



COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

CITY COUNCIL of SALT LAKE CITY
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TO: City Council Members

FROM: Michael Sanders
 Budget & Policy Analyst

DATE: June 05, 2025

RE: FY26 BUDGET – 911 COMMUNICATIONS BUREAU

Budget Book Pages: Key Changes – 54 & 67, Department Overview - 261-264, Staffing Document - 278

ISSUE AT-A-GLANCE:

The 911 Communications Bureau provides dispatch services for Salt Lake City and Sandy City residents. For more information on the department overview see, page 262 of the Budget Book.

The **FY26 proposed budget** increases the 911 Communications Bureau budget by **0.71%**, about **\$82,213**, from about \$11.6 million to **\$11.7 million**. There are no new FTE requests. The Staffing Document indicates that the department currently is funded to have **100** full time equivalents, 8 of which are funded through Funding our Future. The department budget is summarized below.

	FY 25 Adopted	FY 26 Proposed		Change	
911 Communications Bureau Budget by Division					
Combined Emergency Services Dispatch	11,610,306	11,692,519	▲ \$	82,213	0.71%
Total	11,610,306	11,692,519	▲	82,213	0.71
911 Communications Bureau Budget by Type					
Personnel Services	10,438,033	10,520,246	▲	82,213	0.79
Operating and Maintenance	116,784	113,784	▼	(3,000)	-2.57
Charges and Services	905,116	908,116	▲	3,000	0.33
Capital Expenditures	150,373	150,373	▬	-	0.00
Total	11,610,306	11,692,519	▲	82,213	0.71



\$82,214 Increase for Personnel Services

The total personnel services budget is proposed to increase by 0.79%, about \$82,214, to \$10,520,246. This includes the proposed 4% COLA. Personnel costs represent 90% of the total department budget. The increases related to personnel are summarized in the chart below.

911 Communications Bureau - Personnel	Change
Base-to-base	▲ \$ 512
Pension Changes	▼ (64,248)
Insurance Rate Changes	▼ (98,538)
Salary Proposal	▲ 274,488
HSA	▼ (30,000)
Total	▲ 82,214

\$351,688 for AI Call Triage System

This proposed funding will be used for the Versaterm AI Call Triage system which is designed to assist in handling the high volume of non-emergency calls currently experienced by the department.

The software will be funded through the E-911 fund, and implementation is expected to follow a three to six-month timeline, including procurement, system testing, and full integration. Based on performance at peer Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), the department estimates that the AI system could handle up to 30% of the current non-emergency call volume.

To support this new functionality, the department will use the Vesta Analytics platform funded in FY25, which will allow for monitoring of call volume, call types, and outcomes. The Vesta system is fully compatible with the proposed AI solution and will be used to track the effectiveness of AI call triaging, including the number and proportion of calls diverted from live dispatchers.

POLICY QUESTIONS

1. **Pilot Partnership with University of Utah Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT)** – The Council may wish to ask the Administration if what additional resources are needed to make this partnership permanent and to further improve/streamline the program with MCOT to help divert mental crisis calls.
2. **Dispatchers as first responders** – The Council may wish to discuss with the Administration regarding the City’s ability to designate 911 dispatchers as first responders. This may aid with the current staffing/turnover issues.
3. **Alternative response coordination** – The Council may wish to ask what would it take for the Department to dispatch and coordinate diverting eligible calls to and between the City’s growing number of alternative response programs including partnership with MCOT, Medical Response Team, Community Health Access Team, Social Workers, Crisis Intervention Team, Police Civilian Response Team, Park Rangers, Rapid Intervention Team, CLEAN Team, and the street ambassador program.

ADDITIONAL & BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Emergency 911 Dispatch Fund

E-911 revenues come from a 911 excise tax paid on cell phone bills. The E-911 fund supports the General Fund to fund some personnel costs and other technology upgraded within the 911 Department. This year, the E-911 fund will transfer approximately \$3.8 million to the General Fund, and an additional \$9 million is projected to be

transferred next fiscal year. While this represents a larger share of support than in some prior years, transfers are evaluated annually to ensure continued support of core emergency dispatch operations while maintaining the long-term health of the fund.

The fund currently holds a cash balance of approximately \$13 million. After accounting for the FY25 transfer to the General Fund, the year-end balance is projected to be about \$9.2 million. In FY26, \$5 million in new E-911 revenue is anticipated, with planned uses totaling \$9 million. This would leave a projected ending balance of approximately \$5.2 million.

While a 5% reserve is typically considered a minimum for fund balance health, finance staff have established an informal target of \$3 million in reserves for the E-911 fund to ensure stability and preserve capacity for technology upgrades and other operational needs. Based on current projections, the fund is expected to maintain adequate reserves over the next 3–5 years. Finance staff have expressed no concerns about the ability to fund anticipated technology investments during that time.

Staffing, Turnover, and Recruitment Challenges

The 911 Department continues to face challenges fully staffing their department. As of the time of this writing, there are 16 vacant dispatch positions. This role experiences a consistently high turnover rate, largely due to the demanding nature of the work and competition with other agencies. The current turnover rate is 14.3%, which is an improvement from the 25.9% rate observed at this time last year.

The Council authorizes but does not fund three dispatcher FTEs to provide hiring flexibility for the Department (like the unfunded FTE approach used in the Police and Fire Departments). However, due to turnover rates consistently higher than the City's average the Department has been unable to utilize these for the past five years.

Exit interviews reinforce that job difficulty remains the primary driver of attrition. In a few cases, employees have leveraged their experience in dispatch to transition to sworn roles within the Salt Lake City Police Department. In other instances, compensation concerns played a direct role in attrition. A recent hiring example documented, two candidates who rescinded their acceptance just before onboarding, citing that the offered pay was insufficient relative to job demands.

Notably, 911 dispatchers are currently not classified as first responders. This designation, which is recognized in other jurisdictions, carries several important benefits:

- Earlier retirement eligibility that is more in line with the demanding nature of the work.
- Workers' compensation enhancements: Easier access to comp benefits for job-related stress, illness, or injury.
- Inclusion in first responder legislation: Eligibility for grants, protections during national emergencies, or specialized leave policies (e.g., COVID-19-related benefits).
- Priority access to vaccinations and PPE: Recognized first responders often receive prioritized health and safety measures during public health crises.

The department has noted that there are efforts underway to propose or advocate for first-responder designation for 911 operators.

Industry Best Practices for 911 Call Answer and Response Times

Ideally, a 911 call is supposed to elicit the following responses within six minutes:

1. Dispatcher answers incoming call within 10 seconds,
2. 60 seconds or less for dispatcher to gather priority information,
3. 60 seconds or less for dispatcher to notify appropriate emergency responders, and
4. 4 minutes or less for emergency responders (fire, medical, social workers, and/or police) to reach the caller's location.
5. 90% of 911 calls answered within 15 seconds
6. 95% of 911 calls answered within 20 seconds

Call Performance Metrics and Operational Trends

The 911 Department continues to perform at or above established benchmarks for call response times, in alignment with both Utah state standards and Federal best practices.

For calendar year 2024, the department exceeded these standards for their 155,166 calls of which:

- 93.9% of calls answered within 10 seconds
- 94.9% within 15 seconds
- 95.8% within 20 seconds
- 98.9% within 40 seconds

1,299 or 0.84% of 911 calls took between 1–2 minutes to answer, and 227 or 0.15% exceeded 2 minutes.

For more information regarding call answer times and call volumes, please see attachments 1 and 2

Federal Funding

The 911 Department is monitoring developments at the Federal level that may significantly impact its ability to modernize emergency communication services. Of particular relevance is the Next Generation 9-1-1 Act of 2023 (H.R. 1784), which, if passed, would authorize up to \$15 billion in federal grant funding for local Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). These funds are intended to support the implementation of interoperable, IP-based systems capable of receiving not only voice calls but also text, image, and video data—a major step forward in improving emergency response.

While the department is not currently facing technology delays due to budget constraints, leadership is proactively planning for future technological advancements. These include:

1. Generative AI for Language Translation and Transcription – To improve communication with non-English-speaking callers in real time.
2. Generative AI for Non-Emergency Call Handling – To triage and route non-urgent calls to the appropriate city departments, increasing efficiency and reducing strain on emergency lines.
3. Integrated Video Capabilities – Enabling the receipt and processing of video feeds to provide more accurate situational awareness to dispatchers and first responders.

Should these funds become available, it would allow the department to make significant technology advancements without drawing down E911 reserves or requiring additional General Fund support.

Continuing Pilot Partnership with University of Utah Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT)

The Department started a pilot partnership with MCOT four years ago including creating criteria and a procedure to determine when a non-violent caller in mental crisis could be diverted away from a sworn police officer response.

The department forward the following information from MCOT

- 92 Calls were diverted to MCOT, of those
 - 30 were resolved over the phone
 - 8 required law enforcement involvement at the request of MCOT
 - 52 were visited by MCOT directly.
 - 2 were referred to a higher level of care.

Contract to Provide Services to Sandy City (Animal Services, Fire and Police)

The five-year contract between Salt Lake City and Sandy City started in October 2013 and the initial term ended in October 2018. It was renewed for another five years until October 2023. A second five-year renewal was approved so the contract ends in February 2029. A six-month cancellation notice is required for either party to terminate the agreement.

HSA Discrepancy

The FY26 budget reflects a \$98,538 decrease in insurance rates and a \$30,000 decrease in Health Savings Account contributions for the City.

The written descriptions however indicate an increase. The narrative reference to an increase is standard language used throughout the budget book; however, the Department is specifically budgeting for a reduction in insurance rate changes and HSA costs. This reflects actual projected savings in these areas for the upcoming fiscal year.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Answer Times
2. Call Volumes

Attachment 1 Answer times

PSAP Answer Time

Salt Lake City 9-1-1
315 E 200 South
Salt Lake City, UT 84111 County: Salt Lake

Report Date: 05/28/2025 08:51:28
Report Date From: 01/01/2024
Report Date To: 12/31/2024
Period Group: Year
Time Group: 60 Minute
Time Block: 00:00 - 23:59

Year: 2024

The PSAP Answer Time Report is representative of the caller's answer time experience. Seizure-to-Answer Time is measured from the time of call seizure to the time of agent answer. Times shown include Setup, and may include Queue Seconds and/or Ring Seconds depending on PSAP configuration.

Call Hour	Answer Times In Seconds								Total	Avg. Duration	% Answered			
	0 - 10	11-15	16 - 20	21 - 40	41 - 60	61 - 120	120+	≤ 10 Secs			≤ 15 Secs	≤ 20 Secs	≤ 40 Secs	
00:00	4,823	40	30	93	36	38	5	5,065	177.7	95.22%	96.01%	96.60%	98.44%	
01:00	4,234	30	16	51	35	31	10	4,407	173.1	96.07%	96.76%	97.12%	98.28%	
02:00	3,527	9	5	29	10	9	1	3,590	173.8	98.25%	98.50%	98.64%	99.44%	
03:00	2,908	7	7	20	14	5	2	2,963	177.7	98.14%	98.38%	98.62%	99.29%	
04:00	2,592	3	4	18	12	15	9	2,653	168.2	97.70%	97.81%	97.96%	98.64%	
05:00	2,762	13	15	26	14	18	7	2,855	163.8	96.74%	97.20%	97.72%	98.63%	
06:00	3,417	28	18	60	36	37	14	3,610	147.3	94.65%	95.43%	95.93%	97.59%	
07:00	4,504	2	5	6	6	3	0	4,526	145.0	99.51%	99.56%	99.67%	99.80%	
08:00	5,499	25	29	67	24	30	2	5,676	140.6	96.88%	97.32%	97.83%	99.01%	
09:00	6,158	73	52	148	53	51	12	6,547	141.8	94.06%	95.17%	95.97%	98.23%	
10:00	6,362	84	63	161	55	53	11	6,789	138.7	93.71%	94.95%	95.88%	98.25%	
11:00	7,032	78	73	180	73	61	6	7,503	140.3	93.72%	94.76%	95.74%	98.13%	
12:00	7,935	117	110	322	141	125	28	8,778	130.9	90.40%	91.73%	92.98%	96.65%	
13:00	7,386	169	122	363	156	143	15	8,354	141.7	88.41%	90.44%	91.90%	96.24%	
14:00	7,774	155	125	287	126	114	13	8,594	136.2	90.46%	92.26%	93.72%	97.06%	
15:00	8,428	110	73	187	90	59	5	8,952	141.8	94.15%	95.38%	96.19%	98.28%	
16:00	8,420	101	101	200	95	48	5	8,970	149.5	93.87%	94.99%	96.12%	98.35%	
17:00	8,224	136	116	295	134	115	14	9,034	157.3	91.03%	92.54%	93.82%	97.09%	
18:00	8,610	102	92	203	93	87	14	9,201	144.3	93.58%	94.69%	95.69%	97.89%	
19:00	7,836	63	50	127	72	51	6	8,205	154.3	95.50%	96.27%	96.88%	98.43%	
20:00	7,462	65	54	132	59	33	5	7,810	153.9	95.54%	96.38%	97.07%	98.76%	
21:00	7,372	102	69	228	105	84	36	7,996	158.3	92.20%	93.47%	94.33%	97.19%	
22:00	6,687	60	47	138	42	34	1	7,009	163.9	95.41%	96.26%	96.93%	98.90%	
23:00	5,771	50	43	102	55	54	6	6,081	169.5	94.90%	95.72%	96.43%	98.11%	
Total:	145,723	1,622	1,319	3,443	1,536	1,298	227	155,168	150.9	93.91%	94.96%	95.81%	98.03%	
Overall %:	93.91%	1.05%	0.85%	2.22%	0.99%	0.84%	0.15%							

**Attachment 2
Call Volumes**

