The Matrix Consulting Group was hired by
Salt Lake City
to conduct a performance audit of public
safety emergency and
non-emergency dispatch services
and reported their results on March 1, 2019

THE MAJOR FINDINGS INCLUDED:

The Median Number of Seconds Before Call Information Is sent to a Dispatcher (CALL RECEIVED TO QUEUE IN SECONDS) is 41 seconds for SLC Police, 30 seconds for Fire and 32 seconds for Medical.

New dispatchers (at the end of 2018) were paid $15.20 an hour. ("Applying the average benefits rate of 42% and 7.65% FICA to that rate at 2,080 hours per year results in an annual cost of about $47,500 for each new hire.") PBX Operators were paid about $2 an hour less but the audit recommended that only trained and certified dispatchers answer phones (as the UCA 911 Audit recommended). Staffing should increase by 21 additional employees "but 21 additional employees would be a significant financial burden to the City."

The recent audit confirmed that part of the problem is the Priority Dispatch script that is more useful for fire department and medical professionals. The Fire Department likes it. The police hate It. "some dispatch staff and many (patrol) field staff believe that the Priority Dispatch ProQA system hinders the level of service.... to officers in the field and.... to the emergency requestor....Those who hold this sentiment believe that the rigidity of ProQA inhibits call takers' ability to interact with callers using common sense, quickly obtain and relay the most vital information and correctly determine the level of priority for calls". When you are calling about a robbery in progress, being forced to answer a lot of questions from a script can be dangerously frustrating. Salt Lake City has decided to move away from Priority Dispatch and has committed to work with UPD to use their system. VECC uses Priority Dispatch.

SLC DISPATCH “DOES NOT MEET THE SECONDARY NENA STANDARD”

While The 911 Center Processes Calls Efficiently, The Time Elapsed from Call-Taking to Dispatch of Field Units Is Often Excessive for Salt Lake City Police.

“The 911 Center has established goals for call-taking timeliness, seeking to answer 95% of calls within 10-15 seconds, and 98% of calls within 20 seconds. 90% of calls are answered within 10 seconds, meeting both the agency’s goal and the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) target. However, only 93.5% of calls are answered within 20 seconds, meaning that 6.5% of calls ring for longer than the target time of 20 seconds. Similarly, the 911 Center does not meet the secondary NENA standard of 99% calls answered within 40 seconds. A review of the data provided shows that 96.7% of calls are answered within 40 seconds, leaving the remaining 3.3% (1 in 30) to ring longer than this target time.

Time to dispatch can be over 700 seconds. The average time to send a call to dispatch is 139 seconds. SLC Dispatch "does not meet the secondary NENA standard of 99% of calls answered within 40 seconds" (in SLC it is 96.7%). It can take almost 10 minutes for 10% of the priority one calls to be sent to officers on patrol by dispatch! Ten minutes was the median reported wait time for services (Fire/EMS/Police) to arrive while the average was one hour (page 59 of 911 audit)! "SLC customers reported a median wait time of 15 minutes for officers to arrive, compared to 10 minutes for Sandy City customers."

		RCV to QUEUE (seconds)				RCV to DISP (seconds)			
Priority	Count	Median	90th%	95th%	99th%	Median	90th%	95th%	99th%
Salt Lake City									
1	9,350	35	146	204	1,038	183	519	851	1,839
2	40,995	34	119	178	1,051	270	1,315	2,120	4,854
3	42,773	44	146	207	885	700	4,634	7,053	12,998
4	21,007	47	151	218	1,267	2,036	13,928	19,662	29,666
5	63	33	132	398	475	384	20,063	28,713	43,705
6	5	30	73	74	75	775	3,306	3,623	3,876
7	335	52	117	158	424	1,478	4,648	6,395	7,856
8	78	95	192	255	537	223	840	917	979
9	2,653	73	152	198	350	418	6,390	9,130	22,492
All	117,259	41	139	200	954	452	4,777	8,440	19,884
Sandy									
1	1,499	22	87	145	723	147	302	382	968
2	6,966	31	122	176	973	205	535	846	1,920
3	12,693	41	132	185	612	243	1,087	1,785	3,853
4	9,416	41	128	177	634	290	1,987	3,007	5,930
5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	115	35	157	190	417	707	3,484	4,028	10,481
7	65	66	196	243	443	283	1,018	1,421	3,029
8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
All	30,758	38	127	180	706	235	1,212	2,020	4,484

Fire CAD Incidents

	RCV to QUEUE (seconds)	RCV to DISP (seconds)
Salt Lake City		
Median	30	103
90th%	78	182
95th%	114	222
99th%	346	382
Sandy		
Median	29	104
90th%	78	191
95th%	117	226
99th%	316	346

Medical CAD Incidents

	RCV to QUEUE (seconds)	RCV to DISP (seconds)
Salt Lake City		
Median	32	117
90th%	74	199
95th%	101	232
99th%	242	320
Sandy		
Median	30	119
90th%	68	195
95th%	94	228
99th%	206	305

As the tables above show, many calls take longer than 60 seconds for the call-taker to code them for dispatch, and significantly longer for dispatchers to ask public safety personnel to respond. Specifically: Police: the time from call receipt to coding for dispatch (RCV to QUEUE) at the 90th percentile for Police CAD incidents is 139 seconds in Salt Lake City, and 127 seconds in Sandy. This means 10% of calls (even Priority 1 calls) take more than 2 minutes and 19 seconds for call-takers to code them for a dispatcher. A review of the data showed that 66% of calls are coded within one minute.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES

The SLC CAD/RMS (Versadex) system should allow patrol officers to view Fire/EMS calls as they occur. The system does not allow that now. The 911 Center's current CAD system, Versadex, includes mobile access for emergency personnel in the field. Each agency has access only to the CAD cases generated for their agency, and the two are not integrated to provide visibility between the fire and police departments.

The new Mobile Mental Crisis Outreach Team is still not operating effectively in our urban areas. It could be an important cost effective and better system for handling mental health issues. When police are called, the large response can make the situation worse due to the noise and massing of personnel. It can result in a major fight with significant injuries and in some cases, death due to poor training and a stressful situation. The crisis number is 801 587 3000. Unfortunately, many 911 systems are not passing callers to this number and service.

For residents near the Salt Lake City and Sandy boundaries, they often find that their 911 cell phone calls end up going to the wrong 911 Dispatch Center Valley Emergency Communications Center VECC! And despite the new Legislative bill that requires all 911 calls be handed off to 911 and not to a non-emergency number (if it went to the wrong 911 center), sometimes VECC dispatch sends the call to the SLC non-emergency number! If over 50% of the calls from the cell tower is supposed to go to SLC 911 dispatch, the City, after a complaint and evaluation of call volumes, can have all 911 calls go to SLC 911 dispatch first. The best solution is to combine the multiple Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). As the UCA 911 Audit said "fear of closing down their small public safety answering points (PSAPs) is the obvious way to reduce transfers... there are other options"…..Speed and efficiency of 911 call handling could improve by reducing 911 call transfers". According to the UCA 911 Audit, in 2018, "call transfers between Salt Lake City 911, Salt Lake Valley Emergency Communications Center (VECC) and the Unified Police Department (UPD) accounted for approximately 40% of the State's 911 call transfers."

The Audit said "rapid response should be the core goal of all public safety providers". I urge this Legislature to consider studying what it will take to force the PSAPs to combine as Weber and Morgan County did and make the 911 system work as it should. Utah Communications Authority does not have the influence to force them to combine and reduce the "needlessly redundant communications infrastructure".