



**EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS
(DISPATCHERS)**



SPECIAL AUDIT

DECEMBER 18, 2006 THROUGH MARCH 30, 2007

**CITY OF CHESAPEAKE, VIRGINIA
AUDIT SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

For Fiscal Year 2005-2006 Emergency Communications had an operating budget of \$3,430,164 and an authorized compliment of 70 personnel, 68 of which were Dispatcher/Call Taker positions and 2 of which were the Lieutenant and an IT Technician. Additionally, a Police Sergeant and a part time Communications Specialist position were assigned to Emergency Communications from the Police Department budget. Emergency Communications received funds from Federal, State, and City sources. Emergency Communications was located within the Police Department Headquarters in Great Bridge.

Based on our review, we determined Emergency Communications had accomplished its overall mission of providing emergency communications services to the Police and Fire Departments, and the citizens through the hard work and dedication of its dispatchers. However, we did identify several significant issues that needed to be addressed. In the short term, Emergency Communications needed to address staffing shortages, streamline the hiring process, take steps to enhance working conditions, and address GIS deficiencies related to the new CAD system. Longer term, the City needed to seriously consider relocating Emergency Communications to another department where its technology and environment issues could be more easily addressed.

This report, in draft, was provided to Police Department officials for review and response. Their comments have been considered in the preparation of this report. These comments have been included in the Managerial Summary, the Audit Report, and Appendix A. Police Department management, Emergency Communications supervisors, and their staffs were very helpful throughout the course of this audit, and we appreciate their courtesy and cooperation on this assignment.

Sincerely,



Jay Poole
City Auditor
City of Chesapeake, Virginia

C: William Harrell, City Manager
Anne Odell, Deputy City Manager
Richard Justice, Chief of Police
Louis Tayon, Deputy Chief of Police
Steve Best, Fire Chief

Managerial Summary

A. Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

We have completed our review of the Chesapeake Police Department's Public Safety and Emergency Communications Section (Emergency Communications) for December 18, 2006 to March 30, 2007. Our review was conducted for the purpose of determining whether Emergency Communications was providing services in an economical, efficient, and effective manner, whether its goals and objectives were being achieved, and whether it was complying with applicable City and Department procedures in areas of payroll, safety, information technology, recruitment, turnover, operations, and grants management. The review was conducted in accordance with Government Auditing Standards and included such tests of records and other audit procedures as we deemed necessary in the circumstances.

Emergency Communications provided essential services within the 353 square miles of the City of Chesapeake. Primary Emergency Communications services included providing communications services to a variety of professionals such as Law Enforcement, Fire Services, Animal Control, Emergency Medical Services, Civil Defense, and Civil Services, as well as the general public and Emergency Communication support services for various State and Federal agencies. Emergency Communications was responsible for maintaining and using multiple telecommunication systems including Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD), Graphic Information System (GIS), radios, E911 mapping system, fire alerting system, radio tower/system alarms, ANI/ALI E911 telephone call identification and locating system, voice logging recorders, City alarm system, 800 MHz radio control monitor, emergency backup CAD, training stations and numerous other systems as well as updating and maintaining the Virginia Crime Information Network data base. During Fiscal Year 2005-2006, Emergency Communications received 309,333 incoming calls, of which 168,575 were emergency 911 calls; Emergency Communications handled 178,385 outgoing calls and 7,823,467 radio transmissions.

For Fiscal Year 2005-2006 Emergency Communications had an operating budget of \$3,430,164 and an authorized compliment of 70 personnel, 68 of which were dispatcher/call taker positions and 2 of which were the Lieutenant and an IT Technician. Additionally, a Police Sergeant and a part time Communications Specialist position were assigned to Emergency Communications from the Police Department budget. Emergency Communications received funds from Federal, State, and City sources. Emergency Communications was located within the Police Department Headquarters in Great Bridge.

Major Observations and Conclusions

Based on our review, we determined Emergency Communications had accomplished its overall mission of providing emergency communications services to the Police and Fire Departments, and the citizens through the hard work and dedication of its dispatchers. However, we did identify several significant issues that needed to be addressed. In the short term, Emergency Communications needed to address staffing shortages, streamline the hiring process, take steps to enhance working conditions, and address GIS deficiencies related to the new CAD system. Longer term, the City needed to seriously consider relocating Emergency Communications to another department where its technology and environment issues could be more easily addressed.

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B. Staffing Shortages and Working Conditions

Finding – Recommendation - We recommend that Emergency Communications take immediate action to attempt to hire sufficient qualified candidates to bring Emergency Communications up to the total number of authorized full time equivalents (FTEs) and develop a contingency plan in the advent that the current staffing level drops below the functional minimum. Steps should also be taken to improve working conditions.

Recommendation - We recommend that Emergency Communications take immediate action to attempt to hire sufficient qualified candidates to bring Emergency Communications up to the total number of authorized full time equivalents (FTEs) and develop a contingency plan in the advent that the current staffing level drops below the functional minimum. Steps should also be taken to improve working conditions.

Response - In Section B. Staffing, Shortages and Working Conditions, the second paragraph states the staffing requirement was set at 30 people per day. This is incorrect as the minimum staffing requirement is 27 persons per day composed of 10 each for day and evening shift and 7 for midnight shift. While the minimum staffing level is 27, a staffing level of 30 is suggested to allow personnel to take meal breaks, restroom breaks and perform necessary administrative duties (i.e., cycle sheets, training evaluations, etc.). Without the addition of 1 person per shift, the inability or very decreased capability for personnel to have meal or restroom breaks only adds to the stress and environmental discomfort. Without the additional person, administrative duties would have to be performed on overtime after normal work hours, again adding to discontent. Additionally, scheduling at minimum staffing levels was attempted, but only caused more severe issues when personnel who called out had to be replaced by keeping someone over from the previous shift. This meant employees had to work

unplanned double shifts as a common practice. (The remainder of the Police response is included in the full audit report.)

C. Hiring Process

Finding - Emergency Communications' hiring process was not as streamlined as it could be.

Recommendation - Emergency Communications management should develop and implement a streamlined hiring process. In addition, recruitment efforts should be expanded to increase the population of quality candidates.

Response - The audit report states that our hiring process takes between 4 and 9 months which is not consistent with the actual times (Auditor's Note: The report language has since been revised) A. While the hiring process taken one piece at a time may take months, several parts are often combined or overlap to cut the actual hire time as much as possible. (The remainder of the Police response is included in the full audit report.)

D. GIS Deficiencies

Finding – Emergency Communications identified significant GIS deficiencies related to the new CAD system that had not been corrected.

Recommendation – We recommend that, in the short term, sufficient GIS resources be designated to work with Emergency Communications management to resolve all GIS issues immediately. In the long term, Emergency Communications needs to have a dedicated GIS resource that places the needs of Emergency Communications as its first priority.

Response - In Section D, we completely agree there are GIS issues which need to be immediately addressed, the Police Department needed additional GIS resources before the implementation of the new CAD system and still, has substantial GIS issues related to the new CAD system that must be resolved. The Police Department requested a position that would handle GIS and specific related CAD/GIS tasks in the last 3 years of budget requests. In the budget request, we outlined the issues that would result without direct and dedicated GIS support. The Police Department was not granted that position, nor was the GIS support position approved for any other department. As such, we worked with City GIS personnel that were not dedicated to E911 GIS issues and did not have the best working knowledge of how the CAD would work or of how GIS issues would affect public safety responses. In the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2007-2008, there are 2 GIS positions that would assist with E911 & CAD issues. One of the GIS positions, although assigned to the City's Information Technology Department, would be for direct support of E911 GIS issues. Until that time, we will need to work on as many of the GIS issues as possible.

E. Realignment and Relocation of Emergency Communications

Finding – It did not appear that the continuation of Emergency Communications operation within the Police Department was an optimal organizational structure.

Recommendation – The City should strongly consider transferring responsibility for Emergency Communications to another area, such as Information Technology, or a similar entity, that will ensure sufficient technological support for Emergency Communications.

Response - Section E is a recommendation to realign and relocate Emergency Communications. First, the basis for the recommendation appears to be biased as the only two managers that the Auditor states meeting with both are civilian managers over emergency communications centers falling under non-public safety departments. I consider both of these managers to be friends of mine, respect their opinions and am confident that neither of them would state that Chesapeake Emergency Communications is any less effective or efficient than their own centers. I believe equal time should have been given to managers under public safety departments. If that had been done, I believe the audit would have shown there to be just as many valid reasons for Emergency Communications to remain as either under a public safety department or realigned as an independent public safety department. (The remainder of the Police response is included in the full audit report.)

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A. Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

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Scope and Methodology

To conduct this audit, we reviewed and evaluated City and Emergency Communications administrative policies and procedures, and operations documents and reports. Also, we evaluated statistical data related to staffing levels and turnover, and conducted site visits of other local Emergency Communications Centers. We discussed these audit areas and conducted interviews with the Coordinator of Emergency Communications, as well as 10 Dispatch Supervisors, Dispatchers, and Call Takers. We also discussed dispatcher staffing and turnover-related issues with the City's Human resources Department.

B. Staffing Shortages and Working Conditions

Finding – During the past four years, the staffing level of Emergency Communications has been short by an average of 9 people. This condition was exacerbated by a 35 percent turnover rate among new hires. As a result, there was a lack of fully trained personnel, and Emergency Communications experienced mandatory overtime, high stress levels, and lowered morale. Also, the dispatchers indicated that the working environment contributed to the morale issue.

Our discussions with Emergency Communications management indicated that there was a consistently high turnover rate within Emergency Communications. In order to determine the cause of the high turnover and staffing shortage within Emergency Communications, we interviewed a random selection of ten employees to determine the issues and concerns from the employee's point of view. In addition, we reviewed employee staffing statistical data supplied by management to determine the actual staffing shortage and turnover rates.

In the total compliment of 68, there were 10 vacancies as of March 2007. (See Exhibit # 1 on page 5) This count did not take into account the fact that there were 13 trainees who were at various levels of training. This situation had a net effect of reducing the total number of fully trained staff by 23 employees. In addition, there were 6 "specialty" supervisors who were assigned to other administrative duties and were not generally available for working in Emergency Communications. Therefore out of the total compliment of 68, only 39 fully trained personnel were available for full-time duties. While bare minimum staffing was 27 dispatchers a day, the March 2007 staffing requirement was set at 30 people per day. This staffing level, while necessary to meet the needs of the citizens, was further taxing the 39 people available. One staffing model used, which took into account items such as sick and annual leave, indicated that properly staffing a center that used 30 people per day required a minimum of 45 fully trained personnel on staff.

Our analysis of data for the period July 1, 2006 through January 29, 2007 indicated 23 dispatcher trainees were hired; and of these, 8 subsequently left, creating a turnover rate of 35 percent for the period. We used an Employee Turnover Costs Calculator, found at www.GeivityInstitute.com, to determine the annualized replacement cost of a 35 percent turnover rate would be \$926,077, or more than \$115,000 each time an employee left.

The results of our interviews with dispatchers indicated that the following were the top 7 items mentioned as being problems or areas of concern.

- 1) Stress from all sources
- 2) Feeling unappreciated/lack of recognition
- 3) Mandatory overtime
- 4) Work environment – space needs, cleanliness
- 5) Pay
- 6) Shift work/scheduling
- 7) Insufficient training on the new CAD system and GIS issues

These dispatchers' interviews also indicated that the following were the top 5 items mentioned as being solutions to the problems or areas of concern.

- 1) Change the environment – new center, clean center, fix HVAC
- 2) Better pay – shift differentials
- 3) Hire additional personnel
- 4) Change schedule – minimize mandatory overtime
- 5) Additional CAD training

Based on observations, interviews with staff, and analysis of the staffing numbers, we noted that Emergency Communications was never staffed to its full compliment. Since staffing levels were never met, the existing fully trained staff had to work mandatory overtime, creating stress, lowering morale, and creating overall dissatisfaction.

If Emergency Communications does not address the environmental issues and continues to lose personnel, the staffing level may drop below a functional minimum. As a result, Emergency Communications would not be able to provide adequate emergency services to the citizens, potentially endangering Police, Fire, and EMS personnel, and increasing liability to the City.

Recommendation - We recommend that Emergency Communications take immediate action to attempt to hire sufficient qualified candidates to bring Emergency Communications up to the total number of authorized full time equivalents (FTEs) and develop a contingency plan in the advent that the current staffing level drops below the functional minimum. Steps should also be taken to improve working conditions.

Listed below are some ideas for consideration to make up for staffing shortcomings:

- Conduct a pay classification and job analysis study to ensure that pay is at the proper levels.
- Immediately initiate the hiring process for up to authorized FTE plus the authorized 5 “over hires”.
- In the interim, consider reducing the number of personnel necessary to staff the daily shifts from 30 to 27.
- Look at different shift configurations to try and minimize the amount of required overtime.
- Fast track training to the extent practicable.
- Provide “Niche” training.
- Evaluate viability of potential employee bonus programs.
- Reduce the length of the hiring process.
- Create a “Ranked Eligibility List” of qualified applicants.
- Utilize the City’s Encore Program.
- Create a committee comprised of members of the existing staff to identify the most significant turnover and shortage issues and develop solutions. Human Resources could help facilitate this committee.

We also recommend that steps be taken to clean up and address the environmental issues in the existing working facility to the extent practicable for the well being and health of our employees. The use of portables should also be considered to provide more working space for specialty supervisors.

**Exhibit # 1
Public Safety and Emergency Communications Section Personnel List**

Rev. Date 3/15/07

Dispatch Supervisor (DS) – 10 Positions			
1	DS	V. A. B. – 8/14/00	6 DS A. P. G. – 2/9/73
2	DS	C. M. C. – 7/17/84	7 DS C. S. M. – 8/1/81
3	DS	L. J. D. – 5/1/90	8 DS J. R. – 11/5/86
4	DS	M. J. E. – 9/9/91	9 DS K. F. S. – 8/16/96
5	DS	M. A. F. – 8/1/95	10 DS P. A. S. – 8/16/91
Senior Dispatcher (SD) – 8 Positions			
1	SD	S. M. B. – 7/31/00	5 SD A. B. M. – 8/1/85
2	SD	N. M. C. – 11/19/01	6 SD J. M. M. – 7/10/00
3	SD	P. T. G. – 9/23/02	7 SD L. M. P. – 10/9/00
4	SD	B. J. K. – 8/21/00	8 SD (Vacant)
Dispatcher II (D2) – 15 Positions			
1	D2	L. M. B. – 10/1/01	9 D2 P. A. P. – 5/1/90
2	D2	J. L. C. – 3/29/04	10 D2 W. L. R. – 3/29/04
3	D2	J. E. D. – 7/7/03	11 D2 C. A. S. – 12/16/02
4	D2	S. E. E. – 1/7/02	12 D2 H. D. S. – 3/4/02
5	D2	G. A. G. – 3/16/87	13 D2 K. M. S. – 10/18/04
6	D2	G. H. – 3/29/04	14 D2 (Vacant)
7	D2	H. D. L. – 10/18/04	15 D2 (Vacant)
8	D2	D. A. N. – 12/3/01	
Dispatcher I (D1) and/or Dispatcher Trainee (DT) – 27 Positions + up to 5 Over Hires			
1	D1	K. F. H. – 5/2/05	17 DT A. Y. M. – 7/10/06
2	D1	J. D. J. – 5/2/05	18 DT U. V. N. – 7/24/06
3	D1	W. J. J. – 10/18/04	19 DT V. R. P. – 7/24/06
4	D1	A. M. K. – 7/7/03	20 DT A. R. S. – 7/31/06
5	D1	E. W. O. – 5/8/00	21 DT C. M. W. – 7/31/06
6	D1	K. L. P. – 2/27/06	22 DT J. N. D. – 10/16/06
7	D1	A. D. R. – 5/2/05	23 DT B. M. – 10/16/06
8	D1	L. M. S. – 12/26/06	24 DT S. W. Z. – 10/16/06
9	D1	S. L. T. – 5/2/05	25 DT S. L. C. – 1/29/07
10	D1	(Vacant)	26 DT J. N. K. – 1/29/07
11	D1	(Vacant)	27 DT M. L. S. – 1/29/07
12	D1	(Vacant)	OH 1 Over Hire 1
13	D1	(Vacant)	OH 2 Over Hire 2
14	D1	(Vacant)	OH 3 Over Hire 3
15	DT	M. M. J. – 2/27/06	OH 4 Over Hire 4
16	DT	K. M. S. – 2/27/06	OH 5 Over Hire 5
Dispatch Call Taker (DCT) – 8 Positions			
1	DCT	R. H. D. – 10/18/04	5 DCT M. C. T. – 07/11/05
2	DCT	A. L. F. – 07/11/05	6 DCT E. R. W. – 07/11/05
3	DCT	M. A. L. – 10/16/06	7 DCT (Vacant)
4	DCT	R. M. R. – 07/18/05	8 DCT (Vacant)

This chart highlights employee initials and date of hire. The positions highlighted in yellow are vacant. The positions highlighted in blue are trainees. The positions highlighted in green are over hires and are not currently filled. This list does not show the Section Supervisor, and Information Technology positions.

Response - In Section B. Staffing, Shortages and Working Conditions, the second paragraph states the staffing requirement was set at 30 people per day. This is incorrect as the minimum staffing requirement is 27 persons per day composed of 10 each for day and evening shift and 7 for midnight shift. While the minimum staffing level is 27, a staffing level of 30 is suggested to allow personnel to take meal breaks, restroom breaks and perform necessary administrative duties (i.e. cycle sheets, training evaluations, etc.). Without the addition of 1 person per shift, the inability or very decreased capability for personnel to have meal or restroom breaks only adds to the stress and environmental discomfort. Without the additional person, administrative duties would have to be performed on overtime after normal work hours, again adding to discontent. Additionally, scheduling at minimum staffing levels was attempted, but only caused more severe issues when personnel who called out had to be replaced by keeping someone over from the previous shift. This meant employees had to work unplanned double shifts as a common practice.

The next paragraph states there is a consistently high turnover rate of Emergency Communications personnel and that one calculation shows a cost to the City of \$115,000.00 for each employee that leave employment. The \$115,000.00 per employee lost could be best invested in raising salaries, yet we have continually requested dispatcher salaries to be brought to competitive levels in order to reduce the number of employees leaving for better paying jobs. From interviews with employees, it states the top reasons of concern for personnel are stress, unappreciation/lack of recognition, mandatory overtime, work environment, pay, shift work/scheduling and insufficient training on the new CAD system/GIS issues. I completely agree with the high turnover rate, high cost of dispatchers leaving employment, and the list of concerns. Also, the interview with dispatch personnel indicated 5 top solutions, which included changes to the work environment (new center, clean center), better pay, additional personnel, change schedule (minimize mandatory overtime) and additional CAD training. I agree with all of these solutions except changing the schedule as we have not only looked at other scheduling options, but put out surveys to all Emergency Communications personnel and, overwhelmingly, they prefer the current schedule to any other.

This section continues to state that full staffing was never met and mandatory overtime was necessary, which creates additional stress, low morale and overall dissatisfaction. What is not stated is that Emergency Communications was slowly increasing the fully trained staffing complements (i.e. increasing in numbers) until placed into a hiring freeze status in October 2005. When asked to be exempted from the hiring freeze, we were denied and the inability to hire on our projected schedule caused a deficit. Around the same time, Emergency Communications was mandated to implement Emergency Medical Dispatching and the Fire Tactical Dispatching position, which added to the number of required personnel for each shift (2 for day and evening shift and 1 for midnight shift). These factors added to the normal turnover rate of emergency communications personnel and resulted in the necessity of mandatory overtime.

This section also states that environmental issues must be addressed. For years, Emergency Communications has requested a new facility, a better/cleaner HVAC system and additional cleaning services. The Police Department requested an addition to the public safety building, placing a new emergency communications center behind and attached to the current building. This plan was rejected. The City later studied the possibility of a multifunctional public safety operations facility that combined the emergency dispatch center, emergency operations center, customer contact center, channel 48, smart traffic and other City support services used in emergency situations within a single facility. Unfortunately, this plan, due to the number of operations housed within, was estimated at \$21 - \$24 million in March 2006 and never placed as a funded capital improvement project. When the HVAC was replaced in the Emergency Dispatch Center last year, the filtration and ducting were not properly addressed even though issues of temperature disparity and health concerns were raised before and during installation.

Continuing in this section under "Recommendations," the report states that immediate action needs to be taken to hire up to authorized levels. This has been the goal, at least, since I have been Coordinator of Emergency Communications. We have worked with Human Resources to change procedures including reducing the hiring timeline, establishment of a ranked hiring list which keeps applicants valid for one year from date of interview, adding the capability to over-hire by 5 dispatchers (if we had sufficient qualified applicants), and adding a new job classification of Dispatch Call Taker allowing for a 9 month training time reduction compared to dispatchers and other initiatives.

Addressing each of the bulleted "ideas for consideration, we have asked for a pay classification and job analysis study twice in the last two years. The first time a brief salary comparison was completed by Human Resources, which I debated the validity of due to their use of unequal job position in other cities in the comparison. With the second request, Human Resources launched what appeared to be a full pay classification and job analysis study as we received job classification surveys and were asked to have them completed in 5 days. However, we submitted the surveys on January 9, 2007 and are still awaiting results from that request.

The next bullet is to immediately initiate the hiring process for the authorized staffing plus the 5 over-hires. We have never stopped trying to hire. Occasionally, we would not post the job listing for a week or two in order to catch up on the previously posted requirements, but it was not until the City implemented a hiring freeze that we slid into a negative ratio of hiring and training compared to employee turn-over. Because of the hiring freeze, the sparse number of qualified applicants and the 12 or more months it takes to train dispatchers, it will take years to reach the authorized level and have an operationally reasonable number of fully trained dispatchers. Yet if salaries and environmental issues (facilities and health related) are not addressed in a timely manner, we may continue to have low numbers of qualified applicants and current employees leaving at high rates.

On the recommendation to consider reducing the necessary staffing levels, as previously explained, while the minimum staffing level is 27, a staffing level of 30 is needed to allow personnel to take meal breaks, restroom breaks and perform necessary administrative duties (i.e. cycle sheets, training evaluations, etc.). Without the addition of 1 person per shift, the inability or much decreased capability for personnel to have meal or restroom breaks only adds to the stress and environmental discomfort. Without the additional person, administrative duties would have to be performed on overtime after normal work hours, again adding to discontent.

Trying to reduce the amount of overtime and looking at different shift configurations was also suggested. We are nearing the point where 6 of the current dispatcher trainees will be finishing their Basic Dispatcher Training in the next few months. As long as we do not have unforeseen personnel losses, we should be able to reduce the required mandatory overtime from 2 four-hour slots per week to 1 four-hour slot per week. It is foreseeable that we could eliminate mandatory overtime by May 2008, but only if we continue to progress in hiring, training and can keep the turn-over rate to a minimum level.

The next bullet states to fast track training to the extent possible. Our current training program for dispatch personnel is both effective and efficient. Trying to “hurry up” training more than what is outlined in the program may result in quality and performance issues throughout the employees’ careers. What is needed is for the EDC Portables Project to proceed in a timely fashion. Currently, we have to share the computer room at the Police Academy and training of dispatch personnel is often placed on hold as we wait for computer access, which is the primary training means for dispatchers. The EDC Portables Project would provide a 20 student computer classroom behind the Public Safety Building specifically for dispatcher training (although it can be used for non-dispatch personnel when not needed for dispatchers). Additionally, the dispatcher classroom would be setup to be closer to the operating conditions of the 9-1-1 Center, making the transition from classroom to field training easier.

Niche training is the next recommendation. We did work with Human Resources to create a new position of Dispatch Call Taker in order to make a specific job and now only have to train those positions for their specific job related tasks. That reduced the time needed to train call takers from 12 or more months to around 3 to 4 months. Unfortunately, the remaining dispatch positions must be cross trained in police, fire, emergency medical services, animal control and other disciplines in order to adequately provide the coverage needed in the Emergency Communications Center. While some centers do have personnel that are dedicated to one discipline, it actually takes more employees to operate in that manner as they cannot replace a one type of niche employee with another type when they are on a break, out sick, on leave, in training or otherwise unable to work their position.

The recommended bonus program was not defined to the point of knowing if it was a hiring bonus, a training bonus or a performance bonus. If it is referring to a hiring bonus, this could be a way to entice a larger number of qualified applicants and I would be in favor of such a program provided that it was appropriately designed.

C. Hiring Process

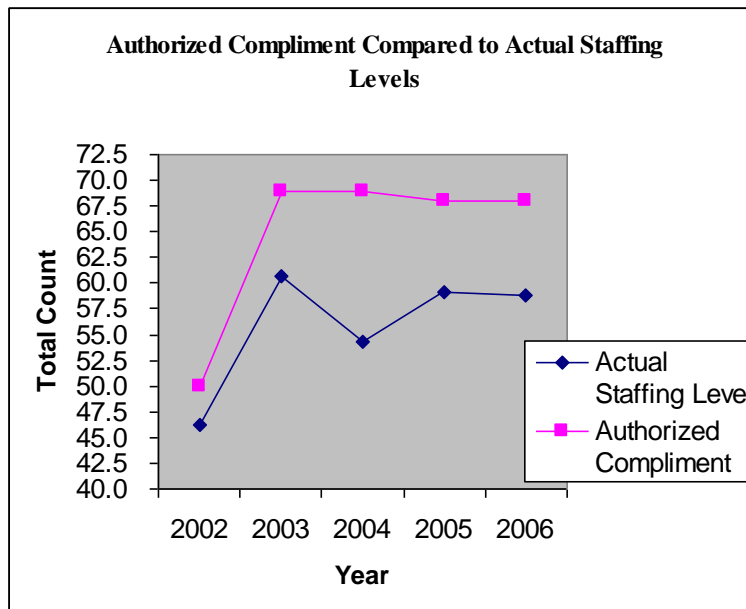
Finding - Emergency Communications hiring process was not as streamlined as it could be.

In discussing hiring procedures with several cities, we noted that Virginia Beach was able to give conditional job offers in as little as three months. Virginia Beach also had a dedicated person to handle the hiring process from beginning to end without any additional collateral duties. They outsourced multiple hiring functions including the Criti-Call test and polygraph testing. Their hiring process placed the background checks earlier in the process, resulting in a lower number of candidates who need to be tested on Criti-Call as compared to the City of Chesapeake.

Our evaluation of Chesapeake's dispatcher hiring process revealed the following:

- While the hiring process generally took two months from application to hire, we noted instances where the process took as long as ten months.
- Dispatch positions were not continuously posted to the City's "CLICK" System and Emergency Communications never reached the authorized number of 68 FTEs. The department's staffing shortage over the last 4 years ranged from 8 to 15 FTEs. They were, on average, 10 FTEs short throughout the four-year period we examined as shown below.

Exhibit # 2



- The Personal History Statement was lengthy and time consuming to complete. In addition, because it was given to the applicant with a deadline at the front end of the application process, a large number of applicants did not return the Statement, thus eliminating them from the hiring process.
- The Criti-Call Test was given but "hurdles" were not being utilized to eliminate applicants that do not meet minimum testing criteria. Hurdles were

predetermined levels of performance on various skills that the applicant must meet in order to continue.

- Background investigations were not completed at the front end of the hiring process, allowing large numbers of unqualified applicants to continue in the hiring process, and wasting time and resources that could be better spent.

Because Emergency Communications hiring process was not as streamlined or efficient as it could be, the City was losing qualified applicants. Applicants got discouraged and found employment elsewhere, which had a cost to the Center and the City.

Recommendation - Emergency Communications management should develop and implement a streamlined hiring process. In addition, recruitment efforts should be expanded to increase the population of quality candidates.

The Dispatcher hiring process should be evaluated and modified so that the hiring process can be completed in three months or less. We offer the following suggestions to improve the hiring process:

- Realign hiring steps as suggested in the table below:

	Current - Dispatcher Hiring Process	Suggested – Dispatcher Hiring Process
1	City application	City application - scan for disqualifiers
2	Applicants must submit a Personnel History Statement to Police Dept.	Send out notarized release form for background checks
3	Criti-Call Test must be passed.	Perform background investigation – DMV, VCIN, check states, verify ss#
4	Personal Interview	Give applicants tour of facility, view video
5	Ranking of applicants	Register for Criti-Call test
6	Perform back ground investigation – DMV, scan for disqualifiers, VCIN, check state, employment references, compare with PHS, verify ss#	Give Criti-Call test (establish hurdles). Give persons passing test Personnel History Statement to be completed and brought in at the time of interview.
7	Ranking of applicants	Set up personal interview
8	Conditional Offer	Personal interview
9	Pre polygraph screening	Ranking of applicants based on Criti-Call and interview results
10	Polygraph	Finish background investigation - employment references
11	Drug/Alcohol Test	Conditional Offer
12	Pre-employment physical	Polygrapher to review Personal History Statement and perform Polygraph exam
13	Payroll signup	Fingerprinting
14	Fingerprinting	Drug/Alcohol Test
15	Hired	Pre-employment physical
16		Hired

- Implement the use of hurdles into the Criti-Call test to allow for early identification of an applicant's good skills set and also be able to eliminate those applicants that do not meet minimum skill requirements.
- Review and streamline the current Personal History Statement so that only relevant data is obtained and does not become an obstacle to the hiring process.
- Determine and expand areas where the Human Resources Department can be involved in the Dispatcher hiring process.
- Keep the job posted on the City's "CLICK" System until the full number of authorized FTEs and 5 over hires is reached.
- Recruit enough qualified applicants to meet full staffing levels of Emergency Communications. A "Ranked Eligibility List" of qualified applicants should be created and maintained. Emergency Communications should develop and conduct an active, ongoing, recruitment campaign to attract more qualified candidates. Listed below are ideas for consideration in this campaign:
 - Develop a DVD of Emergency Communications in operation to be given to potential applicants.
 - Conduct tours of Emergency Communications for high school students
 - Have recruitment tables at the various high school job fairs.
 - Create a committee comprised of members of the current staff to identify the recruitment issues and develop solutions. Human Resources could help facilitate this committee.
 - Contact high school counselors to make them aware of Emergency Communications dispatcher positions for high school graduates who will not be attending college or entering the military.
 - Develop a job program with the Police recruiter in which the 18 year old high school graduate, who would like to be a police officer but cannot until age 21, could start as a dispatcher for three years then transition to the police force.
 - Establish relations with the DECA Program in the City's high schools. Conduct presentations and provide tours of Emergency Communications to expose the high school students to this job opportunity.
 - Establish recruiting relations with local colleges, universities, and technical schools job offices.
 - Develop relations with local vocational schools, such as ECPI, that have programs, such as telecommunications or law enforcement.
 - Utilize the City's Encore Program.
 - Develop a comprehensive web page similar to Henrico County's.
 - Develop a comprehensive brochure that identifies the Mission of Emergency Communications and the Skills and Qualifications necessary for successful employment.
 - Advertise on the APCO international website for candidates who may be relocating to the Hampton Roads Area.
 - Advertise on the City's TV station, Channel 48 WCTV.

Response - The audit report states that our hiring process takes between 4 and 9 months which is not consistent with the actual times (Auditor's Note: The report language has since been revised) A. While the hiring process taken one piece at a time may take months, several parts are often combined or overlap to cut the actual hire time as much as possible. The table below shows the Emergency Communications employees hired from 7/1/06 to the one that will start next Monday, 4/16/07.

Last Name	Date of Application	Date of Hire	Difference
Ferree	2/7/2007	4/16/2007	2 months, 9 days
Chamberlain	2/16/2007	4/9/2007	1 month, 22 days
Szoch	2/28/2007	4/9/2007	1 month, 10 days
Chatnam	10/15/2006	1/29/2007	3 months, 14 days
Kimbrough	12/13/2006	1/29/2007	1 month, 16 days
Sewell	12/3/2006	1/29/2007	1 month, 26 days
Shimek	11/12/2006	1/29/2007	2 months, 17 days
Duck	9/15/2006	10/16/2006	1 month, 1 day
Ipock	7/18/2006	10/16/2006	2 months, 29 days
Lucas	9/10/2006	10/16/2006	1 month, 6 days
Mclver	6/8/2006	10/16/2006	*4 months, 8 days*
Veney	8/23/2006	10/16/2006	1 month, 23 days
Zummo	9/11/2006	10/16/2006	1 month, 5 days
Blissett	7/26/2006	8/7/2006	12 days
Brown	7/4/2006	7/31/2006	27 days
Moselle	6/6/2006	7/31/2006	1 month, 25 days
See	6/7/2006	7/31/2006	1 month, 24 days
Sperry	7/11/2006	7/31/2006	20 days
White	6/12/2006	7/31/2006	1 month, 19 days
Novellino	6/10/2006	7/24/2006	1 month, 14 days
Perdue	7/7/2006	7/24/2006	17 days
Swastek	6/1/2006	7/24/2006	1 month, 23 days
Nichols	8/3/2005	7/10/2006	*10 months, 27 days*
Minton	8/2/2005	7/10/2006	*10 months, 28 days*

* These employees applied prior to or during the hiring freeze and were caught in the hiring freeze until allowed to be hired on or after 7/10/2006

Three employees who applied before or during the hiring freeze were not able to be hired until 7/10/06, but the remaining employees were hired in a timely manner. When compared to Virginia Beach, you should also reduce out time by one week as the time from conditional offer (benchmark used by Virginia Beach) to the actual hire date (our benchmark) takes at least one week or more.

As illustrated, the current hiring process is extremely effective in starting qualified employees in a timely manner. Still, the reduction of the hiring process is currently being revisited to try and reduce the time to hire even more as we are looking to streamline the personal history statement and establish the keystroke hurdle feature in the CritiCall testing program.

The key question is, with only taking a couple of months from the application date to the date of hire, why does Emergency Communications still have vacancies? The answer is that, although there are reasonable or even good numbers of applications being submitted, many of the applicants do not follow through with the process and there is an overall lack of qualified applicants. In order to hire an applicant, they must provide the required paperwork, show up for their scheduled CritiCall test and interview and not have any disqualifiers. In most cases, a 2 month vacancy posting for dispatcher trainee will have 300 applicants, but only 2 to 4 persons will be hired as meeting all the requirements. Also, with a high turn-over rate, it is likely that Emergency Communications will have at least one position become vacant in the same time period.

The recommendation for a "Ranked Eligibility List" is already part of the process for hiring dispatcher trainees, but often we hire all the qualified applicants on the list. When there are more qualified applicants than we can hire and start in classroom training, the remaining qualified applicants are left on a ranked list and contacted on a regular basis to let them know the status of the next hiring date.

Another recommendation is to utilize the City's Encore Program. There has only been 1 Emergency Communications dispatcher to retire and be eligible for part time hire under this program. She retired last July and I have already spoken to her about the Encore Program. At that time, she was pursuing her Masters Degree and would likely be teaching at a local college.

Recommendations to clean up, address environmental issue and use portables for needed workspace are also made in the audit report. We have repeatedly made requests to the City department responsible for these issues and through the budget process for a new facility, but have not received these changes. Additionally, we have an appropriations request coming before City Council on April 24, 2007, which would allow us to fund the EDC Portables Project.

Section C. Hiring Process, relates many of the issues that are currently being worked on and much of what was in the response from Section B applies to Sections C. Again, the actual time to hire is not 4 to 9 months, but actually has been less than 2 months, in most cases, since we have been able to work with Human Resources on streamlining the process. Although there have been times that the vacancy listing for dispatcher trainee has not been posted for a week or two while catching up on the previous posting, the listing is posted almost continually through the year.

The personal history statement is lengthy and time consuming. It is currently being edited in an effort to delete any unnecessary parts, but must still be approved by the Chief of Police, Human Resources and the City Attorney prior to replacing the current personal history statement. The Audit Report recommends hurdles be added to CritiCall, which are already being worked on, and that background investigations (actually criminal history inquiries) should be

completed at the beginning of the process instead of at the end. The criminal history checks can be completed at the beginning, but if more than 30 days old must be rechecked in the actual background investigation completed after the interview. Emergency Communications has streamlined the process and is now hiring within a couple of months from the date of application. We are hopeful the current Job Classification and Pay Study being conducted by Human Resources will recommend pay increases to all the Emergency Communications positions, which should assist in drawing more qualified applicants. Only with both parts can we fill all positions in a timely manner.

D. GIS Deficiencies

Finding – Emergency Communications identified significant GIS deficiencies related to the new CAD system that had not been corrected.

When new automated systems such as CAD are implemented, there are always issues that occur that were not identified and corrected during the testing process. After CAD systems are implemented, any issues that are identified need to be corrected to reduce stress on the dispatchers and eliminate the possibility of dispatching emergency units to the wrong location.

Emergency Communications identified the following GIS issues with the new CAD system that they considered to be critical, requiring immediate attention in order to avoid emergency call taking or Public Safety dispatching errors.

- Records that had Invalid Intersection Records. This issue arose due to 59999 (default) block ranges that needed to be corrected. For example: (Battlefield and Cedar Rd was there, but not if you pulled it up by Cedar and Battlefield).
- Records that had no Common Place Name Associated with a Street address due to block ranges and did not match the address of the Common Place. (During the Data Conversion Exceptions were not added due to block ranges of addresses being invalid. Many problems were due to address ranges being listed as 59999 (default) block ranges).
- Records that had Reversed Directional Prefixes or Suffixes needed to have an alias established. Many addresses were listed on Street signs one way and legally recorded another way. Example: (S Military Highway and Military Highway S).
- Records that had Missing Streets Segments at the borders of the City. The last block segments for streets at the City's border were shown as being in adjacent cities. Example: Many streets that were located both in Chesapeake and Suffolk had the Suffolk address range but not the last block of the Chesapeake address range (i.e. Pearl Street).
- Reporting District lines needed to be drawn accurately. Streets needed to be identified that were drawn in the incorrect reporting district. Streets that had physical boundaries within one reporting district and their response assignment in another police beat or fire station needed to be identified as well. Those streets needed to reflect the reporting district of the beat or station that would have the primary response to the call.
- Premise Records that were rejected during the conversion needed to be manually added or modified to be acceptable to the conversion process (and then have the conversion run again). Streets fitting any of the above criteria (59999 (default) Blocks, Reverse Directional, etc.) were rejected.

- Non-Addressed Segments need to be given mile marker, exit ramp number, cross street and/or other references. This information was primarily for interstates where there was no address to verify location.

This situation occurred because the Police Department did not have the necessary technology infrastructure to address the GIS problems after implementation. Thus Emergency Communications knew prior to implementation that they had a problem with GIS.

The effective and efficient operation of emergency call taking and dispatching rely on accurate and timely GIS data and proper conversion, modification, and updates to the information in the actual CAD system. If the GIS issues are not corrected, it will affect the timely dispatching of emergency units to the scene of an emergency. It may also jeopardize the safety of Firefighters, Police Officers and put our citizens' lives at risk. The City will not be able to provide the best services to the citizens of Chesapeake.

Recommendation – We recommend that, in the short term, sufficient GIS resources be designated to work with Emergency Communications management to resolve all GIS issues immediately. In the long term, Emergency Communications needs to have a dedicated GIS resource that places the needs of Emergency Communications as its first priority.

We suggest that Emergency Communications management determine who has been designated as their dedicated GIS resource within the City. This GIS resource should correct all identified GIS issues in the CAD system. Corrective action for CAD issues should take place immediately.

Response - In Section D, we completely agree there are GIS issues which need to be immediately addressed, the Police Department needed additional GIS resources before the implementation of the new CAD system and still, has substantial GIS issues related to the new CAD system that must be resolved. The Police Department requested a position that would handle GIS and specific related CAD/GIS tasks in the last 3 years of budget requests. In the budget request, we outlined the issues that would result without direct and dedicated GIS support. The Police Department was not granted that position, nor was the GIS support position approved for any other department. As such, we worked with City GIS personnel that were not dedicated to E911 GIS issues and did not have the best working knowledge of how the CAD would work or of how GIS issues would affect public safety responses. In the proposed budget for fiscal year 2007-2008, there are 2 GIS positions that would assist with E911 & CAD issues. One of the GIS positions, although assigned to the City's Information Technology Department, would be for direct support of E911 GIS issues. Until that time, we will need to work on as many of the GIS issues as possible.

E. Realignment and Relocation of Emergency Communications

Finding – It did not appear that the continuation of Emergency Communications operation within the Police Department was an optimal organizational structure.

To determine whether the Police Department was the optimal location for Emergency Communications, we met with managers from the cities of Norfolk and Virginia Beach Emergency Communications Centers, and noted that they reported to the City Manager and Information Technology, respectively. The reasons given by these cities for changing the organizational location of their Emergency Communications Centers were as follows:

- To provide emergency communications services to a variety of professionals such as Law Enforcement, Fire Services, Animal Control, Emergency Medical Services, Civil Defense, and Civil Services, as well as the general public.
- To service all areas in an equitable fashion without regard for departmental or organizational differences.
- To provide services equally and efficiently for the overall good of the City and its citizens.
- To provide an independent oversight of the communication function.

In addition, we noted that the cities of Norfolk and Virginia Beach dispatchers did not maintain and update the Virginia Crime Information Network data base. In these cities the data base is updated by Police Department personnel.

In our review and evaluation of Emergency Communications, we noted the following:

- The technology within Emergency Communications was changing at a rapid pace and the Police Department was not well positioned to meet the needs of Emergency Communications, making it difficult for maintaining the required technology infrastructure. Emergency Communications was responsible for maintaining and using multiple telecommunication systems including CAD, GIS, radios, GPS, and mobile data units.
- The working facility for Emergency Communications was too small for the number of employees and the computer equipment needed to efficiently operate. In addition, there were environmental concerns at the facility, such as heat and air conditioning issues, re-circulated air, cleanliness of facility, cramped work area, and no private workspace for supervisors. Dispatchers complained that these conditions have made the facility a breeding ground for sickness. These issues, if not addressed, could affect the health and well being of the employees.
- The Virginia Crime Information Network data base was being updated by dispatchers. This process was time-consuming and labor-intensive.
- Finally, the day-to-day operations of Emergency Communications were run in a paramilitary manner. While this structure worked very well within the rest of the Police Department, the paramilitary environment and the additional layers of supervisory structure (See Exhibit #3 on page 20) made it difficult to address the needs of the civilian dispatchers and did not always provide the best service environment.

As long as the Police Department has primary responsibility for Emergency Communications, technology support will likely be inadequate, service delivery could be challenged, and the decisions made may not be in the best interest of the entire City as a whole. These issues if not addressed can also cause employee stress, lowered morale, and may cause increased turnover.

Recommendation – The City should strongly consider transferring responsibility for Emergency Communications to another area, such as Information Technology, or a similar entity, that will ensure sufficient technological support for Emergency Communications.

Consideration should be given to making an organizational change realigning Emergency Communications from its current organizational location as part of the Police Department and reposition it as a part of the Information Technology, or a similar entity, that will ensure sufficient technological support for Emergency Communications. This can be done in conjunction with moving other communication and technology driven areas under the Information Technology Department or an Information Technology reorganization. We noted that other municipalities of equal or greater size had Emergency Communications Centers that were organized outside of the Police and Fire operations. To implement this recommendation:

- We suggest that a new, larger, working facility be found for Emergency Communications. This facility should be of ample size for employees and equipment and provide a healthy working environment. In the interim, the use of portables should be considered to provide more working space for senior supervisors.
- Civilian management should be responsible for Emergency Communications operations. We would suggest that the civilian manager have some degree of Police/Public Safety experience.
- Necessary technology infrastructure should be provided to support current and future Emergency Communications systems.
- The updating and maintaining of the Virginia Crime Information Network data base should be transferred to another area of the Police Department. This transfer may require additional resources.

Exhibit # 3
Public Safety and Emergency Communications Organizational Chart



Colonel R. A. J., Chief of Police

Lieutenant Colonel L. J. T., Jr., Deputy Chief

Major (currently vacant), Support Bureau Commanding Officer

**Lieutenant G. S. S., Coordinator
 Public Safety & Emergency Communications Section**

Sergeant J. N. C., Executive Officer

Administrative Dispatch Supervisor

Basic Training Dispatch Supervisor

EDCS Information

Hiring & Special Projects Disp.

Developmental Training Dispatch

Client Technologies Analyst II

Quality Assurance Dispatch Supervisor

Equipment Dispatch Supervisor

Communications Specialist

A Squad Dispatch Supervisor

B Squad Dispatch Supervisor

C Squad Dispatch Supervisor

Midnight Shift Dispatch Supervisor

Senior Dispatchers (2)

Senior Dispatchers (2)

Senior Dispatchers (2)

Senior Dispatchers (2)

Dispatcher IIs (4)

Dispatcher IIs (4)

Dispatcher IIs (4)

Dispatcher IIs (3)

Dispatcher Is (6)

Dispatcher Is (6)

Dispatcher Is (6)

Dispatcher Is (9)

Dispatch Call Takers (2)

Dispatch Call Takers (2)

Dispatch Call Takers (2)

Dispatch Call Takers (2)

Dispatcher Trainees (0)

Dispatcher Trainees (0)

Dispatcher Trainees (0)

Dispatcher Trainees (0)

Response - Section E is a recommendation to realign and relocate Emergency Communications. First, the basis for the recommendation appears to be biased as the only two managers that the Auditor states meeting with both are civilian managers over emergency communications centers falling under non-public safety departments. I consider both of these managers to be friends of mine, respect their opinions and am confident that neither of them would state that Chesapeake Emergency Communications is any less effective or efficient than their own centers. I believe equal time should have been given to managers under public safety departments. If that had been done, I believe the audit would have shown there to be just as many valid reasons for Emergency Communications to remain as either under a public safety department or realigned as an independent public safety department.

While the city governments of Norfolk and Virginia Beach decided to relocate their Emergency Communications Centers outside of the direct responsibility of their public safety departments, by far most emergency communications centers are under the direction of law enforcement. More than 80% of the calls for service in the City of Chesapeake are for the Police Department. There will always be claims of favoritism wherever Emergency Communications is located, be it under police, fire, information technology or as an independent department. Still, Fire Department priorities and welfare are always considered as a very important part of Chesapeake's Emergency Communications decisions, policies, procedures and practices. This is very apparent with the additions of Emergency Medical Dispatching (EMD) and the Fire Tactical Dispatcher positions being added to Emergency Communications prior to the needed Police Department additions of the Police Operations Position, the permanent separation of the Police East and West positions (they are merged into one from 11:30 pm until 7:30 am). The Fire Department routinely assists in Emergency Communications when there are major incidents, at peak service times and with technology issues and training specific to fire/EMS. The Fire Department even writes the standard operating procedures that Emergency Communications personnel use in dispatching fire and emergency medical services. Additionally, we work closely with the Fire Department's liaison (and Fire Department Staff) to ensure any issues are resolved.

The recommendation to remove the Virginia Crime Information Network (VCIN) and NCIC database records entry tasks from Emergency Communications is another point of agreement. We previously identified this to be a major concern in Emergency Communications, but without additional personnel added to the Police Department's Central Records Section, removal of these duties was never achieved.

The bulleted area in this section refer to several issues and my response is as follows:

- Emergency Communications does utilize many different technologies and, just like all technology, it changes periodically. While the Police Department has only a very small information technology staff, it has been**

able to implement numerous major information technology projects, even though justifiable requests for additional personnel were never approved. Without the Police Department's Information Technology Staff, many of the information technology advantages that the Chesapeake Police Department currently supports, such as automated field police reports, mobile laptops in police vehicles, the new CAD implementation and many others may not have been achieved. Additionally, while technology is a key resource in Emergency Communications, its function is directly related to public safety E911 operations and the support of public safety personnel communications.

- While the current Emergency Communications Center is too small and has several environmental concerns, its relocation has been a top issue for the Police Department for many years, but all proposals have been denied. It would not matter what Department the Emergency Communications Center falls under there is still the need for a new facility.
- The VCIN/NCIC database record entries should be removed from Emergency Communications as soon as practical.
- The day-to-day operations of Emergency Communications are operated in a paramilitary manner. The Emergency Communications Centers of all cities including Norfolk and Virginia Beach have a structured rank organization. In order to effectively and efficiently maintain control of critical emergency dispatching services under stressful, emergency conditions, such as hurricanes, homicides, police pursuits, multiple alarm fires, train crashes, etc., all emergency dispatch personnel are required by federal regulation to use NIMS protocol. To properly use the required Incident Command (paramilitary rank structure) in times of crisis, emergency dispatch personnel must use it on a day-to-day basis. Personnel cannot and will not suddenly change their habits and day-to-day work practices from a non-structured format to a formal ranked structure at a moment's notice, which could be devastating in a time of disaster or crisis. Still, consideration to the needs of every level are important and the uses of committees, surveys and other personnel tools are an important part of providing a more suitable work environment for civilian employees.

The placement of Emergency Communications should not be a factor in the support of technology as all City services should be able to utilize the resources of the Information Technology Department. Just as the Information Technology Department assists any other department with technology needs, as needed, they should assist Emergency Communications for projects that need additional technology support beyond the capability of the information technology personnel within the Emergency Communications staff (or police IT personnel).

I disagree with the realignment of Emergency Communications under Information Technology as it places the operational function under the resource instead of using the resource to empower the operational function. It would be like placing all police, fire, emergency medical services, and other departments that use vehicles as a primary resource under the City Garage because they are in charge of vehicles. Emergency Communications is a public safety support

function and an emergency 9-1-1 service request operation. It must follow public safety policies, procedures and practices. Emergency Communications personnel greatly need the connection between their support function of public safety personnel and the actual police, fire and emergency medical services personnel. Removing that connection by taking EDC away from a public safety department and placing them under a non-public safety department would reduce the recognition and appreciation of their work. If Emergency Communications must be realigned and taken out from under the Police Department, it should become an independent department under public safety or an independent department under the City Managers' Office (or Deputy City Manager of Community Initiatives).

No matter if Emergency Communications remains in the Police Department or is realigned under another department or becomes its own independent department, a new, larger work facility is greatly needed. The facility should be built with a growth projection and meet current standards for a healthy work environment as well as structural standards to withstand other recommendations presented in the Public Safety Operations Facility Study (storm resistance, emergency shelter, etc.). Until such time as a new facility is complete, the proposed use of portables for training and administrative offices should be approved as soon as possible to relieve current workspace issues within the Emergency Communications Center and assist with the extensive training considerations of emergency dispatch personnel.

If Emergency Communications is realigned and not under police or fire, the use of civilian management is expected, but due to the intricacies and constant interactions with public safety, civilian management must have ample public safety experience to adequately address policies, procedures and needs that will be required of the Emergency Communications operation as it supports public safety personnel. Additionally, it would be favorable for 1 lower level administrative employee from both police and fire to either be assigned to or liaisons to Emergency Communications.

APPENDIX A

RESPONSE FROM POLICE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS

April 13, 2007

TO: COLONEL R. A. JUSTICE, CHIEF OF POLICE

FROM: LIEUTENANT G. S. STAYLOR, COORDINATOR
PUBLIC SAFETY & EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO AUDIT REPORT ON EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

In response to the City Auditor's report on the Public Safety and Emergency Communications Section, which they refer to as Emergency Communications in the audit report, I would like to address their observations, comments and recommendations in the order listed in the audit report.

In Section A. Objectives, Scope and Methodology, the second paragraph failed to list statistical data which I believe should be included. What should be added are the 262,864 activities and/or calls for service entered into CAD, 155,913 report numbers assigned, and 11,488 active Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) calls handled by Emergency Communications personnel. Under the Major Observations and Conclusions section, I agree with the short term conclusions that staffing issues need to be addressed, the hiring process needs to be streamlined, the working environment of Emergency Dispatch needs to be enhanced and GIS issues need to be corrected in the new CAD system. However, it must be noted that Emergency Communications has made numerous requests on all of these issues and, except for assistance from Human Resources on streamlining the hiring process, received little or no support from the City outside what we could implement within our own department. A longer term conclusion was made to "seriously consider relocating Emergency Communications to another department where its technology and environmental issues could be more easily addressed." I will respond to this conclusion later in this letter as this subject comes under its own section and has many facets that were part of the overall conclusion.

In Section B. Staffing, Shortages and Working Conditions, the second paragraph states the staffing requirement was set at 30 people per day. This is incorrect as the minimum staffing requirement is 27 persons per day composed of 10 each for day and evening shift and 7 for midnight shift. While the minimum staffing level is 27, a staffing level of 30 is suggested to allow personnel to take meal breaks, restroom breaks and perform necessary administrative duties (i.e. cycle sheets, training evaluations, etc.). Without the addition of 1 person per shift, the inability or very decreased capability for personnel to have meal or restroom breaks only adds to the stress and environmental discomfort. Without the additional person, administrative duties would have to be performed on overtime after normal work hours, again adding to discontent. Additionally, scheduling at minimum staffing levels was attempted, but only caused more severe issues when personnel who called out had to be replaced by keeping someone over from the previous shift. This meant employees had to work unplanned double shifts as a common practice.

Colonel R. A. Justice

*"The City of Chesapeake adheres to the principles of equal employment opportunity.
This policy extends to all programs and services supported by the City."*

The next paragraph states there is a consistently high turnover rate of Emergency Communications personnel and that one calculation shows a cost to the City of \$115,000.00 for each employee that leave employment. The \$115,000.00 per employee lost could be best invested in raising salaries, yet we have continually requested dispatcher salaries to be brought to competitive levels in order to reduce the number of employees leaving for better paying jobs. From interviews with employees, it states the top reasons of concern for personnel are stress, unappreciation/lack of recognition, mandatory overtime, work environment, pay, shift work/scheduling and insufficient training on the new CAD system/GIS issues. I completely agree with the high turnover rate, high cost of dispatchers leaving employment, and the list of concerns. Also, the interview with dispatch personnel indicated 5 top solutions, which included changes to the work environment (new center, clean center), better pay, additional personnel, change schedule (minimize mandatory overtime) and additional CAD training. I agree with all of these solutions except changing the schedule as we have not only looked at other scheduling options, but put out surveys to all Emergency Communications personnel and, overwhelmingly, they prefer the current schedule to any other.

This section continues to state that full staffing was never met and mandatory overtime was necessary, which creates additional stress, low morale and overall dissatisfaction. What is not stated is that Emergency Communications was slowly increasing the fully trained staffing complements (i.e. increasing in numbers) until placed into a hiring freeze status in October 2005. When asked to be exempted from the hiring freeze, we were denied and the inability to hire on our projected schedule caused a deficit. Around the same time, Emergency Communications was mandated to implement Emergency Medical Dispatching and the Fire Tactical Dispatching position, which added to the number of required personnel for each shift (2 for day and evening shift and 1 for midnight shift). These factors added to the normal turnover rate of emergency communications personnel and resulted in the necessity of mandatory overtime.

This section also states that environmental issues must be addressed. For years, Emergency Communications has requested a new facility, a better/cleaner HVAC system and additional cleaning services. The Police Department requested an addition to the public safety building, placing a new emergency communications center behind and attached to the current building. This plan was rejected. The City later studied the possibility of a multifunctional public safety operations facility that combined the emergency dispatch center, emergency operations center, customer contact center, channel 48, smart traffic and other City support services used in emergency situations within a single facility. Unfortunately, this plan, due to the number of operations housed within, was estimated at \$21 - \$24 million in March 2006 and never placed as a funded capital improvement project. When the HVAC was replaced in the Emergency Dispatch Center last year, the filtration and ducting were not properly addressed even though issues of temperature disparity and health concerns were raised before and during installation.

Colonel R. A. Justice
April 13, 2007
Page Three

Continuing in this section under "Recommendations," the report states that immediate action needs to be taken to hire up to authorized levels. This has been the goal, at least, since I have been Coordinator of Emergency Communications. We have worked with Human Resources to change procedures including reducing the hiring timeline, establishment of a ranked hiring list which keeps applicants valid for one year from date of interview, adding the capability to over-hire by 5 dispatchers (if we had sufficient qualified applicants), and adding a new job classification of Dispatch Call Taker allowing for a 9 month training time reduction compared to dispatchers and other initiatives.

Addressing each of the bulleted "ideas for consideration, we have asked for a pay classification and job analysis study twice in the last two years. The first time a brief salary comparison was completed by Human Resources, which I debated the validity of due to their use of unequal job position in other cities in the comparison. With the second request, Human Resources launched what appeared to be a full pay classification and job analysis study as we received job classification surveys and were asked to have them completed in 5 days. However, we submitted the surveys on January 9, 2007 and are still awaiting results from that request.

The next bullet is to immediately initiate the hiring process for the authorized staffing plus the 5 over-hires. We have never stopped trying to hire. Occasionally, we would not post the job listing for a week or two in order to catch up on the previously posted requirements, but it was not until the City implemented a hiring freeze that we slid into a negative ratio of hiring and training compared to employee turn-over. Because of the hiring freeze, the sparse number of qualified applicants and the 12 or more months it takes to train dispatchers, it will take years to reach the authorized level and have an operationally reasonable number of fully trained dispatchers. Yet if salaries and environmental issues (facilities and health related) are not addressed in a timely manner, we may continue to have low numbers of qualified applicants and current employees leaving at high rates.

On the recommendation to consider reducing the necessary staffing levels, as previously explained, while the minimum staffing level is 27, a staffing level of 30 is needed to allow personnel to take meal breaks, restroom breaks and perform necessary administrative duties (i.e. cycle sheets, training evaluations, etc.). Without the addition of 1 person per shift, the inability or much decreased capability for personnel to have meal or restroom breaks only adds to the stress and environmental discomfort. Without the additional person, administrative duties would have to be performed on overtime after normal work hours, again adding to discontent.

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Trying to reduce the amount of overtime and looking at different shift configurations was also suggested. We are nearing the point where 6 of the current dispatcher trainees will be finishing their Basic Dispatcher Training in the next few months. As long as we do not have unforeseen personnel losses, we should be able to reduce the required mandatory overtime from 2 four-hour slots per week to 1 four-hour slot per week. It is foreseeable that we could eliminate mandatory overtime by May 2008, but only if we continue to progress in hiring, training and can keep the turn-over rate to a minimum level.

The next bullet states to fast track training to the extent possible. Our current training program for dispatch personnel is both effective and efficient. Trying to "hurry up" training more than what is outlined in the program may result in quality and performance issues throughout the employees' careers. What is needed is for the EDC Portables Project to proceed in a timely fashion. Currently, we have to share the computer room at the Police Academy and training of dispatch personnel is often placed on hold as we wait for computer access, which is the primary training means for dispatchers. The EDC Portables Project would provide a 20 student computer classroom behind the Public Safety Building specifically for dispatcher training (although it can be used for non-dispatch personnel when not needed for dispatchers). Additionally, the dispatcher classroom would be setup to be closer to the operating conditions of the 9-1-1 Center, making the transition from classroom to field training easier.

Niche training is the next recommendation. We did work with Human Resources to create a new position of Dispatch Call Taker in order to make a specific job and now only have to train those positions for their specific job related tasks. That reduced the time needed to train call takers from 12 or more months to around 3 to 4 months. Unfortunately, the remaining dispatch positions must be cross trained in police, fire, emergency medical services, animal control and other disciplines in order to adequately provide the coverage needed in the Emergency Communications Center. While some centers do have personnel that are dedicated to one discipline, it actually takes more employees to operate in that manner as they cannot replace a one type of niche employee with another type when they are on a break, out sick, on leave, in training or otherwise unable to work their position.

The recommended bonus program was not defined to the point of knowing if it was a hiring bonus, a training bonus or a performance bonus. If it is referring to a hiring bonus, this could be a way to entice a larger number of qualified applicants and I would be in favor of such a program provided that it was appropriately designed.

The audit report states that our hiring process takes between 4 and 9 months which is not consistent with the actual times. While the hiring process taken one piece at a time may take months, several parts are often combined or overlap to cut the actual hire time as much as possible. The table below shows the Emergency Communications employees hired from 7/1/06 to the one that will start next Monday, 4/16/07.

Last Name	Date of Application	Date of Hire	Difference
Ferree	2/7/2007	4/16/2007	2 months, 9 days
Chamberlain	2/16/2007	4/9/2007	1 month, 22 days
Szoch	2/28/2007	4/9/2007	1 month, 10 days
Chatnam	10/15/2006	1/29/2007	3 months, 14 days
Kimbrough	12/13/2006	1/29/2007	1 month, 16 days
Sewell	12/3/2006	1/29/2007	1 month, 26 days
Shimek	11/12/2006	1/29/2007	2 months, 17 days
Duck	9/15/2006	10/16/2006	1 month, 1 day
Ipock	7/18/2006	10/16/2006	2 months, 29 days
Lucas	9/10/2006	10/16/2006	1 month, 6 days
McIver	6/8/2006	10/16/2006	*4 months, 8 days*
Veney	8/23/2006	10/16/2006	1 month, 23 days
Zummo	9/11/2006	10/16/2006	1 month, 5 days
Blissett	7/26/2006	8/7/2006	12 days
Brown	7/4/2006	7/31/2006	27 days
Moselle	6/6/2006	7/31/2006	1 month, 25 days
See	6/7/2006	7/31/2006	1 month, 24 days
Sperry	7/11/2006	7/31/2006	20 days
White	6/12/2006	7/31/2006	1 month, 19 days
Novellino	6/10/2006	7/24/2006	1 month, 14 days
Perdue	7/7/2006	7/24/2006	17 days
Swastek	6/1/2006	7/24/2006	1 month, 23 days
Nichols	8/3/2005	7/10/2006	*10 months, 27 days*
Minton	8/2/2005	7/10/2006	*10 months, 28 days*

* These employees applied prior to or during the hiring freeze and were caught in the hiring freeze until allowed to be hired on or after 7/10/2006

Three employees who applied before or during the hiring freeze were not able to be hired until 7/10/06, but the remaining employees were hired in a timely manner. When compared to Virginia Beach, you should also reduce out time by one week as the time from conditional offer (benchmark used by Virginia Beach) to the actual hire date (our benchmark) takes at least one week or more.

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As illustrated, the current hiring process is extremely effective in starting qualified employees in a timely manner. Still, the reduction of the hiring process is currently being revisited to try and reduce the time to hire even more as we are looking to streamline the personal history statement and establish the keystroke hurdle feature in the CritiCall testing program.

The key question is, with only taking a couple of months from the application date to the date of hire, why does Emergency Communications still have vacancies? The answer is that, although there are reasonable or even good numbers of applications being submitted, many of the applicants do not follow through with the process and there is an overall lack of qualified applicants. In order to hire an applicant, they must provide the required paperwork, show up for their scheduled CritiCall test and interview and not have any disqualifiers. In most cases, a 2 month vacancy posting for dispatcher trainee will have 300 applicants, but only 2 to 4 persons will be hired as meeting all the requirements. Also, with a high turn-over rate, it is likely that Emergency Communications will have at least one position become vacant in the same time period.

The recommendation for a "Ranked Eligibility List" is already part of the process for hiring dispatcher trainees, but often we hire all the qualified applicants on the list. When there are more qualified applicants than we can hire and start in classroom training, the remaining qualified applicants are left on a ranked list and contacted on a regular basis to let them know the status of the next hiring date.

Another recommendation is to utilize the City's Encore Program. There has only been 1 Emergency Communications dispatcher to retire and be eligible for part time hire under this program. She retired last July and I have already spoken to her about the Encore Program. At that time, she was pursuing her Masters Degree and would likely be teaching at a local college.

Recommendations to clean up, address environmental issue and use portables for needed workspace are also made in the audit report. We have repeatedly made requests to the City department responsible for these issues and through the budget process for a new facility, but have not received these changes. Additionally, we have an appropriations request coming before City Council on April 24, 2007, which would allow us to fund the EDC Portables Project.

Section C. Hiring Process, relates many of the issues that are currently being worked on and much of what was in the response from Section B applies to Sections C. Again, the actual time to hire is not 4 to 9 months, but actually has been less than 2 months, in most cases, since we have been able to work with Human Resources on streamlining the process. Although there have been times that the vacancy listing for dispatcher trainee has not been posted for a week or two while catching up on the previous posting, the listing is posted almost continually through the year.

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The personal history statement is lengthy and time consuming. It is currently being edited in an effort to delete any unnecessary parts, but must still be approved by the Chief of Police, Human Resources and the City Attorney prior to replacing the current personal history statement. The Audit Report recommends hurdles be added to CritiCall, which are already being worked on, and that background investigations (actually criminal history inquiries) should be completed at the beginning of the process instead of at the end. The criminal history checks can be completed at the beginning, but if more than 30 days old must be rechecked in the actual background investigation completed after the interview. Emergency Communications has streamlined the process and is now hiring within a couple of months from the date of application. We are hopeful the current Job Classification and Pay Study being conducted by Human Resources will recommend pay increases to all the Emergency Communications positions, which should assist in drawing more qualified applicants. Only with both parts can we fill all positions in a timely manner.

In Section D, we completely agree there are GIS issues which need to be immediately addressed, the Police Department needed additional GIS resources before the implementation of the new CAD system and still, has substantial GIS issues related to the new CAD system that must be resolved. The Police Department requested a position that would handle GIS and specific related CAD/GIS tasks in the last 3 years of budget requests. In the budget request, we outlined the issues that would result without direct and dedicated GIS support. The Police Department was not granted that position, nor was the GIS support position approved for any other department. As such, we worked with City GIS personnel that were not dedicated to E911 GIS issues and did not have the best working knowledge of how the CAD would work or of how GIS issues would affect public safety responses. In the proposed budget for fiscal year 2007-2008, there are 2 GIS positions that would assist with E911 & CAD issues. One of the GIS positions, although assigned to the City's Information Technology Department, would be for direct support of E911 GIS issues. Until that time, we will need to work on as many of the GIS issues as possible.

Section E is a recommendation to realign and relocate Emergency Communications. First, the basis for the recommendation appears to be biased as the only two managers that the Auditor states meeting with both are civilian managers over emergency communications centers falling under non-public safety departments. I consider both of these managers to be friends of mine, respect their opinions and am confident that neither of them would state that Chesapeake Emergency Communications is any less effective or efficient than their own centers. I believe equal time should have been given to managers under public safety departments. If that had been done, I believe the audit would have shown there to be just as many valid reasons for Emergency Communications to remain as either under a public safety department or realigned as an independent public safety department.

While the city governments of Norfolk and Virginia Beach decided to relocate their Emergency Communications Centers outside of the direct responsibility of their public safety departments, by far most emergency communications centers are under the direction of law enforcement. More than 80% of the calls for service in the City of Chesapeake are for the Police Department. There will always be claims of favoritism wherever Emergency Communications is located, be it under police, fire, information technology or as an independent department. Still, Fire Department priorities and welfare are always considered as a very important part of Chesapeake's Emergency Communications decisions, policies, procedures and practices. This is very apparent with the additions of Emergency Medical Dispatching (EMD) and the Fire Tactical Dispatcher positions being added to Emergency Communications prior to the needed Police Department additions of the Police Operations Position, the permanent separation of the Police East and West positions (they are merged into one from 11:30 pm until 7:30 am). The Fire Department routinely assists in Emergency Communications when there are major incidents, at peak service times and with technology issues and training specific to fire/EMS. The Fire Department even writes the standard operating procedures that Emergency Communications personnel use in dispatching fire and emergency medical services. Additionally, we work closely with the Fire Department's liaison (and Fire Department Staff) to ensure any issues are resolved.

The recommendation to remove the Virginia Crime Information Network (VCIN) and NCIC database records entry tasks from Emergency Communications is another point of agreement. We previously identified this to be a major concern in Emergency Communications, but without additional personnel added to the Police Department's Central Records Section, removal of these duties was never achieved.

The bulleted area in this section refer to several issues and my response is as follows:

- Emergency Communications does utilize many different technologies and, just like all technology, it changes periodically. While the Police Department has only a very small information technology staff, it has been able to implement numerous major information technology projects, even though justifiable requests for additional personnel were never approved. Without the Police Department's Information Technology Staff, many of the information technology advantages that the Chesapeake Police Department currently supports, such as automated field police reports, mobile laptops in police vehicles, the new CAD implementation and many others may not have been achieved. Additionally, while technology is a key resource in Emergency Communications, its function is directly related to public safety E911 operations and the support of public safety personnel communications.
- While the current Emergency Communications Center is too small and has several environmental concerns, its relocation has been a top issue for the Police Department for many years, but all proposals have been denied. It would not matter what Department the Emergency Communications Center falls under there is still the need for a new facility.

- The VCIN/NCIC database record entries should be removed from Emergency Communications as soon as practical.
- The day-to-day operations of Emergency Communications are operated in a paramilitary manner. The Emergency Communications Centers of all cities including Norfolk and Virginia Beach have a structured rank organization. In order to effectively and efficiently maintain control of critical emergency dispatching services under stressful, emergency conditions, such as hurricanes, homicides, police pursuits, multiple alarm fires, train crashes, etc., all emergency dispatch personnel are required by federal regulation to use NIMS protocol. To properly use the required Incident Command (paramilitary rank structure) in times of crisis, emergency dispatch personnel must use it on a day-to-day basis. Personnel cannot and will not suddenly change their habits and day-to-day work practices from a non-structured format to a formal ranked structure at a moment's notice, which could be devastating in a time of disaster or crisis. Still, consideration to the needs of every level are important and the uses of committees, surveys and other personnel tools are an important part of providing a more suitable work environment for civilian employees.

The placement of Emergency Communications should not be a factor in the support of technology as all City services should be able to utilize the resources of the Information Technology Department. Just as the Information Technology Department assists any other department with technology needs, as needed, they should assist Emergency Communications for projects that need additional technology support beyond the capability of the information technology personnel within the Emergency Communications staff (or police IT personnel).

I disagree with the realignment of Emergency Communications under Information Technology as it places the operational function under the resource instead of using the resource to empower the operational function. It would be like placing all police, fire, emergency medical services, and other departments that use vehicles as a primary resource under the City Garage because they are in charge of vehicles. Emergency Communications is a public safety support function and an emergency 9-1-1 service request operation. It must follow public safety policies, procedures and practices. Emergency Communications personnel greatly need the connection between their support function of public safety personnel and the actual police, fire and emergency medical services personnel. Removing that connection by taking EDC away from a public safety department and placing them under a non-public safety department would reduce the recognition and appreciation of their work. If Emergency Communications must be realigned and taken out from under the Police Department, it should become an independent department under public safety or an independent department under the City Managers' Office (or Deputy City Manager of Community Initiatives).

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No matter if Emergency Communications remains in the Police Department or is realigned under another department or becomes its own independent department, a new, larger work facility is greatly needed. The facility should be built with a growth projection and meet current standards for a healthy work environment as well as structural standards to withstand other recommendations presented in the Public Safety Operations Facility Study (storm resistance, emergency shelter, etc.). Until such time as a new facility is complete, the proposed use of portables for training and administrative offices should be approved as soon as possible to relieve current workspace issues within the Emergency Communications Center and assist with the extensive training considerations of emergency dispatch personnel.

If Emergency Communications is realigned and not under police or fire, the use of civilian management is expected, but due to the intricacies and constant interactions with public safety, civilian management must have ample public safety experience to adequately address policies, procedures and needs that will be required of the Emergency Communications operation as it supports public safety personnel. Additionally, it would be favorable for 1 lower level administrative employee from both police and fire to either be assigned to or liaisons to Emergency Communications.

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