Ask any citizen what they think is one of the most stressful tasks in a 9-1-1 communications center, and they will most likely tell you dealing with irate or frantic callers, walking someone through CPR, or working the radio during a high-speed pursuit or a multiple-alarm fire. Ask the same question to anyone who works inside of a 9-1-1 communications center, and a majority of them will quickly come up with the same answer: employee scheduling.

## The Employee Scheduling Nightmare

While the "who does scheduling" varies from PSAP to PSAP, from supervisors, lead telecommunicators, managers and administrative schedulers, they all face similar scheduling challenges; trying to maintain both their sanity and minimum staffing coverage for their centers. But even though scheduling can be a daunting task, it can be made easier, more efficient and more accurate with smart and intelligent scheduling software.

The Houston Emergency Center (HEC) is an example of an emergency communications center that has benefitted from adopting a new scheduling system. HEC schedules between 200 and 230 telecommunicators and supervisors every day. Administration specialist Norma Lona is responsible for the scheduling of all three shifts (5:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for day shift, 1:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. for evening shift and 9:30 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. for night shift). Lona manages everyone's schedule changes, vacation, training, trades, overtime and special assignments.

HEC previously used a scheduling system that was built in-house and based on Microsoft Excel. This worked for the time they used it, but they had to incorporate several different applications to allow them to do everything they needed, such as tracking attendance, training, shift trades and a variety of other tasks.



### Houston Emergency Center

Prior to September 2003, Houston had three emergency communications centers for 9-1-1: Neutral Public Safety Answering Point, Police Department Emergency Communications Division, and Fire Department Emergency Communications Operations. The development of the state-of-the-art Houston Emergency Center (HEC) consolidates all of these efforts.

Along with HEC providing 24/7 round-the-clock emergency 9-1-1 services, the facility is a $50 million investment towards a secured, state-of-the-art emergency communications technology. Antiquated facilities have been replaced with an innovative and redundant complex that consolidates emergency communications.

The Houston Emergency Center is one of the most impressive and technologically advanced emergency communications centers in the country.

# Enter Schedule Express

The Houston Emergency Communications 9-1-1 Center eventually purchased Schedule Express, which offered one-stop shopping for their busy call center; they no longer need multiple applications to perform various scheduling functions. It also allows them to run numerous reports concerning attendance, time off requests, FMLA and hours of overtime accumulated.

"It is a very important tool for me to be able to control and arrange the workloads," said Lona. "It makes call takers more accountable for their time and schedule changes, because they are able to have access to make necessary changes to their very versatile work schedule."

Lona said the system is extremely user friendly for all ranks regardless of whether they access it from work, home or their smartphones. "Supervisors and managers use it to post overtime and approve absence requests, and call takers can easily sign up for the overtime and request time off right from their phone!"

Since most scheduling systems are web-based, they are accessible from any computer that has internet access. They are typically highly secure with 256-bit SSL data encryption, and employees can be granted access to different features based on their unique login. Since these systems are 100 percent cloud-based technology, there is no hardware or software to maintain.

## We Are Public Safety Scheduling Experts

Still using spreadsheets? Spending too much time tracking employee overtime, time-off requests, shift-trades, training, shift bids and the like?

Schedule Express automates workforce scheduling to get **the right people to the right place at the right time** in the most efficient, cost-effective manner possible.

Schedule Express is an intelligent workforce management solution that reduces the risks, costs and complexities of scheduling public safety professionals and resources. An award-winning cloud-based solution that is trusted by leading public safety agencies, Schedule Express has been deployed throughout the U.S. for Police, Fire, 9-1-1, Corrections, EMS, Records, Investigations and more.