

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY



RI E-911 UNIFORM EMERGENCY TELEPHONE SYSTEM DIVISION **2021 ANNUAL REPORT**



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Director's Message

The global pandemic of 2021 and the correlation with an increase in calls for service was the foremost issue for this agency. The resolve of every member of this agency to stay strong and report to work each day during a potentially deadly health risk is commendable if not heroic. As our State's first, first responders we processed 498,395 E-911 calls which is an increase of more than 7% from the previous year. The rise in calls for service to our customers was at a rate that is unprecedented.

The protection of our Rhode Island E-911 members against the pandemic remained a priority. I honor the administrative staff and supervisors who recognized the challenges and designed creative solutions to protect everyone during this unprecedented pandemic event. RI E-911 followed all relevant protective strategies mandated by the State of Rhode Island.

While some agency members contracted the virus nonetheless, the strategy worked. Aside from the required quarantine and isolation cases, the workforce remained operational. Sadly, we know that Dispatchers and Telecommunicators (TCs) across the country lost their lives from the virus. The proactive measures taken in Rhode Island likely saved lives.

Workflow calls in queue (referred to automated message), opioid calls, domestic violence calls, depression calls and many other statistics are evaluated to understand trends and support partner agencies. Strategically, we see the RI E-911 Uniform Emergency Telephone System Division as a service (911aaS), we know that tactically it is people helping people at the time of their greatest need.

A priority for 2021 was to address the challenges of attrition, recruitment, and retention. There is a continuous effort to streamline the hiring process to meet the staffing demands necessary to support the needs of an efficient Public Safety Answering Point.

During 2021, we began the deployment of Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) to replace legacy copper wire, and analog phones. The technology provides call information to the dispatcher not previously available. Ultimately, this project is expected to take two years to complete.

Agency members have earned FEMA certifications in IS100 and IS200 so that we may become eligible for certain federal grants and partnerships. RI E-911 is a member of the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) providing access to a multitude of resource material compiled by industry experts. Supervisors have been provided with management and leadership training along with additional educational opportunities.

There is mutual interest that exists between our agency and other professional organizations such as the Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs, the Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association, the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency along with many other fine state agencies and organizations. We are proud to recognize the motto of our host agency "In the Service of The State" but we also know that our technology makes 911 service unique. We want to be known as not just the ubiquitous and unknown space that you call for help when you dial 911. We want to educate everyone about the various services and products that can be developed through shared resources, technical solutions, data mining, advanced predicative analytics and as-yet developed technology.

Thank you to the citizens and visitors to our great state for all the confidence you have in our staff to assist you during your critical time of need. My most profound thanks to members of this agency who take those calls and find you the best help.

GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

In 2008 the Rhode Island General Assembly passed Article 9 of House Bill 7390 to reorganize many functions of state government. The major focus of this reorganization was to bring several law enforcement and criminal justice agencies previously under the Department of Administration under one organizational structure. This re-structuring created the Department of Public Safety.

The goal of the consolidation of these agencies is to assure the provision of professional services, enable the most efficient and effective use of the state's public safety resources, allow for the consolidation of the communications, training, and operating procedures of these agencies, and protect the lives and promote the safety of the citizens of the state.

The legislation named the Superintendent of the Rhode Island State Police as the Director of the Department of Public Safety. Accordingly, all directors of these agencies report to the Director. The Director is appointed by, reports directly to, and serves at the pleasure of the Governor.

A statutory Advisory Commission acts in an advisory capacity to the Director. Its composition and function are described in Section 39-21-4, General Laws, State of Rhode Island:

- **39-21-4 Advisory Commission.** – (a) There shall be an E 9-1-1 Uniform Emergency Telephone System Advisory Commission consisting of fourteen (14) members to be appointed in the following manner: five (5) of the members shall be: the Director of the Department of Health or his or her designee, the Fire Marshal or his or her designee, the Colonel of the Rhode Island State Police or his or her designee, the State Telecommunications Director or his or her designee, and the Administrator of the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers or his or her designee; three (3) members shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House: one of whom shall be a member of the House of Representatives, and one of whom shall be a representative of the Police Chiefs' Association, and one of whom shall be a representative of the telecommunication services provider that is the primary provider to the E 9-1-1 PSAP; three (3) members shall be appointed by the President of the Senate; one of whom shall be a member of the Senate, one of whom shall be a representative of the Fire Chiefs' Association, one of whom shall be a representative of the wireless telecommunication industry; and three (3) members shall be appointed by the governor: two (2) of whom shall be representatives of the public, one of whom shall be representative of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns.
 - (b) Members of the Commission shall serve five (5) year terms, except for ex officio members.
 - (c) The Advisory Commission may make such recommendations and give such advice to the Director of the division as it deems appropriate.

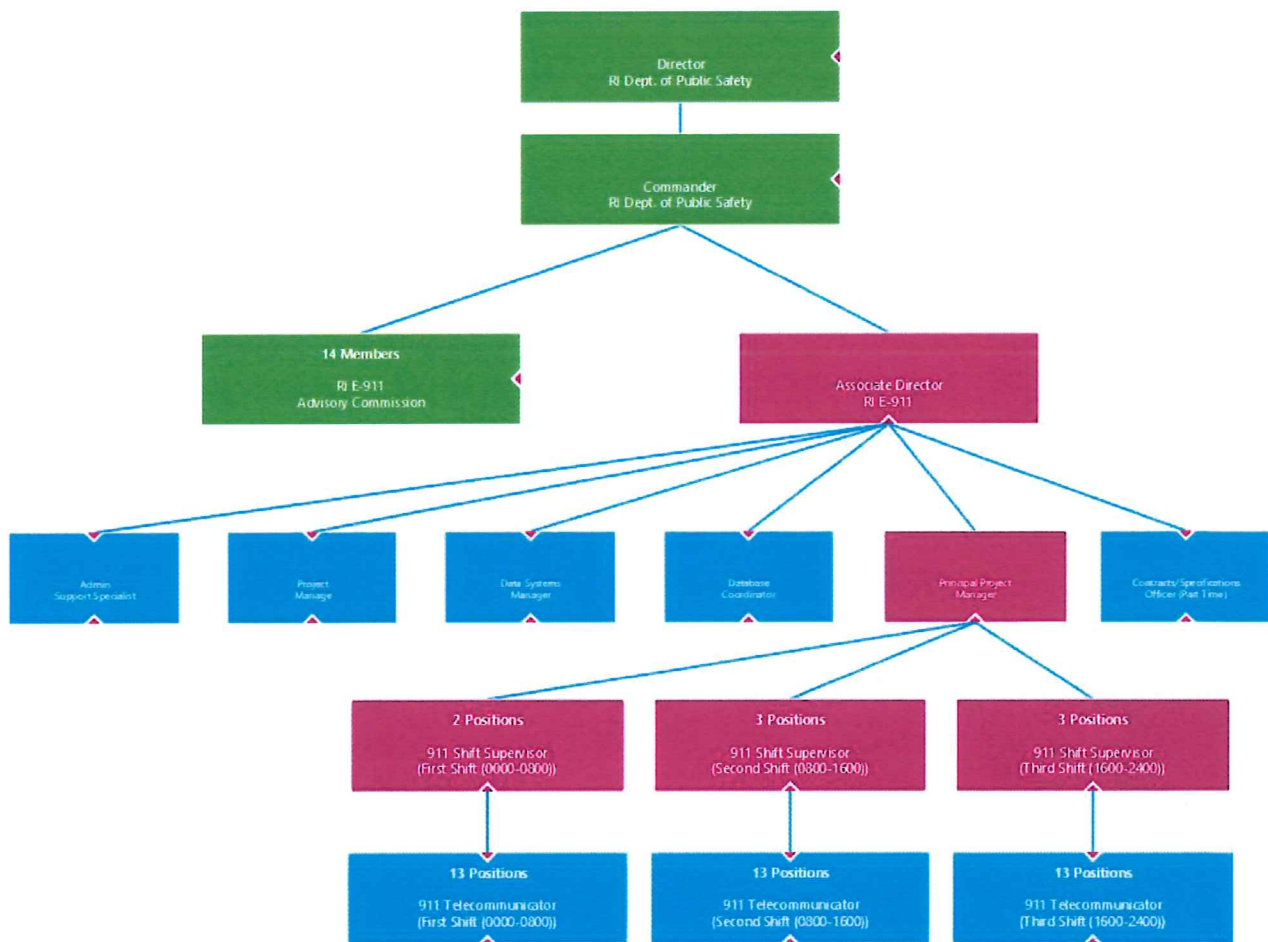
ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETINGS WERE SUSPENDED DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

ORGANIZATION

RI E-911 Uniform Emergency Telephone Agency like many organizations is comprised of Administrative and Operations staff.

The Administrative staff consists of the Director, Principal Project Manager, Contracts and Specifications Officer, Project Managers, Administrative Support Specialist and Database Coordinator. The Administrative staff leads and supports the agency and all executive functions.

The Operations staff consist of Supervisors and Telecommunicators whose primary objective is to provide a simple and expeditious way for Rhode Island residents and visitors to request assistance in an emergency by dialing "9-1-1" on traditional landline telephones and on wireless cellular telephones. Those requests are received in a central statewide communications center and are transferred to the appropriate local public safety and emergency medical response units for rapid response.



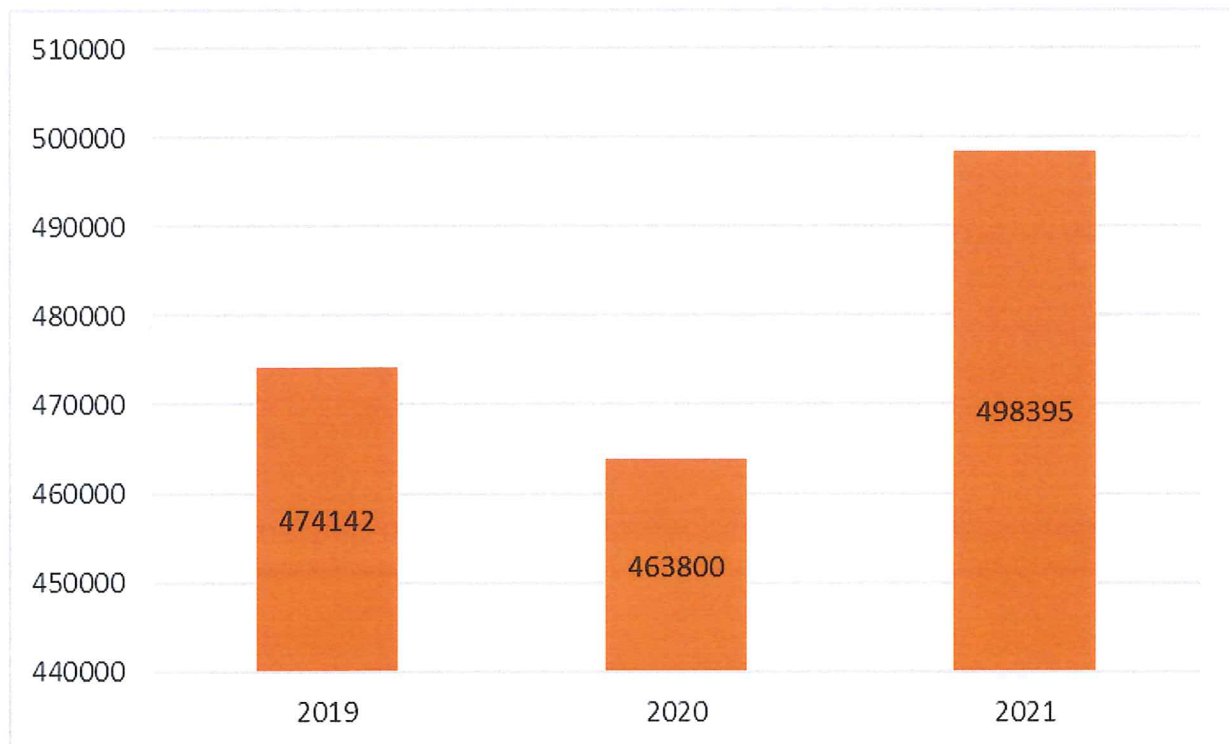
2021 OPERATIONAL STATISTICS

Call volume reports are generated weekly, quarterly, semi-annually, and annually through the combined efforts and data processing skills of our 911 staff, supervisors and technology vendors.

In 2021, RI E-911 received a total of 498,395 incoming calls resulting in 339,057 transferred requests for emergency services. Wireless calls comprised 92% of total call volume. This information along with transfer data can be found on the next two pages of this report.

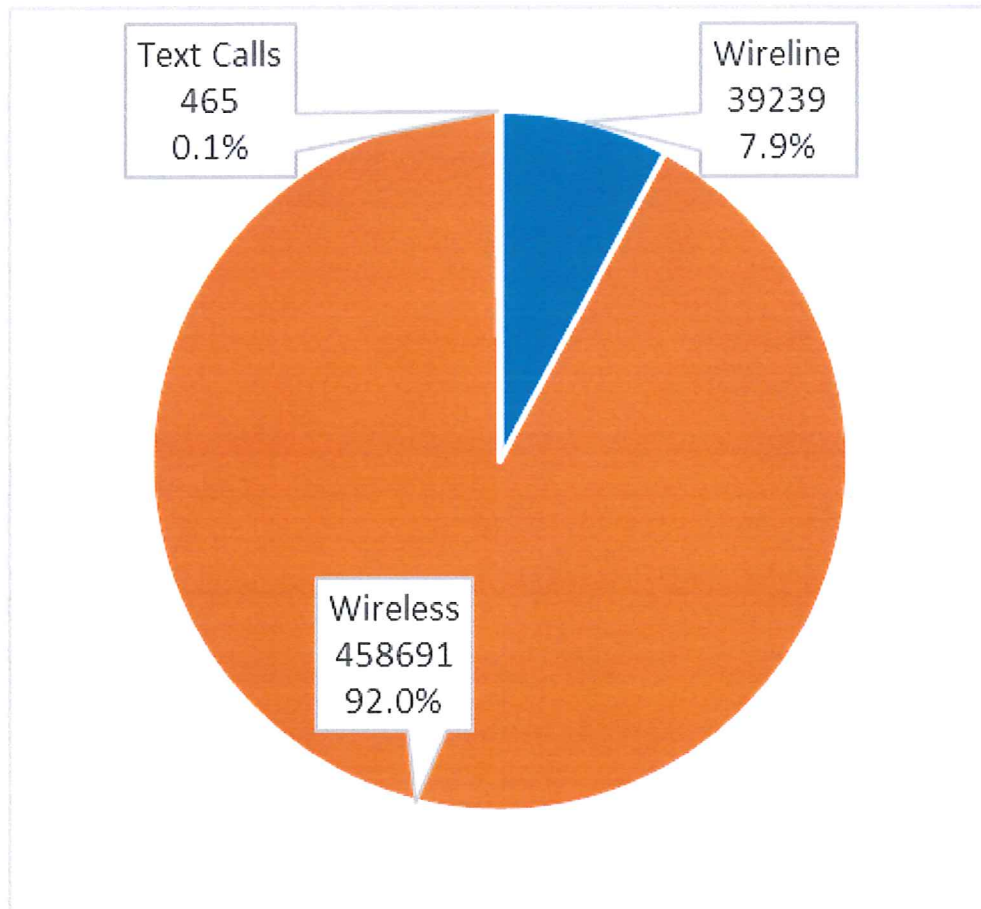
Calls in queue increased year-to-date by 71% from 7,326 to 12,592. In order to maintain the quality of service, there was a commensurate increase in overtime both voluntary and involuntary.

CALL VOLUME REPORT



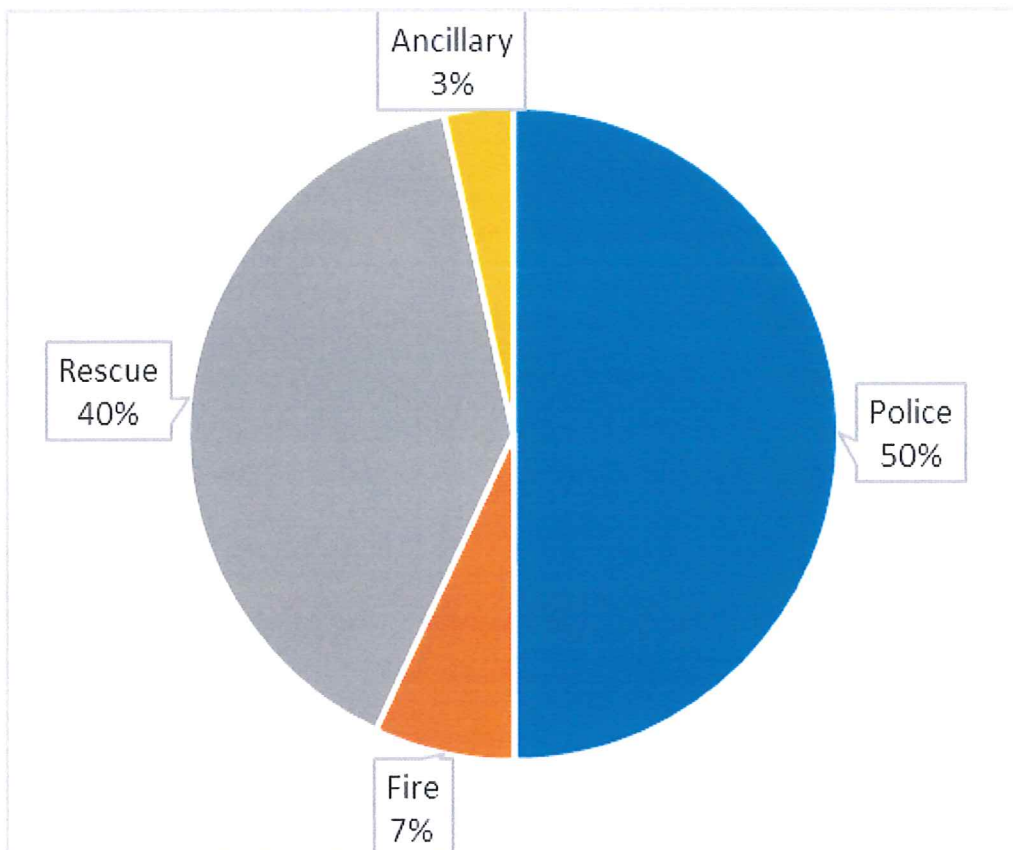
Incoming 911 Calls

<u>Description</u>	<u>Total Calls</u>	<u>Percentage of Calls</u>
Wireline	39,239	7.9%
Wireless	458,691	92.0%
Text Calls	465	0.1%
Total Incoming Calls	498,395	100%



Transferred Calls

<u>Description</u>	<u>Total Calls</u>
Police	50%
Fire	7%
Rescue	40%
Ancillary Calls	3%
<hr/>	
Total	100%
Total Transfers	339,057



2021 OVERVIEW

TRAINING

RI E-911 conducts a very comprehensive training program for new hires. Prior to the interview process candidates are invited to a formal orientation. During orientation the candidates are apprised of the specific job requirements, more specifically, what is required as an “Essential” employee. Additionally, after candidates are selected, he/she is required to pass (a) a criminal background check, (b) a physical examination, (c) a psychological evaluation and, (d) American Heart Association First Aid and CPR certifications.

New employees are enrolled in a four-month training program which includes, but is not limited to, reviewing policies and procedures, listening to 911 calls for review and comment, familiarizing themselves with the software programs, taking live 911 calls in a controlled environment, listening to guest speakers from various state agencies and other disciplines whose clients traditionally dial 911 for help.

RI E-911 now requires employees to become certified in FEMA ICS 100 and 200 which are necessary to be compliant with Federal Grant guidelines. RI E-911 plans to offer more continuing education classes, such as, stress management, autism awareness, HAM radio, management for supervisors, etc. We are also discussing the necessary steps to become an accredited agency.

All agency members to include administrative, supervisory, and telecommunicator staff earned the Emergency Medical Dispatcher certification. Successful completion of this program required 24 hours of instructor-led curriculum.

PANDEMIC RESPONSE

RI E-911 was tasked with running a critical 24x7x365 operation during the continuation of the COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic Omicron Variant. Rhode Island noted an apparent correlation between the announcement of shelter-in-place orders and a reported temporary spike in call volume relative to callers describing symptoms of COVID-19, opioid and domestic violence calls. These call categories were tracked and forwarded to the Department of Health and the Department of Public Safety accordingly.

COVID-19 has affected the anxiety and stress levels of our Operations Staff, and we have been proactive relative to offering support services to support wellness and mental health during the pandemic. RI E-911 has taken specific wellness measures to combat these concerns, including but not limited to:

- Promoting Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)
- Arranged for stress management presentations.
- Updates from the RI Department of Health
- Disseminating wellness webinars and articles
- Arranging visits from service animals

RI E-911 had to implement measures to ensure PSAP health and minimize the possibility of crippling the operation due to widespread infections and quarantining protocols. The following measures were implemented:

- Activation of our Alternate PSAP
- Health screenings
- Changes to minimum staffing requirement
- Ample supplies of PPE were provided.
- New policies/procedures relative to PSAP cleanliness and social distancing measures
- Ordering technical and administrative staff to work from home.
- Taking employees temperatures at the start of shifts
- Installing UV disinfectant lights inside HVAC systems
- Prohibiting non-PSAP personnel from the floor