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# Non 9-1-1 Call Processing and Dispatch

APCO candidate American National Standard 1.125.1-202X

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# FOREWORD

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

133 The growth and use of other three-digit numbers increase the probability that ECCs will have calls transferred to  
134 them by other call centers that handle, and process calls for social and human service's needs. Those needs  
135 include calls concerning people in a behavioral health crisis. The three-digit numbers are shortcuts to longer toll-  
136 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-  
137 digit number, 9-8-8, that serves as a shortcut to the former National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which is now  
138 repurposed to assist those in any behavioral health crisis and renamed the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. These call  
139 centers may transfer calls to an ECC on a dedicated or standard ten-digit line. In addition, calls to an ECC's ten-  
140 digit lines may involve a person needing emergency or urgent assistance and are triggered by a worn or carried  
141 device or a device or system included within a vehicle.

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

153

154

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 9-8-8 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)<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/faqs#about-lifeline>

<sup>2</sup> <https://988lifeline.org/current-events/the-lifeline-and-988/>

205 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  
 206 call to an ECC on a ten-digit line if call center personnel believe that an emergency is occurring  
 207 and resources available for dispatching by an ECC may be needed.

## 208 **2.2 2-1-1 Information and References to Essential Health and Human Services**

209 2.2.1 Calls to 2-1-1 are primarily to obtain information and referrals. Calls to 2-1-1 are routed based on  
 210 the caller's location to the closest local or regional call center.

211 2.2.2 An operator, or referral specialist, answers the call and attempts to match available services to  
 212 the call based on the caller's needs. The caller may be referred to available resources or  
 213 transferred directly to an agency or organization that can provide help if that agency is open and  
 214 available at the time of the call.

215 2.2.3 Types of referrals include basic human needs resources, i.e., physical and mental health resources,  
 216 work support, access to services in languages other than English, support for elderly and disabled  
 217 community members, and support for children, adolescents, and families. Referrals may also  
 218 include suicide prevention.<sup>3</sup>

219 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,  
 220 fire, or EMS response. If a call to 2-1-1 requires such a response, the call center may not be in the  
 221 same county or area as the caller. The call will likely come through to the ECC via a ten-digit line.

## 222 **2.3 3-1-1 Non-Emergency Number Used by Cities for Governmental Services**

223 2.3.1 3-1-1 was originally envisioned as a non-emergency phone number for police services to  
 224 complement 9-1-1. Instead, 3-1-1 has been turned into a three-digit number to obtain a wide  
 225 range of governmental services, usually from local or county governments.

226 2.3.2 In some areas, 3-1-1 may be used as a part-time or full-time public safety non-emergency number.  
 227 When used in this manner, a service call could be created by the 3-1-1 call center and submitted  
 228 to the ECC for dispatching or transferred directly to an ECC for call processing when an immediate  
 229 response is needed.

230 2.3.3 In areas where 3-1-1 is not advertised as a public safety non-emergency number, it is possible that  
 231 a caller could need an immediate public safety response and be transferred to a non-emergency  
 232 ten-digit phone line in the ECC by 3-1-1 call center staff.

233 2.3.4 Many 3-1-1 automated responses will advise callers with an emergency to hang up and dial  
 234 9-1-1.

## 235 **2.4 4-1-1 Local Directory Assistance**

236 2.4.1 Callers contacting 4-1-1 for information or assistance could be transferred to an ECC's non-  
 237 emergency and/or administrative ten-digit phone line.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/dial\\_211\\_for\\_essential\\_community\\_services.pdf](https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/dial_211_for_essential_community_services.pdf)

238 2.4.2 Callers to 4-1-1 may also be transferred to an administrative ten-digit phone line, processed by an  
239 ECC, and then transferred to the administrative offices of a public safety agency.

## 240 **2.5 Service Providers (Call centers for telematics, safety apps/programs)**

241 2.5.1 Telematics-related call centers are specific to the platform or application and will usually contact  
242 an ECC on a ten-digit phone line. Some contact examples include:

243 2.5.1.1 In car emergencies, i.e., crash/medical, with voice connection.

244 2.5.1.2 Automatic crash notifications with no voice connection

245 2.5.1.3 Calls from Good Samaritans or others who enable their telematics devices to report an  
246 incident in which they are not involved.

247 2.5.1.4 Report stolen vehicles (call center may be able to effect a slow down or stop)

248 2.5.1.5 Report missing person(s) in vehicles.

249 2.5.2 Other devices that may contact an ECC, possibly through a dedicated call center, include:

250 2.5.2.1 Wearable devices (e.g., bracelets, pendants, devices linked to non-ported cell phones).

251 2.5.2.2 Communication devices (e.g., smartphones, tablets, or watches with built-in fall or crash  
252 recognition).

## 253 **2.6 Technology Platform Notifications**

254 2.6.1 Automatic gunshot detection systems (AGDS).

255 2.6.2 Active threat detection systems (i.e., active shooter notifications through apps).

256 2.6.3 Directly linked alarm systems (i.e., ASAP-to-ECC platforms)

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## 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.

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## Chapter Four

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# Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST)

## Responsibilities

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### SCOPE

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

#### 4.1 Call Taking and Resource Handling

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

296

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

297

298

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

299

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

300

301

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.

302

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

303

304

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.

305

306

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.

307

308

309

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.

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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.

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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315 **ANS** American National Standards

316 **ANSI** American National Standards Institute

317 **APCO** Association of Public Safety Communications Officials

318 **CAD** Computer-Aided Dispatch

319 **ECC** Emergency Communications Center

320 **NG911** Next Generation 9-1-1

321 **SDC** Standards Development Committee

322

DRAFT

# GLOSSARY

323

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

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

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

331 **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  
332 caller and automatically displays the caller’s phone number and address

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

335 **2-1-1:** Typically used for community referrals – usually for health/human services, housing, or food.

336 **3-1-1:** Typically used for non-emergency police and/or referral to other government services.

337 **4-1-1:** Directory assistance

338 **5-1-1:** Typically used for traffic conditions and travel information.

339 **7-1-1:** Typically used for relay services.

340 **8-1-1:** Typically used in communities for “call before you dig” hotline to ensure you are not digging into a  
341 utility line (e.g., gas line, electric line, water line, cable TV line).

342 **9-1-1:** Most remembered and used three-digit number – for police-fire-medical emergencies.

343 **9-8-8:** The number for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline).

344

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346

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