

FITNESS FOR DUTY



AN EMOTIONAL, MENTAL AND PHYSICAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

1/26



FITNESS FOR DUTY

An employee's essential job functions are the fundamental duties of the position or the primary reasons the position exists.

Fitness for Duty refers to an employee's physical, mental, and emotional ability to perform their job's essential functions safely and effectively, without posing risks to themselves or others. [Google.com](https://www.google.com)

An employee is fit for duty when they are able to perform their essential job functions, with or without a reasonable accommodation, in a manner that does not pose a direct threat.



FITNESS FOR DUTY

The mental health, emotional well-being, cognitive functioning and physical fitness of the telecommunicator is crucial for peak performance. The telecommunicator must conduct honest and frequent self assessments to ensure effective job performance and agency compliance. The question to ask yourself before every shift and after every stressful call/incident or life altering event is "AM I FIT FOR DUTY?"

- Am I alert enough ✓
- Am I feeling overwhelmed ✓
- Did I get enough rest ✓
- Am I levelheaded enough/clear thinking enough ✓ , etc.





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The telecommunicator is often required to work long hours sitting down with limited breaks. Prolonged sitting can cause poor circulation, back pain, and muscle atrophy. Shift work interrupts established routines and sleep patterns, and is linked to increased health risks including cardiovascular diseases, obesity, and gastrointestinal issues.

Exercise helps process stress hormones (cortisol and adrenaline), which build up during intense, long shifts, and helps to reduce the risk of burnout and possible mental health issues. Healthy telecommunicators tend to have more energy, better focus, and improved overall job performance.

Physical Fitness



FITNESS FOR DUTY

Practical suggestions to help maintain physical fitness for duty.

- Maintain good sleep hygiene and a balanced diet.
- Get up for 2-3 minutes every hour to walk around or stretch.
- Change positions (sit and stand) frequently throughout the shift to engage different muscles and joints.
- Take advantage of any wellness program or gym membership offered by your agency.
- Park further from the building and use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Choose healthy snacks (fruits, nuts, veggies etc.)





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Exercise Routine for Office Lifestyle

Working Surface at Elbow Height

Entire Back should be supported

Knees level to or slightly Lower than your hips

Hips as far back as possible

feet should be touching ground or on foot rest

— Correct sitting posture —

.Take a break.
.Walk around.

— Stand up every 30 minutes —

Leaning forward shoulder stretch

Leaning Hamstring Stretch

Chest Up Elbows Out. Bend side ways

Side Stretch

— Stretch while sitting every 1hour —



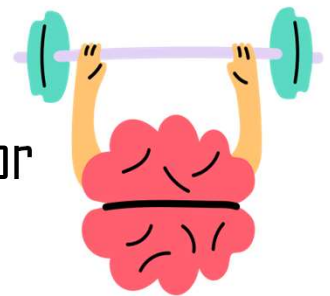


FITNESS FOR DUTY

Vicarious trauma exposure coupled with feelings of helplessness, compassion fatigue and a lack of closure, expose the telecommunicator to severe mental health risks such as anxiety, depression and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder).

Mental health struggles can manifest as errors, poor focus, absenteeism, substance abuse or mood swings, which could significantly affect job performance.

Significant changes in appearance, attitude, work ethic or disruptive behavior could be warning signs of burnout, mental health issue or impairment.



Mental Fitness

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Practical suggestions to help maintain mental fitness for duty:

- Exercise can reduce both physical and mental stress
- Talk it out – chat with a trusted co-worker (they have been there and can share from experience)
- Focus on what you can control
- Never compare or associate a caller's tragedy with your own
- Practice limited empathy – maintain a level of detachment
- Take advantage of peer support, EAP and other available resources



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FITNESS FOR DUTY

10 Mental Health Tips





FITNESS FOR DUTY

The constant exposure to distressing situations can take an emotional toll on telecommunicators, affecting them in ways that may not always be immediately visible. The weight of a traumatic incident can linger long after the calls have ended which makes it hard to shake off emotional exhaustion.

While helping others to navigate their emotions, the job demands constant suppression of fear, anger, and sadness, contributing to psychological strain. Some telecommunicators often struggle with regulating their own emotions, leading to feelings of numbness and difficulty managing the constant and intense pressure to perform flawlessly.

Emotional Fitness

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The constant threat of dire consequences (termination, lawsuit, loss of life, etc.) for mistakes made by the telecommunicator contribute to the emotional exhaustion felt daily. Environmental factors also affects the emotional wellbeing of the telecommunicator. Factors such as, but not limited to:

- Noise
- Clutter/Dirt/Dust/Out-dated equipment
- Unpleasant peers and poor leadership
- Temperature extremes (too hot or too cold)
- Confined spaces with bad lighting
- Speed and volume of call





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Your emotional awareness checklist

- What words best describe how I'm feeling?
- What thoughts am I having about or in response to this emotion?
- What physical sensations am I feeling in response to this emotion?
- How intense is this emotion and how long does it last for?
- What actions do I tend to take when I experience this emotion? How drastic are these actions?





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Signs of Emotional Exhaustion:

- Anxiety – constant worry/nervous
- Hypersensitivity
- Powerlessness/defeated
- Overwhelmed
- Anger/irritability
- Guilt
- Depleted
- Detachment
- Depression
- Sadness
- Shutdown
- Extreme fatigue
- Difficulty making decisions





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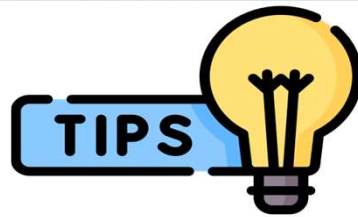
Behaviors of a telecommunicator that is unfit for duty:

- High absenteeism
- Constant change in co-worker relationships
- Lack of teamwork
- Aggressive behavior towards co-workers
- Negativism towards management
- Strong reluctance toward change
- Lack of vision for the future

**Early detection
is key**



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Process Your Emotions Appropriately – Keeping emotions bottled up usually leads to an emotional explosion later and causes physical harm.

Maintain Proper Nutrition – A poor diet can make one more vulnerable to stress.

Get Enough Sleep – Sleep is important for emotional and physical wellbeing. Lack of sleep can negatively impact one's ability to handle stress and fight off diseases



FITNESS FOR DUTY

Telecommunicators work in a high-risk, safety-sensitive environment and are constantly exposed to trauma, stress and tragedies. The nature of the job often lead to high rates of PTSD, burnout, depression, and anxiety which could impact essential job functions.

The aforementioned are exacerbated by understaffing due in part to high staff turnover, lack of support, and the immense pressure to make split-second critical decisions while still maintaining performance expectations. It is with this in mind that the telecommunicator must be emotionally, mentally and physically fit for every tour of duty.





FITNESS FOR DUTY



THE ICEBERG EFFECT

Only 20% of psychological trauma is seen on the surface, the rest is carefully hidden. Assess daily and reach out for help as often as needed. You can choose to show up as a liability or an asset.

DON'T JUST SHOW UP, SHOW UP FIT FOR DUTY!!

WHAT IT'S LIKE
TO BE HONEST
WITH YOURSELF



THANK YOU



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