

13-C-5001

2018

First Reading

Committee _____
Date _____
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FINAL COUNCIL ACTION
 2nd 1st & 2nd 3rd
Readings
 Consent V Vote RC Vote

A COMMUNICATION FROM FRED WILLIAMS, CHAIR, AUDIT COMMITTEE:

SUBMITTING THE PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT REGARDING E911 COMMUNICATIONS CENTER.

FILED
MAY 20 2013
By Council

- CONSENT REFER
- REGULAR REPORT REFER
- ADVERTISE & REFER
- 1ST ADOPT 2ND READ & REFER
- PERSONAL PAPER REFER

Date Referred: 5/6/13
Referred To: Public Safety
Date Referred:
Referred To:
Date Referred:
Referred To:

Committee	PSA	Committee	
Date	5/14/13	Date	
Chair	[Signature]	Chair	
Action	File	Action	
Fav, Adv, Hold (see rev. side)		Fav, Adv, Hold (see rev. side)	
Other		Other	
Members	[Signature]	Members	
Refer To		Refer To	

Committee	COA	Committee	
Date	5/20/13	Date	
Chair	[Signature]	Chair	
Action	File	Action	
Fav, Adv, Hold (see rev. side)		Fav, Adv, Hold (see rev. side)	
Other		Other	
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CERTIFIED
MAY 20 2013
ATLANTA CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT
[Signature]

CERTIFIED
MAY 30 2013
Rhonda Daughin Johnson
MUNICIPAL CLERK

MAYOR'S ACTION

RCS# 2709
5/20/13
3:42 PM

Atlanta City Council

13-C-5001

AUDIT COMMITTEE SUBMITTING PERFORMANCE
AUDIT: E911 COMMUNICATIONS CENTER
FILE

YEAS: 13
NAYS: 0
ABSTENTIONS: 0
NOT VOTING: 2
EXCUSED: 0
ABSENT 1

Y Smith	Y Archibong	Y Moore	Y Bond
NV Hall	B Wan	Y Martin	Y Watson
Y Young	Y Shook	Y Bottoms	Y Willis
Y Winslow	Y Adrean	Y Sheperd	NV Mitchell

13-C-5001



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CITY OF ATLANTA

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Donald T. Penovi, CPA, Vice Chair
Marion Cameron, CPA
C.O. Hollis, Jr., CPA, CIA
Ex-Officio: Mayor Kasim Reed

AMANDA NOBLE
Deputy City Auditor
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TO: Mayor Reed, President Mitchell, and City Council members

FROM: Fred Williams *Fred Williams*
Chair, Audit Committee

DATE: May 1, 2013

SUBJECT: Performance Audit: E911 Communications Center

The report listed above is attached for your review. It will appear on the Council agenda for May 6, 2013 and referred to committee for the week of May 13, 2013. Feel free to contact Leslie Ward, City Auditor, if you have questions or want to discuss the report.

Cc:

- Duriya Farooqui, Chief Operating Officer, Mayor's Office
- Hans Utz, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Mayor's Office
- Candace Byrd, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
- Katrina Taylor, Deputy Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
- Sonji Jacobs, Director of Communications, Mayor's Office
- David Bennett, Senior Policy Advisor, Mayor's Office
- Cathy Hampton, City Attorney
- Peter Andrews, Deputy City Attorney
- J. Anthony Beard, Chief Financial Officer
- Gwendolyn Smith, Deputy Chief Financial Officer
- John Gaffney, Controller
- George Turner, Chief of Police, Atlanta Police Department
- Erika Shields, Deputy Chief, Atlanta Police Department
- Nina Hickson, Ethics Officer
- Rhonda Dauphin Johnson, Municipal Clerk
- Tangela Williams, Director, Council Staff
- Dexter Chambers, Director, City Council Office of Communications
- Bernard Thomas, Public Safety Committee Analyst
- Reggie Grant, Finance Executive Committee Analyst
- Audit Committee

**Performance Audit:
E911 Communications Center**

April 2013

**City Auditor's Office
City of Atlanta**

File #12.01



CITY OF ATLANTA

City Auditor's Office
Leslie Ward, City Auditor
404.330.6452

April 2013

Why We Did This Audit

We undertook this audit because our 2011 audit of Fire Department response times found that high E911 call transfer times contributed to the fire department's inability to meet response time standards. The fire department fell short of meeting the national standard of processing 90% of calls within 60 seconds.

E911 staff also expressed concern that the center did not have enough staff to handle its workload. The center spent \$1 million in overtime during fiscal year 2012.

What We Recommended

The Chief of Police should direct the E911 Communications Center to:

- Purchase scheduling software that will allow the center to develop shift schedules that optimize staff resources.
- Develop and implement shift schedules for communications staff that align staff with call workload. The center director should create staggered breaks.
- Require communications staff to properly record their status in the Positron system, eliminating any uncoded time.
- Continue to reinforce the existing call dispatching procedures and monitor dispatch times to ensure that call takers continue to transfer information to dispatchers as quickly as possible. Examine individual staff performance times and use the results to target training.

For more information regarding this report, please contact Stephanie Jackson at 404.330.6678 or sjackson@atlantaga.gov

Performance Audit:

Atlanta E911 Communications Center

What We Found

Shifting staff from the morning to the afternoon/early evening hours could improve performance throughout the day and reduce overtime. During fiscal year 2012 the center met its goal of answering at least 90% of emergency calls within 10 seconds. Although the center has not reached its goal of processing 90% of fire calls within 60 seconds, the center has improved its call processing time by implementing process changes.

The center met its answer goal for fiscal year 2012, but performance was uneven throughout the day. The center fell short of its goal 7 hours each day. The number of 911 calls was highest during the hour of 3:00 pm.

The center has more staff than needed during early morning hours to meet its answer time goal. Time spent on calls was twice as high during afternoon and evening hours compared to early morning. Call takers spent close to 50% of their time on emergency calls in the late afternoon and early evening and spent about 25% of their time on emergency calls during the early morning hours.

We calculated the number of call takers needed on duty by hour of day to handle existing workload while equalizing time waiting to take the next call at 33% of call takers' time. Our model added staff between noon and 9:00 pm and reduced staff between 11:00 pm and 8:00 am, while reducing total hours worked per week by about 305 hours. The reduction of hours by optimizing scheduling as well as some reduction of workload as a result of the implementation of the city's 311 call center should reduce the center's overtime usage.

While the center dispatched less than two percent of priority 1 emergency calls within 60 seconds in fiscal year 2012, process changes initiated by the Atlanta Police Department have begun to improve dispatch times, without the need for additional staff. Although fire dispatch times improved, the center was still far from reaching the NFPA standard of dispatching 90% of fire calls within 60 seconds. Industry literature suggests that the 60 second benchmark may not be reasonable.

Management Responses to Audit Recommendations

Summary of Management Responses		
Recommendation #1:	The Chief of Police should direct the E911 Communications Center to purchase scheduling software that will allow the center to develop shift schedules that optimize staff resources.	
Response & Proposed Action:	The department will conduct an assessment of scheduling software options and select and implement the appropriate solution.	Agree
Timeframe:	The estimated time frame for implementation is 6 months to 1 year.	
Recommendation #2:	The Chief of Police should direct the E911 Communications Center to develop and implement shift schedules for communications staff that align staff with call workload. The center director should create staggered breaks.	
Response & Proposed Action:	The E911 Center will develop a plan to develop and implement a new shift schedule to improve the overall alignment with workload. In addition to the scheduling software referenced in Recommendation 1 above, this plan will include consideration of the current cross training program and other elements that are necessary to effectively support a more flexible schedule.	Agree
Timeframe:	The estimated time frame for implementation is 6 months to 1 year.	
Recommendation #3:	The Chief of Police should direct the E911 Communications Center to require communications staff to properly record their status in the Positron system, eliminating any un-coded time.	
Response & Proposed Action:	The E911 Center will immediately introduce appropriate coding and procedure updates to ensure full accounting of time.	Agree
Timeframe:	Within 6 months.	
Recommendation #4:	The Chief of Police should direct the E911 Communications Center to continue to reinforce the existing call dispatching procedures and monitor dispatch times to ensure that call takers continue to transfer information to dispatchers as quickly as possible. Examine individual staff performance times and use the results to target training.	
Response & Proposed Action:	The Chief of Police will direct the E911 Center to maintain the current improvement plan which focuses on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous improvement and streamlining of processes to speed up service to citizens • Strong emphasis on raising the level of individual performance through training, building capacity and performance management This program will continue to monitor and analyze performance data to ensure the department is driving towards the national best practice.	Agree
Timeframe:	This initiative is underway and will continue to be a key focus for the department.	



CITY OF ATLANTA

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Donald T. Penovi, CPA, Vice Chair
Marion Cameron, CPA
C.O. Hollis, Jr., CPA, CIA
Ex-Officio: Mayor Kasim Reed

April 30, 2013

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

We undertook this audit of the Atlanta E911 Communications Center because our 2011 audit of Fire Department response times found that high E911 call transfer times contributed to the fire department's inability to meet emergency response time goals adopted by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Call processing time, defined as time elapsed from receipt of a call to dispatch of a fire apparatus, fell far short of meeting the national standard of processing 90% of calls within 60 seconds.

In this audit, we analyzed E911 call processing time and its components during fiscal year 2012. We found that while the center's processing time improved, it continued to exceed the NFPA benchmark. Since we completed our analysis, the center has continued to make process changes aimed at speeding call processing; we have analyzed fiscal year 2013 data and include it in Appendix C of this report.

We also found that the E911 center exceeded its goal of answering 90% of incoming emergency calls within 10 seconds. Call takers answered 91% of incoming calls in 10 seconds or less during 2012. Performance was uneven, however, throughout the day; call answer time was more than 10 seconds during 7 of 24 hours. Staffing did not increase enough during periods of higher workload, while staffing remained higher than necessary when workload was at its lowest.

Because E911 staffing did not match variation in call volume, our recommendations focus on shifting staff schedules to match workload while continuing the current processes that have improved overall processing time. In addition to improving performance during the busiest periods, we estimate that better scheduling would reduce total work hours by 305 hours per week. Because the center routinely relies on overtime to meet scheduled staffing, adopting our recommendations should reduce overtime and therefore narrow the gap between expenditures and dedicated E911 fee revenue now covered by the city's general fund.

The Atlanta Police Department agrees with all recommendations and commits to implementing them within 6 months to a year. The response and additional comments are

included in Appendices A and B respectively. The Audit Committee has reviewed this report and is releasing it in accordance with Article 2, Chapter 6 of the City Charter. We appreciate the courtesy and cooperation of city staff throughout the audit. The team for this project was Christopher Armstead, Rhonda Sadler, Sterling Thomas, and Stephanie Jackson.



Leslie Ward
City Auditor



Fred Williams
Audit Committee Chair

E911 Communications Center

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Introduction

We conducted this performance audit of the E911 Communications Center pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Atlanta City Charter, which establishes the City of Atlanta Audit Committee and the City Auditor's Office and outlines their primary duties. The Audit Committee reviewed our audit scope in October 2012.

A performance audit is an objective analysis of sufficient, appropriate evidence to assess the performance of an organization, program, activity, or function. Performance audits provide assurance or conclusions to help management and those charged with governance improve program performance and operations, reduce costs, facilitate decision-making and contribute to public accountability. Performance audits encompass a wide variety of objectives, including those related to assessing program effectiveness and results; economy and efficiency; internal controls; compliance with legal or other requirements; and objectives related to providing prospective analyses, guidance, or summary information.¹

We undertook this audit because our October 2011 performance audit of the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department identified long call processing times as a significant factor in the department's response times to emergency medical and fire incidents. In 2010, the median time for the E911 Communications Center to process an emergency call for a fire response was 3 minutes and 20 seconds, compared to the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) benchmark of 60 seconds for 90% of calls. We concluded that auditing E911 to assess why call transfer times were high could help speed emergency responses.

Background

The Atlanta Police Department operates the PSAP (public safety answering point) that serves the city of Atlanta. Calls to 911 from an Atlanta address or a cell phone tower located in Atlanta are routed to the department's E911 communications center. The E911 center is part of the police department's Support Services Division.

¹Comptroller General of the United States, *Government Auditing Standards*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2011, p.17-18.

The E911 center operates 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Its duties include:

- answering emergency and non-emergency calls for service
- receiving, classifying, and prioritizing calls from citizens
- dispatching police and fire units to incidents that require a response
- transferring and/or directing calls that do not require a police or fire response to the proper agency
- checking on wanted/missing persons and reported stolen items
- completing Georgia Crime Information Center/National Crime Information Center forms on missing persons and stolen autos

In fiscal year 2012, the center answered over one million 911 calls and dispatched public safety personnel to 223,080 police incidents and 49,721 fire incidents (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1 Count of Police and Fire Incidents by Priority

Priority	Count	Percent	Response
Fire			
1	46,880	94.3%	"All Units" Emergency Response
2	13	0.0%	"First Unit" Emergency Response
3	2,796	5.6%	Non-emergency
Undefined	32	0.1%	
Total	49,721	100%	
Police			
0	209	0.1%	Immediate
2	38,748	17.4%	Expedited
3	126,421	56.7%	Routine
4	57,450	25.8%	Non-emergency
5	81	0.0%	Teleserve Calls
6	19	0.0%	Court/Referral
Undefined	152	0.1%	
Total	223,080	100%	

Source: Atlanta Police Department's Computer-Aided Dispatch Data for fiscal year 2012

The majority of police responses were routine (56.7%) or non-emergency (25.8%); 17.5% required an immediate or expedited response. About 94% of fire incidents were priority 1, indicating a threat to life or property that required an immediate response.

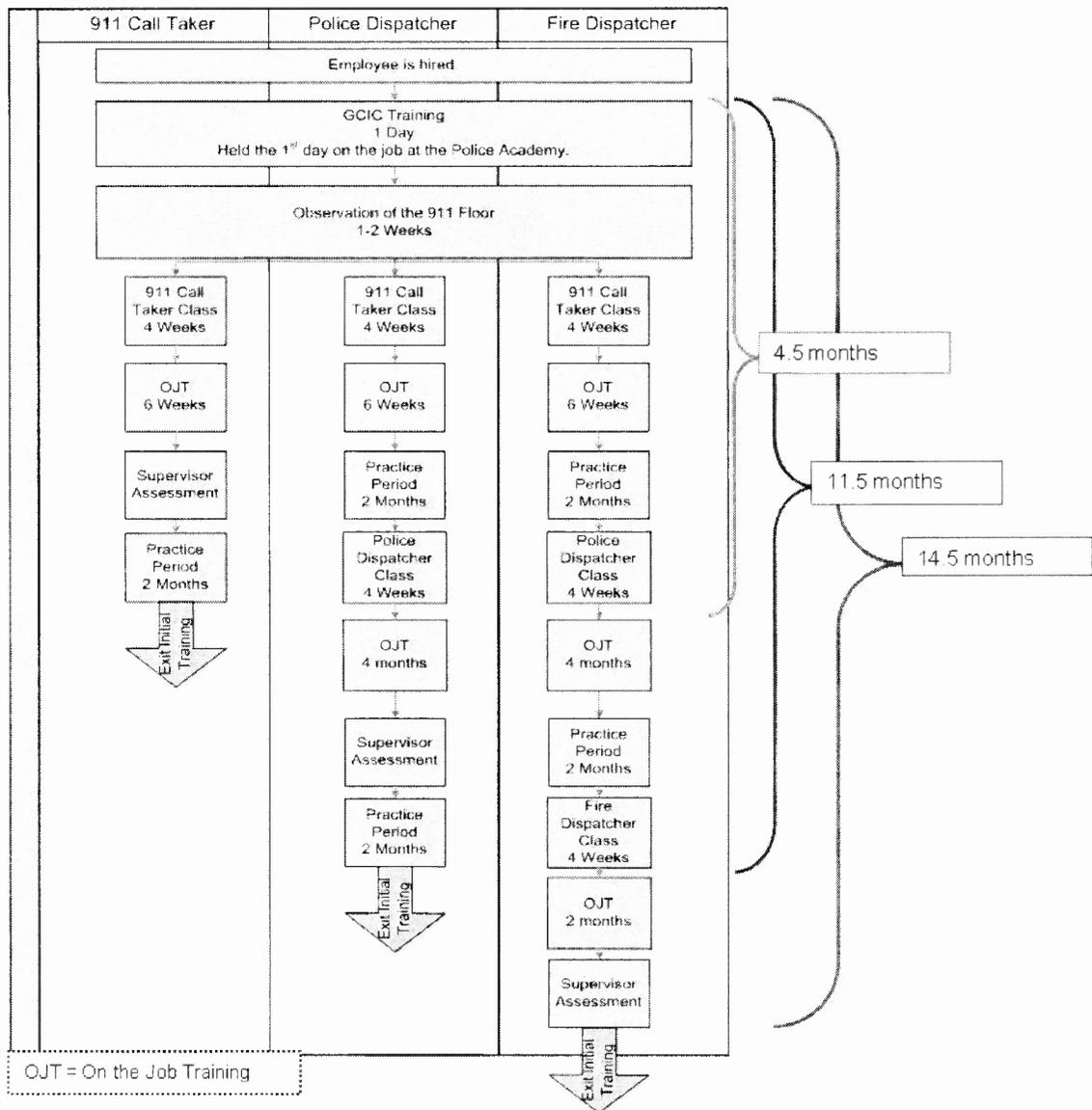
About 0.1% of police and fire calls are coded with a priority that is not defined by the department. The center's current systems do not track the number of calls transferred to other agencies such as Grady Emergency Medical Services, or other public safety answering points, such as centers operated by Fulton and DeKalb counties.

Staffing and Training

The center was authorized 166 positions in the fiscal year 2013 budget and had 151 positions filled as of October 2012. Most of the positions are communications officers, including 911 call takers, dispatchers, supervisors, and the 911 communications manager and 911 communications director. State law defines communications officers as persons employed by a local government agency to receive, process, or transmit public safety information and dispatch law enforcement officers, firefighters, medical personnel, or emergency management personnel. E911 center support staff includes four training coordinators, one IT/telecommunications analyst, four IT/telecommunications managers, three quality services specialists, and two administrative positions.

All communications officers are trained as call takers. Call takers answer emergency calls, gather and record information from the caller to confirm the location and determine the nature of the emergency and type of response needed, and direct the information to a dispatcher through the CAD (computer-aided dispatch) system. Call takers receive four weeks of classroom training and at least six weeks of on-the-job training (see Exhibit 2). All communications officers receive 40 hours of P.O.S.T. (Peace Officer Standards and Training) basic communications training to become state-certified, and are trained to use the GCIC (Georgia Crime Information Center) system that maintains state criminal history records.

Exhibit 2 Training for E911 Center Communications Officers



Source: E911 Training Coordinator

Call takers can be further trained to work as police or fire dispatchers. Dispatchers are responsible for dispatching emergency units as appropriate, monitoring the status of units in the field to ensure safety, taking and relaying messages, and coordinating support services and communication with other agencies. Dispatcher training includes four weeks of classroom training for each position and at a minimum, an additional sixteen weeks on-the-job training for police dispatchers and at least another eight weeks of on-the-job training for fire dispatchers. Full cross training