



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**  
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**Agenda Item Number:** 7

**Agenda Date:** December 16, 2024

**In Control:** Audit Committee

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**DEPARTMENT:** Office of the City Auditor

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Baltazar Vargas

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** Citywide

**SUBJECT:**

Acceptance of the Office of the City Auditor Report AU23-033 Audit of Public Safety 9-1-1 Operations

**SUMMARY:**

Determine if 9-1-1 operations are effective, efficient, and comply with national standards.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Background

Bexar Metro 9-1-1 Network works with AT&T to provide 9-1-1 services to Bexar, Guadalupe, and Comal Counties. Bexar Metro is financed through fees on cell phones and landlines. The fee per line is \$0.50 for private customers and \$1.00 for commercial customers. The funding is used to provide equipment, software, and the technology to route and connect calls to the appropriate public safety answering point (PSAP).

The City's 9-1-1 call center (a.k.a. PSAP) is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to assist the public by taking calls and dispatching appropriate emergency services. The call center is staffed with civilians on the Police side and uniformed "engineers" on the Fire Department side who operate independently but are co-located at the same call center facility. When a citizen calls 9-1-1, the first person that they communicate with is a San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) call taker, who will either take the call or route the call to the San Antonio Fire Department (SAFD) if fire or medical services are needed. The call taker receives all relevant information and inputs it into the computer aided dispatch (CAD) system. From there, a dispatcher will assign appropriate resources to the incident and provide additional support during the call.

If a call is transferred to SAFD, the nature of the incident is determined. SAFD has implemented several programs to improve the quality of services provided and reduce the burden on field-units. The Clinical Dispatching program allows paramedics to provide more in-depth care and resources for individuals seeking medical services who may not require emergency services. Based upon the nature of the incident, various resources can be provided and/or medical or fire services will be dispatched.

In addition to 9-1-1 voice calls, both SAPD and SAFD, handle other communications including Text-to-9-1-1, TTY services (to aid in communication with those who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired), and non-emergency calls.

### Scope & Methodology

The audit scope included 9-1-1 call center operations and controls over CAD. We reviewed the period from FY 2022 through March 2024. We assessed internal controls relevant to the audit objective. This included a review of system data and reports, standard operating procedures, security policies, department utilized reports and analysis, and COSA administrative directives. In addition, as part of our testing procedures, we examined SAPD and SAFD staffing procedures; SAPD and SAFD response time calculations; training and quality assurance programs; abandoned call procedures; physical and logical security; and CAD application security controls.

### Conclusions

Overall, 9-1-1 operations are effective, efficient, and comply with national standards. Both the SAPD and the SAFD are meeting current National Emergency Number Association (NENA) standards for call answering times. For fiscal year (FY) 2023, SAPD answered 96% of calls within 15 seconds, while SAFD answered 90% of calls within 15 seconds. Additionally, police civilian call takers and uniformed paramedics are appropriately licensed for their role. Training for staff is effective and completed timely. Additionally, we found controls over CAD backups, change management, and system patching to be effective.

While 9-1-1 operations are effectively managed, we did identify areas in which operations could be improved to include SAPD Quality Assurance call reviews, SAFD staffing level methodology, facility transfer procedures, abandoned call controls, badge access, and CAD user access.

We made recommendations to address these issues. Management from SAPD, SAFD, and Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) concurred with the recommendations and developed corrective action plans.

**ISSUE:**

This item is presented for acceptance by the Audit Committee.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

N/A

**ALTERNATIVES:**

N/A

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of this audit report.