



March 16, 2018

Chris Horton, Ph.D., CIA, CGAP
County Auditor
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300
Arlington VA, 22201

Dear Dr. Horton,

The Department of Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management is pleased to respond to the Emergency Communications Center (ECC) Overtime Performance Audit Report. We would like to thank you for your thoroughness in understanding the unique environment of the ECC and for your diligence in maintaining constant communication with us throughout the process.

In the review of the ECC operations and overtime, your audit report produced the following three findings:

1. More efficient training processes will likely reduce overtime
2. Non-Emergency calls are a growing problem, creating unnecessary work
3. Additional authorized positions not needed at this time and data access should be a higher priority.

Across these three findings, are twelve recommendations that are designed to change the current course of the performance in those areas and result in less overtime being spent within the ECC. While the department agrees with most of the recommendations, as well as the concept that short-term gains must be realized, we must also assess the long-term impact of these efforts and analyze ways to permanently change the underlying conditions that cause these recommendations to be needed.

Finding One: More Efficient Training Processes Will Likely Reduce Overtime

There are seven recommendations under this finding that range in focus but mostly on changing the training process to ensure a quicker, more efficient process that results in more staff moving to ECT III status to achieve the greatest flexibility in terms of skill-sets, as well as providing the ECC with more candidates eligible for Certified Training Officer (CTO) positions to train other staff.

The ECC agrees that steps must be taken in order to make the training cycle more efficient in terms of time to move employees through the various disciplines, however these steps must be taken in concert with other management practices not addressed to ensure that the overall quality of the training process is not compromised for the sake of quantity. The department will look to

implement the recommendations where we agree laid out the in the following pages along with steps and timelines enumerated in each response. The ECC view these recommendations as short term in nature and is evaluating its approach to training that may result in sustainable reductions in overtime.

Finding Two: Non-Emergency Calls are a Growing Problem, Creating Unnecessary Work

There are three recommendations under non-emergency calls that are recommended by this report, and most of the steps taken to address these are already underway. We are working with County working groups and the Communications and Public Engagement teams to implement key elements from the EMIT report; two out of three recommendations identified will be completed by the end of the fiscal year. The final recommendation regarding volunteers will be explored as to its viability within the center.,

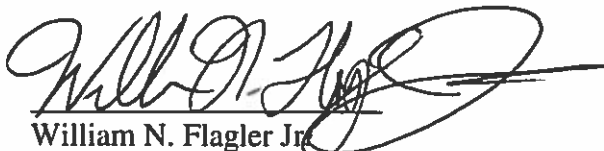
Finding Three: Additional Authorized Positions Not Needed at this Time; Data Should be a Higher Priority

Over the past few fiscal years, the ECC has requested and received authorized positions to address staffing shortages. These investments have increased authorized staffing levels and led to short-term improvement in percent of shifts at minimum staffing, and helped sustain the center when turnover rates increased. While there are still struggles that exist in staffing due to the various items mentioned, staff resources are a critical component to operational effectiveness.

When analyzing the various needs for resources, staff rely on data from various systems to help inform decisions, however those systems are not often integrated, nor is the data available in real-time for instant analysis. The ECC agrees that the presence of easily accessible data would help supervisors and staff adjust various processes that could positively impact staffing, however we do not believe that one recommendation should be at the expense of another. Given the complexity and significant cost of ECC systems, the viability of finding a perfect solution for data may be more challenging than any of the identified recommendations.

We agree that examining the possibility of police and fire personal being assigned to the ECC as a duty station is an option but it requires the allocation of new positions and this is outside our scope of authority.

In closing, we would like to thank you again for your thoroughness and diligence in working with us on this report, its recommendations, and its action plan. We look forward to beginning the process of implementing many of these recommendations, seeing results, and planning for the long-term sustainable performance of the center.



William N. Flagler Jr.
Acting Director

Finding 1: More efficient training process will likely reduce overtime

Recommendation 1.1: 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.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion
Agree	<p>ECC Staff: Deputy Administrator of Operations and ECC Training Manager</p> <p>Support Staff: DPSCEM Support Staff</p>	<p>Plan Begin: May, 2018 Plan Complete: November 2018</p> <p>Because of the findings of this audit review, as well as based on research and analysis by staff, ECC is taking steps to separate the recruitment and retention functions from the training functions, and allow each to operate with renewed focus. This approach will begin in the spring using existing ECC resources. Staff will report back within six months and next steps for the remainder of the fiscal year.</p> <p>ECC Staff agree with the recommendation of prioritizing training over other matters to reduce overtime. However, staff views this recommendation as a short-term solution and is evaluating its approach to training that may result in sustainable reductions in overtime.</p>

Recommendation 1.2: 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.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	<p>ECC Staff: ECC Training Manager</p> <p>Support Staff: DPSCEM Support Staff</p>	<p>Plan Begin: May, 2018 Plan Complete: November 2018</p> <p>Based on conversations had during this audit process, ECC will institute a twelve-hour training mode split among 2 CTOs to increase efficiency and decrease training cycle time by adding hours to the training time allotted to staff.</p> <p>ECC management agrees that training of personnel who learn and advance quickly is an efficient mechanism to advance personnel to the ECT III level.</p> <p>ECC management believes that this is a good short term focus when there are no ECT Trainees, however when new staff comes on board, the priority must remain with ECT-Ts,</p>

		especially during the probationary year.
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Recommendation 1.3: ECC management should reduce the current training timeline, perhaps to as little as twelve months.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	ECC Staff: Deputy Administrator of Operations and ECC Training Manager Support: DPSCEM Support Staff	Plan Begin – May, 2018 Plan in Place – July, 2018 Action Plan: Evaluate current approach to training.

Recommendation 1.4: ECC management should work to make as many of the new ECT IIIs into CTOs as are interested and capable.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	ECC Staff: ECC Training Manager Support Staff: DPSCEM Support Staff	Plan Begin: May 2018 Plan in Place: July 2018 New training cycles to move staff into ECT III positions is strongly encouraged to increase the skill sets available on shift. ECT III designation qualifies an individual as eligible to become a CTO, and ECC will follow established processes to determine if staff has the experience and skills necessary to add to the training cadre. ECC management must also balance the full implications of additional CTOs with the reality that once the current environment of staffing shortages is stabilized, there will most likely not be a need for a cadre of more than 16 CTOs to maintain routine training needs. However, further evaluation and study is needed to validate that number.

Recommendation 1.5: Other ECC options for consideration include: 1) using ECC management personnel to fill in potential interruptions in training time; 2) using contractors to help cover training on an as needed basis to mitigate against interruptions in training.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
1.5.1 Disagree	1.5.2	Plan Begin: May 2018

1.5.2 Agree	<p>ECC Staff: ECC Recruitment Manager</p> <p>Support Staff: DPSCEM Support Staff</p>	<p>Plan Complete: September 2018</p> <p>1.5.1: Disagree: If ECC management, which already assists with filling vacant positions on the floor as available, are tasked with additional training duties, this further prevents them from accomplishing their normally assigned tasks.</p> <p>1.5.2: Agree: We agree with the use of the contractors, and we are looking to collaborate with regional partners who have similar needs. ECC staff will work with purchasing staff in DMF and Public Safety to draft requirement for contracted training plans.</p>
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Recommendation 1.6: Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management (PSCEM) management should 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.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	<p>ECC Staff: ECC Recruitment Manager</p> <p>Support Staff: DPSCEM Support Staff</p>	<p>Plan Begin: May, 2018 Plan Completion: August, 2018</p> <p>ECC is reclassifying a vacant position into a Training Manager in order to split the duties of Recruitment, Retention and Training into two separate, discrete functions and positions. This position can work with an external subject matter expert or contractor on strategy to maximize effective recruitment and retention.</p>

Recommendation 1.7: Recommendation 1.7: 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.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	<p>ECC Staff: ECC Recruitment Manager</p>	<p>Plan Begin: May 2018 Plan Completion: July 2018</p> <p>Staff will work with Human Resources Department to construct a policy and process to implement this recommendation and the data extracted will substantially help inform the direction of recruiting efforts going forward as well</p>

		as overall retention of ECC staff.
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Finding 2: Non-Emergency calls are a growing problem, creating unnecessary work

Recommendation 2.1: PSCEM management should work to prioritize implementation of the EMIT recommendations regarding renaming the non-emergency line; 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.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	ECC Staff: ECC Administrator Support Staff: DPSCEM Staff	Plan Begin: March 2018 Plan Completion: May 2018 The ECC is currently part of a County work group lead by CAPE to identify opportunities to clarify to the public and Arlington County Staff the best use of the Public Safety Non-Emergency Line.

Recommendation 2.2: 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.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	ECC Staff: ECC Administrator Support Staff: DPSCEM Strategic and Finance Staff	Plan Begin: March 2018 Plan Completion: May 2018 ECC has incorporated the EMIT recommendations into the discussion with the working group referenced in 2.1 above.

Recommendation 2.3: 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.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	ECC Staff: Deputy Administrator of Operations	Plan Begin: July, 2018 Plan Complete: December, 2018 ECC will examine the viability of the use of the Arlington

	Support Staff: DPSCEM Volunteer Coordinator	County Volunteer Program to assist with the appropriate non-emergency call handling.
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Finding 3: Additional authorized positions not needed at this time and data access should be a higher priority

Recommendation 3.1: 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.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	ECC Staff: ECC Administrator, Deputy Administrator of Operations Support Staff: DPSCEM Support Staff	Plan Begin: July, 2018 Plan Complete: December, 2018 ECC management has clearly seen the value of practitioners from the stakeholder agencies such as Police and Fire/EMS embedded within the 9-1-1 center. However, implementation of this recommendation will require additional FTE's in both agencies. (Outside of our scope)

Recommendation 3.2: 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 DPSCEM budget proposal.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	ECC Staff: ECC Administrator Support Staff: DPSCEM Support Staff	Plan Begin: May, 2018 Plan Complete: September 2019 The ECC management has already articulated moving to performance metrics based management as a high priority initiative to guide operational and managerial decisions, including guidance in staffing levels and resource allocation. Staff is currently evaluating existing datasets for analysis to help inform decisions, and will look to enhanced solutions in the future when new call processing systems come on line and the two processes are not mutually exclusive and can be conducted concurrently.