

Communications Operator interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Communications Operator roles focus on your ability to stay calm, follow process and communicate clearly under pressure. Employers want to know you can handle the technical systems and the human side of emergency calls.

- **Process and technical:** Questions about how you use CAD, P25 radio and GIS, and how you walk through a call from start to finish.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Hypothetical incidents where you must prioritise, dispatch and adapt as new information arrives.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of handling stress, multitasking or conflict in a communications centre.
- **Safety and compliance:** How you follow procedures, protect privacy and meet regulatory standards.
- **Client-facing and communication:** How you manage distressed callers, difficult conversations and radio etiquette.

The process usually starts with a phone screen or online assessment, then a panel interview with a supervisor and a peer. You may complete a practical exercise using a simulated CAD or radio console, followed by a psychological or resilience assessment. Some agencies run a medical and background check before an offer.

1. Walk me through how you handle a call from a distressed member of the public reporting a house fire.

Why they ask

This tests your process knowledge and ability to stay calm while gathering critical details.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walk-through: greeting, reassurance, key questions, CAD entry, dispatch, radio relay, and follow-up.

Example answer

"In my last role, I took a call from a woman whose kitchen was on fire. I stayed calm, asked her to confirm the address and whether anyone was inside, and typed the details into CAD as she spoke. I dispatched two fire crews and an ambulance, then stayed on the line until she was safe outside. I updated the incident log with her answers and relayed the situation to the crew en route via radio."

2. Tell me about a time you had to manage multiple incidents at once. How did you prioritise?

Why they ask

This probes your multitasking and triage skills in a high-pressure environment.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: situation, task, action, result. Focus on your decision-making and the outcome.

Example answer

"At my current centre, I once had three incidents at once: a car accident, a medical emergency, and a reported gas leak. I used CAD to triage by severity, dispatched the ambulance to the medical first, then police to the accident, then fire to the gas leak. I kept radio contact with each crew and updated records as new information came in. I got through all three without any delay to the highest-priority call."

3. You receive a call from someone who is panicking and not giving clear information. What do you do?

Why they ask

This checks your client-facing communication and judgement under pressure.

How to structure your answer

Use a judgement-under-pressure structure: calm the caller, simplify questions, extract location, dispatch, and stay on the line.

Example answer

"If someone is panicking, I lower my voice, use short sentences, and ask one question at a time. I might say, 'I need you to take a breath and tell me the street name.' If they still can't answer, I ask yes or no questions. I keep typing what they say into CAD, even if it's fragmented, and dispatch based on the location if I can get it. I don't hang up until help is on the way."

4. Describe your experience using computer-aided dispatch systems and P25 radio consoles.

Why they ask

This is a technical question to confirm you can use the core tools of the role.

How to structure your answer

Use a skills walk-through: name the systems, describe daily tasks, and give a specific example of a complex dispatch.

Example answer

"I've used CAD daily for three years, entering incident details and dispatching resources. I'm comfortable with P25 radio consoles, switching channels and relaying messages to field crews. I've also used GIS to identify the closest crew and emergency alert systems to notify residents in a bushfire zone. I pick up new software quickly because I focus on the workflow, not just the buttons."

5. What would you do if you received a radio call from a crew requesting backup but you were already coordinating a higher-priority incident?

Why they ask

This scenario tests your ability to prioritise, escalate and follow protocol.

How to structure your answer

Use a scenario response: acknowledge, log, assess, escalate if needed, and hand over if possible.

Example answer

"If a crew requests backup during a higher-priority incident, I would acknowledge the request and tell them I'm coordinating another incident. I would log the request in CAD, assess whether another supervisor or dispatcher can assist, and if the crew is in immediate danger, I would escalate to my supervisor and dispatch the nearest available resource. I would not leave the higher-priority incident unattended without handing it over."

6. How do you ensure you comply with regulatory and operational procedures when under pressure?

Why they ask

This checks your safety mindset and attention to detail.

How to structure your answer

Use a reflective structure: describe your habits, give an example, and explain the result.

Example answer

"I follow the procedures because they keep everyone safe. When pressure is high, I use a checklist in CAD and speak aloud the steps as I do them. I also flag any deviation to my supervisor immediately."

In one case, a call came in during a mass outage, and I stuck to the script for taking details, then passed the record to the next operator when my shift ended. The audit found no errors."