



April 12, 2023

Report No: ILR 2023-A

## **Subject: Two-Year Follow-Up of 911 Call Answer Times for VECC and Salt Lake City 911**

Audit report #2020-06, An In-Depth Follow-Up of 911 Audits and Review of 911 Staffing, was presented to the Legislative Audit Subcommittee in August 2020. That report showed significant deficiencies in the 911 emergency call answer times at Salt Lake Valley Emergency Communication Center (VECC), Utah's largest public safety answering point (PSAP). The report also showed past call answering deficiencies at the Salt Lake City 911 PSAP.

In response to that report, the Legislative Audit Subcommittee has unanimously adopted multiple motions for us to revisit 911 call answering performance for both VECC and Salt Lake City 911. We presented our first follow-up review to the subcommittee in May 2021 and our second review in December 2021. This document shows the results of another review, with approximately 30 months of updated analysis since our original audit release, in response to a motion from the subcommittee in its December 2021 meeting.

The updated performance numbers in this report show that VECC has improved significantly. Though still falling below the 20-second 911 call answering standard in most months, VECC has increased average monthly performance and recently satisfied the 20-second standard for the first time in several years. We therefore reemphasize the recommendation from audit report #2020-06 and encourage the VECC Board of Trustees to continue to support and direct management to maintain the center's call answering performance in line with national standards and nearly all other PSAPs throughout Utah.

### **National Standards Are Reflected in Utah Statute**

The National Emergency Number Association (NENA) establishes two key targets for how quickly emergency calls should be answered.

- 90 percent of emergency calls shall be answered within 15 seconds.
- 95 percent of emergency calls should be answered within 20 seconds.

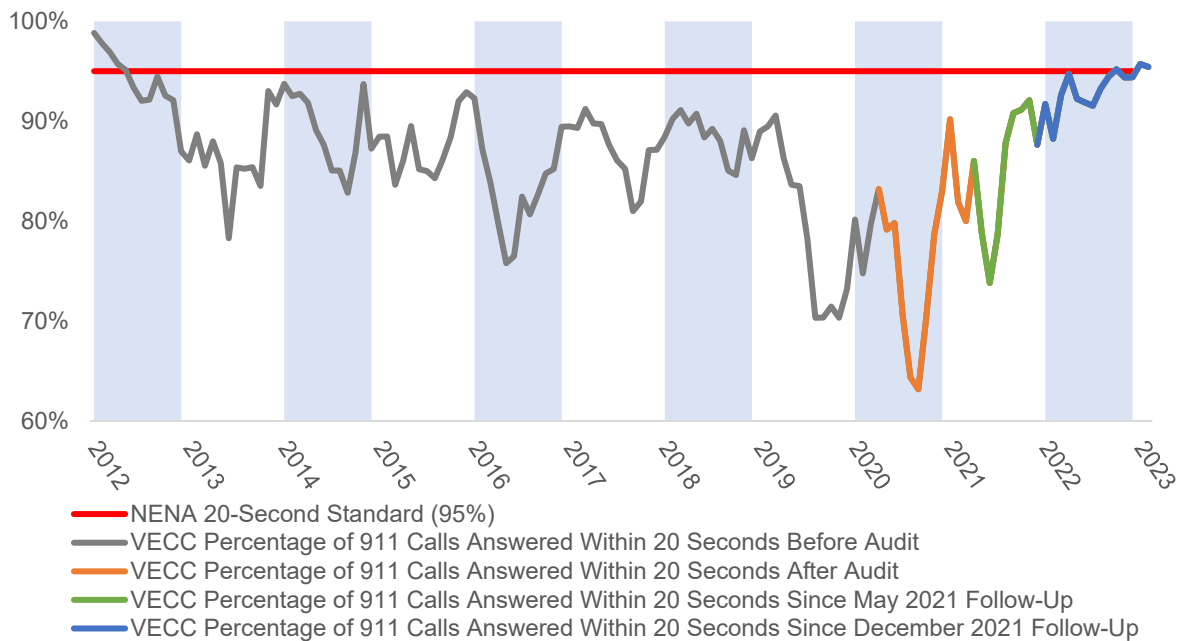
These call answering standards were also adopted in statute in **Utah Code** 63H-7a-304.5 as one of the conditions for receiving certain 911 funding from the Utah Communications Authority (UCA). The focus of our analysis in report #2020-06 and in this limited review is on NENA's 20-second standard.



## VECC Has Improved But is Still Underperforming Relative to Call Answering Standards

This report continues from our original analyses of monthly 911 call answering at VECC. Figure 1 shows VECC’s call answering performance against NENA’s 20-second 911 call answering standards. Our different phases of analysis since the original audit was released are reflected in gray, orange, green, and blue.

**Figure 1 VECC’s Call Answering Performance Has Improved, Achieving the 95 Percent Standard During Three Recent Months Since Our Audit Was Released.** VECC answered 95.2% of its 911 calls within 20 seconds in October 2022. This is the first time VECC has exceeded the 95% standard since May 2012.



*Source: Auditor analysis of ECaTS 911 call answering data*

Shown in blue on the far right of Figure 1, VECC’s call answering performance has undoubtedly improved since our December 2021 follow up report. This improvement includes three months (Oct 2022, Jan 2023, and Feb 2023) in which 911 call answering performance exceeded the 20-second standard for the first time since 2012.

Also reflected in Figure 1, VECC’s monthly 2022 call answering performance has exceeded prior years’ (2012-2021) monthly average performance by as much as 12%.<sup>1</sup> In reports about its efforts to improve, VECC leadership has emphasized hiring additional personnel and technology upgrades as the largest factors contributing to better performance.

Over the last few years, the VECC board of trustees has adopted significant budget

<sup>1</sup> VECC answered 94.4% of its 911 calls within 20 seconds in September 2022. The 2012-2021 average for September is 82.2%, which means 2022 performance was 12.3% higher than average.

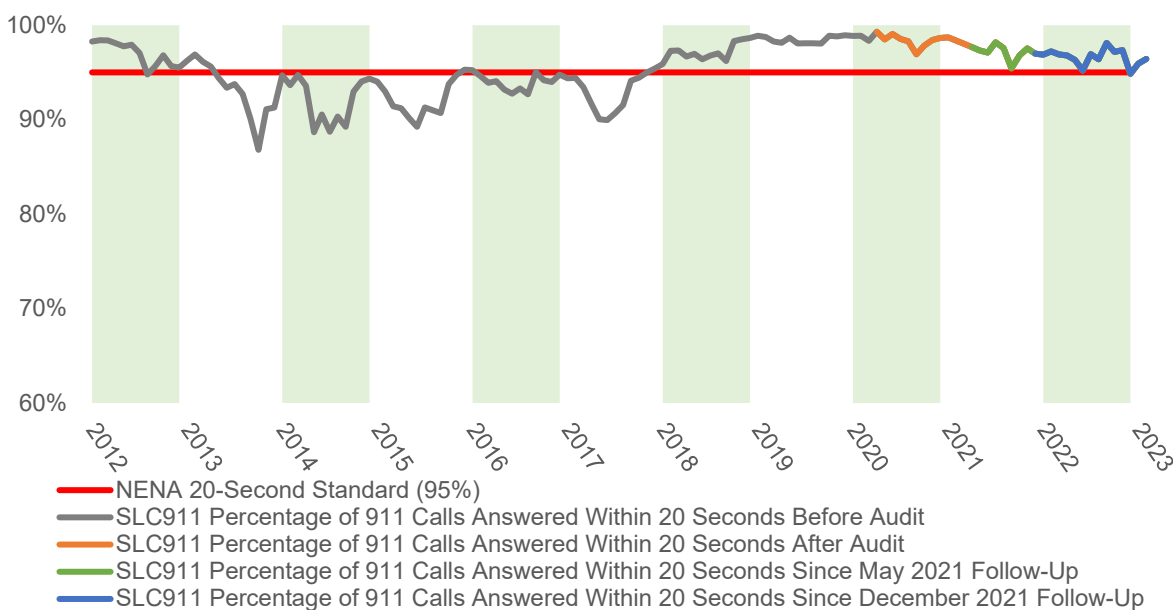


increases, approved and funded a capital project to upgrade essential equipment and streamline operations, and adopted resolutions committing VECC to the performance metrics identified in this audit report. VECC leadership also reports significant efforts to recruit and retain employees. We recognize these efforts of the VECC trustees and the improved 911 call answering performance shown in Figure 1. As VECC begins to satisfy the 95% performance standard, we reemphasize the recommendation from audit report #2020-06 and encourage the VECC Board of Trustees to continue to support and direct management to maintain the center’s call answering performance in line with national standards.

## Salt Lake City 911 Continues to Satisfy The National Call Answering Standard

Audit report #2020-06 shows that Salt Lake City 911 (SLC911) was out of compliance with NENA’s 20-second call answering standard for 32 of 60 months from 2015-2019.<sup>2</sup> The report notes, however, that SLC911 had made improvements—consistently meeting the 20-second NENA standard from December 2017 through the end of that analysis in December 2019. Figure 2 shows that SLC911 has continued to perform above the 95 percent NENA standard but dropped below the standard in December 2022—falling to 94.8 percent—for the first time since November 2017. Leadership at SLC911 reports that the primary factor leading to the decreased performance in December 2022 were acute staffing challenges. As Figure 2 shows, SLC911 has since satisfied the 20-second call answering standard in January and February 2023.

**Figure 2 SLC911 Has Continued to Exceed the NENA 20-Second Call Answering Standard but Dropped Below 95 percent in December 2022.** Prior to 2018, SLC911 frequently fell short of the 95% answer percentage.



Source: Auditor analysis of ECaTS 911 call answering data

<sup>2</sup> See report #2020-06, Figure 3.1, p. 17



Beyond VECC and SLC911, Utah PSAPs have continued to satisfy the NENA 20-second call answering standard through this updated time period.<sup>3</sup>

### **RECOMMENDATION**

As VECC begins to satisfy the 95% performance standard, we reemphasize the recommendation from audit report #2020-06 and encourage the VECC Board of Trustees to continue to support and direct management to maintain the center's call answering performance in line with national standards.

For further questions or inquiries, please contact Brian Dean at 801-580-6660 ([bdean@le.utah.gov](mailto:bdean@le.utah.gov)) or Jake Dinsdale at 801-755-7322 ([jdinsdale@le.utah.gov](mailto:jdinsdale@le.utah.gov)).

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<sup>3</sup> The one exception was the Beaver County Sheriff's PSAP, which answered 94.4% of 911 calls within 20 seconds in May 2022. This was the first time the PSAP had dropped below 95% since November 2017.



# Agency Response





## SALT LAKE VALLEY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

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March 27, 2023

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Salt Lake City, UT 84114-5315

RE: Response to Two-Year Follow Up of 911 Call Answer Times for VECC

On behalf of the VECC Board of Trustees, I wish to extend our gratitude to the Office of the Legislative Auditor General, and particularly Mr. Jake Dinsdale, for your fair approach to examining the deficiencies identified at VECC. I also wish to express gratitude to President Adams, Speaker Wilson, and the members of the Utah State Legislature for your political pressure to push VECC to perform better, and for your patience while we worked through the improvements we have made at VECC over the last few years. The residents of the VECC communities are better served as a result.

As we expressed in November 2021, we are pleased with the progress Executive Director Scott Ruf has made during his tenure at VECC. As your report states, the installation of the new 911 phone system on August 11, 2021, made a significant positive impact on call answering performance. In addition, improved work schedules, recruitment efforts, and substantial budget increases approved by the Board of Trustees continue to improve the service VECC provides to the community and to the respective police and fire agencies.

VECC is pleased to report that while we still have work to do to more efficiently and safely receive, triage, and dispatch emergency calls for service VECC has made great progress since our last presentation. For the first time in over 10-years VECC met the APCO/NENA standard for calls answered in 15 seconds or less for all of 2022 and while still a bit shy of the 20 second standard, VECC was more consistent from previous years and many months in 2022 were just below, and in a couple of instances above, the APCO/NENA standards.

In the time since our last presentation on November 17, 2021, VECC has almost completed its \$5.3M capital project improving the dispatch center and with the addition of eight console positions increasing our capacity and capabilities by almost 10%. VECC, in partnership with SLC, has begun the migration of all public safety CAD systems to the cloud. This transition, when completed later in 2023, will provide for increased efficiencies and redundancies, greatly reducing the potential for countywide outage of our

shared systems. The capital project and investment in the transition to the cloud was made with the full support of the VECC Board of Trustees.

VECC has completed the transition of all public safety agencies in Salt Lake County to a common CAD platform eliminating transfers between VECC and SLC911 and improving call answer and call-to-dispatch times. Over the next year, the Salt Lake Valley Consortium will welcome new partners to the common CAD: the University of Utah Public Safety, Utah Transportation Authority, and the Granite School District. Within Salt Lake County, we will also see the completion of the CAD-to-CAD connections between VECC and DPS, further reducing 911 call transfers. There has also been interest from Davis County, Bountiful, Layton, Tooele County, and others in joining the CAD-to-CAD hub as well, potentially further strengthening the relationships with our regional partners and increasing efficiencies in getting people help.

The VECC Board of Trustees remains committed to improving VECC's performance and service to the community. In January 2022, Trustees formally adopted the APCO/NENA standard of answering 911 emergency calls within 20 seconds, 95% of the time. Director Ruf is accountable monthly to the Trustee's for VECC's call answering times and continues to make that the top performance measure of the center. Further, the Trustees continue to invest in VECC's budget and work to provide the staff and resources needed to operate the center effectively into the future.

In closing, the Board of Trustees appreciate the focus of your office and find that our goals have been aligned for several years. Over the last two years, VECC has made significant advancements and is continuing to focus on quality service for the communities served. Thank you again for the fair and unbiased look at VECC service levels.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Korban Lee', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Korban Lee  
VECC Board of Trustees - Chair  
City of West Jordan, CAO





Legislative Audit Committee:

Salt Lake City 911 continues to satisfy The National Call Answering Standard despite staffing challenges. In December 2022, our center dropped to 94.8% for the first time since November 2017. This particular month the staffing levels decreased significantly. As a center, we pulled together with an “all hands-on deck” approach. At the direction of Executive Director Meyer, supervisors and managers pulled together to help with answering calls to alleviate the temporary shortage while also fulfilling Director Meyer’s dynamic staffing model. The dynamic staffing model was based on the eCAT’s forecast for what is recommended for staffing the center at various times of the day.

As a team, we pulled together to re-evaluate the dynamic staffing model, improve its delivery and sought out other options to alleviate the low staffing numbers while also not placing an unbearable burden on the staff that was present to answer the calls. Per the findings in your audit figure 2 shows, SLC911 has since satisfied the 20-second call answering standard in January and February 2023.

Furthermore, moving forward in 2023 we have provided a retention bonus to our current employees in exchange for their two-year commitment to stay employed with SLC911. This will allow us to move forward with our newly restructured hiring and training process that provides less time between training classes to increase staffing levels in an abbreviated amount of time compared to past efforts. We are also implementing a new model for the available shifts that will promote better coverage and fosters a shared responsibility by the center to equally assist where needed the most. This will take effect in upcoming spring shift bid.

SLC911 greatly appreciates the work that this committee has put in to aid us in our commitment to meeting and exceeding our basic obligations to the community that we are proud to serve. We look forward to a continued partnership and welcome any and all feedback.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Kehoe".

Lisa Kehoe  
Interim Executive Director  
Salt Lake City 911