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RESPONSE**

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**2022–2023  
Alameda County Grand Jury  
Final Report**

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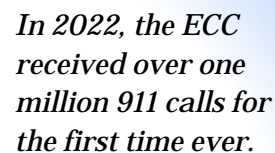
## OAKLAND 911 STILL LACKING A TIMELY RESPONSE

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“In an emergency, we expect our 911 call to be answered quickly and to speak with a person. Unfortunately, that is often not the case in the City of Oakland.”

These sentences are from the 2019–2020 Grand Jury Report titled “Oakland 9-1-1 Communications Center — A Center in Crisis.” The 2022–2023 Grand Jury received a complaint alleging that calls made to the Oakland Police Department 911 Emergency Communications Center (ECC) are still not answered in a timely manner.

The Grand Jury investigation revealed that call volumes to 911 at the ECC continue to increase. In 2022, the ECC received over one million 911 calls for the first time ever. The California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) mandates that 90% of calls that come into a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), like the ECC in Oakland, shall be answered by a live person within 15 seconds, and that 95% should be answered within 20 seconds. Instead, the response rate at the ECC has gotten worse. In 2022, the ECC failed to answer about half of the calls it received within 15 seconds.



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The 2019–2020 Grand Jury report identified staffing shortages that affected the ECC’s ability to answer incoming calls promptly. Since then, some of the hiring challenges identified in the 2019–2020 report have been partially addressed. However, staff shortages, hiring difficulties, attrition, and mandated overtime persist. The “Great Resignation” that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic added to hiring and retention difficulties for the ECC, as well as for other city and county agencies throughout the Bay Area.

Additionally, the ECC has not yet implemented the dispatch and record keeping software that was noted as almost ready in the 2019–2020 report. This software will assist the ECC dispatchers in mapping locations of incidents requiring a response, in real time, so they can direct calls to police officers on duty. The software will also assist police officers in filing mandated reports. Since 2020, the Grand Jury has been told that the roll out date for this critical software and hardware update would be “in another 6 months”. The senior staff interviewed expressed

frustration with the long delays in the software implementation and the need to bring the ECC up to the latest 911 technology. Some of these IT-related staff members have since left the Oakland Police Department, making the personnel shortage much worse.

This Grand Jury concluded that, though some progress has been made to address previously identified hiring issues, the 911 service to residents has fallen further behind. The ECC still needs to be better staffed. The proposed dispatch and record keeping software and hardware still need to be implemented and all associated Oakland Police Department personnel need to be trained. The ECC needs to be upgraded in a way that keeps pace with current technology. It is vital that 911 calls be answered in a timely manner; About 10% of the calls go to the Oakland Fire Department (OFD) for fire and medical emergency dispatching and about 30% lead to a dispatch by the Oakland Police Department (OPD). At current staffing, technology, and funding levels, there is no clear plan to adequately handle the call volume in a timely manner.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Oakland Police Department 911 Emergency Communications Center (ECC) is the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for the City of Oakland, handling most incoming emergency police, fire and medical calls and texts, as well as some non-emergency calls and texts. It is a part of the Oakland Police Department (OPD). The ECC runs 24 hours per day, seven days a week. When someone in Oakland calls 911 with an emergency, the expectation is that their call will be answered by a real person within a few rings and police officers, fire fighters, or emergency medical technicians will arrive on scene within minutes to take care of the issue.

### **Call Answering and Routing**

When a call comes in to 911 via phone or text, the ECC is mandated by the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) to answer that call in a timely manner. The CalOES standards state that 90% of incoming calls shall be answered within 15 seconds, and 95% of incoming calls should be answered within 20 seconds. A variety of callers use 911 whether or not appropriate, and the ECC operator will not know if this is a true emergency until answering the call. The operator must first determine how the call should be handled, then either re-direct the caller or talk with the caller and take down the caller's information.

- About 10% of the incoming calls are regarding a fire or medical emergency. These calls are immediately forwarded to the Oakland Fire Department (OFD) for their dispatcher to handle. They are under similar constraints to respond to calls within a certain time frame, so delays in answering the initial ECC call impact both fire and police response times.

- About 30% of the incoming calls are emergencies that warrant police dispatches. For these, the operator takes down all pertinent information from the caller on a computer intake form; the data transfers automatically to a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system that displays the

locations of incidents in real time on a map. Then a dispatcher at the ECC assigns the incidents to appropriate officers. The data also populates the Records Management System (RMS) for later reporting of crime statistics. This CAD system is available to officers in their patrol cars and at their desks.

- The remaining 60% of incoming calls include:

- Crank calls and chronic non-emergency callers.
- Multiple calls for the same incident. Since each caller might have slightly different information about the incident, the dispatcher must get all information available from each witness, to add to the information already gathered in previous calls, though each call may not result in an additional police dispatch.
- Emergency calls asking for assistance from the Public Works Department (PWD), such as flooding or trees down, for which the caller is directed to the PWD emergency number 510-615-5566. When this PWD number is called after hours, the caller has a menu of choices to press, depending on the nature of the emergency, that will direct the call to 911, OPD, OFD, EBMUD, PG&E, or the PWD After Hours Emergency Dispatch Center.
- Non-emergency PWD related calls, such as illegal dumping, potholes, and abandoned vehicles, for which the caller is directed to an appropriate daytime number, website, email, or app in the City of Oakland's 311 system.
- Calls for the Mobile Assistance Community Responders of Oakland (MACRO) for non-violent/non-emergency situations that can be handled by mental health professionals. These come into 911 but are transferred to a MACRO dispatcher. The latest MACRO Impact Report, for the month of February 2023, states that 182 MACRO calls were initiated via 911 dispatch for the month, a 65% increase over the previous month. The number of calls handled through 911 is expected to rise as people become more aware of the service and as MACRO's available service hours are extended. In addition to calls passed through 911, MACRO personnel handle situations observed during their patrols, and receive requests from community referrals. The total number of incidents for February 2023 was 1,354. Several City Council members have prioritized budgeting for a separate telephone number and personnel for MACRO dispatching in the future, which will remove this call burden from the ECC.
- After hours complaints about police officers. Calls to the Internal Affairs Office are routed to the ECC non-emergency line after hours. The operator takes down all pertinent information to forward to Internal Affairs to handle the next business day. Federal oversight of the OPD for the past 20 years mandates that these calls be documented in real time, including after hours.
- Hang ups and accidental calls. Witnesses told the Grand Jury that many callers hang up after waiting for minutes with no answer; they may or may not try again. The witnesses did not know the actual number of calls. Others dial 911 accidentally, then hang up as soon as they realize what they have done. Per ECC policy, every uncompleted call must be researched by the ECC staff and may trigger a call back or in-person visit. There is no way to know if the caller was too incapacitated to complete the call. Thus, every uncompleted

call is taken seriously. Callbacks are difficult if the caller chooses to not pick up a return call from an unknown number or does not have voice mail set up. Tracking down the caller in person is especially difficult if the caller is in a moving vehicle.

- Other calls to the non-emergency OPD number. This includes requests for public records and general information.

Currently, not all calls to 911 made in Oakland go directly to the Oakland ECC. Some cellular providers still route their 911 calls through the California Highway Patrol (CHP) office in Solano County. Those calls that are not coming from someone on a freeway, and appear to be coming from Oakland, are then routed to the Oakland ECC. Texts to 911 are also handled, initially, by the CHP. This transfer of calls and texts can add a delay of up to 3 minutes before it is answered by someone in the ECC. Eventually, all cellular calls and texts will be routed directly to the Oakland ECC, decreasing the delay in connecting with the ECC.

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- Priority Four calls are non-emergency cold calls, not tracked by the FBI, for reports of abandoned cars and other low-priority calls.

Sometimes the call is a non-police incident, but requires an OPD dispatch immediately for traffic control, e.g., a downed power line. In these cases, operators and dispatchers need to coordinate efforts among several agencies.

## **Personnel and Budget**

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In the coming fiscal year, the City of Oakland faces a budget deficit of just over \$100 million. Presumably, OPD will share in extensive budget cuts, including funding for ECC employees and technology. The 2022–2023 midcycle budget authorized 99 dispatchers/operators and eight managers/supervisors for the ECC, though not all these positions were filled. The mayor's 2023–2025 Budget proposes to cut or freeze all unfilled positions in the OPD. That would bring the ECC personnel budgeted down to 76 Police Communication Dispatchers and eight managers/supervisors and would cut 23 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions from the ECC. The proposed budget also calls for a 15% decrease in overtime throughout the OPD.

## **Previous Investigations**

This report is a follow up to the investigation made during the 2019–2020 Civil Grand Jury term. In the previous investigation, the Grand Jury found that:

- Staffing levels could not competently handle the 700,000+ emergency calls the ECC received in 2019.
- The operators were unable to meet the CalOES timeliness criteria for answering incoming calls. There was no call-answering policy or standard to ensure compliance.
- The ECC was understaffed and employees were required to work excessive overtime. Management presumed excessive overtime to be part of the reason for disproportionately high levels of sick leave, disability claims, and attrition.
- Implementation of the software and hardware, purchased in 2018, was delayed for lack of dedicated staff and management.
- Managing public records requests and the OPD complaint line (for Internal Affairs) diverted staff away from answering emergency calls.
- The use of a recorded message to greet 911 callers was ineffectual and increased the number of abandoned calls.
- Oakland's hiring process was too slow and the hiring of ECC operators/dispatchers was not seen as a priority.

In response to the 2019–2020 Grand Jury report, the Interim Chief of Police concurred that the broader finding – that calls are not being answered to State standards – was correct, and asserted that some of the Grand Jury's recommendations were already in progress:

- The "troubled" phone system was recently replaced.
- The Motorola PremierOne CAD system was being configured and, at the time, OPD thought it would be operational by 2021.
- Hiring practices were improved and the City of Oakland had a "very optimistic view" of upcoming recruitments.
- OPD's executive team was exploring alternative resources for ancillary (non-emergency) duties.
- OPD promised to provide centralized training for staff to assist with ECC training needs.

The 2019–2020 Grand Jury report partly relied on the City Auditor's Report in 2017 which found:

- The ECC failed to meet timeliness standards.
- There was a consistently large number of vacant positions.
- Staffing levels within a 24-hour period did not align with peak call volumes.
- High overtime reliance exacerbated high employee turnover.
- The hiring and onboarding process was protracted.
- The ECC should consider using civilian instead of sworn officers for supervisory positions.

The report noted that sworn officers tended to last about 6 months, while civilians lasted an average of 17 years and created a more stable workforce. There are differences in training and compensation between sworn and civilian personnel. The Audit also noted that making the supervisory positions civilian rather than sworn would allow a path for advancement for the civilian dispatchers and operators from working on the ECC floor to working in management positions.

The 2019–2020 Grand Jury report also partly relied on the independent consultant report in February 2019 by Federal Engineering, Inc. which stated:

- The ECC was understaffed and should have at least 90 dispatchers and 15 shift supervisors. The ECC supervisors should do their own assignments and not routinely cover for vacant operator and dispatching stations.
- There should be at least 18 dispatchers and three supervisors working during peak hours.
- Non-emergency work, such as officer complaint calls, Pursuit Logs, and Use of Force logs are time consuming and should be handled elsewhere.
- The ECC should have a full-time Technology Manager to ensure that technology needs are met.
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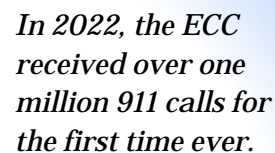
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- The ECC should have a dedicated Training Manager.



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The Grand Jury also learned that OPD's 20-year-old software and hardware are not keeping up with evolving telecommunications technology. Components of the technology include caller identification and routing, call intake, computer aided dispatch (CAD), and records management systems (RMS) required by the FBI.

### **Phone Answering System and Data Intake**

One improvement successfully implemented at the ECC regards the phone system. The old system, as noted in the 2019–2020 Grand Jury report, experienced frequent failures and dropped calls, and had a data entry system tied to an out-of-date records management system. That phone system has recently been replaced with a new system by AT&T. The new phone and data entry system, VESTA, has an expanded computer interface page that is more ergonomic and has decreased the operators' repetitive stress injuries. It will also work with the proposed records management system when it is installed. Now that the operators have

been fully trained on the new VESTA software, there are no apparent decreases in productivity.

### **The Computer Assisted Dispatch (CAD) System**

The existing CAD system in the ECC is provided by Motorola. The CAD system for the mobile data terminals in the patrol cars is not Motorola, resulting in some data loss as data goes from one CAD system to another. The proposed CAD system will be part of the Motorola PremierOne system and will integrate the ECC operator input (VESTA), mobile data terminals in patrol cars, and the records management system. The proposed system will have new software, new servers, new network switches, and be partly cloud-based. The proposed system will require more data entry at the time of the call. Currently, operators can complete an entry in two or three clicks, but the proposed system will require nine or ten clicks. This may decrease call volume handling slightly. On the other hand, the proposed CAD system will do a better job of locating the nearest officer to the incident, for quicker response and management of personnel.

### **Next Generation 911 Call Identification and Routing**

The 911 call identification and routing system is evolving, along with evolving phone technology. When homes and offices had land line phones tied to unique addresses, the reverse phone look up system worked well. If the ECC knew the phone number, the ECC knew precisely where the call was coming from and could easily dispatch police and fire to the scene. Now, at least 80% of emergency calls come in via cell phones, sometimes in moving cars, which are much harder to locate precisely. The technology to locate cell calls via cell-tower triangulation is evolving and improving all the time. There is also an increase in calls that come in from private telephone exchanges in large office complexes and from Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services like Skype and Google Voice that are not tied to a location. There are newer technologies for locating callers available, called Enhanced 911 (E911) and more recently, Next Generation 911 (NG911) that are slowly rolling out nationwide. NG911, when fully implemented, will be able to handle incident related video and images from 911 callers, texts, traffic webcam integration, reverse 911, and OnStar systems from cars. All emergency communications centers are mandated to eventually upgrade to NG911. Any technology upgrades made now will have to have compatibility with NG911 in mind.

### **Record Management System**

In 2000, the FBI issued a new crime data Record Management System (RMS), the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), to replace the 1930s-era Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system. The NIBRS system became federally mandated in 2021, thus Oakland must upgrade its technology, train its people, and allocate resources to implement

## **INVESTIGATION**

### **Basis of this Investigation**

In 2022, the Oakland ECC received over one million calls. Almost half of the callers were required to wait 15 seconds or more for a response. Many simply gave up. It is the intent of this Grand Jury investigation to determine the main causes for this inability to meet standards and to suggest ways to improve the system. The Grand Jury concentrated efforts on investigating the timeliness of the initial 911 response (answering the phone), but also considered the timeliness of the arrival of emergency services on scene, since that is part of the public perception of timeliness.

Members of the Grand Jury made a site visit to the ECC facility and interviewed OPD management, to better understand how the system works, and to research personnel and technology issues. Numerous standard-setting documents were reviewed from the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), CalOES, the FBI, and other sources to get a better understanding of how an ECC should operate. Previous investigations and audits by the Alameda County Civil Grand Jury, the City of Oakland, and private contractors, were also reviewed.

### **Current Emergency Communication Center Staffing Levels**

Since the last Grand Jury investigation, the ECC has seen a decrease in staffing. The entire workforce of Alameda County has diminished by 30%, as part of the "Great Resignation". This includes ECC operators and dispatchers, police officers, information technology (IT) support, trainers, and even the human resources personnel necessary to fill vacant positions. Employees that remain at OPD are subject to mandatory overtime and given less time to devote to crime prevention and public outreach. Because Oakland's hiring system is cumbersome, recruiting employees at the ECC is difficult. Potential employees are recruited more quickly by other employers, existing workers move to other agencies, and overworked employees are burnt out and quit.

The 2022–2023 Grand Jury was informed that the existing staff at the ECC work mandatory overtime, and experience increased stress, absenteeism, and separation from service. Based on information received from interviews, ECC staff are expected to work an additional 60 hours in every 6-week block of time, an average of 10 extra hours per week. Some employees work up to 65 hours per week and up to 16 hours per day. Workers have expressed that it is hard to be professional at the end of a stressful 16-hour day. Schedules are so tight that vacation time is often not granted. Shift sign-ups are based on seniority, with the more senior employees allowed to sign up for more favorable shifts, rather than shifts with a high

call demand. This results in some less favorable shifts having insufficient workers to cover the incoming calls, resulting in more delays in answering calls. When dispatchers attend mandatory ongoing training, that is time away from the phone and dispatch stations, for both the trainers and the trainees.

## **Work Volumes**

Meanwhile, the number of calls to 911 is growing and exceeded 1 million calls last year. Crime has fluctuated in the past few years but is now on the rise. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, violence had been slowly dropping and 2018–2019 had some of Oakland’s lowest violence statistics. During the COVID-19 pandemic, violent crime, including domestic violence, spiked while property crime decreased. There was an increase in unsheltered populations, which led to more violence, homicides, and drug trafficking in encampments. The 2023 crime levels are similar to 2019 levels.

In 2021, there were on average 142 calls per hour, and there were usually 10 to 16 employees present at any one time. Some of those present were taking calls, some were working dispatches, some were in training, and some were handling non-emergency issues like complaints. When the Grand Jury visited the ECC during the mid-morning, it appeared that there was a steady queue of incoming calls.

## **Hiring**

Some witnesses complained that the process to add new staff is arduous, lengthy, and many candidates drop out before final hiring decisions are made. The Grand Jury has heard of applicants waiting 6 months for an interview. Hiring for ECC positions is managed by the City of Oakland’s Human Resources Management Department (HR). Human Resources Management is striving to improve the time it takes to hire new employees and improve the level of HR resources that are directed to those hirings, even though HR is understaffed as well. Recruitment efforts for OPD, in general, and the ECC in particular, are increasing, though applications declined during the COVID-19 pandemic. Part of the reason is that during the COVID-19 pandemic, workers in other industries were allowed to work remotely or with flexible hours. Staff in the ECC are required to work on site; remote work is not currently possible. This requirement has proven to be a barrier for some candidates.

New employees require lengthy training before they can start to answer the phones or dispatch officers. Some drop out during the training period once they realize the job is not what they expected. Management has started screening applicants in a way that determines this incompatibility earlier in the recruitment process. This has helped the effort to fill the positions with suitable employees more quickly. Staff has developed a better training protocol leading to a better pass rate for mandatory testing. Overall, the staffing efforts are

improving the number of employees hired, but there are still many vacancies, and still some attrition among the existing employees.

Some witnesses expressed concern that there were not enough managers to handle managerial work such as floor supervision, training, risk management, coordination with city officials, budgeting, billing, hiring, staff assignments, software management, public records requests, and quality assurance. In many cases, the mid-level managers are expected to work at three levels:

1. Completing their own assigned work required by their position
2. Supplementing the work of dispatchers when there are not enough dispatchers on the floor
3. Supplementing the work of upper management, when the upper managers are unavailable

Managers are currently working their own full day shifts, while also on call 24/7 to deal with issues. The ECC has currently authorized 8 managerial positions. A recent study recommended 15 supervisors/managers for Oakland. The Oakland mayor's proposed budget recommends not changing the level, staying at 8 supervisors/managers.

### **Non-Emergency Work**

The employees at the ECC also have non-emergency duties, as described above, including after-hours Internal Affairs calls, inappropriate 311 calls that should have gone to Public Works, calls for public records (which can take many hours of research to respond to), returning calls for those who hung up before connecting, and other calls – a total of 60% of the calls – that do not directly result in OPD or OFD dispatches to emergencies. Moving some of this workload to other departments would free up more time for ECC staff to answer 911 calls in a timely manner.

Training is always an ongoing part of work in the ECC. When the proposed CAD software is finally deployed, it will require additional training time, which is time away from answering the incoming 911 calls.

### **Police Officer Dispatching and Response Time**

The federal Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program is handled by the FBI, with input from every U.S. city. The UCR tracks the average response time for Priority One calls in Oakland—imminent injury, prevention of violent crime, and incidents involving weapons. The data has varied over the past 13 years and appears to be unrelated to staffing levels of 600 to 800 sworn officers in the OPD. The average response time for years 2017 through 2020 was 12 minutes. In 2021, the annual average jumped to 19 minutes, and the number of sworn

officers was 690. There is no published data available for 2022. The 2017 Oakland Audit stated that about 12% of police dispatches were Priority One.

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the NIBRS data collection. OPD’s current CAD and RMS software, both supplied by Motorola, are 20 years old and are based on the old, out-of-date UCR data collection system. Upgrading to current FBI reporting standards will require installing NIBRS-based software and hardware into the ECC, patrol cars, and OPD desk stations, and be integrated with the proposed CAD system. Implementation of NIBRS will also require at least 3 months to train the police force.

The existing Motorola software and hardware at the Emergency Communications Center is so out of date, it is no longer supportable. The Oakland Police Department is forced to buy replacement parts on eBay because Motorola doesn’t supply them anymore. Motorola has only one technician who still knows how to work on the 20-year-old software. Oakland and one other city are the only customers left in the United States using this software.

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Part of the reluctance to change to NIBRS is that it collects far more data. In the old UCR system, a hierarchy was used and only the most serious crime in a multi-crime incident was reported for national statistics. For example, a robbery-homicide would be listed as a homicide, and the robbery would not be added to the statistics, which results in incomplete crime statistics. In NIBRS, both would be reported. Currently, it can take 60–90 days to consolidate records so that they are available for public review. With the proposed system, officers in the field will record the data real-time, for almost instantaneous viewing on an open data platform online, for internal and public viewing, and for response to constituent data requests. Observers will note an apparent increase in crime, but this is a result of more accurate, complete crime records. The NIBRS rollout and expanded availability of data will require effort on the part of the public information officer to explain how to interpret the data.

### **Delayed Implementation**

New technology takes time to implement and OPD has not devoted the resources needed to finish the implementation of the proposed CAD and RMS. OPD has consistently stated from the 2019–2020 Grand Jury investigation to the present day, that the proposed CAD and RMS would be installed, trained for, and implemented “6 months from now”. The proposed technology was purchased in 2018, and in the intervening five years, not enough time, money, and staffing has been devoted to the implementation and training. If installation of



the proposed hardware and software is perpetually delayed to “6 months from now”, the city risks a catastrophic failure of the system. If that happens, they will be back to paper and pencil, as they were during the recent ransomware attack.

Most of the staff and management involved in implementing the proposed system have left the city or are on leave, including key people in IT and OPD. There is no longer an Executive Steering Committee in the City Administrator’s office to give the work priority. The Grand Jury was told that getting the management staffing back up to functional levels to complete this job would be “like trying to turn a supertanker”.

Specialized work is needed to integrate the proposed CAD/RMS system with 20 to 30 other systems, such as the Criminal Information Management System (CRIMS), the Consolidated Arrest Reports (ECAR), Forensic Logic, Alameda County databases, Contra Costa County databases, and other mandated data sharing. There is also reporting required by the OPD Consent Decree, unique to Oakland, including the Use of Force (Vision Technologies software). There is not currently and there has never been a dedicated, full-time team of dispatchers, patrol officers, records managers, and fire personnel assigned to adapt the proposed CAD and RMS systems to Oakland’s specific needs. Oakland Police Department’s IT team requested three to five full time employees (FTEs) from the Police Department and three to five FTEs from the Fire Department to develop the required configurations, but these positions were never supplied. San Francisco, on the other hand, has 20 people working full time on their CAD/RMS upgrade. Oakland has two employees mostly dedicated to this work.

When the NIBRS system is finally ready to implement, efficiency in the short term will drop as it will take 3 months of installation and training for the associated personnel and their 500 plus patrol cars, 150 fire units, and numerous desktops. Several members of OPD/ECC Management said there is reluctance in the rank-and-file officers to change to the proposed system, and reluctance to spend more officer time on training and away from dispatching to the field to do “paperwork”. Upper management in OPD and the City are verbally supportive but have not provided all the needed resources. The OFD, which will share the proposed CAD system with the OPD, is eager to have the proposed system, but is not providing subject experts to implement the proposed system. Operators, dispatchers, and managers at the ECC are generally supportive of the proposed upgrades. So far, over \$8M has been spent by Motorola’s team to install, configure, integrate, migrate, and coordinate with these other systems, but the work is not yet complete and won’t be for “another 6 months”.

### **Future Work**

Motorola recommends making major upgrades to their products every five years. The proposed CAD and RMS systems were purchased in 2018, so the products are already five years old. CAD and RMS systems are usually updated every few years to be properly

maintained and responsive to the latest technologies and legal mandates. At the other end of the spectrum, some witnesses expressed the opinion that OPD may not consider upgrading again until forced to by lack of technical support (just as they are now forced to upgrade their 20-year-old system). Periodic minor upgrades can be made to the updated system, but only if OPD and OFD agree to the upgrades and deem them worthy of shutting down the system for a few hours every so often and training the rank-and-file in the new additions. Procurement takes time—sometimes many months—so OPD needs to put them in their forecast now.

### **Disaster Preparedness**

Most of the witnesses that the Grand Jury questioned were unaware of disaster preparedness plans for the ECC. The Grand Jury was encouraged to learn about the cloud-based functionality portion of the proposed CAD system. Such a system allows for flexible movement of physical ECC operations to the Oakland Emergency Operations Center (EOC), in the event of a natural disaster or social unrest. Since the ECC building is at heightened risk for sea level rise, flooding, tsunamis, and earthquake-generated liquefaction, cloud-based software is good disaster preparedness. But if AT&T, which currently routes 911 calls to the ECC, is not prepared to handle an increase in 911 calls during a major event, then, the Grand Jury was told, “it doesn’t really matter”. In a worst-case scenario, ECC personnel would have to rely on standard police radios for relaying emergency information and dispatching personnel to incidents. There is interoperability between various agencies in Alameda County for radio communications, but not for CAD. Oakland’s ECC has a different existing and proposed CAD system than the Alameda County Sheriff’s Department, as well as neighboring cities and counties.

## **CONCLUSION**

The 2022–2023 Grand Jury has found the same personnel issues first reported by the 2019–2020 Grand Jury. Hiring has been slightly streamlined, but there are still far too many vacancies. Human Resources Management should work with the union representation to assess other means to increase staffing, such as competitive salaries and benefits, or the use of non-sworn instead of sworn officers for the supervisors and managers. The staffing level does not meet the recommendations of the 2017 City of Oakland Audit nor the independent audit in 2019 by Federal Engineering, Inc. The recommendations made by the 2019–2020 Grand Jury in still stand: Hire more managers, operators, and dispatchers; hire them more quickly; distribute the work shifts to match the workload, and minimize the mandatory overtime that is causing stress, absenteeism and attrition. Until this is done, there simply aren't enough bodies employed at the ECC to answer phone calls in a timely manner. The other major concern is the stalled technology upgrade. The situation appears to be getting more dire, as key people leave, the remaining team members are unable to implement the

work, the patrol officers are resisting, and the 20-year-old system is waiting to fail catastrophically.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Staffing and Workload**

#### *Finding #23-1:*

The Emergency Communications Center lacks adequate staffing to promptly answer all 911 calls and, working with the City of Oakland Human Resources Management Department, has been unable to fill open positions in a timely manner.

#### *Finding #23-2:*

The ECC staff spends part of its time doing work that is not 911 related that could be handled by others.

#### *Finding #23-3:*

Emergency Communications Center staffing levels within a 24-hour period do not align with peak call volumes; union and seniority rules take precedent over wise use of resources.

### **Technology**

#### *Finding #23-4:*

The ECC is in dire need of technology upgrades and is not preparing for future upgrades.

#### *Finding #23-5:*

The team for installing the proposed Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) and Records Management System (RMS) is severely understaffed and underprioritized.

#### *Finding #23-6:*

The "troubled" phone system reported by the 2019–2020 Grand Jury has been replaced and is functioning well, decreasing the number of dropped and abandoned calls.

#### *Finding #23-7:*

The ECC is not well prepared for a major disaster and lacks a disaster recovery plan.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### *Recommendation #23-1:*

The Grand Jury recommends that the Oakland City Council, in its Fiscal Year 2023–2025 budget, authorize and budget for additional Emergency Communications Center managerial

positions, up to a total of 15 management positions; avoid cutting the budget for operator/dispatch positions; and avoid capping or reducing overtime.

*Recommendation #23-2:*

The Grand Jury recommends that the ECC management work with Human Resources (HR) to hire and train managers, dispatchers, operators, and support staff sufficient to fill all the authorized positions, by June 30, 2024. The ECC management and unions may need to consider more competitive salaries and benefits and use of civilian personnel instead of sworn officers for supervisory positions to attract more applicants.

*Recommendation #23-3:*

The Grand Jury recommends that the ECC management, no later than January 1, 2024, address the widespread effects of mandatory overtime on the staff, using National Emergency Number Association (NENA) recommended tools for stress reduction and employee retention.

*Recommendation #23-4:*

The Grand Jury recommends that the OPD's Public Information Officer (PIO), no later than January 1, 2024, increase public outreach to explain the use of 911, as well as 211, 311 (Public Works routine maintenance), MACRO, Public Works After Hours Emergencies, EBMUD, PG&E, CHP, Alameda County Sheriff, 988 (crisis hotline), and other resources for non-emergency calls, as a means to decrease the number of non-emergency calls coming into 911.

*Recommendation #23-5:*

The Grand Jury recommends that the OPD's PIO engage in a public information campaign prior to the NIBRS RMS going live, to explain the new method of data capture and anticipated changes in crime statistics.

*Recommendation #23-6:*

The Grand Jury recommends that the Oakland Police Department, no later than June 30, 2024, implement alternative methods to collect and process public records requests to free up more time for Emergency Communications Center operators to answer emergency calls.

*Recommendation #23-7:*

The Grand Jury recommends that the OPD management negotiates with the union(s) to make a better assignment distribution and match personnel loading to call demand for the ECC, at the next upcoming union contract negotiations.

*Recommendation #23-8:*

The Grand Jury recommends that the OPD management implement alternative ways to address after-hours Internal Affairs calls, no later than June 30, 2024.

**Recommendation #23-9:**

The Grand Jury recommends making implementation of the proposed CAD and RMS software and hardware one of the top priorities of the OPD, with coordination between the OPD, OFD, IT, HR, and upper city management, so that the CAD and RMS can be fully functional by December 2023. This includes installation in all necessary terminals, and adaptation to all connected databases.

**Recommendation #23-10:**

The Grand Jury recommends that OPD complete the training of police officers and ECC personnel sufficient to get the proposed CAD and RMS functioning by December 2023.

**Recommendation #23-11:**

The Grand Jury recommends that the OPD by October 31, 2023, start to hire or assign a dedicated Information Technology Manager for the ECC, to lead a team in the timely roll out of the proposed CAD and RMS, and to stay on with the ECC beyond the implementation, to procure and implement future technology upgrades, including elements of Next Generation 911, under the guidelines of CalOES.

**Recommendation #23-12:**

The Grand Jury recommends that by the end of December 2024, the OPD work with AT&T and OFD to make a viable emergency operations plan, interoperability plan, and disaster recovery plan, to deal with power outages, phone outages, earthquakes, flooding, cyberattacks, and other disasters.

**REQUEST FOR RESPONSES**

Pursuant to California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the Grand Jury requests each entity or individual named below to respond to the enumerated Findings and Recommendations within specific statutory guidelines. Governing bodies of public agencies shall respond to the findings and recommendations no later than 90 days from the public release date of this report. Elected county officers or department heads shall comment within 60 days to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, with an informational copy to the Board of Supervisors. Elected city officers or department heads are requested to comment within 60 days to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, with an informational copy to the City Council.

**Responses to Findings shall be either:**

- The respondent agrees with the finding.
- The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefore.

**Responses to Recommendations shall be one of the following:**

- The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
- The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation.
- The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency where applicable. This time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury report.
- The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefore.

**REQUEST FOR RESPONSES**

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

Oakland City Council

Finding: 23-1

Recommendation: 23-1

**INVITED RESPONSE:**

Acting Chief, Oakland Police Department

Findings: 23-1 thru 23- 7

Recommendations: 23-2 through 23-12

## **Appendix A: Glossary**

**CAD** – Computer Aided Dispatch – a computer program that maps the location of incidents and patrol officers, to manage the best way to dispatch and track officers and incidents

**CalOES** – California Office of Emergency Services

**CHP** – California Highway Patrol

**EBMUD** – East Bay Municipal Utility District

**ECC** – Oakland Police Department 911 Emergency Communications Center

**E911** – Enhanced 911 – early upgrades to the 911 system to deal with cell phone calls and other phone tracking issues

**FBI** – Federal Bureau of Investigation

**HR** – Human Resources

**IT** – Information Technology

**LEO** – Law Enforcement Officer, sworn police officer

**MACRO** – Mobile Assistance Community Responders of Oakland – a response team for non-emergency issues, using mental health professionals.

**NENA** – National Emergency Number Association – a standard setting and educational group for improving PSAPs

**NG911** – Next Generation 911 – the latest technology for locating and tracking 911 calls

**NIBRS** – National Incident-Based Reporting System – the current standard system for reporting crime data to the FBI

**OFD** – Oakland Fire Department

**OPD** – Oakland Police Department

**PG&E** – Pacific Gas and Electric

**PSAP** – Public Safety Answering Point (such as the Oakland Emergency Communications Center)

**PWD** – City of Oakland Public Works Department, which handles maintenance and emergency repairs for streets, buildings, utilities, parks, and other Oakland infrastructure.

**RMS** – Records Management System, such as UCR or NIBRS

**UCR** – Uniform Crime Reporting system – the old system for reporting crime data to the FBI



*Port of Oakland*