

Communications Unit Personnel Position Task Book Sign-Off Process Template

Introduction

As defined by the Incident Command System (ICS), and the National Incident Management System (NIMS), Communications Unit (COMU) personnel plan and manage the technical and operational aspects of the communications function during an incident or event. To obtain COMU, Communications Unit Leader (COML), or Communications Technicians (COMT) status, trainees must complete a Position Task Book (PTB) documenting their ability to perform the functions required of a COMU position.

The National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC) Planning, Training, and Exercise Committee, in conjunction with the SAFECOM Communications Unit (COMU) Working Group, developed this PTB Sign-Off Process Template to assist Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWIC), SWIC designees, state governance bodies, and regional governance bodies in developing a system for COMU personnel PTB sign-off. This template is intended to shepherd SWICs and/or state governing communications bodies through the basic processes and procedures necessary for establishing a COMU PTB sign-off process until such time that a national program is developed. This document is meant to guide, rather than restrict. Not all items may be applicable to your program. The SAFECOM COMU Working Group is currently working on the development of a national program.

PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE (PRC) MAKEUP

The SWIC and/or the state governing communications body should establish a Peer Review Committee (PRC). The PRC is responsible for reviewing and recommending individuals for sign-off. It is recommended the PRC include five to seven members, with three to four members present, either in person or by conference call, at the time of review and approval of an applicant. PRC members should be chosen by the SWIC or the state governing communications body. A PRC point of contact (POC) should be chosen by the SWIC, or the PRC, to coordinate application submissions, meetings, and communication with the SWIC and applicants. PRC members may include representatives from state, local, or tribal agencies, or be chosen by geographic regions. The committee should report to the SWIC. Once the PRC has completed its review and approval of an application, the SWIC, or the state governing communications body completes the sign-off.

Peer Review Committee member qualifications *may* include:

- State Accredited COML or COMT
- State Accredited COMU Instructor
- SWIC, Deputy/Alternate SWIC or SWIC designee(s)
- Active participant of a COMU in state/region
- OEC Coordinator (in an advisory role)
- State/Regional governance bodies chair

Peer Review Committee POC qualifications *may* include:

- Most experienced committee member
- Appointed by SWIC
- Voted by committee
- Based on agency/department housing the committee
- State Credentialed Instructor

Peer Review Committee member terms:

- Member terms *may* be 2-3 years in length with new members coming onboard every 2 years, creating staggered terms to ensure consistency within the committee as new members are introduced.

Peer Review Committee Voting

- COMU applicants must receive a majority vote to be recommended for sign-off by the SWIC. Once the committee has recommended an applicant for sign-off the PRC POC sends the applicant's PTB to the SWIC for the final sign-off.

STATE PTB SIGN-OFF PROCESS

The template PTB sign-off process described below was developed based on committee members' current state processes and best practices. As previously noted, this template is intended to serve as a starting point and baseline for implementing a PTB sign-off process and can be leveraged as is, or revised as needed, to serve a state's needs.

- COMU Personnel PTB application process
 - o Applicant submits COMU application and completed (legible) PTB to PRC POC
 - o Applicant also submits any state specific requirements.
 - o Information submitted to POC could include:
 - Completed Incident Command System (ICS) forms
 - Contact information of those who signed off on tasks/events
 - o Suggest creating a check sheet of all required documentation
 - o Original PTB to remain with applicant
- PRC POC Review Process
 - o PRC POC reviews submitted application and PTB. POC will notify the applicant if the PTB will be submitted for full PRC review, or return application and PTB to the applicant if additional information is needed.
- PRC application review process
 - o PRC will review the submitted application and PTB for complete information, including a skills overview. For this template, a skills overview is an evaluation of the incidents and/or events a COMU applicant has completed and included in their PTB to demonstrate their experience and skills relevant to a COMU position.

- Recommended skills overview requirements:
 - Communications Exercise participation in a known exercise: recommend completion of at least one
 - Planned events: recommend completion of at least two
 - Unplanned incident(s): recommend completion of one to two
- Number of events *may* be altered based on the complexity of the events or incidents.
- PRC recommendation for sign-off
 - If the PRC approves an applicant’s application and PTB, the materials are submitted to the SWIC, or someone with similar authority and accountability, for final sign-off.
 - Once the applicant’s application and PTB are approved, the state should issue a State Identification Card, if they have the ability. The Identification Card should include: identifying information; certification level; personal information, such as blood type, etc.; issuing agency; residing agency; and agency where the current NOK information resides.
 - If the PRC does not approve the applicant’s application and PTB, then all materials are returned to the applicant. The applicant may have 3-5 years to resubmit an updated application, PTB, and any additional supporting information.

Additional Considerations:

- COMU Personnel PTB Sign-Off Policies
 - It is recommended a state review its COMU Personnel PTB certification process every two to three years.
 - It is recommended COMUs be re-certified every 3 or 5 years by submitting another task book each time the individual recertifies.
 - Some states and territories have chosen to develop a continuing education program with requirements in several categories to be completed before re-certification.

About NCSWIC and SAFECOM

The NCSWIC Planning, Training, and Exercise Committee developed this document with the support of the SAFECOM Communications Unit Working Group. The NCSWIC is comprised of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWIC) and their staff from 56 states and territories; SWICs promote the critical importance of interoperable communications. SAFECOM’s membership includes more than 60 members representing federal, state, local, and tribal emergency responders, elected and appointed officials, and major intergovernmental and national public safety associations, who provide input on the challenges, needs, and best practices of emergency communications. This document reflects the expertise of NCSWIC and SAFECOM members sharing innovative methods, best practices, and lessons learned in public safety communications. The NCSWIC Planning, Training, and Exercise Committee will continue to seek best practices for emergency communications planning, training, and exercises; and share updates as they become available.