



Police Internal Audit Report Calls for Service Response



Contents

Auditor's Conclusion	3
Audit Profile	4
Findings and Recommendations	5
ISS. 1 - Evaluate response to alarm calls.....	5
ISS. 2 - Measure and monitor response times.....	6
ISS. 3 - Canceled calls.....	6
ISS. 4 - Update policies and procedures	7
ISS. 5 - Efficiency study	11
ISS. 6 - Review call categories.....	11
ISS.7 - Collaboration	12

Auditor's Conclusion

August 24, 2023

The Office of Internal Audit has completed the Calls for Service Response audit. We conducted this engagement as part of our 2023 Annual Police Audit Plan.

The audit objective was to determine the level of efficiency and effectiveness of APD response to specific calls for service, including alternate responses.

To this end, Internal Audit:

- Reviewed policies and procedures,
- Researched practices,
- Interviewed personnel,
- Rode along with patrol officers,
- Analyzed calls for service data, and
- Other methods as needed.

Based on the results of our engagement procedures, we conclude that Aurora Police should evaluate how it responds to specific call types and better utilize call data. We have detailed our issues and recommendations in this report's Findings and Recommendations section. We want to acknowledge the cooperation and assistance from the members of the Aurora Police Department throughout this engagement.



Michelle Crawford, M.Acct., CIA, CFE, CRMA
City Auditor

Audit Profile

Audit Team

Michelle Crawford, M.Acct, CIA, CFE, CRMA – City Auditor
 Sheree Van Buren, CIA, CFE – Reviewing Auditor

Scope

Calls for service for the period of January 1, 2021, through March 13, 2023.

Background

The Aurora Police Department responds to calls for service as received by Aurora911. This engagement focused on the process of calls for service for certain call types. We could not perform any work on the priority response times as data was unavailable for us to review.

We created the tables below documenting call volume using the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) data provided to us by APD. The tables document the call categories with the highest call volume for the initial and final call categorizations. The 2023 data is from January 1 through March 13, 2023. The 2022 and 2021 data are from January 1 through December 31.

Initial Call Category	2023		2022		2021	
	# CFS	% CFS	# CFS	% CFS	# CFS	% CFS
911 HANGUPS,WELFARE CKS,BOMB THREATS			27,441	16%	54,415	25%
SUSPICIOUS OCCURRENCE	2,024	8%	14,910	9%	17,247	8%
TRAFFIC STOP	2,159	9%	12,369	7%	12,182	5%
AREA WATCH	1,353	5%	12,215	7%	15,855	7%
MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT	1,350	5%	6,798	4%	6,889	3%
ADMINISTRATION	-	0%	6,677	4%	10,388	5%
OFF DUTY	1,202	5%	1,920	1%	-	0%
<i>Total of listed and % of grand total</i>	8,088	33%	82,330	49%	116,976	53%
GRAND TOTAL CALLS FOR EACH YEAR	24,695		166,986		221,672	

Final Call Category	2023		2022		2021	
	# CFS	% CFS	# CFS	% CFS	# CFS	% CFS
Cancel - No Units Dispatched	5,532	22%	22,502	13%	34,068	15%
HANGUP/UNFOUNDED/CANCELED	58	0%	29,656	18%	56,505	25%
CONTACT MADE	3,368	14%	17,767	11%	18,924	9%
CHECKED AREA/AREA WATCH	2,106	9%	15,068	9%	18,418	8%
ADMINISTRATIVE/DETAIL	1,066	4%	12,207	7%	16,208	7%
UNABLE TO LOCATE PERS/PROB	1,178	5%	7,156	4%	7,463	3%
<i>Total of listed and % of grand total</i>	13,308	54%	104,356	62%	151,586	68%
GRAND TOTAL CALLS FOR EACH YEAR	24,695		166,986		221,672	

Findings and Recommendations

ISS. 1 - Evaluate response to alarm calls

The Aurora Police Department should evaluate its response to alarm calls. Sixty-two percent of incoming alarm calls were false alarms or canceled from January 1, 2021, through March 14, 2023.

Incoming calls for service for alarms during the period reviewed were classified as Alarm-Robbery, Alarms-All, Alarm-Vehicle, and Verified Burglary Alarm. Using Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) data, we classified the final call categories into four general types and documented the outcomes below.

Call Type	2023		2022		2021		Totals
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
False or Canceled	1,329	68%	4,829	57%	7,527	66%	13,685
Alarm, Robbery, etc.	358	18%	1,822	21%	2,119	19%	4,299
Checked area, contact made, etc.	255	13%	1,503	18%	1,448	13%	3,206
Other	25	1%	372	4%	310	3%	707
<i>Totals</i>	<i>1,967</i>		<i>8,526</i>		<i>11,404</i>		<i>21,897</i>

The total number of false or canceled calls is likely higher; we reviewed 25 calls closed as "Alarm," and all 25 were false alarms or canceled calls. APD's directive 8.27 for verified alarm response was last updated on March 10, 2005. The directive states, "Due to the overwhelming number of false intrusion alarms, the Aurora Police Department will not routinely respond to alarms unless additional information is received to verify the validity of the alarm."

The volume of false alarms and canceled alarm calls indicates a need to reevaluate the response to alarm calls. When officers respond to false alarms, they are not available for other calls for service.

Other agencies nationwide, from large and small departments, have identified varying approaches to alarm calls, including alarm permit programs, false alarm fees, and not responding to certain alarm call types.

Recommendation

We recommend that APD evaluates how it responds to alarm calls and determines if an alternate response, such as a false alarm program, would reduce the number of false alarms and canceled calls. Additionally, the directive should be updated to reflect current practice and any changes.

Management Response

APD will conduct further analysis of alarm calls to establish if they are being dispatched within the guidelines established by Directive 8.27. This will require collaboration with Aurora911 to ensure that both departments' policies align. APD will update Directive 8.27 to provide additional clarity to department expectations. Additionally, alternative responses, such as a false alarm program, will be explored to determine if it would reduce the number of false alarms and canceled calls.

Estimated Implementation Date: February 29, 2024

Business Contact: Deputy Police Chief

Business Reviewer: Police Chief

ISS. 2 - Measure and monitor response times

APD is not actively measuring or monitoring priority response times. As a result, we could not analyze response times to determine efficiencies.

The department could not provide any information documenting response times or the department's goal for response times. When a call for service is received, it is assigned a priority response category number, indicating the urgency of the call. APD collects call data but is not using that data to identify performance metrics or goals for priority response time.

Setting a measure for a priority response time and then measuring against it allows the agency to know how they are performing and may indicate where response changes are needed.

Recommendation

We recommend that APD develops priority response time metrics, develops procedures to monitor those metrics, and develops a reporting process of the results. We also recommend that APD uses metrics to inform response changes and call for service priorities.

Management Response

The working partnership between APD and Aurora911 in updating the priority response will include response time metrics. A monthly report of the metrics will be conducted, and an annual report will be included in the Department's annual report. Based on the analysis, a review will be conducted to ensure that the proscribed metrics remain appropriate.

Estimated Implementation Date: January 31, 2024

Business Contact: Deputy Chief

Business Reviewer: Police Chief

ISS. 3 - Canceled calls

Canceled calls represent a large percentage of priority one call for service and are one of the top five call types across all priority levels.

A high rate of canceled calls may indicate that processes need to be fixed from receipt of a call to it being dispatched and assigned.

Our review of CAD data for 2021 and 2022 identified that canceled calls for service represented 15% of calls; when combined with 911 hangups/unfounded/canceled calls, it represents 37%. For priority 1 response calls, canceled calls were the number one call for service final category in 2021 and 2022, accounting for 16% of the final category of calls.

During our observations, we witnessed and heard examples of calls that were dispatched to APD that Sergeants canceled because a police response was not needed. One example was a call for service for a broken vehicle. The call remarks noted that the reporting party had not called AAA because they take too long; the reporting party was advised to call AAA, however, dispatch noted the reporting party still required APD as they would respond faster than AAA. It takes Aurora911's and APD's time to assess and respond to calls for service. Our observations also included Sergeants monitoring to identify calls for service that needed to be canceled so officers did not need to respond.

The current process increases the possibility that resources are diverted from higher-priority calls. Additionally, priority 1 calls should be those that require immediate action, and with canceled calls representing the number one final category for 2021 and 2022, a more detailed analysis is necessary to ensure resources are being allocated effectively.

Recommendation

We recommend that APD analyze priority 1 canceled calls to identify significant drivers requiring operational changes. APD should also establish a baseline for canceled call volume and develop procedures to monitor for significant variations that could impact operations regularly.

Management Response

APD will analyze a set of priority 1 calls that were canceled to identify any significant drivers and evaluate to determine any operational changes that may need to be made. APD is currently working with Aurora911 on priority responses and will make necessary adjustments to the event types and the priority response to each. APD will establish a process to review canceled calls to ensure the appropriateness of canceled calls and monitor for variations.

Estimated Implementation Date: May 31, 2024

Business Contact: Deputy Police Chief

Business Reviewer: Police Chief

ISS. 4 - Update policies and procedures

Policies and procedures need to be updated, and there are conflicts between some policies and procedures.

The police department has directives that serve as the department-wide policies and standard operating procedures that serve as the unit-level procedures. In addition, Aurora911 has its own policies and procedures, separate from the police

department. As part of our review, we reviewed police directives, the front-desk standard operating procedures, and the relevant Aurora911 policies related to calls for service.

Aurora Police Department Policies

The policies that relate to calls for service need to be updated and reflect current practices.

Directive 8.4 - addresses call priority designations, which identify the priority levels for calls for service, and was last updated on November 15, 2004. Aurora911 last edited its police priority level designations in 2023; their designations differ from the directive.

Directive 8.27 – addresses verified alarm response and was last updated on March 10, 2005. The directive notes that Aurora Police will not routinely respond to alarms unless additional information is received to verify the validity of the alarm. The directive also states that officers will be assigned to respond to all human-activated alarms, including, but not limited to, robbery alarms and panic or duress alarms, along with alarms at any of the following locations or facilities:

- Financial Institutions
- Schools
- Drug Facilities
- Weapons Facilities, and
- Government Facilities.

Based on our data review, current practices may not align with this policy. Practices have changed over the past fifteen years; policies should reflect current practices and be updated to reflect any changes in leading practices.

Directive 8.41 – addresses online reports and was updated on November 18, 2022. However, some information posted on the department’s public website only follows some areas of the directive.

Front Desk

The front desk unit handles some calls for service and helps individuals in person. The APD directive 8.4 does not reference the priority or call designation for the front desk.

In addition, the front desk unit has its own standard operating procedures (SOP), including one for online reports, last updated on May 30, 2018. The online reporting SOP has conflicting information compared to directive 8.41.

Aurora911

Aurora911 has two internal policies we reviewed, their police dispatch protocols and call-taking guide.

Police Dispatch Protocols

The protocols include dispatching by priority levels, with defined priorities for Priority 1-4, 5, and 8. However, there is no defined priority for DESK calls assigned to the front desk. The priorities also differ from the police directive.

The Aurora911 policy for police dispatch protocols includes high-level overviews for special units, including examples of potential situations where it may be appropriate to dispatch a unit. We identified some areas where the protocols may not reflect APD's current practices. For example, the K9 unit examples include crowd control which is not a common situation for the deployment of this unit.

Another example is that the protocols do not mention the Crisis Response Team; this team is available as an alternate response to individuals in crisis. The protocols should guide this team's use.

The protocols also include that if a priority 1 call has been pending for 15 minutes, to notify the on-duty supervisor. Current practice is to inform the on-duty supervisor and Sergeant after 10 minutes. The policy should be updated to reflect the changes in practice.

APD has identified several call types that an online report can handle. We observed that in some instances if a caller insists that they speak with an officer, the call will be dispatched to an officer. The APD policies and Aurora911 policies should identify the exceptions when someone will receive a police response when otherwise it would be an online report.

The Aurora Police and Aurora911 policies should align with the two department's practices, including priority designations and appropriate responses for special units. When alignment does not exist, incorrect information may be provided to the caller or responders, and the wrong response may be deployed.

Recommendation - APD

We recommend that APD updates its policies and procedures, including priority response and alarms, to reflect current practices. In addition, we recommend that APD update its website's information to reflect the updated policies and procedures and work with Aurora911 to determine exceptions to online reporting.

Management Response

APD is currently collaborating with Aurora911 to update event types and priority responses to all calls, including alarms. APD is also in the process of updating Directive 8.04 Call Priority Designations which, once approved, will be placed on the website along with updating the website with a current list of crimes or incidents eligible to be completed online. APD will continue to work with Aurora911 to determine exceptions and opportunities for online reporting. Additionally, APD will support Aurora911 with alternatives for callers that are unable to complete online reporting.

Estimated Implementation Date: February 29, 2024

Business Contact: Deputy Police Chief
Business Reviewer: Police Chief

Recommendation – Aurora911

We recommend that Aurora911 works with the appropriate rank of police personnel, including all special units, to update the relevant Aurora911 SOPs to align with APD's practices and policies and work with APD to determine exceptions to online reporting. We also recommend that Aurora911 update its SOPs to reflect its current practices.

Management Response

Aurora911's policies and SOP regarding police calls and response were originally crafted with direct input from APD. Any changes to police-related policy occur by request of APD Command Staff. Aurora911 communicates and publishes pending changes to policy with our staff on the 30th of every month, to include the details of what will change, and why the change is required. Published policy updates must be reviewed and signed by all team members no later than the 15th of the following month. Because we share a PowerDMS license with APD, members of both departments can review the active policies of both APD and Aurora911. This platform co-location is intentional, to provide the ability to cross-reference APD policy with ours and ensure alignment. We invite our partners in APD to review our current policy as a guide to update their policy, as well as to identify and communicate any required changes or updates with our department, so that our policy remains aligned to APD's current business practice. We will include these updates in our current workflow of policy management.

Additionally, Aurora911 is in the process of preparing for the implementation of the Police Priority Dispatch System (PPDS), which is a formal protocol system based on research and best practices in law enforcement response. PPDS is based on 36 chief complaint categories and six priority levels within each category. We have invited APD to the project implementation team, so that they can provide input into the pathway of each category and priority. This will allow them to identify the response plan for every priority level within a category, which can include all available alternative responses for lower acuity calls. We are committed to directing callers to the most appropriate resource for their issue, with the expectation that identified alternative resources are previously informed and prepared to receive requests for assistance. Public education is critical to the successful deployment of alternative response planning, in order to prevent community distrust due to a perception of inaccessibility to assistance. We are prepared to partner with APD and City Communications in order to support public education efforts.

Estimated Implementation Date: January 5, 2024

Business Contact: Deputy Director of Operations & Deputy Director of Admin and Education

Business Reviewer: Aurora911 Director

Recommendation – Front Desk

We recommend that the front desk update its standard operating procedures to reflect current practices and to follow police directives.

Management Response

APD will update the front desk standard operating procedures to reflect the department directives.

Estimated Implementation Date: February 29, 2024

Business Contact: Deputy Police Chief

Business Reviewer: Police Chief

ISS. 5 - Efficiency study

The Aurora Police Department created two efficiency studies to update their responses to specific calls for service. However, our review identified that most of the changes still need to be implemented, and there are misperceptions about the status of the studies.

During our audit observations, we heard from patrol officers about the prior efficiency studies. We reviewed the original 2018 and updated 2022 studies and compared them to the current dispatch protocols. Most of the recommendations in the studies have yet to be implemented.

We also noted conflicting information from all levels of employees on what portions of the efficiency studies were supposed to be implemented. The lack of follow-through and implementation of the study recommendations has led to misunderstandings regarding the response to certain call types.

Recommendation

We recommend that APD review the prior efficiency studies and determine if any previous recommendations should be implemented. If there are response changes, we recommend that APD works with Aurora911 to implement the changes and communicates the changes with other stakeholders and residents.

Management Response

APD is in the final stages of reviewing the efficiency studies with Aurora911. Following the review, APD will ensure that the changes are communicated with other stakeholders and residents. Additionally, APD and Aurora911 will continue to work together to ensure that the changes are fully implemented.

Estimated Implementation Date: May 31, 2024

Business Contact: Deputy Police Chief

Business Reviewer: Police Chief

ISS. 6 - Review call categories

Multiple call categories exist for similar call types. As a result, calls may not be categorized accurately, resulting in poor data and reducing the department's ability to make data-driven decisions.

An example of this is alarm call types. We observed that for initial call categories, the following were used for Alarms:

- Alarm Robbery
- Alarms All
- Alarm Vehicle
- Verified Burglary Alarm

We observed that for final call categories, the following were used relating to alarms:

- Alarm Robbery
- Alarms All
- Alarm Vehicle
- Verified Burglary Alarm
- False Alarm

We reviewed 25 calls with a final category of Alarm; all calls were false alarms.

Similar call categories make it challenging to close the call with the correct category. This is one example of a call category with multiple similar options. Data reporting relies on accurate information.

Recommendation

We recommend reviewing, at minimum, the alarm call categories to determine if all categories are required and to simplify the process for officers to categorize calls correctly.

Management Response

We are currently in the process of working with Aurora911 to reduce all event types, not just alarms. This review is examining redundant event types as well as combining event types into more effective and efficient types. Along with that would be a process and/or instructions for ensuring calls are categorized correctly.

Estimated Implementation Date: June 30, 2024

Business Contact: Deputy Police Chief

Business Reviewer: Police Chief

ISS. 7 - Collaboration

APD has an opportunity to increase collaborations with various City departments to respond more efficiently and effectively to specific calls for service.

We reviewed ten random warrant calls for service to review. Four of the ten calls were from the Aurora Municipal Center Campus. At the time of the audit, procedures did not exist for individuals to turn themselves in directly to jail. A call for service to have a patrol officer respond was required every time. The Detention Center and APD are collaborating on improving this process.

Another opportunity for collaboration is with ParkAurora. We reviewed ten calls for parking and reviewed one call which was transferred to AccessAurora¹ for ParkAurora² to handle. This is an excellent example of collaboration and using an alternate response. The only limitation to working with ParkAurora is their limited authority to enforce actions on city-owned parking lots and facilities and public rights-of-way.

These two examples are only some areas where opportunities exist to collaborate.

Recommendation

We recommend that APD continues to identify areas to collaborate with other departments and areas, such as Court Administration, Aurora Fire Rescue, and ParkAurora, to ensure the most appropriate response to calls for service.

Management Response

APD will continue to collaborate with other departments to ensure the most appropriate response to calls for service without compromising on service to the residents of Aurora.

Estimated Implementation Date: June 30, 2024

Business Contact: Deputy Police Chief

Business Reviewer: Police Chief

¹ AccessAurora is the online system for contacting the City of Aurora for non-emergency concerns and requests for service.

² ParkAurora is within Public Works and focuses on parking management for the City of Aurora.