

14-0600-S110

ADOPTED BUDGET RECOMMENDATION

REFER to the Public Safety Committee for further report, 2014-15 Budget Memo No. 95 regarding the consolidation of public safety dispatch operations.

(Pursuant to adoption of the Mayor's 2014-15 Budget on May 21, 2014)

MAY 21 2014

REFERRED TO

PUBLIC SAFETY

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Memo No. 95

Date: May 7, 2014

To: Budget and Finance Committee

From: Gerry F. Miller, Chief Legislative Analyst Subject: **CONSOLIDATION OF PUBLIC SAFETY DISPATCH OPERATIONS IN OTHER MUNICIPALITIES**

As directed by the Budget and Finance Committee, this Office reviewed the efforts and issues encountered by various municipalities, including the cities of New York, Boston and Long Beach, in merging and consolidating their public safety (police and fire) dispatch functions. Some agencies have merged only their computer aided dispatch (CAD) system, and some agencies have merged both their CAD system and the associated staffing and operations for their dispatch functions. In addition, some jurisdictions have separate agencies responsible for delivering fire response and emergency medical services (EMS).

The following table provides a brief overview of municipalities that were researched:

Jurisdiction	Merged CAD?	Merged CAD & Staffing?	When Initiated?	Separate Fire & EMS Agencies?	Evidence of Issues?	Source
New York	Yes	No	2004	Yes	Yes	City Website ¹²³
Boston	Yes	No	2008	Yes	No	City Website ⁴
Long Beach	Yes	In progress	2013	No	No	Job Description ⁵

The following is brief background information on the municipalities listed above:

New York

There have been significant issues with the implementation of the unified 911 center, including a shared CAD, in New York City. The consolidation was designed to address technology, personnel and operations issues. There have been problems with all three facets of the consolidation. While Police, Fire, and EMS dispatchers were relocated to the same facilities and are now utilizing the same technology, multiple consultants and the New York City Comptroller's Office have found some serious issues

¹ http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/FM11_107A.pdf (Comptroller audit 1)

² http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/7A11_104.pdf (Comptroller audit 2)

³ http://pdf.911dispatch.com.s3.amazonaws.com/nyc_911_report_may2012.pdf (Consultant report)

⁴ <http://www.cityofboston.gov/ems/divisions/dispatchoperations.asp>

⁵ <http://agency.governmentjobs.com/longbeach/default.cfm?action=viewclassspec&classSpecID=8870&agency=545>

with the implementation. Some of these issues include technological problems, such as reports that the system sometimes sends firefighter or police officers to incorrect addresses, that the system has been subject to persistent crashes, and the system has occasionally dropped emergency calls. Reports indicate that these problems may not have been addressed in a timely manner. In addition to technological problems, the City Comptroller and independent consultants have indicated that while dispatchers have been co-located, they are not fully integrated, and they have not fully merged their dispatch services. It has been found that some operators waste time and create confusion by failing to follow the standardized scripts, and some have spent an inordinate amount of call time asking repeated questions on the location of the caller instead of the nature of the emergency. Finally, there have been significant cost overruns totaling approximately \$1 billion, and extensive delays in implementation.

Boston

The City of Boston consolidated its CAD system in September 2013, and its Fire, Police and EMS departments all utilize the unified system. Further, EMS and Police dispatchers have been co-located at the Boston 911 call center. The EMS Department operates the CAD system for all users. All of Boston's public safety departments have the ability to communicate with each other quickly, but dispatch operations and call-taking remains a separate function for each department. Boston's system is relatively new, and no significant issues with the consolidated CAD system have been indicated.

Long Beach

The City of Long Beach recently initiated the consolidation of its police and fire dispatch systems and operations. The consolidation will result in all emergency communications and dispatch staff being fully trained in answering law enforcement, fire services or medical calls under the Department of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Communication, working closely with the Police and Fire Departments. As of May 2014, implementation of the consolidation is still in progress.

Additional Comments

It should be noted that additional time and effort is needed to fully assess the feasibility and challenges faced by other municipalities, in relation to any proposed consolidation between the Los Angeles Police and Fire Departments' dispatch centers.

As indicated by the Mayor's Office during the 2014-15 budget hearings, the funding allocated in the General City Purposes (GCP) Fund for consolidating dispatch operations is primarily for staffing associated with the "Public Safety Technology Group," which will be examining technology upgrades in the Police, Fire, and Emergency Management Departments. The Mayor's Office indicated that the Public Safety Technology Group will report jointly to the Police Chief and Fire Chief.

Should an effort to consolidate the dispatch operations for the Los Angeles Police and Fire Department be advanced further, the Council will have the ability to review and approve any such proposal based on funding, staffing, operations, and technology considerations.

GFM:SMT:MF:JD

Question No. 264