Non 9-1-1 Call Processing and Dispatch

APCO candidate American National Standard 1.125.1-202X
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Emergency Communications Centers (ECCs) have created policies, procedures, and written protocols to handle emergency calls for service made to 9-1-1. These ECCs have continued to operate administrative or non-emergency ten-digit phone lines after converting to handle and process 9-1-1 calls. Policies, procedures, and written protocols for handling emergency or non-emergency calls over these ten-digit lines are lacking.

The growth and use of other three-digit numbers increase the probability that ECCs will have calls transferred to them by other call centers that handle, and process calls for social and human service’s needs. Those needs include calls concerning people in a behavioral health crisis. The three-digit numbers are shortcuts to longer toll-free phone lines and include “N-1-1” numbers such as 2-1-1, 3-1-1, 4-1-1, and 9-1-1. There is also a newer three-digit number, 9-8-8, that serves as a shortcut to the former National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which is now repurposed to assist those in any behavioral health crisis and renamed the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. These call centers may transfer calls to an ECC on a dedicated or standard ten-digit line. In addition, calls to an ECC’s ten-digit lines may involve a person needing emergency or urgent assistance and are triggered by a worn or carried device or a device or system included within a vehicle.

ECC leaders and Public Safety Telecommunicators (PST) must know how to take, process, and dispatch available resources or transfer calls that come into their ten-digit lines from other call centers. This knowledge requires updates to existing policies, procedures, and written protocols. This standard provides information about three-digit numbers to avoid confusion or misunderstanding, when and why the numbers are used, and the call centers that may accept incoming calls from those numbers. It also discusses various technology platforms that alert an affiliated call center about a problem, and those call centers contact an ECC for assistance with the problem. The standard guides policy, procedure, and written protocol creation or updates that outline the responsibilities of the ECC and the PSTs who staff those ECCs. These policies, procedures, and written protocols discuss taking and processing calls that may be transferred from these call centers, determining if the calls constitute an emergency based on existing policies, procedures, and written protocols, and dispatching appropriate resources when the ECC can dispatch the resources.
Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Standardized policies, procedures, and written protocols are needed to process incoming calls from call centers handling calls for social and human service’s needs. These call centers can be accessed by calling an N-1-1 number, another three-digit number, a local ten-digit number, or through vehicle or personal telematics. After contact by a person in need, the call center may transfer that need for service directly, usually by calling a ten-digit line, into an Emergency Communications Center (ECC) or indirectly via linkage into computer-aided dispatching (CAD) systems or other computer systems not linked to CAD within an ECC.

Incorporating operational support of these new or existing and expanding external call centers into the ECC generates many questions currently unanswered by ECC policies, procedures, and written protocols. This standard will guide ECC leaders in developing and implementing policies, procedures, and written protocols to overcome hesitation concerning interactions between ECCs and these external call centers.

SCOPE

As technology evolves and new services become available to the public, ECCs will likely receive, and process calls from sources other than 9-1-1. Unlike legacy administrative or non-emergency line calls, these calls may be received from 2-1-1 and 9-8-8 call centers and others that receive N-1-1 calls. The processing of these calls may require new policies, procedures, and written protocols. New technology may also have to be added to process these calls. This standard will provide guidance on incorporating these types of outside referral services and contacts from external call centers into the traditional 9-1-1 landscape.
Chapter Two

Understanding the Delivery of Non 9-1-1 Calls into the ECC

SCOPE

This chapter explains how non-9-1-1 calls for service from three-digit numbers can be received by an ECC.

2.1 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (National Suicide Prevention Lifeline)

2.1.1 9-8-8 is a three-digit number in the United States offering 24/7 call, text, and chat (via website only) access to training crisis counselors who can help people experiencing suicidal, substance use, mental health crises, or other type of emotional distress.

2.1.2 9-8-8 replaces the previous National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number of 1-800-273-8255 (TALK). The 800 number will continue to reach the 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. 9-8-8 is built off that ten-digit number. 1-800 has also expanded beyond suicide prevention and now takes calls from those seeking help for various crises.

2.1.3 The initial call to 9-8-8 will result in an automated greeting while the system processes the call. The call will be routed to one of over 200 local and state-funded crisis call centers (Lifeline network crisis centers) across the United States. If the call cannot be routed, it will remain at the national center for answering or reassignment.

2.1.4 Calls to 9-8-8 will be initially routed to the crisis call center matched to the area code for the ten-digit number assigned to the caller’s device. The next step will be to use geolocation to route the call to the nearest 9-8-8 call center based on the cell tower that receives the call or SMS message.

2.1.5 A trained crisis counselor will answer the call, listen, understand how the problem affects the caller, provide support, and share resources if needed.

2.1.6 If the call cannot be answered at the initial crisis call center, it can be routed to another crisis call center that may or may not cover an area adjacent to the initial call center.

2.1.7 The call could be routed back to the national center to answer if it cannot be transferred.

2.1.8 The crisis call center could transfer the call to a local crisis line (city, county, multi-county) if that crisis line is available.

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1 https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/faqs#about-lifeline
2 https://988lifeline.org/current-events/the-lifeline-and-988/
2.1.9 The 9-8-8 national center, a 9-8-8 lifeline crisis call center, or a local crisis center could transfer a call to an ECC on a ten-digit line if call center personnel believe that an emergency is occurring and resources available for dispatching by an ECC may be needed.

2.2 2-1-1 Information and References to Essential Health and Human Services

2.2.1 Calls to 2-1-1 are primarily to obtain information and referrals. Calls to 2-1-1 are routed based on the caller’s location to the closest local or regional call center.

2.2.2 An operator, or referral specialist, answers the call and attempts to match available services to the call based on the caller’s needs. The caller may be referred to available resources or transferred directly to an agency or organization that can provide help if that agency is open and available at the time of the call.

2.2.3 Types of referrals include basic human needs resources, i.e., physical and mental health resources, work support, access to services in languages other than English, support for elderly and disabled community members, and support for children, adolescents, and families. Referrals may also include suicide prevention.3

2.2.4 Calls to 2-1-1 will generally not result in a need to transfer the call to an ECC for a law enforcement, fire, or EMS response. If a call to 2-1-1 requires such a response, the call center may not be in the same county or area as the caller. The call will likely come through to the ECC via a ten-digit line.

2.3 3-1-1 Non-Emergency Number Used by Cities for Governmental Services

2.3.1 3-1-1 was originally envisioned as a non-emergency phone number for police services to complement 9-1-1. Instead, 3-1-1 has been turned into a three-digit number to obtain a wide range of governmental services, usually from local or county governments.

2.3.2 In some areas, 3-1-1 may be used as a part-time or full-time public safety non-emergency number. When used in this manner, a service call could be created by the 3-1-1 call center and submitted to the ECC for dispatching or transferred directly to an ECC for call processing when an immediate response is needed.

2.3.3 In areas where 3-1-1 is not advertised as a public safety non-emergency number, it is possible that a caller could need an immediate public safety response and be transferred to a non-emergency ten-digit phone line in the ECC by 3-1-1 call center staff.

2.3.4 Many 3-1-1 automated responses will advise callers with an emergency to hang up and dial 9-1-1.

2.4 4-1-1 Local Directory Assistance

2.4.1 Callers contacting 4-1-1 for information or assistance could be transferred to an ECC’s non-emergency and/or administrative ten-digit phone line.

3 https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/dial_211_for_essential_community_services.pdf
2.4.2 Callers to 4-1-1 may also be transferred to an administrative ten-digit phone line, processed by an ECC, and then transferred to the administrative offices of a public safety agency.

2.5 **Service Providers (Call centers for telematics, safety apps/programs)**

2.5.1 Telematics-related call centers are specific to the platform or application and will usually contact an ECC on a ten-digit phone line. Some contact examples include:

2.5.1.1 In car emergencies, i.e., crash/medical, with voice connection.

2.5.1.2 Automatic crash notifications with no voice connection

2.5.1.3 Calls from Good Samaritans or others who enable their telematics devices to report an incident in which they are not involved.

2.5.1.4 Report stolen vehicles (call center may be able to effect a slow down or stop)

2.5.1.5 Report missing person(s) in vehicles.

2.5.2 Other devices that may contact an ECC, possibly through a dedicated call center, include:

2.5.2.1 Wearable devices (e.g., bracelets, pendants, devices linked to non-ported cell phones).

2.5.2.2 Communication devices (e.g., smartphones, tablets, or watches with built-in fall or crash recognition).

2.6 **Technology Platform Notifications**

2.6.1 Automatic gunshot detection systems (AGDS).

2.6.2 Active threat detection systems (i.e., active shooter notifications through apps).

2.6.3 Directly linked alarm systems (i.e., ASAP-to-ECC platforms)
Chapter Three

Agency Responsibilities

SCOPE

This chapter outlines the agency’s responsibilities to its Public Safety Telecommunicators (PST) and other staff in the ECC.

3.1 Agency Responsibilities

3.1.1 The ECC shall provide all staff with a safe, secure, and balanced working environment.

3.1.2 The ECC shall provide and adequately and consistently maintain all equipment and systems used in processing calls for service.

3.1.3 The ECC shall develop, create, review, revise, and keep current policies, procedures, and/or written protocols for gathering, documenting, and processing information received on calls for service from non-9-1-1 sources.

3.1.4 The ECC shall make current policies, procedures, and/or written protocols for gathering, documenting, and processing information received on calls for service from non-9-1-1 sources readily available and accessible to all staff.

3.1.5 The ECC shall provide training to all staff regarding policies, procedures, and written protocols in the use of N-1-1 numbers and community resources to process calls for service from non-9-1-1 sources and dispatch resources or transfer calls to other appropriate resources when applicable.
Chapter Four

Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST) Responsibilities

SCOPE
This chapter serves as a base model for call handling.

4.1 Call Taking and Resource Handling

4.1.1 The PST should know and understand the use of three-digit numbers, i.e., N-1-1.

4.1.2 The PST should know and understand available local systems and when they should be used.

4.1.3 The PST shall know and understand the ECC’s policies, procedures, and/or written protocols regarding the position’s responsibilities.

4.1.4 The PST should use active listening skills and provide information to determine a course of action.

4.1.5 The PST shall determine the best course of action by utilizing the ECC’s policies, procedures, and/or written protocols and knowledge of available resources.

4.1.6 The PST shall determine if the call for service is for an emergency or non-emergency situation.

4.1.7 The PST shall determine the ECC’s ability to manage the call for service. The call can be transferred to another location when a transfer is the best course of action.

4.1.8 The PST shall follow the ECC’s policies, procedures, and/or written protocols regarding the documentation of the call for service, utilizing software as applicable.

4.1.9 The PST shall monitor the call for service, including adding and relaying additional information obtained before, during, and after the responders arrive at the scene and provide additional information to all stakeholders.

4.1.10 The PST shall follow the ECC’s policies, protocols, and/or written protocols regarding subsequent follow-up calls and contacts as applicable.
## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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<th>ACRO/ABBREVIATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>ANS</td>
<td>American National Standards</td>
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<td>ANSI</td>
<td>American National Standards Institute</td>
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<td>APCO</td>
<td>Association of Public Safety Communications Officials</td>
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<td>CAD</td>
<td>Computer-Aided Dispatch</td>
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<td>ECC</td>
<td>Emergency Communications Center</td>
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<td>NG911</td>
<td>Next Generation 9-1-1</td>
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<td>SDC</td>
<td>Standards Development Committee</td>
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GLOSSARY

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP): a written directive that provides a guideline for carrying out an activity. The guideline may be made mandatory by including terms such as “shall” rather than “should” or “must” rather than “may.”

ALTERNATIVE RESOURCE: an entity or call center that is not an ECC but may receive calls requiring emergency assistance

ECC: Emergency Communication Center (formerly known also as Public Safety Answering Point or PSAP)

E-9-1-1: a system mandated by the FCC that routes an emergency call to the nearest 9-1-1 center closest to the caller and automatically displays the caller’s phone number and address

THREE-DIGIT NUMBERS: Nationwide telephone numbers intended to give the public fast and easy access to an ECC or another resource. Those ending with 1-1 are commonly called N-1-1 numbers

2-1-1: Typically used for community referrals – usually for health/human services, housing, or food.

3-1-1: Typically used for non-emergency police and/or referral to other government services.

4-1-1: Directory assistance

5-1-1: Typically used for traffic conditions and travel information.

7-1-1: Typically used for relay services.

8-1-1: Typically used in communities for “call before you dig” hotline to ensure you are not digging into a utility line (e.g., gas line, electric line, water line, cable TV line).

9-1-1: Most remembered and used three-digit number – for police-fire-medical emergencies.

9-8-8: The number for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline).
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