*. Base fire chief wrote to help students

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understand how firefighters perform their jobs.

### Miscellaneous

- PA system: announce emergencies and address of emergency

## Procedures

### Introduction

- Dispatcher welcomes and introduces self to firefighters (students).
- Student is assigned to work alongside the dispatcher.
- Dispatcher explains firefighter's responsibilities as a student.
- Dispatcher asks student if they have previous EMD/EDC experience. This would promote nontraditional learning (Harris & Johnson, 2002) as the student would explain what the equipment is and how it works. Student's training would depend on how long it would take for student to learn dispatch duties.

**Activity** (for as long as it takes for student to become EMD qualified)

- If student has prior experience, student would explain through nontraditional method (Harris & Johnson, 2002) what equipment they know and explain their functions. If student has no prior knowledge, dispatcher begins traditional method (Schwedt & Wuppermann, 2009).
- Dispatcher has student solve an easy emergency scenario; student explains how to solve it, and dispatcher provides formative assessment (Lodico et al., 2010). While waiting for real 911 calls, student reads two manuals, Baskas (2008) and Theodore (2011).
- Student is given few more easy scenarios; dispatcher continues formative assessments.
- Later that week, student is given difficult scenarios, summative evaluations (Lodico et al., 2010) to determine what areas need additional attention.

**Closure** (when student is to become EMD qualified)

As student becomes proficient in the EDC, to be determined by the dispatcher, the dispatcher would provide a simulated summative evaluation where all skills and content would be assessed into one scenario to determine what areas the student may need to work on. When the student has worked with all parts of the 911 equipment and has experienced as many emergency calls as possible, the student is given the opportunity to determine for themselves if they are ready to go solo.

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**Responsibilities of Participants**

**Dispatcher:** welcomes students to classroom; explain student and teacher responsibilities; assess students' prior EMD knowledge; facilitate student's learning while working with equipment; assess students' knowledge through numerous formative and summative scenarios.

**Student:** report to training on time and be prepared; participate in all training (computers and manuals); ask questions to redefine EMD knowledge.

**Practice and Feedback****Practice:**

1. Create cheat sheet:  
Respond to bldg. \_\_\_\_\_ for a(an) \_\_\_\_\_ emergency, address \_\_\_\_\_, box # \_\_\_\_\_ on your map.
2. Review two manuals, Baskas (2008) and Theodore (2011).

**Feedback:**

1. Immediate dialogue between Dispatcher and Student.
2. How situations are being taken care of as student performs duty, did the outcome produce desired results? If and when equipment malfunctions, or backtalk (Yanow & Tsoukas, 2009), how would the student deal with the situation?

**Evaluation**

Assessments are designed based on dispatch experience.

**Formative Assessments:**

Dispatcher: constantly provides numerous small scenarios to test student's knowledge and skills; provides feedback; evaluates effectiveness of training.

Student: explains how to process emergency calls and dispatch fire department personnel using all necessary equipment and materials.

**Summative Assessment:**

The dispatcher creates two scenarios which the student would use what resources he/she would need to solve the problem.

Scenario 1 (Easy): The student received a 911 call reporting someone who is sick at building 373, Fitness Center. The student is to describe in detail how to process the emergency.

Scenario 2 (Difficult): The student received a phone call from a pregnant female going into labor in an elevator. The student is to describe in detail how to process the emergency.

**Rubric: Learning Task One**

<b>Rating</b> <b>Objectives</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Needs Work</b>
<b>Answers 911 phone</b>	Consistently answers calls on time.  Answers calls within first or second ring.	Answers some calls within the first or second ring.  Occasionally misses calls.	Refuses to answer calls on time.  Does not answer.  Answers on last ring.
<b>Uses Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) protocol (card number) when handling emergencies</b>	Thoroughly evaluates calls using protocol.  Uses correct protocol.  Follows instructions in correct sequence.	Occasionally uses correct protocol.  Occasionally follows instructions in correct sequence.	Refuses to use correct protocol.  Never uses correct protocol.  Does not follow instructions in correct sequence.
<b>Dispatches emergency personnel to emergencies</b>	Ensures complete correct address.  Quickly dispatches personnel.	Shows some concern in retrieving complete correct address.  Shows some concern in dispatching personnel.	Never retrieves complete correct address.  Takes time in dispatching personnel.

**Learning Task Two: To Provide an Awareness of How 911 Dispatching is Taught**

Due to the large number of on and off duty firefighters that need to be trained in 911 dispatching, the most convenient location to provide this training would be in the fire department's training room. Unfortunately this room is not equipped with the dispatch equipment. This training would need to be conducted during the first hour of the on duty shift as this is the only convenient available time to gather both shifts at the same time. During this one hour of training, on duty firefighters must respond to emergencies. Firefighters responding to emergencies during class will, therefore, decrease the number of students in class for the time

being. The dispatch instructor would need to provide copies of photographs of all 911 equipment for students. The instructor would ask for students with prior dispatching experience to distribute themselves, one per group as a guide.

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**Format** Traditional (Schwerdt & Wupperman, 2009) and Nontraditional (Harris & Johnson, 2002) teaching.

**Objectives** Learners will be able to:

1. Recall how a 911 phone works
2. recall the basic emergency information needed to dispatch calls
3. dispatch emergency personnel to emergencies

**Materials** Photographs of administrative computer and phones; Monaco; 911 console; and radio console

**Procedures**

**Introduction**

- Dispatcher welcomes and introduces self to firefighters (students).
- Dispatcher explains firefighter's responsibilities as students.
- Dispatcher asks for a show of hands of students who have previous EMD/EDC experience; this would promote nontraditional learning (Harris & Johnson, 2002) as the student would explain what the equipment is and how they are used. If no hands, students would be grouped into three, four, or five, depending on the number of personnel on duty that day.
- Students would be divided into groups of four (one EMD/EDC experienced per group): two off duty and two on duty firefighters. For any emergency calls, on duty would respond. For odd number of students per group, groups may be three or five members.

**Activity**

- Dispatcher distributes a set of photographs per group and on the board for clarity.
- Dispatcher asks any experienced student to explain the photographs to the class. If none, instructor would explain.
- Dispatcher writes on the board an easy scenario. Students take notes as they discuss how to solve the problem. Dispatcher monitors group discussions, providing assistance when needed.
- Dispatcher asks one group to explain to the class how they



would respond to the scenario. Dispatcher asks students for their feedback; students and teacher provide formative assessments.

- Dispatcher provides another easy scenario, discussions and formative assessments (Lodico et al., 2010) repeat.
- Dispatcher provides a difficult scenario, process repeats.
- Dispatcher provides final scenario and a summative assessment (Lodico et al., 2010).
- Dispatcher ends session with answering questions.

### **Closure**

Dispatcher would provide a more complicated scenario to encompass all information students have mentally incorporated, a summative assessment would determine any loose ends.

### **Responsibilities of Participants**

**Dispatcher:** welcome students to classroom; explain student and teacher responsibilities; assess students' prior EMD knowledge; facilitate student learning while working with photographs; assess student's knowledge with formative and summative scenarios.

**Student:** report to training on time and be prepared; participate in all training; ask questions to redefine EDC knowledge.

### **Practice and Feedback**

#### **Practice:**

1. Create cheat sheet:  
Respond to bldg. \_\_\_\_\_ for a(an) \_\_\_\_\_ emergency, address \_\_\_\_\_, box # \_\_\_\_\_ on your map.
2. Identify equipment and their function.

#### **Feedback:**

Immediate dialogue between students and dispatcher/student.

### **Evaluation**

#### **Formative Assessments:**

Dispatcher: constantly provides numerous small scenarios to test student's knowledge and skills; provides feedback based on performances; evaluates effectiveness of training

Student: explains how to process emergency calls and dispatch fire department personnel using all necessary equipment and materials.

#### **Summative Assessment:**

The dispatcher creates two scenarios for each group. One person per group performs the scenario with any assistance of their group.

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Scenario 1: The student received an alarm activation on the Monaco computer from building 373, Fitness Center. The student is to describe in detail how to process the emergency.

Scenario 2: The student received a phone call from the base Security Forces reporting that they see smoke showing from building 1. The student is to describe in detail how to process the emergency.

**Rubric: Learning Task Two**

<b>Rating</b> <b>Objectives</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>Recall how a 911 phone works</b>	Consistently repeats how a 911 phone works.	Has trouble recalling how a 911 phone works.	Is never able or refuses to recall how a 911 phone works.
<b>Recall basic emergency information needed to dispatch calls</b>	Consistently recalls information.	Has trouble recalling information.	Is never able or refuses to recall information.
<b>Dispatch emergency personnel to emergencies</b>	Consistently dispatches personnel to correct address and emergency.	Has trouble dispatching personnel to correct address and emergency	Is never able or refuses to dispatch correctly.

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