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## Office of Unified Communications 911 Reform Status: Minimal Progress

*Issues remain in staff supervision, call handling, efficient location identification and more*

**September 9, 2022 (WASHINGTON)** Of the 31 recommendations for reform of emergency operations of the District’s Office of Unified Communications (OUC) published last October, only one recommendation has been completed and minimal progress has been made on 24 or 77% of the others, according to the first OUC 911 reform status report published today by the Office of the D.C. Auditor (ODCA).

Two of the original recommendations for improvement have no observed progress and issues identified in ODCA’s previous audit—including call-taking confusion, glitches in dispatch operations, and insufficient management follow-up on after-action reviews—appear to remain.

“There is no more important government service than responding to medical emergencies,” said D.C. Auditor Kathy Patterson. “And we are failing to meet the needs of District residents. Period. “

The report’s authors, public safety communications consulting firm Federal Engineering, Inc. (FE), find that issues that continue to challenge OUC are “rooted in established processes and habits that will need to be changed to improve service to citizens and responders serviced by OUC.”

While there are indications of effort and movement within some areas, the status of some recommendations are highlighted below:

- Evaluate and reduce the number of event types and associated priorities to reduce and assign the correct priority to event call types. **Minimal progress**
- Streamline the call entry data in the computer-aided dispatch system to allow call-takers to more effectively code calls. **Minimal progress**
- Reduce improvising and adlibbing by adhering to the scripted questions in the criteria-based dispatch (CBD) call processing standard to ensure call-takers follow all the scripted protocols in the CBD system. **Minimal progress**
- Add an automated dispatch function to the computer-aided dispatch system and the Fire and Emergency Services (FEMS) dispatch process to enhance and improve the ability of the FEMS dispatchers to meet the National Fire Protection Association Standard of 60-second notification to units. **Minimal progress**
- Develop and assign a minimum of three supervisors around the clock on the operations floor with assigned discipline focus on call-taking, MPD dispatch, and FEMS dispatch to allow supervisors to perform their most critical function—on the floor, in-person supervision of personnel. **Minimal progress**

- Determine if there are additional applications that would augment or replace translation services to provide necessary additional certified bilingual call-takers; due date for the completion of this effort is September 30, 2022. **No observed progress**
- Enforce Office of Professional Standards and Development policy for returning completed quality assurance reviews for follow up to ensure inappropriate behavior is not repeated; floor supervisors are expected to provide this follow-up within a two-day window. **Minimal progress**

FE did its first report for ODCA after news stories and Advisory Neighborhood Commission complaints detailed OUC failures to handle calls timely and send first responders to the correct locations, and to respond to the National Transportation Safety Board's call for an audit of OUC's call processing times following the fatal 2015 Metro smoke incident.

The October 2021 report assessed the effectiveness of OUC against national standards, including a review of call metrics, a sample of 911 call recordings, an evaluation of OUC culture and training, and a review of OUC's technological capabilities and internal investigations.

ODCA brought back FE to perform a multi-phase follow-up on the original audit's recommendations. The first phase, summarized in the report published today, comprised a six-month effort reviewing the status, progress, and future plans for each of the previous report's recommendations.

The second phase of the follow-up by FE, to be published later this year, will include data analysis for specific recommendations and a sampling of 911 historical data, 911 recordings, computer-assisted dispatch history, and voice recorder data for radio dispatches, along with an evaluation of in-progress plans and future plans to implement the recommendations outlined in the initial report.

It will also evaluate what transpired on July 3, 2022, and August 9, 2022, when young District residents Sevyn Schatzman-Chase and Aaron Boyd, Jr., respectively, lost their lives. As was the case in the October 2021 report, the FE team will review the agency's after-action analysis and corrective actions taken to address shortcomings in each incident.

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