

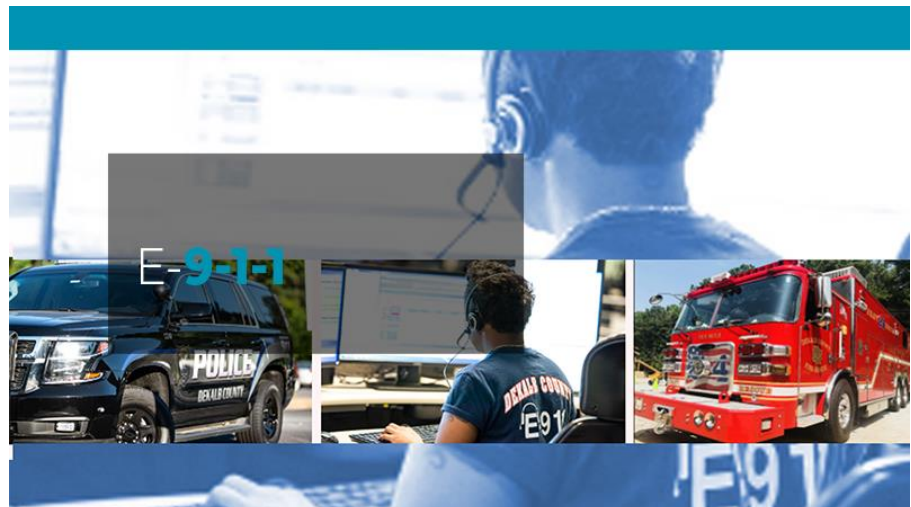


April 2026

**E911 Communications Department &
DeKalb County Fire Rescue**

AUDIT OF E911 CALL RESPONSE TIMES
**Assessment of Dispatch Efficiency,
Data Reliability, and System Continuity**

FINAL REPORT



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Report No. IA-2024-242-PS

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CALL RESPONSE TIMES
AUDIT REPORT NO. IA-2024-242-PS**

HIGHLIGHT SUMMARY

Why We Performed the Audit

In accordance with the Office of Independent Internal Audit (OIIA) annual audit plan, we conducted a performance audit of DeKalb County's E911 Call Handling and Response Process. The objective of this audit was to determine whether internal controls over the County's E911 call handling and response processes are adequately designed and operating as intended.

How We Performed the Audit

Our audit focused on E911 call data, response time and procedures during period September 1, 2024, to May 31, we also considered current procedures as at the time of audit.

Our methodology included, but was not limited to:

- Interviewed relevant County personnel.
- Visted sites and observed the Communications department and E911 facilities.
- Reviewed current processes and procedures.
- Researched related best practices.
- Tested a sample of processes for compliance with current procedures and/or best practices.
- Reviewed supporting documentation.

Background

The DeKalb County's E911 Communications Department and E911 Center operates as a vital component of the County's public safety infrastructure, serving as the centralized hub for emergency communications for the County's applicable jurisdictions. The center is responsible for receiving and processing applicable emergency and non-emergency calls to law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services (EMS), and other public safety agencies across the County.

What We Found

Our audit noted that the County has some procedures in place for managing its call handling and response processes. However, our audit also identified opportunities to enhance current practices that could pose health & safety and financial risks to the County if not addressed.

Audit Findings
1. Limitations in Data Reliability for E911 Response Time Analysis
2. E911 Call Answering Times Did Not Meet the NENA Standard
3. Response Time Objectives Require Final Approval and Routine Monitoring.
4. EMS Vendor Did Not Meet Contracted Response Time Targets.
5. The Non-Emergency Call Handling Process Was Fragmented.
6. Lack of Formal Emergency Arrangements and Interagency Policies and Procedures to Guide Operations Between Neighboring Municipalities During Periods of Emergencies.
7. Lack of a Formal and Tested Disaster Recovery Plan.

What we Recommend:

We recommend management:

- Develop and implement a formal data governance policy.
- Establish data validation and reconciliation controls.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive staff retention strategy.
- Validate the effectiveness of the newly implemented ESI system
- Formally adopt and implement a response time standard
- Validate and enforce 2025 financial controls
- Mandate a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) focused on quicker responses.
- Initiate Procurement Strategy and Contract Redesign (Urgent)
- Conduct a Strategic Review of Non-Emergency Call Handling.
- Initiate formal discussions with neighboring jurisdictions and develop and execute formal agreements with these jurisdictions.
- Develop a comprehensive Disaster Recovery Plan and implement a mandatory annual testing schedule.

Management Response

E911 and Fire and Rescue management have agreed to all findings and have outlined action plans to address them. Action plans are expected to be fully implemented between 30 to 90 days from report issuance. Management has indicated that some action plans are already implemented pending verification by OIIA.



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BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The DeKalb County E911 - Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) is a vital component of the County's public safety infrastructure, operating within the Communications Department. Operating 24/7, it serves as the centralized hub for receiving emergency communications. The center is responsible for processing and disseminating this information to the appropriate response units, primarily coordinating with DeKalb County Fire Rescue.

Emergency Response Operations: DeKalb County Fire Rescue (DCFR) - Once a call is processed by E911, the physical response is executed under the authority of **DeKalb County Fire Rescue**. DCFR is a modern, all-hazards organization responsible for fire suppression, technical rescue, and the delivery of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) across the County.

To fulfill this mission, DCFR utilizes a **Public-Private Partnership (Hybrid) Model**:

- **First Response (DCFR):** DCFR personnel, operating out of 26 strategically located fire stations, serve as the primary "first responders" for medical emergencies. Firefighters are cross trained as EMTs and Paramedics to stabilize patients immediately upon arrival. Because these units deploy from fixed, static locations (stations), their travel times provide a consistent baseline for analysis.
- The County contracts with a private vendor, **American Medical Response (AMR)**. While AMR provides the ambulance fleet and transport personnel, they operate as a contracted extension of DCFR's service delivery model.

Defining Response Metrics To evaluate the effectiveness of this integrated response system this audit utilizes standard industry definitions for time tracking:

- **Call Answering Times:** The duration it takes 911 personnel to pick up an incoming call (Finding 2).
- **Travel Time:** The specific interval from when a response unit begins moving (wheels rolling) to when it arrives at the incident location. (Finding 3 and 4)

Call Volume Statistics the E911 center processed 622,234 calls during the period September 2024 to May 2025.

Non-Emergency Systems (311) In addition to the E911 system, the County also operates a separate system for non-emergency administrative issues, the 311 Citizens Help Center. The stated purpose of the 311 system is to handle general inquiries and service requests, thereby reducing the volume of non-urgent calls directed to the E911 center. The public's understanding of, and interaction between, these two separate systems is a key factor in the E911 center's operational efficiency and is discussed in the findings of this report.

Governance & Standards The E911 center's operations are governed by state agencies, including the Georgia Emergency Communications Authority (GECA) and the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS). Furthermore, operational performance for field responders is evaluated against national benchmarks,



such as **NFPA 1710** (National Fire Protection Association), which sets standards for fire department deployment and travel times.

Figure 1: DeKalb County E911 Conference Room



Current and Future Technology The call center operates 24/7 and, during our audit, utilized several integrated legacy systems:

- **Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) Telephony System (VIPER):** Captures initial call data.
- **Automatic Location Identification (ALI):** Provides caller location (fixed for landlines, dynamic for wireless).
- **Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD):** Used for logging call details, timestamping response benchmarks, and resource deployment.
- **Radio Dispatch Systems:** Communicates with first responders in the field.

It is important to note that the County implemented a new Emergency Services IP Network (ESI-net) in November 2025. This upgrade to Next Generation 911 (NG911) is designed to allow for the secure transmission of multimedia like video and images to PSAP. This implementation presents a critical opportunity to address many of the control weaknesses identified in the legacy systems.

Key Processes and Procedures

1. **Call Handling:** Trained telecommunications officers receive incoming 911 calls, determine the nature and priority of the incident, and collect essential information.
2. **Dispatch Operations:** Based on the priority of the incident, dispatchers assign appropriate response units (Fire or EMS).
3. **Call Documentation:** All timestamps—from call receipt to unit arrival—are recorded in the CAD system. These timestamps form the basis of the travel time analysis presented in this report.
4. **Inter-agency Coordination:** The center coordinates with neighboring municipalities. A list of the neighboring municipalities/jurisdictions and the services they provide is shown in **Figure 2 below**.



Figure 2: List of neighboring municipalities/jurisdictions and the services provided.

Municipality/Jurisdiction	Services Provided by Municipality/Jurisdiction	Services Provided by DeKalb County E911
1. ChattComm (Dunwoody/Brookhaven)	E911/Police Dispatch	Fire/EMS Dispatch
2. Chamblee	E911/Police Dispatch	Fire/EMS Dispatch
3. Doraville	E911/Police Dispatch	Fire/EMS Dispatch
4. Decatur	E911/ Police and Fire Dispatch	EMS Dispatch
5. Atlanta	E911/Police Dispatch (EMS Dispatch handled by Grady if within City Limits of Atlanta)	EMS Dispatch (If location is in Southeast Atlanta)
6. Stone Mountain Park	E911/Fire Dispatch	EMS Dispatch (Fire Dispatch if Rescue Services are needed)
7. City of Lithonia	EMS and Fire Dispatch	E911 and Police Dispatch
8. City of Stone Mountain	None	E911 and Police/Fire/EMS Dispatch
9. Pine Lake	None	E911 and Police/Fire/EMS Dispatch
10. Avondale Estates	None	E911 and Police/Fire/EMS Dispatch
11. Clarkston	None	E911 and Police/Fire/EMS Dispatch
12. Unincorporated DeKalb County	None	E911 and Police/Fire/EMS Dispatch
13. City of Tucker	None	E911 and Police/Fire/EMS Dispatch
14. City of Stonecrest	None	E911 and Police/Fire/EMS Dispatch

Source: E911 Communications Department

AUDIT OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this performance audit was to assess the adequacy of internal controls governing the County’s E911 call handling and response processes.

Our audit scope included call data and travel response times for period of **September 1, 2024, through May 31, 2025**, was selected based on professional judgment to provide a recent and relevant view of E911 operations. Within this period, we conducted a full review of all E911 call data; therefore, the results presented are a complete representation of activity for this timeframe. The conclusions of this report are limited to the period reviewed and are not projected to other periods.

Our audit methodology included the following procedures:

- Interviewed relevant County and vendor personnel.
- Conducted site walkthroughs and observed operations at the County Communications Department and E911 facilities.
- Reviewed and analyzed current departmental processes, policies, and procedures.
- Researched industry standards and best practices for E911 operations.
- Tested key processes for compliance with current procedures and best practices.
- Reviewed supporting documentation, including call data and training records.

A key component of our methodology was a **data reliability assessment** on information collected and processed by the County's telephony systems. This assessment identified significant data limitations, which are detailed as a formal finding in this report. After careful consideration, we determined that the data was **sufficiently reliable to identify performance trends and systemic control weaknesses**, though not precise enough for



exact measurement. **Consequently, conclusions related to performance benchmarks that rely on this data are qualified and should be interpreted with caution.**

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS).

AUDIT RESULTS

Our audit concluded that while the E911 Communications Department has established foundational controls for its operations, gaps exist in performance, strategic planning, and operational efficiency that require management's attention.

We acknowledge that the department has several important processes in place, including internal policies to guide operations and a quality control process for call review. Additionally, the department has recently implemented a new Emergency Services IP Network (ESI-net) which replaces the Viper system. This system will serve as the foundation for Next Generation 911 (NG911), allowing for the secure transmission of voice, data, and multimedia to public safety answering points (PSAPs).

However, our audit identified the following areas need improvement:

- **Performance Below Standards:** E911 call answering times and first responding units dispatch/travel times for fire and medical incidents are not meeting national benchmarks and or internal benchmarks.
- **Inefficient Non-Emergency Call Handling:** A lack of coordination with the 311 Center burdens E911 dispatchers with administrative calls, diverting critical resources from emergency response.
- **Disaster Recovery Planning Gaps:** The department lacks both a formal, tested Disaster Recovery plan and documented mutual aid agreements with neighboring jurisdictions.

This report details the audit findings and recommends actions to improve controls, streamline non-emergency call handling, and enhance the overall effectiveness of the County's E911 services.

FINDING 1: Limitations in Data Reliability for E911 Response Time Analysis

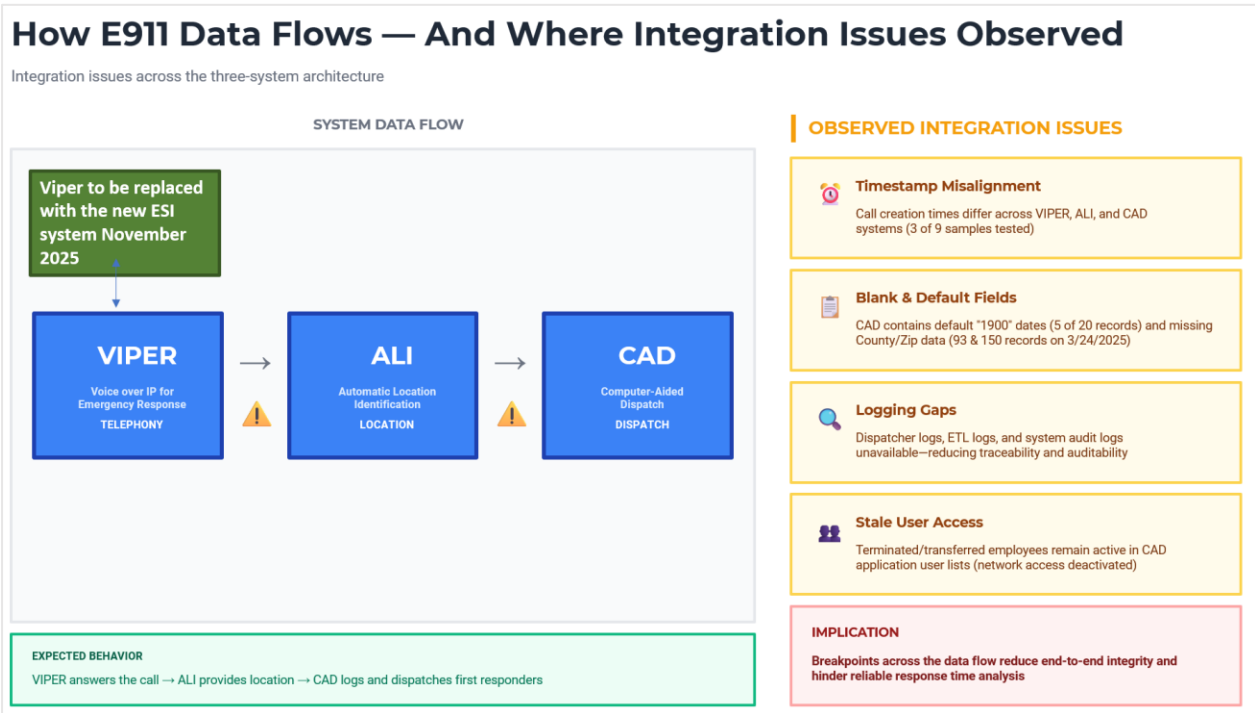
An audit of the E911 Communications Department revealed that systemic control gaps result in **moderate data reliability**, impeding a precise and accurate analysis of the County's emergency response performance.

To assess the data, we performed a detailed test of controls over the County's key E911 systems, which work together to process emergency calls:

- **VIPER (Voice over IP for Emergency Response):** The telephony system that first answers the 911 call. The Viper system has been replaced by the Emergency Services IP Network (ESI-net) which was recently implemented by the Department in November 2025. **ALI (Automatic Location Identification):** The system that provides the caller's location to the dispatcher.



- **CAD (Computer-Aided Dispatch):** The system used to log the call and dispatch first responders.



Source: E911 Communications Department

Our methodology included tracing a sample of call records across these three systems, comparing key data fields for consistency, reviewing governance policies, and examining user access controls. Our testing utilized a risk-based judgmental sampling methodology. This risk-focused approach was designed to efficiently determine if control weaknesses existed. Because the sample was not selected randomly, the results apply only to the items tested and cannot be statistically projected across the entire population of E911 calls. The findings are, however, indicative of underlying control deficiencies that require management's attention. Our testing identified specific deficiencies across multiple control areas:

- **Absence of Governance and Policy:** Management could not provide any documented data governance policies, procedures for ensuring data integrity, or user access policies.
- **Inconsistent and Unreliable Data:**
 - Timestamps for call creation did not match between the three systems for 3 of 9 samples tested (from a population of 3,311 calls). Management indicated that these times rarely match because the recorded 'start time' depends on when each individual call taker manually opens the entry screen, rather than when the call is actually received. Key data fields in the **CAD** system were populated with default "1900" dates in **5 of 20 tested records**. (which affects downstream analysis for Police and Fire units).
 - **Data completeness issue (reporting impact):** Call records for March 24, 2025, contained missing location fields, including blank "County" values (93 records)



and blank “Zip Code” values (150 records). **Management noted that dispatch and response rely on GIS location data to route units and do not depend on these fields for operational response.** However, missing County/Zip Code data reduces the reliability of location-based reporting and limits analysis of service levels by District or neighborhood for reporting, oversight, and performance trending purposes.

- **Lack of Verifiability:** Critical records needed for validation—including dispatcher logs, data transfer logs (ETL), and system audit logs—could not be provided for review.
- **Inadequate Access Controls:** Application User access lists for the CAD system included terminated and transferred employees as active users. The users' network access was deactivated, which limited the risk of unauthorized access.

GAGAS (2024 Revision) §8.32 requires that auditors evaluate the **appropriateness and sufficiency of evidence**. Reliable evidence is defined as being **valid, accurate, and complete**. Additionally, **NENA and NFPA 1221 standards** recommend maintaining traceable, accurate response time records to ensure public safety accountability. This has a direct and significant impact on County operations and this audit report. The primary consequences are:

- **Inability to Manage Performance:** Without trustworthy data, management cannot accurately monitor compliance with national standards, track performance trends, (even when utilizing external scripts that rely on this CAD data; since the source data is flawed, these external reports will inherently be inaccurate)., or hold contracted service providers accountable.
- **Increased Security Risk:** The failure to promptly remove former employees from access lists creates an unnecessary risk of unauthorized access to sensitive public safety information.
- **Qualified Audit Findings:** The Call answer time data was not sufficiently reliable for precise measurement. As a result, the performance-related conclusions in this report are qualified. **However, the consistency and magnitude** of the data were sufficient to conclude that a significant performance gap exists in call answering time, making the findings relevant for identifying critical areas that require management's attention. Please note this data does not relate to Fire and EMS data on response time to an incident location

Recommendations:

We recommend that E911 management, in coordination with the Department of Innovation and Technology, use the implementation of the new ESI-net system as a critical opportunity to establish a strong data governance framework. The lessons learned from the control deficiencies in the legacy systems should be applied to ensure the integrity of the new system from day one.

Specifically, as part of the new system implementation project, management should:



- **Develop and Implement a Formal Data Governance Policy.** Establish formal policies for data entry, validation, retention, and ownership that will govern the ESI-net system.
- **Establish Validation and Reconciliation Controls.** Ensure that the new system's implementation plan includes routine data reconciliation procedures to identify and resolve any inconsistencies. This is especially critical during the initial data migration and cutover phases.
- **Require and Review System Logs from Day One.** Mandate that the new system has robust logging and auditing capabilities (e.g., ETL logs, access history, exception reports). Establish a formal process for the periodic review of these logs to monitor data integrity and prevent undetected system errors.
- **Implement Strict User Access Protocols.** Ensure the "go-live" user access list for the new system is clean and accurate. Implement a formal process for quarterly user access reviews to ensure the timely removal of inactive users and to validate current access rights.
- **Ensure Traceability in the New System.** Confirm that the new ESI-nets system's capabilities for logging and record-keeping are sufficient to allow for independent audit and validation of call handling and response sequences, replacing the need for separate

Management Response (E911 Director):

Management Agreement with the Finding	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to Implement Action Plan
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	A formal Data Governance Policy has been fully developed and is currently pending implementation. Validation and reconciliation controls have been established to ensure data accuracy, consistency, and integrity across all operational systems. Strict User Access Protocols have also been developed and are awaiting implementation as part of the broader security and compliance framework. In addition, traceability within the new phone system has been confirmed, ensuring that call activity can be monitored, audited, and verified in alignment with operational and regulatory requirements.	All policies and procedures will be implemented within 30-60 days
Additional Comments (if any) and/or reason for disagreement:		



FINDING 2: E911 Call Answering Times Did Not Meet the NENA Standard.

Based on our analysis of available system data for the audit period September 2024 to May 2025, the E911 Communications Center's E911 call answering times did **not meet** the nationally recognized benchmark, creating an increased risk to public safety.

According to the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) Standard 020.1.1-2020, 90% of all E911 calls shall be answered within 15 seconds or less.

However, our analysis of system-generated data indicated that **64.84% (245,759)** of incoming emergency calls met this 15-second threshold, while the remaining **35.16% (133,257)** exceeded 15-seconds.

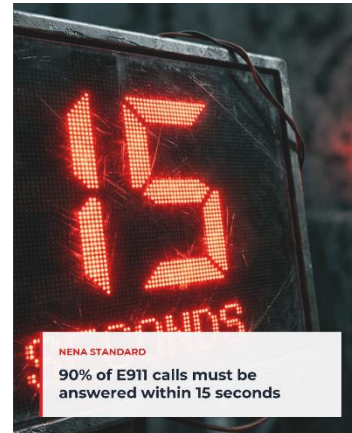


Figure 4a: Percentage of Emergency Calls Answered within 15 Seconds or Less:

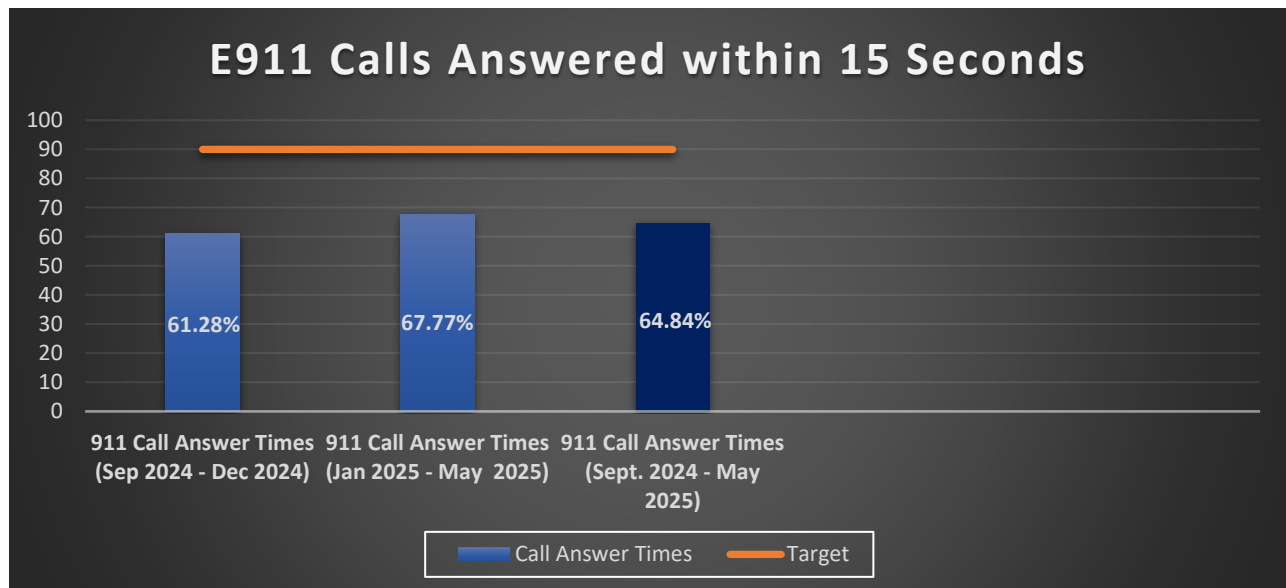
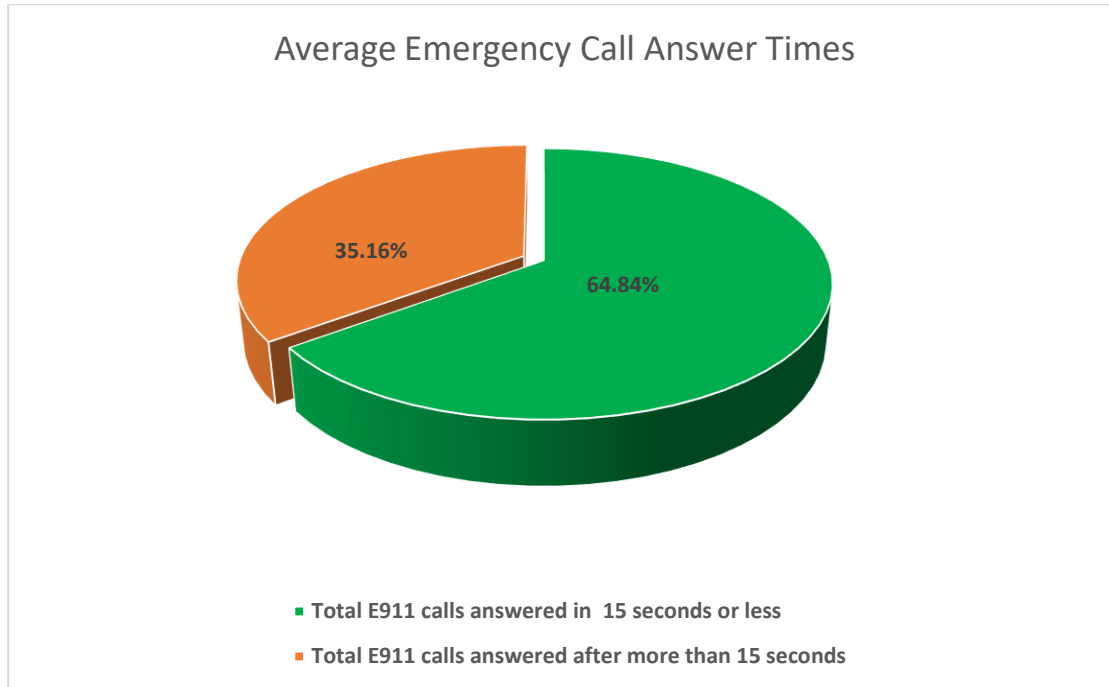




Figure 4b: Pie Chart Depicting Average Emergency Call Answer Times



Source: E911 Communications system data.

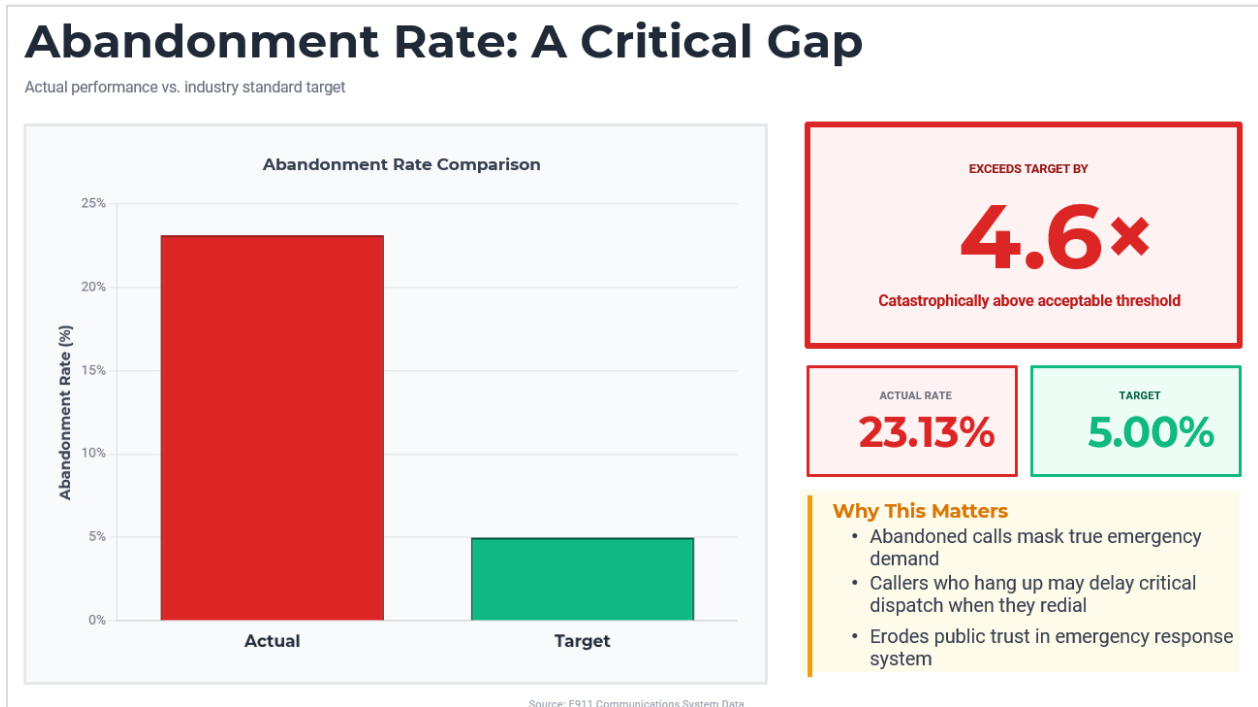
Figure 5A: The breakdown of the 35.16% or 133,257 calls answered in over 15 seconds:



Source: E911 Communications system data.



Figure 5B: Of the 24.51% exceeding 40 seconds, the vast majority of those (23.13%) went unanswered.:



Source: E911 Communications system data.

During our analysis, it was noted that **there were several factors that contributed to E911 call answer times being above the industry benchmark of 15s for 90% of calls**, these included:

- **Insufficient Staffing and High Turnover:** The E911 staffing levels were analyzed to include filled positions, vacant positions, and the allocation of staffing (average staff in queue) were analyzed. The department experienced persistent staff vacancies and a high attrition rate. For example, between September 2024 and May 2025, the department hired 28 new Communications Officers but lost 33 during the same period. **Our analysis confirmed a direct correlation between performance and staffing levels; the 95% standard was only met when the average number of staff in the queue exceeded seven**
- **High Volume of Administrative and Non-Emergency Calls:** Administrative and Non-emergency calls constituted an average of 24% of the total incoming call volume. This is significantly higher than the industry best practice of 10% or less and diverts critical resources from handling true emergencies. Further details regarding this issue are provided in finding number five (5).
- **Technology Gaps:** Deficiencies in the E911 call handling system were a significant cause of processing delays. The software and systems in use during the audit period had several critical limitations:



- **Inefficient Call Routing:** The system could not automatically route calls to neighboring jurisdictions, requiring manual transfers.
- **Imprecise Location Tracking:** The absence of modern, precise GPS-based location tracking forced call takers to spend excessive time verbally identifying a caller's location.
- **Lack of Automated Filtering:** The system could not automatically filter out non-emergency or misdirected calls, increasing the workload on call takers.

The Department's reliance on an outdated system was a primary cause of delayed response times. We noted that the new ESI system was implemented immediately prior to the issuance of this report. While this new system is expected to correct the routing and location deficiencies, its effectiveness could not be validated during our fieldwork audit period.

To mitigate delays prior to this implementation, management utilized interim measures such as the Emergency Rule, overtime, and the deployment of supervisors to assist with call taking. The Emergency Rule involves suspending standard questioning protocols during system overloads, allowing call takers to collect only the most critical details required for a safe response. However, these were temporary fixes rather than root-cause solutions.

Recommendations:

We recommend that the E911 management develop and implement a corrective action plan to address the root causes identified. The plan should include the following:

1. **Develop and implement a comprehensive staff retention strategy.** This strategy should aim to reduce turnover and maintain optimal staffing levels. Actions should include:
 - Conducting periodic anonymous staff surveys to gauge morale and identify workplace issues.
 - Implementing a formal exit interview process to capture actionable data on why employees leave.
 - Measuring and monitoring dispatcher occupancy rates to prevent burnout, keeping rates within the industry best practice of 75%–85%.
 - Performing a compensation and benefits analysis to ensure competitiveness with other local jurisdictions.
2. **Validate the effectiveness of the newly implemented ESI system.** Now that the ESI system has been deployed, Management should verify that the specific technology gaps identified in this report have been resolved. This includes:
 - Conducting a post-implementation review to ensure **GPS location tracking** and **jurisdictional call routing** are functioning correctly.
 - Monitoring call handling times for the first 90 days to ensure the new interface is not causing user-error delays.
 - Configuring the automated filtering settings to ensure non-emergency calls are being properly segregated from true emergencies.



Management Response (E911 Director):

Management Agreement with the Finding	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to Implement Action Plan
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree</p>	<p>A comprehensive Staff Retention Policy has been developed and is currently pending implementation. In addition, Human Resources continues to conduct formal exit interviews and manages all compensation and benefits analysis to support workforce stability. Dispatcher occupancy rates are actively measured and monitored by the E911 Communications Department to ensure staffing levels remain aligned with operational demands.</p> <p>Discussions regarding potential collaboration with 311 have highlighted significant uncertainties. Specifically, partnering with 311 does not guarantee a reduction in non-emergency call volume. Furthermore, it has not been confirmed whether 311 possesses the staffing capacity to absorb additional call volume or what level of training would be required to ensure their personnel can appropriately manage E911 administrative calls.</p> <p>GPS location tracking and jurisdictional call routing have been validated by both E911 staff and the system vendor as functioning correctly. Call handling times have been monitored over the past 60 days, with measurable improvements in call answering performance. At this time, there are no automated filtering settings in place to separate non-emergency calls from true emergency calls, and such functionality would require further evaluation.</p>	<p>The staff retention policy will be implemented in the next 30-60 days. Continued discussions are required to determine the ability for 311 to handle additional call volume.</p>



Additional Comments (if any) and/or reason for disagreement:

The NENA standard is not a requirement; it serves as guidance for what the call-answering benchmark for 911 centers should be. Although the service level standard was not met during the specified period, the E911 Communications Department has continued to demonstrate excellence. The department has maintained its certification as an Accredited Center of Excellence in Emergency Medical Dispatch for the ninth consecutive time through Priority Dispatch, an internationally recognized organization.

In addition, the E911 Communications Center has earned certification as an Accredited Center of Excellence in Emergency Fire Dispatch for the first time. This dual accreditation is an achievement reached by only 137 public safety answering points worldwide.

The department is also currently pending certification as an Accredited Center of Excellence in Emergency Police Dispatch. Achieving all three accreditations, Emergency Medical, Fire, and Police Dispatch—would place the center among an elite group. Only five public safety answering points in the world have earned this Triple ACE recognition.

Additionally, since the E911 Communications Department implemented a more technologically advanced phone system, call-answer times have shown measurable improvement. Performance has increased from 73% in 2025 to over 80% in just the past 60 days, demonstrating the positive impact of updated technology and the continued commitment of our team to providing timely service to the community. Our call answer times have not reached this level of performance since 2020, marking a significant step forward in our ongoing efforts to enhance service delivery.

FINDING 3: Response-Time Objectives Require Final Approval and Routine Monitoring

To evaluate the County's Fire and EMS performance for the period of September 2024 through May 2025, Internal Audit referenced the travel-time objectives outlined in the **National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1710**. NFPA 1710 is a widely recognized benchmark that specifies a **four-minute travel-time goal** for the first-arriving engine company on fire incidents and basic life support (BLS)/first response emergencies.

Importantly, NFPA acknowledges that a one-size-fits-all approach is not always practical. Appendix 4.1.2 of the standard allows the **Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)**—such as the County Board or Fire Director—to establish and implement customized, feasible performance objectives based on local constraints.

Because DeKalb County Fire Rescue (DCFR) has not formally adopted localized travel-time targets, we analyzed dispatch and response data against the baseline NFPA 1710 four-minute objective. **The analysis revealed that departmental travel times frequently exceed this benchmark:**



Fire Incidents: Of 17,155 fire-related calls, **66.7% (11,052 incidents)** had travel times exceeding the four-minute objective.



EMS Incidents: Of 31,601 high-priority (Levels 1–3) EMS-related calls, **67.8% (21,428 incidents)** had travel times exceeding the four-minute objective.

Management Context & Infrastructure Constraints

During discussions, DCFR management correctly highlighted that **meeting the strict NFPA 1710 four-minute travel-time target is not currently feasible**. The County's existing infrastructure — specifically the number and geographic distribution of fire stations relative to population density and geographic size — physically limits the department's ability to consistently meet this benchmark. Internal Audit acknowledges these infrastructure constraints.

The Governance Gap

While infrastructure limitations explain the variance from NFPA 1710, the **primary control gap** is the absence of formally adopted, communicated, and monitored **AHJ-established** response objectives. DCFR has made commendable strides in assessing its operational landscape. The department initiated the accreditation process with the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) and was designated as a Registered Agency in April 2025. As part of this process, DCFR developed a 221-page **Community Risk Assessment/Standards of Cover (CRA/SOC)** document, which identifies community risks and proposes draft turnout and travel benchmarks for various incident types.



However, Internal Audit found that:

1. **Lack of Formal Approval:** There is no evidence that the baselines and benchmarks within the CRA/SOC were formally approved by the Board or County leadership.
2. **Lack of Communication:** The proposed objectives have not been systematically shared with operational staff to guide daily operations or set stakeholder expectations.
3. **Lack of Monitoring:** Fire suppression and EMS benchmarks are not integrated or referenced in the department's routine performance reports distributed to management and staff.

Risks and Impact

Without a formalized, locally adapted standard that is actively monitored, the County and its residents face the following risks:

- **Public Safety Risks:** Without routine monitoring against a localized, data-driven standard, management cannot systematically identify and correct performance delays, potentially impacting patient survivability and increasing property loss.
- **Deployment Inefficiencies:** The absence of communicated targets limits operational accountability and hinders management's ability to optimize staffing models, evaluate performance trends, and prioritize resource allocation.
- **Governance & Oversight Limitations:** Oversight bodies cannot effectively determine if departmental performance is acceptable because current performance reports are not tied to approved benchmarks.
- **Liability & Reputational Exposure:** Without an adopted standard of care and evidence of active oversight, the County may face increased scrutiny, and sustained performance gaps could adversely affect public confidence.

Recommendations:

We recommend that the Chief Fire Officer and County Management:

1. **Formalize, Approve, and Communicate Response-Time Standards**
 - **Board Approval:** Present the customized Fire and EMS response-time baselines and benchmarks — as detailed in the 2023 Community Risk Assessment/Standards of Cover (CRA/SOC) document — to the Board of Commissioners (or applicable governing body) for formal review and adoption as the County's official standard of care.
 - **Internal Communication:** Once approved, systematically distribute these expectations internally. Ensure operational staff and key stakeholders clearly understand the localized response-time targets they are being measured against.
2. **Integrate Adopted Standards into Routine Performance Monitoring**
 - **Update Reporting:** Revise existing operational reports (or develop a new suite of periodic performance dashboards) to explicitly track actual



response and travel times against the newly Board-approved Fire and EMS benchmarks.

- **Management Review:** Implement a routine framework for department leadership to review these reports. Management should use this data to identify performance trends, isolate geographic areas with systemic delays, and inform immediate operational adjustments.

3. Align Long-Term Strategic and Capital Planning with Service Objectives

- **Strategic Analysis:** Conduct a data-driven analysis to map the specific capital and infrastructure requirements (e.g., new station locations, apparatus deployment) needed to incrementally improve response times and close the gap between current baselines and optimal targets.
- **Resource Advocacy:** Incorporate identified infrastructure gaps into the County's formal capital planning process. Present data-driven business cases to key stakeholders (e.g., Finance Department, CEO, Board of Commissioners) to justify and prioritize future resource allocation and infrastructure investments.

Management Response (Fire Rescue Department):

Management Agreement with the Finding	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to Implement Action Plan
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<p>Item 1: DCFR is currently finalizing the 2025 update of the CRA/SOC and will plan to present the document to the board for approval. This step is also encouraged in the Agency Accreditation process and was planned to be undertaken by the department.</p> <p>Item 2: The department currently communicates baseline performance department wide through weekly reporting to the entire department as well as through the implementation of Power BI analytic dashboards for every chief officer in the department. This business intelligence software allows the chief officers to show station and unit level performance at any time with DCFR personnel throughout the year. The department will plan to implement the benchmark times within Power BI for comparison and evaluate how to add that to the weekly reports for the department.</p>	Implemented prior to the report being issued.



	<p>Item 3: DeKalb County Fire Rescue established a capital improvement plan during the 2016 SPLOST planning process and continually evaluates the plan as projects move forward. To this date the department has acquired land for two additional fire stations and four replacement stations as well as the addition of ten response vehicles to improve coverage and response times. The need of enhancing Fire Rescues physical resources have assisted the department to receive the second most SPLOST funding in both versions passed by voters.</p>	
<p><i>Additional Comments (if any) and/or reason for disagreement:</i></p>		

FINDING 4: EMS Vendor Did Not Meet Contractual Response Time Targets

DeKalb County contracts with a third-party vendor, American Medical Response (AMR), to provide Emergency Medical Services (EMS). The Service Level Agreement (SLA) mandates that the vendor meet specific response-time objectives for 90% of applicable calls.

- **Prior to 2025:** Penalties were assessed based on a retrospective calculation of response times.
- **Effective January 2025:** A contract extension (Amendment No. 1) was implemented, extending the agreement through June 30, 2026. This amendment shifted the penalty structure to include "Unit Hour" (capacity) deductions and "Quarterly Response Time" assessments.

Observation & Analysis

Based on our review of response-time data for the periods of September through December 2024 and January through May 2025, **the vendor did not meet the contractual 90% on-time performance requirement for any service category reviewed.**

Internal Audit recognizes that EMS response performance is influenced by complex, system-wide variables outside of the vendor's direct control, including hospital offload delays, traffic congestion, and sudden call volume surges. While performance improved following the January 2025 contract amendment, vendor performance remained below the established SLA thresholds across all priority levels:



Period	Call Priority	Contract Target	Actual Performance	Contract Requirement	Variance (Gap)
Sept – Dec 2024	Priority 1-3	< 12 Minutes	59.19%	90.00%	(30.81%)
Jan – May 2025	Priority 1	10:59	82.73%	90.00%	(7.27%)
Jan – May 2025	Priority 2-3	14:59	80.63%	90.00%	(9.37%)

The Enforcement Gap: Timing and Application of Assessments During audit discussions, management stated that contract provisions are actively enforced and that penalties are utilized as one component of a broader oversight framework, rather than as standalone corrective tools for system-wide challenges. Internal Audit agrees that financial disincentives alone cannot mitigate all operational demands; however, they remain a critical accountability lever.

Internal Audit verified that financial recoveries occur, noting an April 17, 2025, settlement letter where the vendor acknowledged—and the County received—\$1,325,250 for substandard performance covering calendar years 2023 and 2024. However, historical enforcement relied heavily on retrospective, year-end settlements. To drive immediate operational improvements and maximize the vendor's accountability, financial assessments should be levied concurrently with the performance variances as required by the contract.

Structural Contract Risks (Amendment No. 1) Our analysis of the 2025 extended contract structure revealed two systemic contract structures that may inadvertently hinder optimal vendor performance:

- **The "Incentive Gap":** The contract assesses a penalty of only \$150.00 for every required "Base Unit Hour" the vendor does not staff. If the actual operational cost to staff and run an ambulance (fuel, personnel, overhead) exceeds \$150 per hour, the vendor may be financially incentivized to pay the penalty rather than incur the higher cost of staffing the unit.
- **Quarterly Averaging:** Moving to "Quarterly" performance averaging allows weeks of severe underperformance to be mathematically diluted by better periods. This structure can delay management's ability to take swift, data-driven corrective action compared to a more frequent enforcement model.

Management Representation on Future Procurement Management represented to Internal Audit that preliminary steps and planning for the procurement and redesign of the upcoming 2026 EMS contract have already commenced. However, the current status, timeline, and scope of these procurement activities were not independently verified during this review.



Effect & Risk

- **Public Safety Exposure:** A 7% to 31% performance variance indicates a significant volume of patients waited longer than the established safety standard for advanced life support.
- **Diminished Accountability Levers:** Structural incentive gaps and delayed or diluted penalty assessments do not effectively align the vendor's financial motivations with the County's required staffing and response benchmarks.

Note on Audit Scope: Financial validation of the complex "Unit Hour" deductions and "Quarterly Performance" penalties for the current contract period (January–May 2025) was excluded from this review. Testing of these specific financial transactions has been deferred to the Contract Compliance Audit scheduled for Fiscal Year 2026.

Recommendations:

We recommend that the Fire Chief and County Management:

1. Validate and Enforce 2025 Contractual Controls in Real-Time

- Implement a routine validation process to calculate, capture, and bill for all penalties listed in the "Table of Penalties" (Amendment 1) at the frequency required by the contract, rather than relying on year-end settlements. This includes the \$1,000 per percentage point assessment for missing Quarterly Response Time targets.
- Identify and proactively bill for individual calls exceeding 29 minutes and 59 seconds. The contract imposes a \$250 penalty per occurrence for these delays. These must be assessed in addition to any quarterly performance assessments to address specific life-safety exposures that quarterly averages obscure.
- Actively track if the vendor is opting to pay the \$150/hour "daily minimum" penalty rather than staffing ambulances to monitor the impact of the incentive gap.

2. Mandate and Monitor an Operational Corrective Action Plan (CAP)

- Continue to require AMR to submit and execute formal corrective strategies specifically addressing the speed of response. This CAP must detail actionable, operational steps (e.g., dynamic deployment changes, stationing adjustments, staffing increases) to bridge the gap from current performance (~82%) to the required 90% SLA.

3. Advance the Procurement Strategy and Contract Redesign

- Ensure the initiated procurement or renegotiation process adheres to a strict timeline to guarantee a seamless transition prior to the absolute contract termination on June 30, 2026.
- Incorporate lessons learned into the ongoing planning phase to close the "Incentive Gap." Ensure that any future contracts, amendments, or RFPs set financial assessments for "Unit Hour" shortages significantly higher than the actual operational cost of staffing an ambulance. This aligns financial incentives with the County's operational goal of having fully staffed units on the road.



Management Response (Fire Rescue Department):

Management Agreement with the Finding	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to Implement Action Plan
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<p>Item 1: DCFR intends to use the quarterly process as stated in the contract. The fees for extended response times per incident are part of the current fee process of the department and have been used since the inception of the current contract extension.</p> <p>Item 2: DCFR has worked with the vendor continuously for the last seven years to improve their operational readiness and response times. In the new contract they are required to have a higher minimum number of unit hours daily as well as add a third deployment center to improve coverage. The vendor has also created a new posting plan and reworked their posting plan software to be more effective.</p> <p>Item 3: The procurement process for the new contract has been completed and will go into effect on July 1st. The \$150 daily minimum unit hour penalty has been increased to \$200 in the new contract.</p>	Implemented prior to the report being issued.
<p>Additional Comments (if any) and/or reason for disagreement:</p>		

FINDING 5: The Non-Emergency Call Handling Process Was Fragmented

The County's framework for managing non-emergency and administrative calls is fragmented, operating three distinct public contact numbers across two separate departments: the 911 emergency line, a 10-digit non-emergency number (404-294-2911) managed by the E911 Center, and the 311 Citizens Help Center for administrative matters.





Currently, this fragmented structure operates without a unified, county-wide communication strategy, creating an inefficient system that places an avoidable administrative burden on the County's critical emergency response system.

The root cause of this inefficiency is the absence of a coordinated, County-level strategy for non-emergency communications. This has led the E911 and 311 departments to operate in informational and technological silos, demonstrated by three primary factors:

- **Absence of Unified Public Education:** The 311 Center, whose core mission is to handle administrative calls, has an opportunity to expand its public education efforts to explicitly define its purpose and differentiate its services from those handled by E911.
- **Isolated Communication Strategies:** The E911 department effectively uses its website and social media to explain its own services. However, this communication occurs independently, omitting references to the 311 Center as a resource for administrative matters.
- **Inconsistent Technology:** The 311 Center uses an automated system to efficiently route calls, while the E911 non-emergency line requires a live, highly trained dispatcher to manually answer every call, including those that should have been directed to 311.

During audit discussions, 311 and E911 management expressed valid concerns regarding resource constraints. Specifically, management noted that a successful public education campaign designed to divert administrative calls to 311 could overwhelm the current staffing levels and training capabilities of the Citizens Help Center. Internal Audit acknowledges that resource capacity must be assessed and addressed prior to driving increased call volume to the 311 Center.

Effect & Risk

While E911 staff appropriately prioritize incoming emergency calls, the uncoordinated funneling of administrative calls to the E911 center introduces several significant exposures:

- **Inefficient Use of Specialized Personnel:** The current process requires highly-trained emergency dispatchers to perform basic screening and routing of administrative calls—a function already automated by another County department.
- **Increased Workload on E911 Staff:** The influx of misdirected administrative calls increases the overall workload and cognitive load on dispatchers, diverting their time and focus from their core public safety mission.
- **Public Safety Exposure:** Every moment a dispatcher is occupied with a misdirected administrative call, they are momentarily unavailable to answer an incoming 911 call. This diversion of focus creates an unnecessary exposure to delayed responses during true emergencies where seconds are critical.



Recommendations:

To ensure operational stability at the 311 Center while alleviating the burden on E911, we recommend a phased approach to system integration.

We recommend that the Deputy Chief Operating Officer of Public Safety, the 311 Citizens Help Center, and the E911 Communications Department:

Phase 1: Strategic Alignment & Capacity Assessment (Pre-Campaign)

- **Conduct a Strategic Review (DCOO):** Direct a formal review to determine the most efficient long-term structure for handling all non-emergency calls. **The final operational design remains at the discretion of executive management;** however, to assist in this assessment, the review could explore potential strategies such as, but not limited to:
 - i. **Streamline and Consolidate:** Directing administrative and non-emergency police calls to 311, leveraging its automated system and freeing up E911 staff.
 - ii. **Enhance and Automate:** Expediting the implementation of the new ESI-net system's automated call-handling features for the E911 non-emergency line to create technological parity with 311, should the current departmental structure be maintained.
- **Assess and Enhance 311 Capacity (Jointly):** Prior to launching any public education efforts, assess the specific resource, training, and logistical requirements of the 311 Center. Enhance the resource capabilities and staffing of the 311 Center to comfortably accommodate the projected influx of redirected non-emergency/administrative calls.

Phase 2: Technological Integration & Protocols

- **Establish a Formal Referral Protocol (Jointly):** Develop and implement a formal Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for efficiently transferring administrative calls that are incorrectly routed to the E911 non-emergency line, ensuring a seamless resident experience.
- **Enhance Digital Presence & Cross-Referencing:** * *311 Center:* Revamp the 311 web pages to serve as a primary information hub detailing services handled (e.g., potholes, trash collection) and hours of operation, rather than simply hosting a contact form.
- **E911 Center:** Update the E911 website and social media content to include clear explanations of the 311 Center's function, leveraging E911's high-traffic platforms to guide residents to the correct resource.



Phase 3: Public Education Rollout

- **Launch a Coordinated Public Campaign (Jointly):** *Contingent upon the successful capacity enhancements identified in Phase 1*, jointly launch a multi-platform public awareness campaign (e.g., "Right Call, Right Time"). Utilize social media, DCTV, and press releases to educate residents on the proper use of the 911 system while heavily promoting 311 for non-urgent matters.

Management Response (E911 Director):

Management Agreement with the finding	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to Implement Action Plan
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<p>Phase 1 Before any operational changes can be considered, a comprehensive, data-driven assessment of both the 911 and 311 systems must be completed.</p> <p>This assessment must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full operational overview of current 911 call types • A full operational overview of current 311 call types • A clear, agency-wide distinction between administrative and non-emergency calls • An analysis of staffing, workflows, service expectations, and resource impacts for both systems • Understanding what 311 already handles—and what it is equipped to handle—is essential before determining whether any call-routing changes would improve efficiency or degrade service. <p>Administrative Calls Administrative calls are informational in nature and do not require a police, fire, or EMS response. These calls typically include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests for copies of police reports. • Questions about county services • Court date inquiries • Information on how to pay fines or citations • General government or departmental information <p>These calls are best suited for administrative or customer service personnel, not emergency communications staff.</p> <p>Non-Emergency Calls Non-emergency calls do require a public safety response, but the situation is not urgent and does not pose an immediate threat to life or property. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property or custody exchanges 	<p>Phase 1 – 60-90 days.</p> <p>Admin Assist was approved in the FY26 budget, and we are currently in the process of adding it as an agenda item for approval by the Board of Commissioners.</p> <p>A timeframe of 3-6 months should be sufficient to assess both 911 and 311 systems.</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing or lost property • Delayed reporting of stolen items • Disputes where all parties are no longer on scene • Past-occurred incidents with no active threat <p>These calls still require dispatching police, fire, or EMS resources, but they do not meet the criteria for a 911 emergency.</p> <p>Before determining the most effective long-term call-routing structure, the following must occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive review of 911 operations – Call types, volumes, staffing, and service expectations. • Comprehensive review of 311 operations – What call types 311 currently handles, what it is designed to handle, and what gaps exist. • Clear classification framework – Formal definitions of administrative vs. non-emergency calls. • Impact analysis – Effects on response times, staffing, training, and public expectations. • Cross-department collaboration – Alignment between 911, 311, and county leadership on responsibilities and service levels. <p>While the initial strategic review indicates that routing administrative and non-emergency calls to 311 is not the most efficient long-term solution, no structural changes should be made until a complete, data-supported evaluation is conducted. A thorough assessment of both systems—and a clear understanding of what 311 currently handles—is essential to ensuring that any future decisions support operational efficiency, public safety, and high-quality service delivery.</p> <p>It is important to note that the E911 Communications Center is in the process of implementing is an additional feature of the new Apex Call Handling System called Admin Assist.</p> <p>Admin Assist uses a virtual agent to answer administrative and non-emergency calls while retaining key word recognition -such as “sick” or “injured”-to automatically transfer those calls to a live 911 operator when appropriate. This ensures that urgent situations are still handled by trained emergency personnel without overwhelming the 911 queue.</p>	
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	<p>Phase 2 Not all administrative or non-emergency calls routed to the E911 Communications Center are inappropriate. 911 operators routinely handle non-emergent but urgent requests for service that still require immediate attention. These calls must continue to be managed by trained 911 personnel.</p> <p>The types of administrative calls that 311 could reasonably handle are limited and would not significantly reduce call volume into the 911 Center.</p> <p>Additional considerations can be made once an assessment of 911 and 311 systems has been completed.</p> <p>Certain non-emergency but time-sensitive requests.</p>	<p>Phase 2 – Dependent upon the findings of the assessment.</p>
	<p>Phase 3 A public education campaign can be developed jointly by 911 and 311 once there is a clear determination of which call types 311 will handle. Educating residents on the proper use of 911 and the services available through 311 will be essential to reducing misrouted calls.</p> <p>A coordinated outreach strategy will help guide the public toward the correct resources, but only after operational responsibilities are clearly defined once the assessment of both 911 and 311 systems has been conducted.</p>	<p>Phase 3 – Dependent upon the findings of the assessment</p>
<p>Additional Comments (if any) and/or reason for disagreement:</p>		

FINDING 6: Lack of Formal Emergency Arrangements and Interagency Policies and Procedures to Guide Operations Between Neighboring Municipalities During Periods of Emergencies.

There is an absence of formally documented mutual aid agreements and interagency policies with neighboring municipalities. While County and its neighboring municipalities have informal arrangements that identify which municipalities are responsible for responding to various incident types within a specific geolocation, our review found no written protocols to guide a coordinated response during a large-scale emergency, such as a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) becoming





inoperable. Industry best practices require these formal agreements to ensure operational continuity and a seamless regional response during a crisis.

This reliance on informal arrangements instead of formal, executed agreements creates a significant and unnecessary public safety risk. In a crisis that takes one or more PSAPs offline, the lack of pre-defined procedures would lead to:

- **Operational Chaos**, with no clear plan for how to redirect potentially thousands of incoming 911 calls to the appropriate backup center.
- **System Overload**, as unprepared neighboring centers would be unable to absorb a sudden, massive increase in call volume, leading to dropped calls and life-threatening delays.
- **Failure to Dispatch**, resulting in an inability to send first responders in a timely manner, directly increasing the risk of loss of life, escalation of injuries, and destruction of property.

Recommendations:

To mitigate these risks and align with the best practices in industry, we recommend that County management, in coordination with the E911 Communications Department, take the following actions:

- **Initiate Formal Discussions with Neighboring Jurisdictions.** Immediately engage with the leadership of all neighboring municipal PSAPs to establish a working group dedicated to creating a regional E911 mutual aid plan.
- **Develop and Execute Formal Agreements.** Based on those discussions, develop and implement formal **Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) or Joint Emergency Operations Agreements** with neighboring municipalities. These coordinated plans must, at a minimum:
 - Identify shared hazards and risks.
 - Define joint operational protocols to address high-risk areas, including technical procedures for call rerouting.
 - Align regional response strategies.
 - Define clear command structures and roles during a joint response.
- **Conduct Joint Training and Exercises.** Once agreements are in place, schedule and conduct periodic joint training exercises, including tabletop and full-scale drills. This will test the procedures, ensure all participating agencies are prepared to execute the plan effectively, and identify any areas for improvement.



Management Response (E911 Director):

<i>Management Agreement with the finding</i>	<i>Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding</i>	<i>Estimated Timeline to Implement Action Plan</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	Work is currently underway to finalize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Atlanta to support coordinated operations and mutual aid between jurisdictions. In addition, neighboring jurisdictions will be contacted to initiate and develop similar MOUs with DeKalb E911. These agreements will help formalize expectations, strengthen regional collaboration, and ensure continuity of service during cross-jurisdictional incidents or periods of operational strain.	60-90 to allow for the approval process for the different jurisdictions.
<p><i>Additional Comments (if any) and/or reason for disagreement:</i></p>		

FINDING 7: Lack of a Formal and Tested Disaster Recovery Plan

The E911 Communications Department is operating without a comprehensive, formally documented Disaster Recovery (DR) plan, creating a significant risk of a complete and prolonged failure of emergency services. While certain business continuity components are in place—such as daily offsite data backups and backup power for the primary facility, these individual elements do not constitute a viable recovery strategy. Industry standards for critical public safety operations mandate a robust, documented, and annually tested DR plan to ensure the timely restoration of services, which the department currently lacks.

The department's focus has been on individual components rather than developing a holistic, end-to-end strategy for operational recovery from a catastrophic event, such as the complete loss of the primary E911 center. Crucially, there is no evidence that a full recovery of systems from backups has ever been tested. This absence of a formal and tested DR plan leads to severe potential consequences in the event of a disaster like a fire, flood, or major cyber-attack:

- **Inability to Restore Operations:** Without documented procedures and a designated recovery site, the department would be unable to restore its systems in a timely manner, if at all.
- **Complete Service Outage:** This would result in the inability to answer any incoming 911 calls or dispatch emergency responders across the County.
- **Catastrophic Public Safety Failure:** A prolonged outage of E911 services would directly and severely increase the risk of **preventable loss of life, escalation of injuries, and destruction of property.**

Recommendations:

We recommend that the E911 Communications Department develop and implement a formal Disaster Recovery program. This program should include:



1. **Develop a Comprehensive Disaster Recovery Plan:** Create a formal, documented DR plan that outlines, at a minimum:
 - o Defined Recovery Time Objectives (RTO) and Recovery Point Objectives (RPO).
 - o Clear roles and responsibilities for a designated recovery team.
 - o Step-by-step procedures for restoring all critical systems, including the new ESI-net system, once implemented.
 - o Identification of, and agreements for, a viable alternate operating site (a "hot" or "warm" site) where operations can be resumed.
 - o A crisis communication plan for internal and external stakeholders.
2. **Implement a Mandatory Annual Testing Schedule:** The plan is not complete until it is tested. Management should:
 - o Conduct annual recovery tests of all critical data from offsite backups to ensure their integrity and viability.
 - o Perform, at least annually, a tabletop exercise or a full failover drill to test the procedures and train the recovery team.
 - o Document the results of all tests and create corrective action plans to address any identified deficiencies.

Management Response (E911 Director):

<i>Management Agreement with the Finding</i>	<i>Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding</i>	<i>Estimated Timeline to Implement Action Plan</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	A departmental evacuation plan is currently in place; however, it is outdated and requires revision to reflect current operational needs and facility configurations. To address this gap, a comprehensive Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) is now being implemented. This plan incorporates all elements outlined in the audit team's recommendations, including updated evacuation procedures, alternate site operations, system restoration priorities, and staffing continuity measures. An annual testing and exercise schedule will also be incorporated into the COOP to ensure ongoing readiness, validation of procedures, and continuous improvement.	60-90 days so that the plan can be tested to ensure that there aren't any gaps.
<i>Additional Comments (if any) and/or reason for disagreement:</i>		



APPENDICES

Appendix I – Objective, Scope, And Methodology

Objective:

The objective of this audit was to determine whether internal controls over the County's E911 call handling and response processes were adequately designed and operating as intended.

Scope

Our audit focused on E911 call data, response time and procedures during period September 1, 2024, to May 31, 2025. We also considered current procedures as at the time of audit.

Methodology

Our methodology included, but was not limited to, the following:

- Interviewed relevant County personnel.
- Visited sites and observed the County's Communications department and E911 facilities.
- Reviewed current processes and procedures.
- Researched related best practices.
- Tested a sample of processes for compliance with current procedures and/or best practices.
- Reviewed supporting documentation.



Appendix II – Management Response



DEKALB COUNTY
E-9-1-1 communications
1960 W. Exchange Place, 5th Floor Tucker,
GA 30084
678-406-7944



Carina R. Swain
E911 Communications Director
Email: crswain@dekalbcountyga.gov
Phone: 470-605-6835

March 24, 2026

Lavois Campbell
Chief Audit Executive
Office of Independent Internal Audit 1300
Commerce Drive, Suite 300
Decatur, Georgia 30030

RE: Management Response to "Audit of E911 Call Response Times" IA-2024-0242-PS

Dear Mr. Campbell:

In accordance with DeKalb County, Georgia – Code of Ordinances / Organizational Act Section 10A- Independent Internal Audit, this is our response to the audit named above provided in this document. As required by the ordinance, our response includes 1) a statement regarding our agreement or disagreement along with reasons for any disagreement, 2) our plans for implementing solutions to issues identified, and 3) the timetable to complete such plans.

If you have any questions about this response, please contact me. Sincerely,

Carina Swain
Director, DeKalb County Government E911 Communications

Carina Swain Digitally signed by Carina Swain
Date: 2026.03.24 22:20:10 -04'00'

Interim Fire Chief Melvin K. Carter
DeKalb County Fire Rescue (Finding 3 and 4)



Appendix III – Abbreviations and Definitions

- **ALI (Automatic Location Identification)** This is the system that automatically provides the **caller's location data** (e.g., their address) and phone number to the 911 dispatcher.
- **ANI** Automatic Number Identification
- **CAD (Computer-Aided Dispatch)** This is the computer system that dispatchers use to manage everything after a call is answered. It takes information from **ALI** and **VIPER** and helps the call taker log the call, assign police or fire units, track their status, and coordinate the response.
- **Call Processing Time** This refers to the time from the moment an E911 call is answered to waiting in queue for dispatch.
- **E911 (Enhanced 911)** This refers to an emergency calling system that, unlike the original 911, automatically provides the call taker with the **caller's phone number and physical location**.
- **EFD** Emergency Fire Dispatching
- **EMD** Emergency Medical Dispatching
- **EMS** Emergency Medical Services, which comprises of both basic life support (BLS) and advanced life support (ALS)
- **EPD** Emergency Police Dispatching
- **ETL (Extract, Transform, Load)** This is a standard **IT** process for **moving data between different computer systems**. In this case, it refers to how data is extracted from the phone system (**VIPER**), potentially transformed into a compatible format, and loaded into the dispatch system (**CAD**).
- **IT (Information Technology)** This refers to the department or staff responsible for managing the County's computer systems, software, networks, and data security.
- **MIS (Management Information System)** In this context, MIS is a general term for a system that **collects and organizes data from various sources** (like **CAD** and **VIPER**) to generate reports for management to use for analysis and decision-making.
- **OIIA (Office of Independent Internal Audit)** This is the internal audit function for the organization (DeKalb County).
- **PSAP** This refers to the Public Safety Answering Point or the E911 call center facility.
- **Response Times** This refers to the timestamp for the time a unit is dispatched to the on scene time.
- **Travel Time** This refers to the timestamps from the time a responding unit is enroute to arrival on scene time.
- **VIPER (Voice over IP for Emergency Response)** This is the brand name of the **telephony (phone) system** used to answer and route 911 calls. It's the first point of contact and captures initial data like call time and caller ID before passing it to the **CAD** system.



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April 20, 2026

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Office of Independent Internal Audit

April 20, 2026

Date

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Office of Independent Internal Audit

April 20, 2026

Date

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Lavois Campbell

Lavois Campbell, CIA, CISA, CFE, CGA
Chief Audit Executive
Office of Independent Internal Audit

April 20, 2026

Date



STATEMENT OF ACCORDANCE

Statement of Accordance

The mission of DeKalb County is to make the priorities of the citizens of DeKalb County; the priorities of County government - by achieving a safer DeKalb, building stronger neighborhoods, creating a fiscally accountable and more efficient County government, and uniting the citizens of DeKalb County.

The mission of the Office of Independent Internal Audit is to provide independent, objective, insightful, nonpartisan assessment of the stewardship or performance of policies, programs, and operations in promoting efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity in DeKalb County.

This performance audit was prepared pursuant to DeKalb County, Georgia – Code Ordinances/Organizational Act Section 10A- Independent Internal Audit. We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

This report is intended for the use of the agency to which it was disseminated and may contain information that is exempt from disclosure under applicable law. Do not release without prior coordination with the Office of Independent Internal Audit.

Please address inquiries regarding this report to the Office of Independent Internal Audit at 404-831-7946.