

Written by gallupsun
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WINDOW ROCK, AZ — In honor of National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, the Navajo Police Department districts celebrated and recognized their Public Safety Telecommunications Operators (PSTO) and critical support staff who answer, process, and dispatch critical calls of service for the Navajo Division of Public Safety on April 16.

On average, the seven police communication centers receive about 332,060 calls for service. The department has 56 authorized PSTO positions with each PSTO personally taking on an average of 5,930 calls over the course of a year. Each communication center has eight funded positions with at least two PTSO on duty at a given time.

As part of the department's priorities, the Navajo Police Department has initiated reforms to enhance the skills of its communication professionals by seeking supplemental funding for additional positions, deploying additional technology for more efficient call answering, and establishing the first public safety answering point (PSAP), which will aggregate 9-1-1 calls from multiple telecoms into one center for the Northern Navajo Agency.

The department has also developed and deployed its first Communication Personnel Policy and Standard Operating Procedures, in addition to include the Navajo Public Safety Dispatch program into its Plan of Operation.

“Through my experience from being raised by a mother who was a dispatcher, I have an understanding and connection with our communications personnel. I want them to know that we are doing everything we can to provide them the tools, training, and support for them to succeed in their profession” Chief Francisco said.

In May 2021, two PSTOs from each police district will attend NPD's first-ever Public Safety Telecommunicator Academy. This course will provide certification with 160 hours of instruction in topics related to call taking, software application, laws, NCIC, and practical skills related to the different calls of crisis received.

By investing in proficiency training and certification, the department is laying the groundwork to shift the perception and classification of PSTOs as a clerical profession to the first responders,

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who take the initial call in and closeouts.

In April, the Navajo Department of Personnel Management signaled their support for this transition as they have approved the first PSAP Supervisor position for the department's communications section. Currently, PSTOs are supervised by police sergeants. The PSAP supervisor will be responsible for supervising the daily operations of our PSTOs at the pilot public safety answering point site and will assist in the transition from basic call taking to Enhanced 9-1-1 call taking.

Throughout the week, the Navajo Police Department districts celebrated and recognized their district dispatchers. On Thursday, the Shiprock and Crownpoint districts honored their PSTOs by distributing recognition awards to dispatchers for their dedication, service, and sacrifice to the Navajo Nation.

"I want to personally thank each of the 37 PSTOs who continue in their daily efforts of answering the calls of our public and being the tether of safety for our NDPS personnel in the field. Your contributions are a cornerstone in enhancing our services to the Navajo Nation." Chief Francisco said, "We remain committed to improving services and we will continue to strive to become a reliable, responsive, and trustworthy department."

