

**TAMPA FIRE RESCUE
COMMUNICATIONS
AUDIT 24-06
MARCH 28, 2024**



City of Tampa
Jane Castor, Mayor

Internal Audit Department

315 E. Kennedy Boulevard
Tampa, Florida 33602
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March 28, 2024

Honorable Jane Castor
Mayor, City of Tampa
1 City Hall Plaza
Tampa, Florida

RE: Tampa Fire Rescue - Communications, Audit 24-06

Dear Mayor Castor:

Attached is the Internal Audit Department's report on Tampa Fire Rescue - Communications.

Tampa Fire Rescue has already taken positive actions in response to our recommendation. We thank the management and staff of the Communications Division for their cooperation and assistance during this audit.

Sincerely,

/s/ Christine Glover

Christine Glover
Internal Audit Director

cc: John Bennett, Chief of Staff
Barbara Tripp, Fire Chief
Dennis Rogero, Chief Financial Officer
Milt Jenkins, Assistant Fire Chief - Administration
Christopher Mygrant, Public Safety Telecommunications Supervisor III
Megan Birnholz, Assistant City Attorney

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/s/ Vivian Walker

Lead Senior Auditor

/s/ Christine Glover

Audit Director

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BACKGROUND

Tampa Fire Rescue (TFR) Communications (Communications) is responsible for receiving and then dispatching calls for fire and medical services. There is an authorized staffing level of 23 Public Safety Telecommunicators (PST), which currently includes four vacancies. All PSTs are required to be certified through the State of Florida. Communications has been approved by the State of Florida’s Department of Health as a 911 Public Safety Telecommunicator Training Program.

Communication’s statistics for calendar years 2022 and 2023 were as follows:

Type of Call	2022	2023
Fire	10,825	10,888
Medical	81,116	81,351

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

This audit was conducted in accordance with the Internal Audit Department's FY 2024 Audit Agenda. The objectives of this audit were to ensure that:

1. The system of internal controls related to Communications operations is adequate.
2. Certifications are current and documented training records are accurate.
3. Performance metrics are accurate and relevant.
4. Communications operations are comparable to jurisdictions in the State of Florida.

STATEMENT OF SCOPE

The audit period covered Communications activity that occurred from April 2020 to January 2024. Tests were performed to determine whether Communications personnel were fulfilling their stated duties and responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner.

The Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system by Astra is used by TFR to capture data related to calls received. CAD was previously evaluated during the audit of Fire Rescue (20-04) and was deemed reliable. However, although the data was deemed reliable, this software is currently being replaced by TFR. Original records as well as copies were used as evidence and verified through observation and physical examination.

STATEMENT OF METHODOLOGY

The following procedures were taken to determine if the stated objectives were being met:

- Reviewed policies and procedures established for Communications operations.

- Discussed the call intake and dispatch process with Communications Management.
- Reviewed training records for PSTs' most recent recertifications.
- Contacted communications sections for jurisdictions within the state of Florida to obtain survey information.

The following steps were performed to determine the accuracy and relevance of metrics reported:

1. Identified CAD as the source/system for metrics reported.
2. Reviewed data reliability testing for CAD generated data.
3. Traced reported data to StatsFD, the reporting software for CAD, to determine accuracy.

STATEMENT OF AUDITING STANDARDS

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the test work performed and the audit findings noted below, we conclude that:

1. The system of internal controls related to Communications operations is adequate.
2. Certifications were current and documented training records were accurate.
3. Performance metrics were deemed relevant but not always accurate.
4. Comparable jurisdictions were contacted for information related to their communications operations. Information was shared with TFR Management.

PERFORMANCE METRIC

STATEMENT OF CONDITION: Fire and medical related emergency calls are answered by TFR Communications Division's PSTs. The February 2024 Annual Compliance Report (ACR) prepared for the accrediting agency, Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI), provided performance data related to PST activities in the category of alarm handling. The ACR described alarm handling as "Pick-up to Dispatch" and provided times for the years 2021-2023. The information reported for these years represented the 90th percentile times obtained from the current CAD software used by TFR. However, there is no "Benchmark (Target)" documented for alarm handling. Additionally, the average times reported in the categories of moderate and high risk did not agree with the source data from StatsFD.

The ACR included results from an external Peer Assessment Team (PAT). The PAT recommended that "the agency monitor, assess, and internally report the ability of the existing service delivery system to meet its stated response goals and outcomes quarterly."

CRITERIA: Performance metrics help guide and gauge the effectiveness and/or efficiency of an activity.

CAUSE: TFR commented, in the ACR, that the current CAD and Epro reporting systems require updating to provide "accurate and timely data." Additionally, there were no goals established in the ACR because TFR Management indicated that CFAI does not require them for alarm handling. There is no internal quality assurance function to review for the accuracy of information being reported.

EFFECT OF CONDITION: Inefficiencies in operations that could potentially result in a liability to the City of Tampa if an untimely response caused either property or life loss.

RECOMMENDATION: TFR Management should establish appropriate targets for dispatch activities. Once implemented, a process should be developed to provide for ongoing monitoring to ensure performance meets the established target.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE: After reviewing the assessment of the Communications Division, I agree improvement in this area is needed. To affect positive change and implement procedures to assist in producing better call receipt and handling, TFR is currently in the final stages of an RFP with replacing the current outdated Computer Aided Dispatch System (CAD). A new CAD will allow TFR telecommunicators to use the electronic version of the medical protocol (ProQA) which will decrease call handling times. The new CAD will also enhance the monitoring of call handling times due to its advanced capabilities. TFR communication division will be able to create a report to provide weekly/monthly call processing times for each telecommunicator thus allowing Supervision to quickly address any concerns that may arise. The implementation of a new CAD will be of great assistance so the TFR Communications Division can achieve its 90 second call processing goal while following national standards.

TARGET IMPLEMENTATION DATE: December 2025, implementation of new CAD