

# FOLLOW-UP REPORT: EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER OVERTIME (REPORT 2018-01)

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## Background

The County Auditor conducts follow-up reviews for each audit recommendation in an effort to assess whether recommendations that the audited department agreed to make have been implemented. During follow-up reviews, the County Auditor works with department leadership to determine the implementation status. The County Auditor makes this determination based on initial information shared by the audited department, supporting documents and data provided by the department, and subsequent interviews and observations. The County Auditor cannot compel implementation of recommendations but can provide guidance regarding what constitutes implementation.

Government Auditing Standards do not cover follow-up reviews. However, the County Auditor endeavors to apply the principles of the Standards to follow-up activities. The County Auditor's follow-up work is informed especially by the principles articulated in the following key standards: evidence; documentation of auditor's work; communication with an audited entity; reporting of audit work to those charged with management and governance; and auditor professional judgment.

The County Auditor employs a risk-based approach to follow-up work. The County Auditor requires verification of the implementation status for all recommendations that are initially reported by management to be *implemented*. The County Auditor does not perform verification work to confirm the status of recommendations originally reported to be *partially implemented* or *not implemented*. However, recommendations originally reported by management to be implemented may be changed to a lower implementation status based on the County Auditor's review.

## Summary:

This report presents the results of the County Auditor's follow-up review conducted on the Emergency Communications Center Overtime audit (Report FY2018-01) during the Spring and Summer of 2021. The audit contained 13 recommendations. Of these 13 recommendations, the follow-up review found three to be fully *implemented* (1.1, 1.4, 1.7). For these recommendations no more follow-up work will be performed.

The remaining recommendations are all *partially implemented* or *not implemented*. Specifically:

- Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management (PSCEM) disagreed with one recommendation (1.5 A) at the audit's issuance. Therefore, no follow-up work on this recommendation has been performed.
- Three recommendations were determined to be *partially implemented*.

- Six recommendations were determined to be *not implemented*. Included here is one recommendation (2.3) PSCEM management newly disagreed with during this round of follow-up. The PSCEM Director took office just after the audit was originally issued. Management retains the right to change its position on implementing audit recommendations. This position is equivalent to accepting the underlying risk to be addressed by the recommendation. Since PSCEM management changed its position on implementing the recommendation after audit issuance, this recommendation will retain a *not implemented* status.

As shown further in the report matrix below, there are numerous recommendations that already may be implemented but for which sufficient supporting documentation was not provided during this round of follow-up. Based on discussion with the PSCEM Director most or all of this documentation from ECC is anticipated during the next round of follow-up in January 2022. This report provides narrative from the PSCEM Director regarding work performed to implement the recommendations, as well as providing the County Auditor's independent conclusions based on the review of the supporting documentation provided. All determinations shown in the "Status" column were made by the County Auditor.

#### Closing Note:

The County Auditor appreciates the time and cooperation provided during the follow-up review by the Director of PSCEM and members of his staff. This follow-up report is being provided to PSCEM, members of County management, the County Board, and the Audit Committee. The report will be issued publicly on the County Auditor's webpage on August 17, 2021.



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| RECOMMENDATION  | ORIGINAL EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE | STATUS                | 2021 MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION  | COUNTY AUDITOR'S DISCUSSION  |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|---|--|
| <p><i>Recommendation 1.1:</i> To help achieve greater staff flexibility, ECC management should prioritize completing training for the ECT IIs closest to completing their fifth discipline of training, even if that means incurring short-term overtime.</p> | November 2018                     | Implemented           | Implemented. We continue to prioritize complete training for those closest to achieving ECT III status.   | County Auditor confirmed implementation. No additional follow-up is required.  |
| <p><i>Recommendation 1.2:</i> Once the ECT IIs closest to completing their fifth discipline of training have advanced to ECT III, the CTOs should be redeployed to focus on training the staff who are likely to advance to ECT III most quickly.</p>         | November 2018                     | Partially Implemented | Implemented. Management has created an ECC Training Academy (Training Manager and two ECC Trainers) to focus on expediting the initial training of ECTs, as well as creating a constant programmatic resource for training advancement, certification management, and on-the-job training and mentorship.   | Additional documentation is needed to demonstrate that the audit issue of needing to accelerate the training process from ECT I to ECT III compared to the developmental timeframe in place during the audit has been addressed. |
| <p><i>Recommendation 1.3:</i> ECC management should reduce the current training timeline, perhaps to as little as twelve months.</p>  | July 2018                         | Not Implemented       | Implemented. As stated previously the establishment of an academy approach and the ECC Training Academy model will expedite the timeline for initial training for staff. In addition, the ECT training program adjusted to first train ECTs on Police and Fire Department Dispatch and then move on to call-taking. By providing dispatch training first, recently hired ECTs will be able to fill common staffing shortfalls within the dispatch position rather than leverage Police and Fire | Documentation is needed to demonstrate that the audit issue of needing to accelerate the training process from ECT I to ECT III compared to the developmental timeframe in place during the audit has been addressed.            |

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|  |                                   |                       | Department staff. Leveraging internal ECC staff to fulfill shortfalls prior to other public safety department staff will significantly decrease the hourly rate spent on overtime.   |  |
| <i>Recommendation 1.4:</i> ECC management should work to make as many of the new ECT Ills into CTOs as are interested and capable.                             | July 2018                         | Implemented           | Implemented. All employees interested and eligible to be CTOs are currently CTOs   | County Auditor confirmed implementation. No additional follow-up is required.  |
| <i>Recommendation 1.5(A):</i> Other ECC options for consideration include: using ECC management personnel to fill in potential interruptions in training time. | N/A                               | N/A                   |  | ECC management disagreed with part A of Recommendation 1.5. This position is equivalent to accepting the underlying risk to be addressed by the recommendation. Therefore, no additional status report is needed unless management has changed its position on implementation. |
| <i>Recommendation 1.5(B):</i> Using contractors to help cover training on an as needed basis to mitigate against interruptions in training.                    | September 2018                    | Partially Implemented | Implemented. The creation of the ECC Training Unit and changes to the training program are designed to mitigate against interruptions in training and following analysis and consideration, represented a better path to achieve the goal than the use of contractors. | Documentation is needed regarding structure and responsibilities of the ECC Training Unit.   |
| <i>Recommendation 1.6:</i> Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management (PSCEM) management should   | August 2018                       | Partially Implemented | Implemented. PSCEM has established a new position and completed interviews for a Human Resource Business Partner (HRBP) that will lead   | The HRBP description was approved. The position has not yet been filled. Further, it is not clear that the HRBP position would develop a recruitment   |

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| consider the hiring of a contractor on a short-term basis to focus on developing a recruitment and hiring strategy, including but not limited to: a profile of a successful ECC operator; ways to target the right applicants in the recruiting process; benchmarking of other successful organizations in recruiting and retaining staff; changes to the hiring process that may be needed to attract and retain the right staff; and impediments to retaining current staff. |                                   |                 | recruitments effort for PSCEM. As stated previously, efficiencies and accessibility improvements realized throughout the FY2021 hiring cycle has resulted in larger applicant and hiring pools than previously observed. The HRBP will continue to coordinate with the Human Resources Department recruiting services and PSCEM's engagement efforts to target a greater qualified candidate pool to alleviate staffing shortfalls in a budget conscious manner in FY2022. | and hiring strategy, or if such a strategy has already been developed to address the aspects of the recommendation. |
| <i>Recommendation 1.7:</i> As part of the process to develop a recruiting and hiring strategy, ECC management should also begin systematically conducting exit interviews of its staff, including call center operators and supervisors, documenting the results, and periodically sharing the results and analysis with PSCEM management.   | July 2018                         | Implemented     | Implemented. PSCEM continues to conduct exit interviews. In addition, ECT's who leave employment are offered the opportunity to have an exit interview with the ECC Administrator or Department Director.  | County Auditor confirmed implementation. No additional follow-up is required.                                       |
| <i>Recommendation 2.1:</i> PSCEM management should work to prioritize implementation of the EMIT recommendations regarding renaming the non-emergency line;  | May 2018                          | Not Implemented | Implemented. Work from the Police Practices Group (PPG) convened by the County Manager reviewed similar areas of concern. Countywide efforts still support the appropriate use of the  | Documentation is needed regarding the status of the EMIT recommendations.   |

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| identifying areas where the non-emergency number can be removed from the County website; and creating an announcement on the non-emergency line clarifying its purpose for callers before the call is connected to ECC.   |                                   |                 | non-emergency line and efforts such as the 7999 COVID hotline continue to help reduce unnecessary call volume to the ECC.  |   |
| <i>Recommendation 2.2:</i> PSCEM management should determine which of EMIT non-emergency line recommendations it plans to implement. Management should then task one of its officials to formally track and periodically report on the implementation status of each of the EMIT recommendations. | May 2018                          | Not Implemented | Implemented. PSCEM management continue to evaluate call volume on regular intervals and monitor and adjust as appropriate.   | Documentation is needed regarding the status of the EMIT recommendations.   |
| <i>Recommendation 2.3:</i> PSCEM management should consider a pilot program to bring in community volunteers for training and deployment in handling non-emergency calls, to help further reduce the burden on ECC operators.   | December 2018                     | Not Implemented | Following additional analysis and review it has been determined that the use of volunteers is not feasible to reduce the burden on ECC operators. For multiple reasons, including some legal and liability concerns, we will no longer pursue implementation of this recommendation. | The PSCEM Director took office just after the audit was originally issued. Management retains the right to change its position on implementing audit recommendations.<br><br>This position is equivalent to accepting the underlying risk to be addressed by the recommendation. Therefore, no additional status report is needed unless management has changed its position on implementation. |

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| <p><i>Recommendation 3.1:</i> PSCEM management should work with the Police Department, Fire Department, and the Department of Management and Finance, to evaluate assigning police and fire personnel to ECC as a duty station, with their pay taken on by the Police and Fire Departments.</p> | <p>December 2018</p>              | <p>Not Implemented</p> | <p>Implemented. The Police Department has established an official ECC Operation Liaison. Currently two senior members of the Operations Division serve as liaisons. Additionally, the Fire Department has an assigned Uniformed Fire Officer as a liaison. Further, both the Police and Fire Departments committed to and have increased the number of personnel cross trained to help for details and overtime.</p> | <p>Documentation is needed to identify who serves in these ACPD and ACFD liaison positions or document the increase in the number of personnel cross trained to help for details and overtime.</p> |
| <p><i>Recommendation 3.2:</i> PSCEM and ECC management should assess their specific short-term and long-term needs regarding improved data access, and prioritize additional data access needs over authorized staff increases in the next DPSCM budget proposal.</p>                           | <p>September 2019</p>             | <p>Not Implemented</p> | <p>Implemented. PSCEM has created new positions for department wide data access, analysis and program management. Further, new ECC systems, including the new VESTA Call Processing System, provide new data management and data insights capabilities.</p>  | <p>Documentation is needed to support the actions asserted in the management discussion.</p>   |