Emergency Communications Department

Internal Audit

May 2014

Bernalillo County Internal Audit
Emergency Communications Department

Executive Summary

SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES

REDW performed an internal audit over selected areas within the Bernalillo County Emergency Communications Department. Our internal audit focused on testing internal controls for various Emergency Communication Department processes including: call follow-up including timeliness of dispatch and status check with dispatch officer, investigation and tracking of complaints, performance of Quality Assurance Checks, 911 call procedures, and training of Emergency Communication Officers (ECO's). We also performed a comparison of the Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) of Bernalillo County Emergency Communications to regulations under the New Mexico Administrative Code.

The procedures performed include:

- Obtaining an understanding of the Emergency Communications Department (ECD) procedures through reading relevant sections of the New Mexico Administrative Code and ECD's SOG, and through interviewing various ECD personnel;

- Comparing ECD's SOG to the New Mexico Administrative Code;

- Testing a sample of Emergency Fire Dispatcher (EFD), Emergency Medical Dispatcher (EMD), and Sheriff's Office calls to determine if the SOG was followed for the type of call;

- Testing a sample of complaints to determine if complaints were investigated in accordance with SOG;

- Testing a sample of Quality Assurance (QA) Checks over EMD and EFD calls to determine that QA Checks were performed in accordance with SOG;

- Testing a sample of QA Checks over Echo (High Priority) EMD and EFD calls to determine that QA Checks were performed over all Echo calls in accordance with SOG;

- Testing a sample of employees to determine that initial training and annual training was obtained;

- Testing a sample of four months to determine if the National Crime Information Center printed files were maintained for a minimum of one year in accordance with the SOG record retention policy.

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We found areas during the course of the audit where controls were functioning properly and established procedures were followed. In total there were 187,000 calls answered in fiscal year 2013 and of that 74,000 were for dispatch. During our call procedure testing, we found that calls were being handled in accordance with the SOG. NCIC record retention requirements were being complied with. There was a process in place to ensure that all NCIC printed files were being maintained for one year and destroyed after one year.

The moderate risk observations are presented below:

- **Quality Assurance (QA) Checks**—QA Checks are not being performed over all Echo (high priority) calls or calls received not using the Pro QA system.

- **Complaint Processing**—The method for tracking complaints was not secure to ensure that all complaints were fully documented and not accidentally deleted or modified.

The lower risk observations are in the attached detailed report.

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Further detail of our purpose, objectives, scope, procedures, observations, and recommendations are included in the internal audit report. In that report, management describes the corrective action taken for each observation.

REDW LLC

Albuquerque, New Mexico
July 15, 2014

Bernalillo County Internal Audit
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Report

INTRODUCTION

We performed the internal audit services described below solely to assist Bernalillo County in evaluating the internal controls over selected processes within the Emergency Communications Department (ECD). Our services were conducted in accordance with the Consulting Standards issued by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards, and the terms of our contract agreement for internal audit services. Since our procedures were applied to samples of transactions and processes, it is possible that significant issues related to the areas tested may not have been identified.

Although we have included management's responses in our report, we do not take responsibility for the sufficiency of these responses or the effective implementation of any corrective action.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Our internal audit focused on evaluating selected processes at ECD to determine if those processes were in compliance with the Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) and applicable regulations, reflected best practices and sound internal controls.

SCOPE AND PROCEDURES PERFORMED

In order to gain an understanding of the processes and internal controls surrounding Emergency Communications Department, we interviewed the following personnel:

- Karen Ziegler, Emergency Communications Director

- Vernon L. Thompson, Emergency Communications Assistant Director

- Stacy Lewis, Emergency Operations Coordinator

- Jared Sanchez, Quality Assurance Specialist

In order to understand the Emergency Communications Department policies and procedures we read relevant portions of:

- ECD Standard Operating Guidelines;

- New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) 10.6.2 Enhanced 911 Requirements;

- NMAC 10.29.7 In-Service Training Requirements;

- NMAC 10.29.10 Telecommunicator Minimum Standards of Training.

We performed the following testwork:

Standard Operating Guidelines: We obtained the Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) of the ECD and compared them to the relevant sections of the NMAC to ensure the SOG reflected State requirements.

Call Procedures: We obtained a list of all calls received from January through December 2013. We selected a sample of 60 calls, (based on 95% confidence level (CL) and 5% tolerable deviation (TD)). We tested that the SOP was followed for the type of call including the following:

- The type of call was appropriate based on the notes in the system incident recall printout;

- The call was dispatched timely;

- There was adequate follow-up if applicable;

- Information on the call appeared complete;

- Information on the report was consistent to the notes in the system; and,

- Officer status checks occurred timely.

Complaint Processing: We obtained the Supervisor's Monthly Complaint Log and the Annual Complaint Log from January 2013 through April 2014. We selected a sample of 14 complaints (approximately 20% of total population). We tested that:

- Complaints had been investigated in a timely manner;

- Results were documented in accordance with the SOG;

- Complainants were notified that the investigation had been completed;

- The Complaint Log was properly updated/completed; and,

- Adequate documentation was maintained to support the investigation.

Quality Assurance (QA) Checks – Emergency Medical Dispatcher (EMD) and Emergency Fire Dispatcher (EFD) calls: We selected the monthly Communication Department Protocol Compliance Reports for January, February, March, and April of 2014 to determine that: QA Checks were performed on a minimum of 25 emergency medical calls and a minimum of 25 fire calls per week, a QA Check was performed for two calls for each Emergency Communications Operator (ECO) per month.

Quality Assurance (QA) Checks – Echo EMD and EFD calls: We selected a random sample of 20 Echo calls (approximately 20% of the population from September through December 2013) to determine that QA Checks were performed over all calls classified as Echo priority calls.

Employee Training Requirements: We obtained a listing of all active ECD personnel as of April 2014, and selected a sample of seven employees (approximately 20% of the population). We tested for the following:

- Employees had completed the required initial training by attending the required NM Public Safety Telecommunicator Academy Class for all newly hired employees;

- Employees had 20 continued education hours bi-annually (required by NMAC);

- The employees were certified and had obtained required training, as applicable, in the following:

  – Emergency Medical Dispatcher;

  – Emergency Fire Dispatcher;

  – Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation;

  – Training for Dealing with People with Mental Impairment;

  – National Crime Information Departments Full Access/Data Entry; and,

  – FEMA IS-100, FEMA IS-200, and FEMA IS-700.

Record Retention: We selected a sample of four months during the fiscal year to test that NCIC printed files were maintained for at least one year and were shredded or destroyed after one year.

OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSES

We identified the following weaknesses relating to the Bernalillo County Emergency Communications Department's processes:

1) *Quality Assurance (QA) Checks*

ECD SOG Section 2.26 - Quality Assurance Checks lists procedures that should be followed when performing QA Checks, including how many calls need to be checked per employee. According to National Academics of Emergency Dispatch (NAED), all Echo calls should have a QA check performed. QA checks were not performed over 10 of the 20 echo calls tested. Additionally, QA checks were not performed over calls for which the Pro QA system was not used.

Risk: Moderate—Failure to perform QA Checks over all Echo calls causes ECD to not comply with NAED standards and could affect their accreditation. Lack of proper QA Checks could result in non-compliance with call handling.

Recommendation

ECD should develop a process to ensure that all Echo calls are identified when selecting calls for QA Checks. QA Check should be performed over all Echo calls, whether Pro QA is used or not. A process to select calls received when Pro QA is not used should also be implemented.

Management's Response

On July 7, 2014, a report was created for the QA Specialist that provides a listing of all "Echo" calls for the month. This report has been and will continue to be provided to the QA Specialist on a monthly basis.

2) *Complaint Processing*

ECD SOG Section 2.5 requires that complaints be recorded on the Complaint Log and investigated timely. The complaint log does not appear to be properly secured as certain complaints appear to have been deleted and modified. Two of the 14 complaints selected for testwork from the initial complaint log obtained were no longer on the same log as of internal audit testing on May 14, 2014. Furthermore, the comments for one of the complaints did not correspond to the complaint.

Additionally, the Excel listing of complaints was not consistently completed. We were able to test that the complaints were handled properly based on the note section of the listing.

Risk: Moderate/Low—Without a secure complaint log there is no complete record documenting complaints were investigated.

Recommendation

ECD should develop a secure way to track complaints. Tracking complaints on an excel spreadsheet that various individuals have access to makes it easy to accidentally delete or change information. The complaint listing should be filled out completely to ensure compliance with the SOG.

Management's Response

We are in discussion with County IT to develop a secure complaint form with restricted access.

3) *Call Procedures-Status Checks*

ECD SOG Section 9.9 Status Checks requires that while a unit is out on a call for service, after 10 minutes a status check will be performed by the dispatcher to ensure field personnel are safe and accounted for. There were two instances where there were no notes in the system to support that status checks were performed. In both instances the units appeared to be on-site for over an hour.

Risk: Low—Not following policies when taking calls could result in risk to the unit and parties involved. Although there were no notes in the system stating "status check" there is a chance that the check did occur but was not documented in the system.

Recommendation

ECD should consider additional training to ECO's on the importance of status checks to ensure the policies are followed consistently.

Management's Response

Status checks will be covered in bi-monthly continuation training which will be held on September 15, 2014.

4) *Employee Training Requirements*

According to NMAC 10.29.10, employees should obtain FEMA IS-200 training. Three of the seven employees tested had not obtained this training prior to the audit in May 2014.

Risk: Low—Failure to ensure that employees obtain FEMA IS-200 training could result in non-compliance with NMAC requirements. This is a more recent addition to the training requirements.

Recommendation

To ensure compliance with NMAC training requirements, ECD should ensure that all active employees received the FEMA IS-200 training.

Management's Response

The Training Coordinator reviewed all employees' training files. It was discovered that seventeen (17) employees had not completed the FEMA IS-200 training. On June 27, 2014, an email was sent to these seventeen (17) employees to have them complete the course. As of July 14, 2014, eight (8) employees have completed the course.

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This report is intended for the information and use of Bernalillo County management, the audit committee, members of the Board of Commissioners of Bernalillo County and others within the organization. However, this report is a matter of public record, and once accepted its distribution is not limited.

We discussed and resolved other minor observations with management during the course of our interviews and testing. We sincerely appreciate the courtesy extended to our personnel.

REDW LLC

Albuquerque, New Mexico
July 15, 2014