



# CENTRALIZED FIRE/EMS DISPATCH CENTER FEASIBILITY STUDY

PREPARED FOR:

**Atlantic County, New Jersey**

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# ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This report evaluates the feasibility of consolidating Atlantic County, New Jersey's, Fire/EMS dispatch and 9-1-1 call center into a centralized facility.

## Version Control

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## Reference

- Agreement K.24.02 between the County of Atlantic and ADCOMM Engineering LLC signed 13th day of February 2024, based on Resolution 16 on 1/16/24 Feasibility Study of Centralized Fire/EMS and 9-1-1 Call Center in Atlantic County
- ADCOMM response to Centralized Fire/EMS Dispatch and 9-1-1 Call Center Feasibility Plan RFP202334.3 dated November 29, 2023
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## Terms and Abbreviations

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| AACN  | advanced automatic crash notification                    |
| AFG   | Assistance to Firefighters Grant                         |
| AHJ   | authority having jurisdiction                            |
| AI    | artificial intelligence                                  |
| ALI   | automatic location information                           |
| ALS   | advanced life support                                    |
| ANI   | automatic number information                             |
| APCO  | Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials    |
| AVL   | automated vehicle location                               |
| BLS   | basic life support                                       |
| CAD   | computer aided dispatch                                  |
| CALEA | Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies |

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| CBA     | Collective bargaining agreement                                  |
| CDGB    | Community Development Block Grants                               |
| CPE     | customer premise equipment                                       |
| CWA     | Communications Workers of America                                |
| DCB     | dispatch center board  |
| DESPP   | Connecticut Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection |
| DHS     | Department of Homeland Security                                  |
| E9-1-1  | Enhanced 9-1-1   |
| EMD     | emergency medical dispatch                                       |
| EMP     | electromagnetic pulse  |
| EMS     | emergency medical service  |
| EOC     | emergency operations center                                      |
| ESInet  | Emergency Services IP Network                                    |
| FAA     | Federal Aviation Administration                                  |
| FCC     | Federal Communications Commission                                |
| FEMA    | Federal Emergency Management Agency                              |
| GIS     | Geographic Information Systems                                   |
| HGSP    | Homeland Security Grant Program                                  |
| HUD     | U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development                 |
| IAED    | International Academies of Emergency Dispatch                    |
| IAFC    | International Association of Fire Chiefs                         |
| ICMA    | International City/County Management Association                 |
| ICS     | incident command system  |
| IGA     | intergovernmental agreements                                     |
| ISP     | Internet service providers                                       |
| IT      | information technology   |
| LEED    | Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design                    |
| MDT     | mobile data terminal   |
| NASNA   | National Association of State 9-1-1 Administrators               |
| NECI    | National Emergency Communications Institute                      |
| NENA    | National Emergency Number Association                            |
| NFPA    | National Fire Protection Association                             |
| NG9-1-1 | Next Generation 9-1-1  |
| NHTSA   | National Highway Traffic Safety Administration                   |
| NIST    | National Institute of Standards and Technology                   |
| NJ FMBA | New Jersey Firefighters Mutual Benevolent Association            |
| NJAC    | New Jersey Association of Counties                               |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| NJOETS   | New Jersey Office of Emergency Telecommunications Services        |
| NJOIT    | New Jersey Office of Information Technology                       |
| NJSP     | New Jersey State Police   |
| NJWA     | New Jersey Wireless Association                                   |
| NTIA     | National Telecommunications and Information Administration        |
| OETS     | Office of Emergency Telecommunications Services                   |
| PEMSA-NJ | Professional Emergency Medical Services Association of New Jersey |
| PERS     | Public Employee's Retirement System                               |
| PFRS     | Police and Fireman's Retirement System                            |
| PPP      | public-private partnerships                                       |
| PSAP     | public safety answering point                                     |
| PSCC     | Public Safety Communications Commission                           |
| PSCR     | Public Safety Communications Research                             |
| PSDP     | public safety dispatch points                                     |
| PST      | public safety telecommunicator                                    |
| QA       | quality assurance   |
| RMS      | records management system   |
| SCIF     | Secure Compartmentalized Information Facilities                   |
| SHRM     | Society for Human Resource Management                             |
| SOP      | standard operating procedure                                      |
| SPEN     | Statewide Police Emergency Network                                |
| UPS      | uninterruptible power supply                                      |

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Atlantic County, New Jersey, Centralized Fire/EMS Dispatch and 9-1-1 Call Center Feasibility Study ("Study") is a comprehensive assessment performed to determine the feasibility for consolidating the county's Fire/EMS dispatch services into a single, countywide communications center. The primary **goal of this consolidation** is to **streamline operations, improve response times, enhance resource coordination, and provide more efficient and effective service** to the communities served by the county's fire and EMS agencies.

ADCOMM Engineering LLC (ADCOMM) examined the current state of dispatch operations across Atlantic County and identified key challenges, opportunities, and the potential benefits of centralizing these services. ADCOMM assessed existing infrastructure, staffing, and operational processes, and evaluated the technological and logistical requirements for creating a unified Fire/EMS communications center. ADCOMM solicited input from stakeholders, including fire and EMS agencies to ensure the solution meets the operational and service delivery needs of all parties involved.

Of the three options considered, **Option No.1: Establishing a Countywide Fire/EMS PSAP and Dispatch Center**, is recommended. It focuses on **creating a centralized, countywide Fire/EMS communications center** that would become the **primary public safety answering point (PSAP) for emergency calls related to fire and EMS**. This facility would directly handle all emergency calls, with seamless integration for transferring law enforcement calls to secondary PSAPs as needed. Additionally, a **key feature is the implementation of universal calltaking**. Universal calltakers will be fully trained to handle all calls for service, including fire, EMS, and law enforcement, ensuring efficient, accurate, and immediate processing of emergency calls regardless of the type of service requested. This will improve the county's emergency response system, increase operational flexibility, and reduce delays in dispatching resources.

## Key Benefits of the Recommended Countywide Fire/EMS Communications Center with Universal Calltaking

**Universal Calltaking:** Calltakers trained in all aspects of emergency service dispatch (fire, EMS, law enforcement) will be able to handle all types of calls efficiently and accurately. This flexibility reduces delays in processing and ensures that emergency calls are prioritized and dispatched immediately to the appropriate service providers.

**Improved Situational Awareness:** A centralized center would provide a comprehensive view of all ongoing incidents, enabling faster, more informed decision-making across the county.

**Enhanced Communication and Coordination:** By consolidating dispatch services, communication between fire, EMS, and law enforcement agencies will be streamlined, improving coordination and reducing delays.

**Faster Response Times:** With universal calltaking, response times will be optimized through quicker resource allocation and better coordination, ultimately reducing the time to get services on the scene.

**Operational Efficiency:** Standardized protocols, shared infrastructure, and advanced technology will help reduce operational costs and enhance the overall efficiency of emergency dispatch services.

**Cost Savings:** By consolidating services and eliminating duplication of effort, the county can reduce long-term costs associated with maintaining multiple, independent dispatch centers.

**Implementation Strategy:** The successful creation of a countywide Fire/EMS communications center involves a phased approach:

**Gaining Consensus and Establishing Governance:** Develop a governance framework that outlines the roles, responsibilities, and funding mechanisms among participating municipalities and agencies. Establish clear coordination protocols with primary PSAPs.

**Planning and Design:** Form a planning group that includes representatives from fire and EMS agencies, municipalities, and technical experts to define staffing, operational structures, and technology requirements. Detailed timelines and contingency plans will ensure a smooth transition.

**Infrastructure and Technology Development:** Construct or repurpose a facility capable of supporting the countywide operations. Integrate advanced technologies such as Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1), CAD systems, GIS mapping, and AI applications to optimize resource coordination and situational awareness.

**Staffing and Training:** Recruit skilled personnel trained in both fire and EMS protocols, ensuring operational readiness. Implement cross-training programs to equip dispatchers with the necessary skills to handle all types of emergency calls, emphasizing universal calltaking.

**Transition Planning:** Develop a clear transition plan to migrate services from existing PSAPs to the new countywide center with minimal disruption to ongoing operations.

## Estimated Costs

**Technology Investment:** \$1,500,000 - \$2,500,000

**Operations/Day-to-Day Costs:** \$2,400,000 - \$3,300,000 annually

**Transition and Implementation Costs:** \$1,300,000 - \$2,300,000

**Future Considerations:** As part of the long-term vision, the county should consider potential future expansions or integrations with law enforcement agencies, should they choose to transition from their current PSAPs to become secondary PSAPs. This flexibility allows for

seamless integration and scalability, ensuring that the county's communications infrastructure remains adaptable to evolving needs.

**Conclusion:** The centralization of Fire/EMS dispatch services into a single countywide communications center, enhanced by the universal calltaking model, will greatly improve operational efficiency, reduce response times, and provide better service to the communities of Atlantic County. By consolidating these services, the county can eliminate inefficiencies, improve coordination, and ensure that the needs of both emergency responders and the public are met effectively. The next steps involve finalizing governance structures, securing funding, and proceeding with the detailed planning and implementation phases to make this vision a reality.

## 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION

### 2.1 Beginnings

The first 9-1-1 call was made in Haleyville, Alabama, in 1968, marking the start of an important emergency communication initiative. In New Jersey, Atlantic City became the first municipality to implement 9-1-1 service in 1972. By 1977, Hunterdon County established the first countywide 9-1-1 system in the state, followed by Gloucester County, which became the first to incorporate Automatic Number Identification (ANI) in 1985, and the first to adopt Enhanced 9-1-1 (E9-1-1) in 1995.

In 1976, a New Jersey Legislative study commission recommended that all 567 municipalities in the state provide 9-1-1 services. The following year, the Statewide Police Emergency Network (SPEN) conducted an assessment of police telecommunications systems and urged New Jersey to align with national policy by implementing 9-1-1 across the state.

In 1984, the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) formed the Ad Hoc New Jersey 9-1-1 Committee, which included directors from Hunterdon and Gloucester County communications centers, public safety officials, representatives from the New Jersey State Police, Bell Atlantic Telephone Company (now Verizon), and state legislators. This initiative laid the groundwork for the establishment of the New Jersey 9-1-1 Commission and the New Jersey Office of Emergency Telecommunications Services (OETS).

In 1989, New Jersey enacted State 9-1-1 Law P.L.1989, c.3 (N.J.S.A. 52:17c-1), mandating the implementation of a statewide enhanced 9-1-1 system. This law formally created the 9-1-1 Commission and OETS, which established regulations, requirements, and standards for the state's E9-1-1 system. Administrative Regulations (N.J.A.C. 17:24) were subsequently issued to outline the technical and operational standards necessary for all components of the system.

In the early 21st century, the 9-1-1 Commission was disbanded and replaced by the New Jersey Public Safety Communications Commission (PSCC), which is now overseen by the New Jersey Office of Information Technology (NJOIT). Although the PSCC remains on paper, it has not convened in a long time.

### 2.2 9-1-1 Surcharge Revenue

#### 2.2.1 Early 2000s

During the early 2000s, three 9-1-1 commissioners, who were also past and present presidents of the New Jersey Chapter of the National Emergency Number Association, collaborated with then Speaker of the Assembly Jack Collins to introduce legislation creating a surcharge on telecommunication devices to fund the 9-1-1 system at state, county, and municipal levels. The goal was to ensure that users, rather than taxpayers, fully funded the system. After extensive

debate, a surcharge rate of 90 cents was established, leading to the enactment of NJAC 17:24 P.L.2004, c.48 on June 29, 2004.

According to the New Jersey Division of Taxation, the revenue collected from this fee is intended to replace the existing 9-1-1 infrastructure with a modern enhanced 9-1-1 system. The funds are also designated for the state's capital equipment, facilities, and operating expenses related to emergency preparedness, response training, counterterrorism, and security at state facilities.

Unfortunately, a loophole in the legislation permitted funds to be diverted to agencies other than 9-1-1, resulting in minimal financial support for 9-1-1 agencies across the state. Consequently, grants for equipment and personnel dwindled, shifting the funding burden onto counties and municipalities and undermining New Jersey's status as a leader in emergency communication.

### **2.2.2 Today**

As of 2020, New Jersey, along with Nevada, New York, Rhode Island, and West Virginia, was identified as one of the worst offenders in diverting 9-1-1 funds. In response, the New Jersey Association of Counties (NJAC) and the New Jersey Wireless Association (NJWA) issued a press release urging the state legislature to adhere to federal guidelines and restore funding to counties and municipalities.

Currently, only minimal partial funding has been restored, insufficient to support the numerous Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) and Public Safety Dispatch Points (PSDPs).

In collaboration with Lumen Technologies, the state plans to transition to next-generation 9-1-1 (NG911) in 2024. New Jersey's transition to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) is primarily funded through state-allocated resources. The Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations Act established a \$10 million Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) Grant Program to assist counties in upgrading and consolidating their 9-1-1 centers in preparation for NG911 implementation. This program is administered by the Office of Emergency Telecommunications Services within the Office of Information Technology.

In March 2022, New Jersey contracted with Lumen Technologies to facilitate the NG911 transition. The state has also encouraged counties to seek additional funding through federal grants, such as the 9-1-1 Grant Program and the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG), to supplement state funds. However, as of now, the primary funding source remains state appropriations.

## **2.3 Project Team Insights: Historical Context and Ongoing Initiatives**

Atlantic County's approach to public safety and emergency services has been shaped by significant initiatives, including recent efforts in court consolidation and emergency incident

coordination. These developments provide valuable context for understanding the need for dispatch consolidation and the opportunities for optimizing public safety operations.

These initiatives demonstrate Atlantic County's proactive approach to centralizing and optimizing critical public services. The lessons learned from court consolidation, grant utilization, and incident management provide a strong foundation for the ongoing efforts to consolidate Fire and EMS dispatch services. By building on these successes, the County can enhance public safety, improve operational efficiency, and ensure a coordinated response to future emergencies.

### **2.3.1 Court Consolidation Impact**

The county's court consolidation initiative has proven a successful model for centralization, generating \$1 million in funding and mandating county-level filings. This effort streamlined operations by requiring smaller municipalities to file at the county level, reducing administrative redundancy and ensuring more consistent service delivery. The success of this initiative demonstrates the potential benefits of consolidating other critical services, such as Fire and EMS dispatch, under a centralized framework.

### **2.3.2 Grant Funding and Resource Optimization**

The Fire and EMS dispatch study benefits from the same grant pool that supported the court consolidation project. This funding strategy highlights the County's commitment to resource optimization by leveraging grants to support multiple, interconnected initiatives. By utilizing shared funding sources, Atlantic County demonstrates fiscal responsibility and strategic planning, ensuring that essential public safety projects receive the financial backing necessary for success.

### **2.3.3 Incident Coordination - Lessons Learned from Major Events**

The need for enhanced coordination was underscored by a significant fire incident in Atlantic City, which required the involvement of nine PSAPs. Multiple PSAPs with multiple radio systems and procedures create operational silos that affect command and control, situational awareness, and common operating picture. Some consequences from lack of situational awareness and common operating picture are fragmented information, poor information flow, ineffective coordination, and failure to adapt to changing conditions which leads to confusion, miscommunication, potentially poor decision-making due to incomplete or inconsistent information, delayed response, and resource misallocation. The complexity of managing resources and communication during this event highlighted gaps in coordination and the importance of streamlined operations. This incident reinforced the critical role of after-action reviews in identifying areas for improvement and ensuring more effective collaboration in future emergencies.

### 2.3.4 Ongoing Communications Improvements

To address these challenges, Atlantic County is actively working to enhance resource coordination during major incidents. These efforts include improving communication protocols and collaboration with key partners such as AtlantiCare, a leading regional healthcare provider. By focusing on integrated response strategies and leveraging advanced communication tools, the County aims to improve situational awareness and ensure a cohesive, efficient response to large-scale emergencies.

## 2.4 User Stories

Detailed Accounting of User Stories and Contributions. These experiences encapsulate the themes and content shared by all the Atlantic County Fire and EMS response community during stakeholder engagement interviews and group meetings.

The contributors' insights underscore the urgent need for Atlantic County to adopt a centralized Fire/EMS dispatch system. This consolidation would resolve current operational challenges, enhance emergency response efficiency, and ensure better coordination across jurisdictions.

### Clifford Snyder, Deputy Fire Chief, Atlantic City Airport

1. **Communication Challenges:** Snyder highlighted that multiple township dispatch centers complicate communication for Incident Commanders and responding units, increasing the risk of mistakes.
2. **Importance of Communication:** He noted that communication failures were a significant factor in many major incidents, including 9/11.
3. **Inefficiencies in Equipment Requests:** Current processes involve multiple steps for additional resource requests, causing delays.
4. **Unique County Situation:** Atlantic County's lack of a centralized dispatch system is an outlier, necessitating improvements to better serve responders and the community.

### Fire Chief Kienzle, Egg Harbor City and President of the Atlantic County Fire Chiefs Association

1. **Need for Central Dispatch:** Emphasized challenges faced by standalone departments surrounded by others dispatched from different centers.
2. **Response Delays:** Noted delays in subsequent alarms during structure fires, citing an incident on April 10, 2021.
3. **Overwhelmed Dispatch Centers:** Recalled an April 2022 incident where Atlantic City Dispatch was overwhelmed, forcing calls to Hamilton Township.
4. **Technological Failures:** Mentioned a significant 800 MHz system failure in February, underscoring the need for reliable technology.

## Fire Chief Dan Adams, Margate City Fire Department

1. **Dispatch Failures:** Reported two incidents where dispatch protocols were inadequately executed, causing delays and operational challenges.
2. **Mutual Aid Delays:** Cited a September 2024 structure fire where Northfield's mutual aid response was delayed by 15 minutes due to dispatch inefficiencies.

## Captain Dan Vespertino, Longport Fire Department

1. **Comparative Analysis:** Highlighted differences between Camden County's and Egg Harbor Township's dispatch systems, noting Camden's simultaneous dispatch and efficient communication protocols.
2. **Operational Challenges:** Identified inefficiencies in Egg Harbor Township's dispatch system, such as delayed medic assignments and lack of cross-street information.

## Firefighter Jerry Critelli, Mullica Township

1. **Dispatch Coordination Issues:** Highlighted a double fatality fire where Hammonton was not dispatched despite requests, leading to confusion.
2. **Lack of CAD System:** Noted that the absence of CAD significantly hampered resource coordination.

## Chief Jacob Ruga, Milmay Volunteer Fire Company

1. **Multiple Dispatch Centers:** Reported complications in mutual aid requests due to involvement of up to four dispatch centers.
2. **Radio Reception Problems:** Cited communication challenges with dispatch centers in neighboring counties.
3. **Dispatch Delays:** Expressed concern over delays, including a 10-minute delay for a barn fire.

## Chief Jess Hand, Dorothy Volunteer Fire Company

1. **Multiple PSAPs:** Highlighted complications arising from over 11 PSAPs, often causing jurisdictional confusion.
2. **Delays in Resource Activation:** Stressed the critical need for a centralized system to expedite mutual aid requests.

## Chief Levon Clayton, Longport Volunteer Fire Department

1. **Current Dispatch Challenges:** Reported delays of 10-15 minutes in mutual aid requests under the current system.

2. **Proposed Solution:** Advocated for a centralized dispatch center to streamline communication and mutual aid coordination.

**Captain Chuck Mackintosh, Bayview Fire and President of Atlantic County Firefighters Association** (Note: Captain MacKintosh was a former 9-1-1 Telecommunicator with Galloway Township)

1. **Overwhelming Workload:** Described dispatchers' struggles with multitasking across several agencies.
2. **Dispatch Delays:** Cited specific examples of delays in mutual aid coordination and Tanker Task Force activation.
3. **Advocacy for Central Dispatch:** Argued that centralization would streamline operations and reduce response times.

**Beau Endres, Former Fire Coordinator**

1. **Cost and Operational Benefits:** Highlighted the financial and operational efficiencies of a centralized dispatch system.
2. **Resistance to Change:** Noted reluctance from individual towns to consolidate, despite clear benefits.
3. **Enhanced Coordination:** Emphasized improvements in mutual aid coordination and resource management.

**2.4.1 Summary of Key Points**

1. **Critical Need for Central Dispatch:** Contributors uniformly stress the importance of a centralized Fire/EMS dispatch system to address current inefficiencies and delays, particularly during mutual aid requests and large-scale incidents.
2. **Operational Inefficiencies:** Issues include fragmented communication, inconsistent dispatch protocols, and lack of simultaneous dispatch capabilities.
3. **Impact on Response Times:** Delays in dispatching mutual aid, equipment, and additional resources have directly impacted emergency response times, with potentially life-threatening consequences.
4. **Technological Gaps:** The absence of integrated systems, such as CAD, and frequent radio communication failures hamper effective coordination.
5. **Benefits of Centralization:** Centralized operations promise enhanced situational awareness, streamlined communication, faster response times, and cost savings through shared infrastructure and standardized procedures.

## 2.5 PSAPs and PSDPs

In 2000, there were 287 separate PSAPs, including PSDPs, in New Jersey. By 2023, that number had decreased to 173 PSAPs and 69 PSDPs. The reduction can be attributed to the establishment of countywide and regional PSAPs and municipalities contracting dispatch services. Changes in political leadership and hospital mergers have also influenced PSAP configurations, as larger hospitals have sometimes taken on PSAP roles.

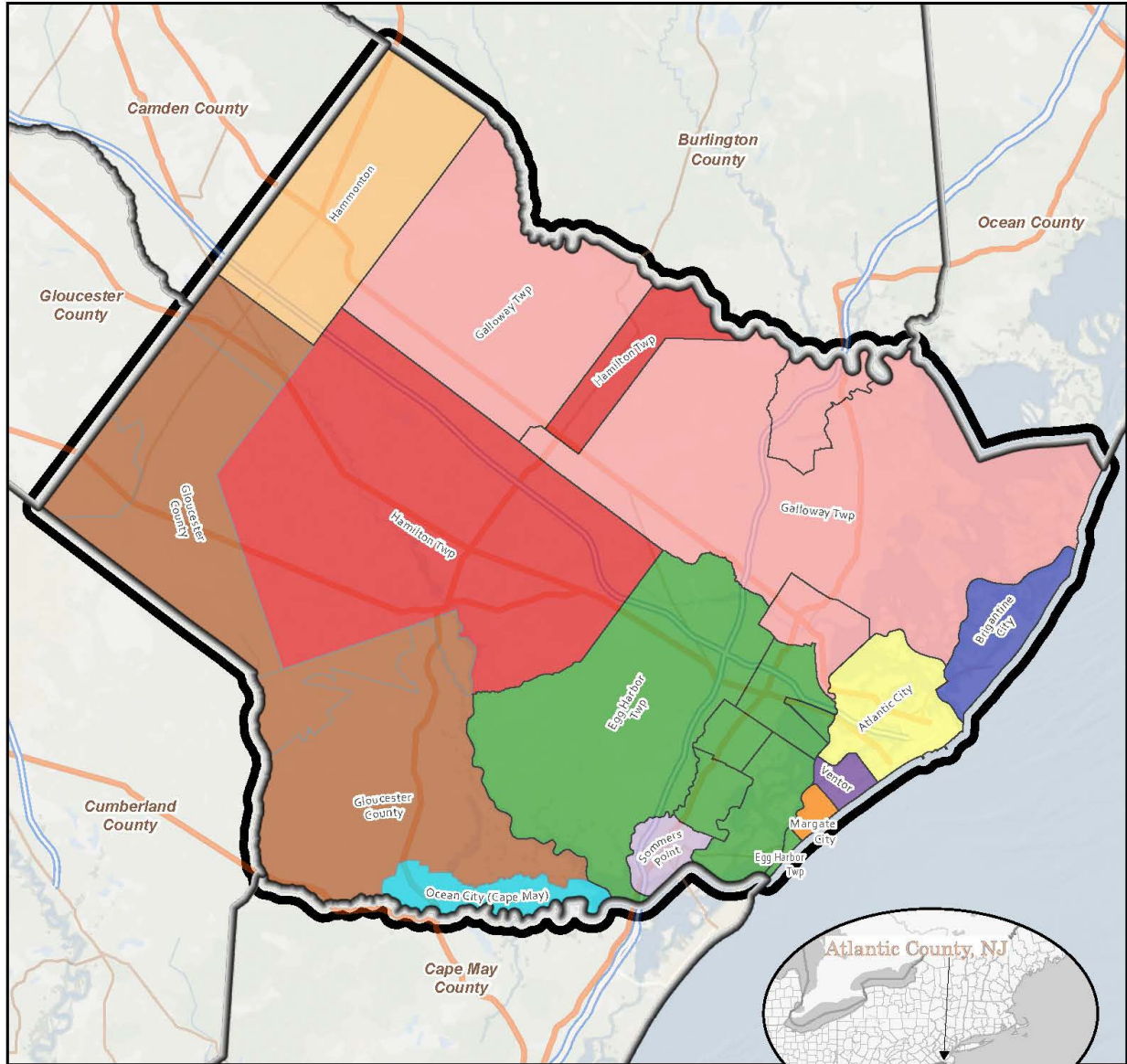
The evolution of 9-1-1 services in New Jersey reflects significant advancements alongside ongoing challenges in funding and governance. To ensure effective emergency response, it is crucial to address these issues and adapt to the changing landscape of public safety communications.

In Atlantic County, 23 municipalities are served by 13 PSAPs. Notably, three PSAPs—AtlantiCare MedCom, Gloucester County Emergency Response, and SJTA Farley—are not operated by municipalities. The four municipalities bordering the Atlantic Ocean (Atlantic City, Brigantine, Margate, and Ventnor) maintain individual PSAPs and have expressed no interest in changing this structure. The PSAPs serving Egg Harbor Township, Galloway Township, Hamilton Township, Hammonton, Ocean City, and Somers Point manage dispatch services for the remaining municipalities.

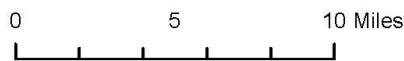
This report focuses on requirements for fire dispatch services. Personnel, operations, and technical requirements are crucial and will involve significant initial and recurring costs that require strategic funding of further regionalization or full consolidation.

The following map depicts the volunteer, career, and hybrid fire agencies.

# ATLANTIC COUNTY, NJ FIRE DEPARTMENT PSAP



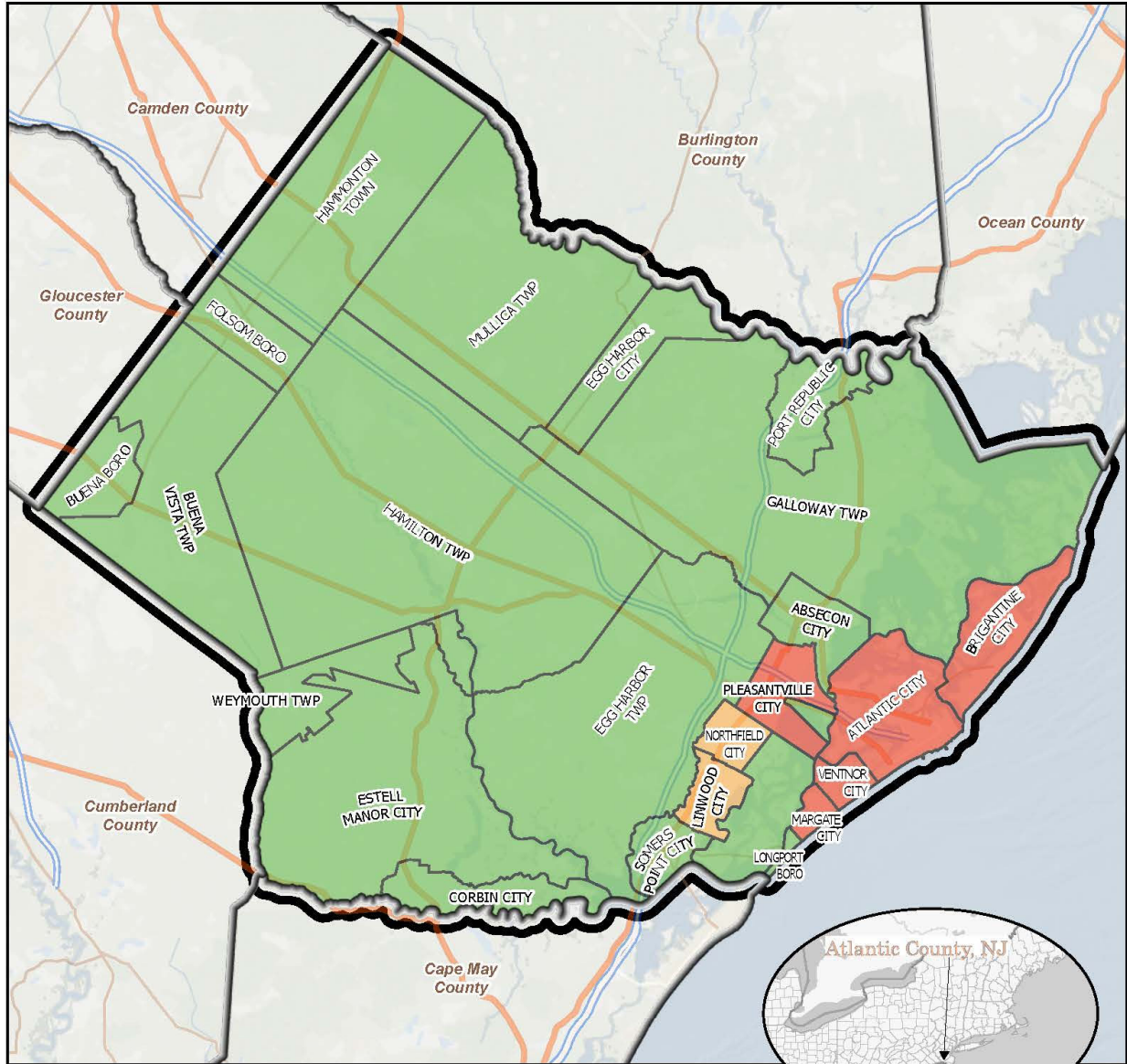
- |                 |               |                       |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Atlantic City   | Hamilton Twp  | Vantor                |
| Brigantine City | Hammonton     | Gloucester County     |
| Egg Harbor Twp  | Margate City  | Ocean City (Cape May) |
| Galloway Twp    | Sommers Point |                       |



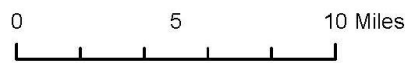
**ADCOMM** Engineering LLC

Prepared for Atlantic County Emergency Management and Homeland Security, by Brian Brady, ADCOMM Engineering, 11/04/2024.  
Data Sources: Esri, Garmin, NaturalVue, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, USFWS, New Jersey Office of GIS, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USFWS.

# ATLANTIC COUNTY, NJ FIREFIGHTER WORKFORCE TYPE



- Interstate Highway
- Highway
- Major Road
- Local Road
- Volunteer
- Hybrid
- Career



**ADCOMM** Engineering LLC

Prepared for Atlantic County Emergency Management and Homeland Security, by Brian Brady, ADCOMM Engineering, 11/04/2024.  
Data Sources: Esri, Garmin, NaturalVue, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, USFWS, New Jersey Office of GIS, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USFWS.

Note that data was not sufficient to create a map of the EMS response areas. The following table lists the EMS response and the PSAP that dispatches the service in Atlantic County.

| EMS AGENCIES                          | PSAP          |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| AtlantiCare Reg. Med. Ctr. (MEDCOMM)  | MEDCOMM       |
| Brigantine Dept. of Fire & EMS        | Brigantine    |
| Bueno Boro EMS                        | Gloucester    |
| Buena Vista Township EMS              | Gloucester    |
| Dorothy Vol. Fire Co.                 | Gloucester    |
| Egg Harbor Twp. EMS                   | EHT           |
| Exceptional Medical Transport         | Atlantic City |
| Galloway Twp. Ambulance Service       | Galloway      |
| Margate Fire Dept.                    | Margate       |
| South Jersey Transportation Authority | EHT           |
| Township of Hamilton Rescue           | Hamilton      |
| Tricare Medical Transportation        | EHT           |
| Ventnor City Fire Dept.               | Ventnor City  |
| Longport EMS                          | EHT           |
| Dorothy EMS                           | Gloucester    |

Feedback from meetings, surveys, and discussions with fire service personnel indicates a desire for a consolidated fire PSDP. In New Jersey, dispatchers in a PSDP must have at least Basic Telecommunicator training. While they are not required to have Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) training, as they do not typically handle initial medical calls, some level of medical training is recommended, especially since ambulances often respond alongside fire companies. Currently, EMD is managed directly by PSAPs.

## 2.6 Training

The current approved training courses for 9-1-1 and dispatch personnel are captured in the table below with links to the source organization. Note that only the Basic Telecommunicator is required for PSAP staff, and EMD is required only if medical calls for service are handled by the PSAP.

| TRAINING CATEGORY                       | ORGANIZATION/PROGRAM   | WEBSITE                            |
|---|--|------------------------------------|
| <b>Basic Telecommunicator Training</b>  | APCO (Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials) | <a href="#">APCO International</a> |
|   | IAED (International Academies of Emergency Dispatch)         | <a href="#">IAED</a>               |
|   | NECI (National Emergency Communications Institute)           | <a href="#">NECI</a>               |
| <b>Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD)</b> | APCO   | <a href="#">APCO International</a> |
|   | IAED   | <a href="#">IAED</a>               |
|   | NECI   | <a href="#">NECI</a>               |
|   | State of New Jersey Program                                  | <a href="#">NJOETS</a>             |

## 2.7 Past Attempts to Consolidate Dispatch and 9-1-1 Services in Atlantic County

Atlantic County has a history of exploring consolidation and regionalization of emergency dispatch services, aimed at enhancing efficiency, improving response times, and optimizing resource allocation.

In 2007, a comprehensive consolidation feasibility study was conducted, which recommended the merging of all 9-1-1 and dispatch services across the county. This study identified critical next steps for planning, considering the advantages and disadvantages of such a consolidation, as well as the associated costs and necessary technology upgrades. However, despite the recommendations, this initiative did not progress beyond the study phase due to a lack of consensus and commitment from the involved municipalities.

Building on the findings of the 2007 study, further exploration occurred in 2015, focusing on a potential partnership with Stockton University to develop a consolidated dispatch center that would serve the entire county. This effort included an analysis of threats and vulnerabilities related to the proposed site, as well as programming considerations for the facility's size, capacity, and future growth. Despite the comprehensive nature of this study, it faced similar obstacles as its predecessor, with municipalities hesitant to commit financially and contractually, resulting in the abandonment of the project before full implementation.

While these earlier attempts focused on complete consolidation, actual regionalization began to take shape in the mid-to-late 2010s. During this period, several townships and cities forged agreements to provide 9-1-1 call answering and dispatching services for law enforcement, fire, and EMS. This led to the establishment of regional centers that currently operate under the auspices of individual municipalities, with administration typically managed by local police departments.

Today, the active regional centers serving Atlantic County include those in Egg Harbor Township, Galloway Township, and Hamilton Township. Additionally, two adjacent counties provide

regional dispatch services that impact Atlantic County: Gloucester County and Ocean City in Cape May County. These arrangements reflect a shift from the earlier goals of total consolidation to a more collaborative approach, enabling municipalities to retain some autonomy while benefiting from shared services and resources.

As Atlantic County continues to navigate the complexities of emergency dispatch services, these historical efforts offer valuable insights into the challenges and successes of regionalization, informing current and future strategies for improving public safety communication systems across the county.

## 2.8 Historical Insight Into Past Successes and Failures

While historical data may be stale and less applicable to current planning efforts, it still offers valuable insights into the successes and failures of past attempts to consolidate emergency communication services. Understanding these lessons is crucial for informing future initiatives aimed at regionalizing fire and EMS dispatch services in Atlantic County.

In reviewing previous consolidation efforts, it becomes clear that they encountered numerous challenges that hindered their progress. However, the insights gained from these experiences can serve as a foundation for developing more effective strategies in the current study focused on fire and EMS dispatch services. This study emphasizes the need to address the complexities of establishing a regional dispatch framework that adequately serves the diverse needs of fire and EMS agencies and the municipalities they support.

These lessons learned from past consolidation attempts will be instrumental in guiding the current study on regionalizing fire and EMS dispatch services in Atlantic County. By applying these insights, stakeholders can better navigate the complexities of establishing an effective and sustainable regional dispatch framework that meets the needs of all involved parties.

The following list highlights key lessons learned from past attempts, providing a roadmap for advancing regionalization efforts today:

- **Data Relevance and Accuracy.** Historical data from past studies may be outdated, making it less effective for current planning efforts. Future initiatives should focus on gathering up-to-date and relevant data that reflects the current needs of fire and EMS agencies.
- **Stakeholder Engagement.** Effective engagement with all stakeholders—including fire and EMS personnel, municipal leaders, and community members—is crucial. Previous attempts often lacked comprehensive support, which hindered the success of proposed regionalization efforts. Ensuring that agencies have a voice in the process can foster collaboration.
- **Clear Goals and Objectives.** Establishing specific aims for regionalization is essential. Past efforts struggled due to vague goals, underscoring the importance of defining clear

objectives that reflect the responsibilities of fire and EMS agencies and the municipalities they serve.

- **Financial Commitment.** Previous studies frequently failed to secure adequate financial backing beyond initial costs. Future regionalization plans must include detailed financial strategies and binding commitments from participating municipalities to ensure sustainability.
- **Technology Assessment.** Inadequate assessments of technological needs and infrastructure were common in previous attempts. Future initiatives should thoroughly evaluate existing systems to ensure they meet the operational requirements of a regionalized dispatch model, considering the specific needs of fire and EMS agencies.
- **Governance and User Agency Input.** Clearly defined governance structures are essential. Past efforts lacked user agency input pathways, which can hinder collaboration. Future initiatives should establish mechanisms for fire and EMS agencies to influence dispatch service operations, ensuring their needs and perspectives are integrated.
- **Training and Quality Assurance.** Input and influence from fire and EMS agencies regarding training and quality assurance programs are vital. Previous attempts often overlooked the importance of these aspects, which are critical for maintaining high service standards.
- **Policy and Procedure Integration.** Future regionalization efforts must involve fire and EMS agencies in the creation and maintenance of policies and procedures. This inclusion fosters ownership and ensures that the unique operational requirements of different agencies are respected.
- **Continuous Communication.** Ongoing communication among all parties is vital for success. Past regionalization attempts faced challenges due to misunderstandings or a lack of information sharing, emphasizing the importance of transparent dialogue throughout the process.
- **Incremental Approaches.** Gradual regionalization efforts have proven more successful than pursuing full consolidation at once. Taking smaller, manageable steps can facilitate smoother transitions and build momentum for broader regionalization of fire and EMS dispatch services, allowing for adjustments based on agency feedback.

## 3. LEGAL AUTHORITY EXAMINATION

ADCOMM is well-versed in New Jersey statutes and administrative codes governing 9-1-1 services. We understand that regionalizing Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) services necessitates a clear grasp of the permissible governance structures defined by New Jersey law, particularly the Uniform Shared Services Consolidation Act (N.J.S.A. 40A:65-1 et seq.). This legislation enables municipalities to enter into shared services agreements, facilitating collaboration in service delivery, including the potential for sharing facilities and operational resources.

This legal authority examination is of the current County conditions and options. Before entering into an IGA(s) it is paramount that additional legal reviews be conducted by County and municipal legal representatives for the successful regionalization of fire and EMS dispatch services in Atlantic County. By leveraging New Jersey statutes, such as the Uniform Shared Services Consolidation Act, and adhering to relevant regulations, municipalities can develop a robust governance framework that clarifies control over the proposed facility and ensures compliance with legal requirements. This strategic approach, coupled with expert guidance, will pave the way for effective collaboration among fire and EMS agencies, enhancing emergency response capabilities across the region.

### 3.1 Governance Structures and Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs)

The establishment of a consolidated Fire and EMS dispatch facility for fire and EMS services requires a well-defined governance framework that outlines control, ownership, and operational responsibilities. Such clarity enhances cooperation among participating municipalities and reinforces accountability.

The governance models developed will encompass:

- **Capital Assets:** Management of physical facilities and technologies.
- **Data Assets:** Oversight of data ownership, access rights, and maintenance responsibilities.
- **Human Assets:** Strategies for staffing, operational management, and organizational change.
- **Funding Models:** Financial structures that support regional dispatch services.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Clear delineation of duties among participating agencies.

## 3.2 Compliance with State and Federal Regulations

ADCOMM acknowledges the critical need for compliance with state and federal laws governing 9-1-1 services. This includes:

- **State Regulations:** The New Jersey State Emergency Services Code (N.J.A.C. 5:75-1 et seq.) sets forth operational standards that must be adhered to, including dispatch protocols to maintain service quality.
- **Federal Regulations:** Compliance with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations is also essential, as these govern the operational procedures and technology implementations of regional dispatch centers.
- **Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs):** Collaboration ensures that IGAs align with applicable laws, supporting the operational and legal framework necessary for effective service delivery.

## 3.3 Addressing Challenges in PSAP Operations

Given the diversity of PSAPs across multiple jurisdictions, delivering consistent service can be complex. Without a formal governance group, engagement with fire and medical partners is essential for addressing these challenges.

Potential strategies to enhance consistency and standardization include:

- **Realignment of Jurisdictions:** Evaluating how jurisdictions are assigned for dispatching could facilitate the grouping of areas with similar policies and practices, taking geographic needs into account. This process would involve creating a matrix to clarify roles and establishing a committee with representation from involved jurisdictions for operational policy development.
- **Advisory Board:** Establishing an advisory board for fire and medical services would provide representation from the jurisdictions served, defining governance scope related to operational planning, policy development, and issue resolution. An advisory board could develop structure, meeting schedules, and could create service level agreements to ensure clear expectations and accountability. An advisory board could be appointed by the Board of County Commissioners and could act in an advisory capacity to the County Executive and the Board of County Commissioners on all matters related to the countywide fire and EMS dispatch system, service, and funding ensuring all components function effectively and efficiently.

For example, a County Fire and EMS Dispatch Advisory Board for Atlantic County could define the scope of governance such as operational planning, policy development, financial authority, and issue resolution. This body could be authorized to develop operational policies and set training requirements for dispatch personnel by following the standards established by the Office of Emergency Telecommunications Services.

The advisory board would be comprised of members appointed by the County Executive with the advice and consent of the Board of County Commissioners. The County Executive will appoint a chairperson to serve at the pleasure of the Board of County Commissioners. There should be at minimum, one member representing the Atlantic County Fire Chiefs Association, one member representing the Atlantic County Firefighters Association, one member representing EMS for Atlantic County while the remaining members should have backgrounds in financial expertise, telecommunications issues, or dispatch operational issues.

Some of the duties and responsibilities of the board could include developing a comprehensive plan for the implementation of a county fire and EMS dispatch system. The comprehensive plan should be reviewed, updated, and prioritized on an annual basis with future planning for a consolidated county 9-1-1 dispatch center to include law enforcement, fire, and EMS. Other duties include monitoring the current system to ensure that all elements of the system are functioning in a coordinated, effective, and efficient manner. The board would be responsible for representing the needs of the fire service, establishing standards and procedures regarding the dispatch of fire service apparatus which are developed to best serve the needs of every fire department. The board may propose equipment changes for the dispatch center. The board may review, comment, and make recommendations on expenses in the dispatch center's proposed fiscal budget including capital improvements before it is submitted to the County Executive.

Any deviations from an established procedure would have a formal process in place for the change. The change would be heard by the board and voted on. Actions by the board would be by a majority of those present at board meetings where a quorum has been established.

The advisory board could be responsible for issue resolution by creating a variance process to address complaints and ensure those complaints are addressed fairly. An example of a variance policy could be that any complaints against other agencies or dispatchers can be submitted by the officer in charge of the agency or a dispatcher. Variance forms will be provided to all emergency services. When submitting variances, forms must be fully completed and signed. The completed variance form will be submitted to the advisory board. The board chairperson will acknowledge receipt of the variance within 72 hours of submission. Once the advisory board has investigated and reviewed the variance, it renders its conclusion in writing to the reporting entity.

### **3.3.1 Disciplinary Process and Collective Bargaining Considerations**

In conjunction with the variance process, a structured disciplinary program could be established to ensure consistent, equitable, and transparent handling of disciplinary matters. The goal of this program would be to assist in developing a positive plan of action to correct performance deficiencies or behavioral concerns while maintaining a fair and legally compliant process.

This disciplinary process must be aligned with the terms of the collective bargaining agreement (CBA), which governs how and what disciplinary actions can be taken. The union plays a critical role in representing employees during disciplinary proceedings, ensuring due process is followed, and advocating for fair treatment. The process should include clear, progressive steps, such as coaching, verbal and written warnings, retraining opportunities, and—if necessary—

further corrective actions in compliance with the agreed-upon disciplinary framework outlined in the CBA.

Additionally, the program should provide mechanisms for appeal and grievance resolution, allowing employees and union representatives to challenge or seek modifications to disciplinary actions when warranted. A well-structured, CBA-compliant disciplinary program fosters accountability, fairness, and operational efficiency, ultimately contributing to improved performance and workplace morale.

**An example of a disciplinary policy could be:** (Note: Will require negotiation for inclusion/acceptance in and by Collective Bargaining Units/Agreements)

**General Statement of Intent:**

*In general, a process of Progressive Discipline will be followed in dealing with any failure to comply with the rules, regulations, and/or SOP's. Progressive discipline should be used as a tool to reinforce an effort to correct behavior. When appropriate, training will be provided to help correct deficiencies. Normally, this process will consist of an initial step of Non-punitive Counseling, followed, respectively, by Verbal Reprimand, Written Reprimand, Suspension Without Pay (1) one day, Suspension Without Pay (3) three days, Demotion and/or Termination. While the utmost care will be taken to preserve fairness and consistency in all disciplinary actions, some offenses may be deemed sufficiently severe to bypass one or more of the progressive steps mentioned above, up to and including immediate termination.*

**Verbal Reprimand:**

*Initial offenses considered to be minor to moderate or similar offenses where Non-Punitive Counseling has already been documented will be dealt with via Verbal Reprimand. A supervisor issuing a Verbal Reprimand will document the date and circumstances and inform the counseled employee that said counseling has occurred. Documentation of the Reprimand shall be held by the employee's supervisor. Should a supervisor verbally reprimand an employee other than his/her immediate supervisor, then the reprimanding supervisor shall pass on the documentation to the employee's immediate supervisor. Documentation of Verbal Reprimand shall not be held in an employee's Personnel file. A copy of the Verbal Reprimand will be held active by an employee's Supervisor and a copy forwarded to the Dispatch Center Manager for a period not to exceed one year. The existence of a Verbal Reprimand shall not prevent an employee from receiving a promotion or merit pay increase. A second or subsequent offenses of the same or of similar nature may constitute just cause for a Written Reprimand.*

**Written Reprimands:**

*Written Reprimands shall be issued for offenses considered to be major, and for offenses where one or more Verbal Counseling have failed to correct the deficiency or offending behavior. A supervisor issuing a Written Reprimand shall document the date and circumstances relevant to said reprimand, as well as the grounds upon which said reprimand is being issued, along with any relevant documentation, such as previous Non-punitive Counseling or Verbal Reprimand. Mandatory training will be assigned if warranted. The*

*reprimanded employee should be verbally notified of an impending Written Reprimand by the reprimanding supervisor as soon as possible after the supervisor has made determination that a Written Reprimand is in order. The Written Reprimand itself should be presented to the reprimanded employee by the supervisor in person no more than fourteen (14) days from the date of the verbal notification or as soon as practicable. Following presentation, the employee is to sign the Written Reprimand, and the supervisor will return it to the Dispatch Center Manager. This signature is an acknowledgement of receipt. A copy of the written reprimand will be provided to the employee after signature. The reprimand will remain active in the employee's Personnel file for a period of one year from the date of the issuance of the reprimand. The existence of a Written Reprimand shall not prevent an employee from receiving a merit pay increase.*

**Suspensions without Pay (1 Day):**

*Suspensions without Pay for one (1) day shall be issued for offenses considered to be serious and for offenses where one or more Written Reprimands have failed to correct the deficiency or offending behavior. A Suspension without Pay for one (1) day, for the purposes of this policy, shall be defined as the reduction in an individual's pay by one shift. A supervisor issuing a Suspension without Pay shall document the date and circumstances relevant to said suspension, as well as the grounds upon which said suspension is being issued, along with any relevant documentation, such as previous Non-punitive Counseling, Verbal Reprimands, and Written Reprimands. Mandatory training will be assigned if warranted. The reprimanded employee should be verbally notified of an impending Suspension without pay by the reprimanding supervisor and Dispatch Center Manager as soon as possible after the supervisor has made determination that a Suspension without Pay is in order. The Suspension without Pay itself should be presented to the reprimanded employee by the supervisor and Dispatch Center Manager in person no more than fourteen (14) days from the date of the verbal notification or as soon as practicable. Following presentation, the employee is to sign the Suspension without Pay. This signature is an acknowledgement of receipt. A copy of the suspension will be provided to the employee after signature. The suspension will remain active for a period of one year from the date of the issuance of the suspension. The existence of a suspension may not prevent an employee from receiving a merit pay increase. During periods of suspension employees are prohibited from using department property, including the computer system, or entering department facilities.*

**Suspensions without Pay (3 Days):**

*Suspensions without Pay for three (3) days shall be issued for offenses considered to be serious and for offenses where one or more previous suspensions have failed to correct the deficiency or offending behavior. A Suspension without Pay for three (3) days, for the purposes of this policy, shall be defined as the reduction in an individual's pay by three shifts. A supervisor issuing a Suspension without Pay shall document the date and circumstances relevant to said suspension, as well as the grounds upon which said suspension is being issued, along with any relevant documentation, such as previous Non-punitive Counseling, Verbal Reprimands, Written Reprimands and Suspensions. Mandatory training will be assigned if warranted. The reprimanded employee should be verbally notified of an impending Suspension without pay by*

*the reprimanding supervisor and Dispatch Center Manager as soon as possible after the supervisor has made determination that a Suspension without Pay is in order. The Suspension without Pay itself should be presented to the reprimanded employee by the supervisor and Dispatch Center Manager in person no more than fourteen (14) days from the date of the verbal notification or as soon as practicable. Following presentation, the employee is to sign the Suspension without Pay. This signature is an acknowledgement of receipt. A copy of the suspension will be provided to the employee after signature. The suspension will remain active for a period of one year from the date of the issuance of the suspension. The existence of a suspension may not prevent an employee from receiving a merit pay increase. During periods of suspension employees are prohibited from using department property, including the computer system, or entering department facilities.*

**Demotions, Terminations:**

*Demotions and Terminations may be issued for offenses considered to be serious, and for offenses the above reprimands and suspensions have failed to correct the deficiency or offending behavior. The Dispatch Center Manager, with the approval of the County Administrator, has the authority to demote or terminate an employee.*

**Variance to Policy:**

*In the event of significantly serious or operationally disruptive incidents/actions or those of a criminal nature or otherwise violating local, state or federal statutes, the County reserves the right to skip Level One, Two, Disciplinary Steps and initiate suspension without pay and /or termination of employment, and whatever additional actions deemed necessary that are not covered under the scope of this policy.*

### 3.3.2 Challenges of Creating a Secondary Dispatch System

Creating a separate fire service dispatch system presents several challenges, including:

- **Duplication of Services:** Transferring calls between communication centers can lead to delays in emergency response.
- **Funding Difficulties:** Establishing a separate dispatch system entails significant costs related to facilities, equipment, staffing, and operations. Funding sources, such as insurance premiums or surcharges on building permits could be explored, but navigating these financial avenues can be complex.
- **Control and Oversight:** The diversity of career, volunteer, and combination fire departments complicates the establishment of an effective leadership model. Government-appointed boards or committees may provide a solution to ensure cohesive oversight.

Overall, the approach to regionalizing fire and EMS dispatch services in Atlantic County must balance the legal requirements, operational efficiency, and the diverse needs of the communities served. By leveraging existing resources, developing clear governance frameworks, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, we can enhance the effectiveness of emergency response services across the region.

## 4. STAFFING EXAMINATION: CALL VOLUME FOR YEARS 2018 - 2023

If a new countywide Fire/EMS communications center will be implemented, a staffing analysis and assessment that includes all data from all PSAPs will need to be completed to confirm the staff needed.

The Request for Proposal states, in part, under the Scope of work: " *Examination of call volume for years 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 2022 2023*

- *Call volume of all county fire departments*
- *Call volume of all county EMS agencies."*

There are twenty-three municipalities covered by thirteen PSAPs in Atlantic County. Of those PSAPs, three (*AtlantiCare MedCom, Gloucester County Emergency Response and SJTA Farley*) are not operated by a municipality. The four municipalities bordering the Atlantic Ocean (*Atlantic City, Brigantine, Margate and Ventnor*) have individual PSAPs and through the interview process have indicated that they have no desire to change. The PSAPs in Egg Harbor Township, Galloway Township, Hamilton Township, Hammonton, Ocean City and Somers Point providing the dispatching services for the remaining municipal services.

Fourteen (14) agencies, thirteen (13) PSAPS received a survey from ADCOMM. Of the 13 PSAPS only nine (9) responded with statistics.

The results of the responses, in alphabetical order, are below:

- Atlantic City Police PSAP- responded to the survey with statistical data – But are not part of the study.
- Brigantine Police PSAP – responded to the survey with statistical data.
- Egg Harbor Township Police PSAP – responded to the survey with statistical data, included statistics from Longport Fire Department.
- Galloway Township PSAP – responded to the survey with statistical data.
- Gloucester County Emergency Response PSAP – responded to the survey with statistical data.
- Hamilton Township PSAP – responded to the survey with statistical data.
- Hammonton Police PSAP - responded to the survey – no statistical data provided.
- Margate City PSAP – some data received in separate correspondence.
- Ocean City PSAP – responded to the survey with statistical data.
- Sommers Point Police PSAP – responded to the survey - no statistical data provided.
- Ventnor Police PSAP – responded to the survey with statistical data.

- Atlantic MedCom PSAP – responded to the survey with statistical data.
- SJTA Farley – Did not respond – no data provided.

## 4.1 Call Volume

A range of staffing tools is available for Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) administrators and other stakeholders, all of which depend on accurate statistical data and comprehensive survey responses. However, ADCOMM did not receive complete statistical data, even from the nine PSAP's that submitted survey responses.

ADCOMM compiled and analyzed all the statistical data received.

**Refer to the following chart that contains the information provided for the years 2018 through 2023.**

**TABLE 1: All Stats Received**

| YEAR | RESPONDING PSAPs                    | 9-1-1 CALLS | FIRE CALL VOLUME | EMS CALL VOLUME | FIRE INCIDENTS DISPATCHED | EMS INCIDENTS DISPATCHED | 9-1-1 CALLS PER DAY AVG | FD INCIDENT PER DAY-AVG | EMS INCIDENTS PER DAY-AVG |
|------|-------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2023 | Egg Harbor Twp                      | 198,555     | N/P              | N/P             | 3,525                     | 17,133                   | 544                     | 10                      | 47                        |
|      | Atlantic City PD (8 months of data) | 204,410     | 6,223            | Outsourced      | 8,070                     | Outsourced               | 560                     | 26                      | n/a                       |
|      | Longport Fire                       |             | N/P              | N/P             | 205                       | 219                      | N/P                     | -1                      | -1                        |
|      | Galloway Twp                        | 26,163      | N/P              | N/P             | 2,117                     | 9,848                    | 72                      | 6                       | 27                        |
|      | Hamilton Twp                        | 19,900      | N/P              | N/P             | 1,346                     | 4,269                    | 55                      | 4                       | 12                        |
|      | Atlantic Care Med                   | 28,221      | N/P              | N/P             | N/P                       | 56,667                   | 77                      | 0                       | 155                       |
|      | Brigantine PD                       | 18,341      | N/P              | N/P             | 484                       | 1,493                    | 50                      | 4                       | 1                         |
|      | Gloucester Co                       | 149,458     | N/P              | N/P             | 24,982                    | 47,019                   | 410                     | 68                      | 129                       |
|      | Longport – Egg Harbor               | n/a         |                  |                 | 205                       | 219                      | n/a                     | 1                       | 1                         |
|      | Ocean City PD                       | 11,999      | N/P              | N/P             | 3,938                     | 2,656                    | 33                      | 11                      | 7                         |
|      | Ventnor PD                          | 4,920       | N/P              | N/P             | 2,519                     | 1,878                    | 14                      | 7                       | 5                         |
|      | Margate                             |             | 1,938            |                 |                           |                          |                         |                         |                           |
| 2022 | Galloway Twp                        | 26,182      | N/P              | N/P             | 1,988                     | 8,581                    | 72                      | 6                       | 24                        |
|      | Hamilton Twp                        | 27,330      | N/P              | N/P             | 1,383                     | 4,153                    | 75                      | 4                       | 11                        |
|      | Atlantic Care Med                   | 27,670      | N/P              | N/P             | 0                         | 55,597                   | 76                      | 0                       | 152                       |
|      | Brigantine PD                       | 18,161      | N/P              | N/P             | 553                       | 1,565                    | 50                      | 2                       | 4                         |
|      | Gloucester Co                       | 142,022     | N/P              | N/P             | 24,951                    | 48,860                   | 389                     | 68                      | 134                       |
|      | Ocean City PD                       | 10,611      | N/P              | 2,557           | 3,878                     | 2,557                    | 29                      | 11                      | 7                         |

| YEAR | RESPONDING PSAPs  | 9-1-1 CALLS | FIRE CALL VOLUME | EMS CALL VOLUME | FIRE INCIDENTS DISPATCHED | EMS INCIDENTS DISPATCHED | 9-1-1 CALLS PER DAY AVG | FD INCIDENT PER DAY-AVG | EMS INCIDENTS PER DAY-AVG |
|------|-------------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
|      | Ventnor PD        | 4,865       | N/P              | N/P             | 2,688                     | 1,851                    | 13                      | 7                       | 5                         |
|      | Margate           | 1,207       | 1,971            |                 |                           |                          |                         |                         |                           |
| 2021 | Galloway Twp      | 23,307      | N/P              | N/P             | 1,879                     | 7,402                    | 64                      | 5                       | 20                        |
|      | Hamilton Twp      | 15,113      | N/P              | N/P             | 1,227                     | 4,025                    | 41                      | 3                       | 11                        |
|      | Atlantic Care Med | 26,472      | N/P              | N/P             | 0                         | 53,431                   | 73                      | 0                       | 146                       |
|      | Brigantine PD     | 19,238      | N/P              | N/P             | 393                       | 1,643                    | 53                      | 1                       | 5                         |
|      | Gloucester Co     | 139,478     | N/P              | N/P             | 24,375                    | 46,613                   | 108                     | 67                      | 128                       |
|      | Ocean City PD     | 24,037      | N/P              | N/P             | 3,867                     | 2,722                    | 66                      | 11                      | 8                         |
|      | Ventnor PD        | 5,735       | N/P              | N/P             | 2,711                     | 1,961                    | 16                      | 7                       | 5                         |
| 2020 | Galloway Twp      | 17,811      | 1,799            | 6,084           | N/P                       | N/P                      | 49                      | n/a                     | n/a                       |
|      | Hamilton Twp      | 20,037      | 1,157            | 3,321           | N/P                       | N/P                      | 55                      | n/a                     | n/a                       |
|      | Atlantic Care Med | 23,238      | 0                | 47,741          | N/P                       | N/P                      | 64                      | n/a                     | n/a                       |
|      | Brigantine PD     | 19,123      | 544              | 1,387           | N/P                       | N/P                      | 52                      | n/a                     | n/a                       |
|      | Gloucester Co     | 130,136     | 22,108           | 41,901          | 22,108                    | N/P                      | 356                     | 61                      | n/a                       |
|      | Ventnor PD        | 4,515       | 2,619            | 1,917           | N/P                       | N/P                      | 12                      | n/a                     | n/a                       |
| 2019 | Galloway Twp      | 17,111      | 1,669            | 6,597           | N/P                       | N/P                      | 47                      | n/a                     | n/a                       |
|      | Hamilton Twp      | 19,504      | 1,079            | 3,700           | N/P                       | N/P                      |                         | n/a                     | n/a                       |
|      | Atlantic Care Med | 25,547      | 0                | 55,947          | N/P                       | N/P                      | 70                      | n/a                     | n/a                       |
|      | Brigantine PD     | 20,378      | 615              | 1,870           | N/P                       | N/P                      | 56                      | n/a                     | n/a                       |
|      | Gloucester Co     | 135,616     | 23,259           | 43,353          | 23,259                    | N/P                      | 371                     | 64                      | n/a                       |
|      | Ventnor PD        | N/P         | 2,799            | 2,101           | N/P                       | N/P                      | n/a                     | n/a                     | n/a                       |
| 2018 | Galloway Twp      | 16,766      | 1,701            | 5,287           | N/P                       | N/P                      | 46                      | n/a                     | n/a                       |
|      | Hamilton Twp      | 20,386      | 1,264            | 3,758           | N/P                       | N/P                      | 56                      | n/a                     | n/a                       |
|      | Atlantic Care Med | 24,732      | 0                | 55,660          | N/P                       | N/P                      | 68                      | n/a                     | n/a                       |
|      | Brigantine PD     | 18,837      | 721              | 1,742           | N/P                       | N/P                      | 52                      | n/a                     | n/a                       |
|      | Gloucester Co     | 132,829     | 23,832           | 41,313          | 23,832                    | N/P                      | 364                     | 65                      | n/a                       |
|      | Ventnor PD        | N/P         | 2,435            | 2,035           | N/P                       | N/P                      | n/a                     | n/a                     | n/a                       |

## 4.2 Staffing Tools Explanation Overview

A variety of staffing tools are available for PSAP administrators, all of which rely on accurate statistical data. This data is typically gathered from sources such as Customer Premise Equipment (CPE), Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) reports, and demographic information used to predict future population growth. Comprehensive staffing analysis requires data from the 9-1-1 center's systems, operational reports, and survey tools completed by each center. All fields

within the Survey Tool must be completed to ensure an accurate assessment. Different tools focus on various aspects of staffing needs. Some evaluate call volume and incidents dispatched, while others focus on coverage based on fixed post positions.

The following are different types of methodologies used in calculating staffing:

#### **4.2.1 Volume Analysis Tools**

Staffing tools look at call volume and coverage data and calculate the information in similar ways. Most PSAPs utilize just their call volume to accurately calculate their call taker/dispatcher positions. It is impossible to staff a PSAP based only on the call volume. Consideration must be given to staffing coverage needed during peak call volume times. Each PSAP has designated shifts, based on the call volume busy times and the coverage needed to process the workload. If staff were based only on call volume and did not include the coverage needed, you would miss the call surges for your staff scheduling and the staffing needed for the dispatch positions. Staffing based on coverage evaluates the number of positions that require an employee to be in a chair at a console regardless of the number of incoming calls or dispatch activities. Staffing based on volume evaluates the number of employees needed based on the volume of incoming calls and/or radio activity.

Each PSAP Administrator and 9-1-1 Director knows that they will be busy during morning and evening commute times. Call volume peaks during those time frames, so they plan heavier call taker/dispatcher staffing during commute times. Call volumes also start to increase (depending on the city) when the entertainment time starts, typically about 20:00hrs. It continues to be busy from 20:00hrs until 02:00hrs, normally peaking during those hours. After 02:00hrs, call volume slows down until it picks back up during the morning commute. The days of the week also need to be considered in the call volume and coverage needed hours. Certain days of the week are busier than others. For example, the entertainment hours are typically busier from Thursday thru Saturday than they are from Sunday through Wednesday. This, of course, may vary depending on local customs, etc.

#### **4.2.2 Coverage Analysis Tools**

Staffing tools also look at fixed post positions. A call taker/dispatch position is considered a fixed post position. A Fixed post position means that the position must be filled daily. To staff one fixed post position 24/7, 365 days per year requires 6 personnel. This model takes into consideration vacation, days off, sick, disability, military and other approved leave.

Staffing tools will also cover availability during a shift, sick leave, vacation, FMLA, training and military leave. The tool will look at the PSAP utilization rate, which is a measure of how many hours a call taker/dispatcher is working versus on breaks or lunch. The attrition rate is also taken into consideration. Some tools look at call taker volume, which is call processing time and the number of calls taken and the positions covered. Call taker/dispatcher coverage will look at various factors of staffing a position such as the hours a console must be staffed, how many days per week and weeks per year the position is staffed, along with other factors. Some tools will look at the dispatcher event volume and coverage in calculations.

### 4.2.3 Shift Length Considerations

Staffing tools look at shift hours. Most are based on 8, 10 or 12-hour shifts. The longer the shift time, the harder it is for personnel to manage the stress level, which is attributed to additional sick leave usage. PSAP personnel must utilize scheduled breaks for functionality, however that does not allow personnel extra time off the floor after having dealt with a stressful telephone call or radio incident. The importance of this factor is expected to increase with the amount and type of data that will be available in a NG9-1-1 environment.

Staffing tools will calculate the number of dispatchers, call takers and supervisors needed to fully staff the PSAP.

## 4.3 Standards and Best Practices

Standards and Best Practices play a key role in Communication Center staffing. The following associations National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA), National Emergency Number Association (NENA), and Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) are the Standards and Best Practices are utilized in the Communication Centers.

The following is a partial list of standards that should be followed in a public safety answering point:

1. NFPA 1221
  - Chapter 15 – Operations
    - 15.1 – Management
    - 15.3 – Staffing
    - 15.4 – Operating Procedures
2. CALEA Chapter 5 and 6 – Operations
  - 5.2 – Training
  - 5.2.6 – Annual Retraining
  - 6.2.1 – Immediate Access to Communications Center
  - 6.2.6 – Procedure for Emergency Hang up Calls
3. NENA
  - 2.2.1 Standard for 9-1-1 Call Processing
  - NENA STA 019-2-2022 NG9-1-1 Call Processing Metrics Standard
  - AOCO/NENA ANS 1.107.1-2015 Standard for Establishment of QA/QIP for Public Safety Answering Points
  - NENA/APCO 56-509 Best Practices Model for Third Party EMD Services

#### 4. APCO

- APCO ANS 3.103.2-2015 – Minimum Training Standard for Public Safety Telecommunicators
- APCO/NENA ANS 2.102.1-2022 Advanced Automatic Crash Notification (AACN) Vehicle
- APCO ANS 3.111.1-2022 Detecting Early Warning Symptoms of Stress in Public Safety Telecommunicators

Agencies and Communications Centers that implement, adhere to, and enforce Policies, Procedures, Standards, and Best Practices strengthen their legal defensibility, ensuring both the organization and its Telecommunicators are better protected in the event of a lawsuit.

### 4.4 Staffing Model for Atlantic County Consolidated Fire and EMS Communications Center

The staffing model below is based on assumptions regarding the agencies expected to transition to the new Atlantic County Fire/EMS Consolidated Universal Call taking Communications Center. Once the County decides to proceed with establishing a consolidated Fire and EMS PSAP, it will be necessary to confirm which agencies will formally participate in the consolidation.

The following assumptions were made:

- Fire and EMS Agencies will move to the New Center.
- It is unknown which Fire and EMS Agencies will move to the New Center.
- It is to be determined what level of radio traffic is expected and associated statistics, or the number of radio channels needed.
- ADCOMM assumed which Agencies will move based upon grant partners and study participants. Each of the Agencies listed had Police/ Fire/EMS call responses or call volume. See Participating PSAP Chart.

The workload breakdown for call taker and radio positions in the new center is based on 2023 statistics for the number of 9-1-1 calls only:

- Total 9-1-1 calls per year – 457,557.
- Average calls per day =1,253.
- Average calls per hour = 52.21.
- Minimum staff needed per hour – 2.6 or 3.
- Maximum staff needed per hour = 4.3 to 5.2.
- Calls handled per telecommunicator per hour is 12-20 depending on the complexity of the calls (per NENA.org) It is assumed 15 calls per hour on average will be handled.

A 4- to 6-position PSAP could cover this workload if all positions are staffed during peak hours. However, additional factors like shift coverage, call duration, and emergency spikes must be considered.

**Radio Positions:** Since ADCOMM does not have specific data on radio traffic or the number of channels needed we have used the same calculations as call takers. A minimum of three radio dispatchers per shift for an 8-hour shift.

### Key Considerations:

1. Call Duration:
  - a. If calls average 2–3 minutes, each telecommunicator can handle about 12 -20 calls per hour.
  - b. If calls are longer (e.g., complex medical or fire incidents), fewer calls can be handled, requiring more staff.
2. Peak Hours: Emergency calls often spike during certain times (e.g., evenings, weekends, holidays). A 4-position PSAP might struggle during peak hours.
3. Staffing Levels:
  - a. For 24/7/365 coverage, you need 3 shifts per day and must account for leave, training, and breaks. This is based on 8-hour shifts.
  - b. A 4- to 6-position PSAP would require a minimum of 12–18 telecommunicators to maintain continuous staffing (4–6 per shift, 3 shifts/day).
4. Backup and Overflow: A 4- to 6-position PSAP might not have sufficient capacity during major emergencies or disasters. Backup systems or mutual aid agreements with neighboring PSAPs would be necessary.

**Conclusion:** A 4- to 6-console position PSAP can handle the workload under normal conditions, but it would require:

- Careful scheduling to ensure all positions are staffed during peak hours.
- Adequate staffing levels (12–18 total telecommunicators for 24/7 coverage).
- Contingency or surge plans for high-call-volume events.

If the call volume or call complexity increases, this PSAP might become overwhelmed, and additional resources would be needed.

ADCOMM did not receive survey information from every Atlantic County PSAP which is necessary for accurately assessing staffing needs. To determine the correct percentage of calls handled by fire and EMS agencies in 2023, the total number of 9-1-1 calls from the following agencies was used. The chart below lists the agencies that provided workload statistics. These statistics were used to estimate the anticipated workload of a countywide consolidated Fire/EMS center. The agencies reported receiving in total 457,557 calls to 9-1-1 in 2023.

**TABLE 2: Participating PSAP's 9-1-1 Call Stats**

| YEAR | PSAP                     | 9-1-1 CALLS    |
|------|--------------------------|----------------|
| 2023 | Egg Harbor Twp           | 198,555        |
|      | Galloway Twp             | 26,163         |
|      | Hamilton Twp             | 19,900         |
|      | Atlantic Care Med        | 28,221         |
|      | Brigantine PD            | 18,341         |
|      | Gloucester Co            | 149,458        |
|      | Ocean City PD            | 11,999         |
|      | Ventnor PD               | 4,920          |
|      | <b>Total 9-1-1 Calls</b> | <b>457,557</b> |

According to the U.S. Fire Administration in the United States, a significant portion of 9-1-1 calls handled by fire departments is related to emergency medical services (EMS). According to the U.S. Fire Administration's 2020 data, approximately 64 percent of fire department calls were for EMS and rescue services, while only about 4 were fire related.

#### Utilizing the U.S. Administration Statistics:

- 64% of 457,557 calls = 292,936 EMS calls for 2023.
- 4% of 457, 557 calls = 18,302 Fire calls for 2023.

Staffing levels were based on 9-1-1 call volume rather than the volume of dispatched incidents. Telecommunicators may receive multiple 9-1-1 calls for the same event, but only a single incident is created for dispatch. For example, a traffic accident may generate numerous 9-1-1 calls, yet it results in just one dispatch incident.

NENA's guidelines and standards often note that telecommunicators handle multiple calls related to a single incident. Their documentation explains that while several 9-1-1 calls may be received regarding one event, only one dispatch incident is ultimately logged. See, for instance, references within NENA's standards such as NENA-STD-020.1.

#### The following minimum personnel are needed to staff the new Atlantic County Fire/EMS PSAP:

**TABLE 3: New Atlantic County Dispatch Center Operation Positions Projections**

| PERSONNEL                       | NUMBER NEEDED |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Telecommunicators - Call Takers | 18            |
| Telecommunicators - Dispatchers | 18            |

| PERSONNEL             | NUMBER NEEDED |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| Supervisors           | 12            |
| Manager/Director      | 1             |
| Assistant Manager     | 3             |
| GIS Technician        | 1             |
| Radio Tech Supervisor | 1             |
| Radio Technician      | 3             |
| CAD Tech Supervisor   | 1             |
| CAD Technicians       | 3             |
| Clerical Staff        | 2             |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>63</b>     |

A complete Assessment and Staffing Study will need to be completed once the County decides to move forward with a new Consolidated Fire/EMS Communications Center. Participation is mandatory.

Below are some of the items that will be covered in the Assessment. Noting that this data was requested for this study but was not fully completed by the non-participating PSAPs.

- Current number of Positions in the PSAP.
  - Are they all radio capable.
- Current number of radio channels.
  - Are the agency's radio systems compatible.
- Current CAD and Telephone system.
- Does the PSAP use protocol systems – which type.
- Need electronic copy of organizational chart.
- Number of Authorized full-time and part-time employees.
- Number of Actual full-time and part-time employees.
- Shift schedules.
- Union information.
- Annual vacation, sick leave, military leave, FMLA used per employee.
- Other activities performed by Telecommunicators besides call-taking and dispatching.
- Completed statistical survey information. All statistics are needed.

## 4.5 Standards for the Center – Not All Inclusive

Below is a list of some of the Standards that need to be followed for either a new Fire/EMS dispatch center or the existing centers in Atlantic County.

## NFPA 1221 – Chapter 15

- **15.1.1** All system operations shall be under the control of a manager, director, or supervisor of the jurisdiction served by the system.
- **15.1.3** Personnel in supervisory roles shall receive supervisory training as defined by the AHJ.
- **15.1.4** The AHJ shall be responsible for initial and ongoing training in supervisory skills for personnel in supervisory roles.
- **15.3 Staffing.**
- **15.3.1** There shall be a minimum of two qualified telecommunicators on duty and present in the communications center at all times.
- **15.3.2** When requested by the incident commander, a telecommunicator shall be dedicated to the incident and relieved of other duties within the communications center.
- **15.3.4** Supervision shall be provided when more than two telecommunicators are on duty.
- **15.3.4.1** Supervision shall be provided by personnel located within the communications center who are familiar with the operations and procedures of the communications center.
- **15.3.4.2** The supervisor shall be allowed to provide short-term relief coverage for telecommunicator, provided the telecommunicator does not leave the communications center and is available for immediate recall as defined in the policies and procedures of the AHJ.

## Operating Procedures

- **15.4.1** Ninety percent (90 percent) of events received on emergency lines shall be answered within 15 seconds, and 95 percent of events shall be answered within 20 seconds.
- **15.4.1.1** Compliance with 15.4.1 shall be evaluated monthly using data from the previous month.
- **15.4.2** Where emergency events are transferred, the transfer process shall not exceed 30 seconds 90 percent of the time.
- **15.4.4** Emergency event processing for the highest prioritization level emergency events listed in 15.4.4.1 through 15.4.4.2 shall be completed within 60 seconds, 90 percent of the time.
- **15.4.1** Ninety percent (90 percent) of events received on emergency lines shall be answered within 15 seconds, and 95 percent of events shall be answered within 20 seconds.

- **15.4.1.1** Compliance with 15.4.1 shall be evaluated monthly using data from the previous month.
- **15.4.2** Where emergency events are transferred, the transfer process shall not exceed 30 seconds 90 percent of the time.
- **15.4.4** Emergency event processing for the highest prioritization level emergency events listed in 15.4.4.1 through 15.4.4.2 shall be completed within 60 seconds, 90 percent of the time.

**15.4.4.1** The following types of calls where there is an imminent threat to life shall be included in the highest prioritization level:

- (1) Trauma (e.g., penetrating chest injury).
- (2) Neurologic emergencies (e.g., stroke, seizure).
- (3) Cardiac-related events.
- (4) Unconscious/unresponsive patients.
- (5) Allergic reactions.
- (6) Patient not breathing.
- (7) Choking.
- (8) Other calls as determined by the AHJ.

**15.4.4.2** The following types of calls where significant property loss/damage is likely or actively occurring shall be included in the highest prioritization level:

- (1) Fire involving or potentially extending to a structure(s).
- (2) Explosion.
- (3) Other calls as determined by the AHJ.

**15.4.4.4** The following types of calls shall be exempted from the requirements of 15.4.4:

- (1) Joint responses with law enforcement (involving weapons).
- (2) Hazardous materials incidents.
- (3) Technical rescue.

**15.4.4.5** The following types of mitigating circumstances shall be exempted from the requirements of 15.4.4:

- (1) Language translation.
- (2) TTY/TDD.
- (3) Incomplete location.
- (4) SMS message to 9-1-1.
- (5) Calls received from outside the normal area of responsibility and/or service area.
- (6) Calls requiring use of a PSAP registry or similar tool to determine the appropriate PSAP and/or transfer location.

- (7) Calls received during a significant disaster that severely and significantly depletes available resources, impacts local infrastructure, and could result in changes to normal dispatcher procedures (disaster mode).
- **15.4.5** For law enforcement purposes, the AHJ shall determine time frames allowed for completion of dispatch.
  - **15.4.6** Any communications center that processes a medical event shall provide emergency medical dispatch.

### **NENA Call Taking Standard**

- **2.2.1 Standard for answering 9-1-1 Calls.**
- Ninety percent (90 percent) of all 9-1-1 calls arriving at the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) SHALL be answered within ( $\leq$ ) fifteen (15) seconds. Ninety-five (95 percent) of all 9-1-1 calls SHOULD be answered within twenty (20) seconds.
- The application of the standard SHALL begin at the time of Call Arrival and extend to the time of Call Answer at the point when two-way communication can begin.

The interval between Call Arrival and Call Answer should be evaluated, at a minimum, for each preceding month using a full month of data. Determining if a PSAP has successfully met the call interval metric of 90 percent in 15 seconds (and 95 percent in 20 seconds), should be based upon the one-month evaluation. An authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) may measure this metric on a weekly or daily basis for a more detailed analysis.

## 5. FACILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY EXAMINATION – PSAPs AND FIRE TRAINING CENTER

After evaluating the facilities of the participating PSAPs in Atlantic County, several key factors emerge regarding their suitability for expanding or enhancing operations to accommodate a countywide fire and EMS dispatch center.

Brigantine PSAP presents challenges due to its limited space and lack of backup facilities, which could hinder operational efficiency during emergencies. While the staff express satisfaction with personalized service, this sentiment may not align with the broader needs of a centralized approach.

Egg Harbor Township PSAP faces significant strain from increased responsibilities without a corresponding increase in staffing. The cramped conditions and the absence of a comprehensive impact study on recent expansions raise concerns about its capacity to support a larger, countywide operation effectively.

Hammonton PSAP also demonstrates limitations, particularly in staffing and operational procedures. The reliance on police officers to supplement dispatch functions highlights potential gaps in training and availability, complicating its role in a unified dispatch center.

Ventnor PSAP, while functioning well for its size, may lack the capacity and infrastructure to support countywide demands effectively, especially during peak times.

Gloucester County PSAP, despite its technical capabilities, struggles with compatibility issues and lacks dedicated personnel for Atlantic County, which could lead to inefficiencies in dispatching and communication.

The Request for Proposal stated “...*The site visits, interviews, and observations are anticipated to take place over 8 days in two 1-week site visits. This should allow 2 to 4 hours at each of the 16 public safety answering points (PSAPs). We anticipate conducting individual interviews with the director of each PSAP, focus group meetings with a cross-section of call takers and dispatchers, focus group meetings with response agency representatives (i.e., fire, EMS), focus group meetings with support staff (i.e., technical, training, QA), observation periods with the operations staff at each PSAP, and facilities walk-throughs. Understanding that there may be scheduling conflicts, ADCOMM schedules virtual meetings in the weeks after the site visits for follow up and to allow input for any stakeholders that were not available.*”

The purpose of the onsite visits was to determine the:

- a. Adequacy of current facilities which could be transferred from local to county
- b. Review Staffing and areas of command, staffing, and/or operations
- c. Examination of current county facilities for expansion to house the center

ADCOMM intended to visit all fourteen PSAPs in Atlantic County. However, only five responded positively, with an additional four expressing interest but failing to schedule visits, and one declining outright. Two PSAPs did not respond at all. Overall, only 36 percent of the PSAPs agreed to participate in the visits.

Below is a Summary of Visits to Participating PSAPs

## 5.1 Brigantine PSAP

**Facility:** Located within the police department, the narrow space accommodates two Public Safety Telecommunicators (PSTs). The layout often leads to congestion, and there is no dedicated backup area in case of evacuation.

**Equipment:** Utilizes Enforsys CAD, Prepared Live, RapidSOS, Zetron call-taking equipment, KOVA logging recorder, and Zetron Max radio system. PSTs expressed a desire for integrated emergency and administrative phone systems.

**Call Handling:** Calls are dispatched by PSTs, who also transfer errant calls. They manage multiple services, including police, fire, EMS, and public works. Advanced Life Support (ALS) dispatch is handled through MEDCOM. EMS directions follow New Jersey's Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) Guidecards.

**Staffing:** Comprises eight full-time telecommunicators working 12-hour shifts, with initial training lasting three months. Staff reported high job satisfaction and see no need for consolidation.

**General Comments:** The lack of an Incident Command System (ICS) led to some duplication of effort, but staff turnover is low, indicating stability.

## 5.2 Egg Harbor Township PSAP

**Facility:** The PSAP is located in the police headquarters, featuring eight consoles, including one for a supervisor. The room is cramped and cannot accommodate future growth.

**Equipment:** Uses ProPhoenix CAD, Zetron MAX, and additional radio systems, with compatibility issues due to previous mergers.

**Call Handling:** PSTs manage calls collectively, leading to inconsistencies in procedures for different fire departments. Delays in EMS responses were reported, attributed to staffing shortages.

**Staffing:** Staff raised concerns about salaries and benefits, especially following recent consolidations that increased the workload without corresponding staffing increases.

**General Comments:** The lack of an impact study prior to expansions has strained resources. Planning and impact studies are crucial for accommodating future growth.

### 5.3 Hammonton PSAP

**Facility:** Located within the municipal building, entry is through a secure door. The dispatch area is small, limiting the capacity during busy periods.

**Equipment:** Utilizes ProPhoenix CAD; a new Zetron radio system is forthcoming.

**Call Handling:** 9-1-1 calls are manually logged before entering CAD. Medical emergencies are quickly transferred to MEDCOM. The police department responds to all fire and medical incidents.

**Staffing:** Staffing is often limited, with only one PST on duty during interviews, necessitating police assistance when busy.

**General Comments:** Staffing concerns regarding qualifications were raised, highlighting the importance of proper training for police officers covering PST duties.

### 5.4 Ventnor PSAP

**Facility:** Located on the second floor of city hall, access is via a secure elevator. It dispatches police, fire, and EMS services.

**Equipment:** Employs Enforsys CAD and Zetron call-taking equipment.

**Call Handling:** 9-1-1 calls are dispatched promptly, with fire department responses covering all medical calls. Mutual aid requests are often communicated by phone due to communication system limitations.

**Staffing:** Typically, at least two PSTs are on duty, except for two overnight shifts.

**General Comments:** Staff expressed satisfaction with the current system, showing no interest in consolidation.

### 5.5 Gloucester County PSAP

**Facility:** Handles 9-1-1 calls for Gloucester County and parts of Atlantic County. Compatibility issues exist between Harris and Motorola radio systems.

**Equipment:** Uses ProPhoenix CAD but lacks a Records Management System (RMS).

**Call Handling:** 9-1-1 calls are verified and dispatched accordingly. Multi-agency communication challenges were noted.

**General Comments:** Atlantic County agencies expressed dissatisfaction with Gloucester's handling of their calls and the lack of a formal communication path/process between the PSAP and the Atlantic County agencies. Regular meetings between Gloucester County Communications and the jurisdictions in Atlantic County receiving dispatching services are planned as of the drafting of this report. Gloucester County Director stated that these meetings will *"be of mutual benefit as it allows all stakeholders opportunity to discuss operational and, as necessary, administrative matters that are of interest or concern."*

## 5.6 Potential Centralized Fire Dispatch Center: Assessment of the Canale Fire Training Center

### Overview

An interview with Architect Tom Sykes provided insights into the feasibility of utilizing the Canale Fire Training Center as a site for a centralized fire dispatch center. Sykes, whose firm was responsible for the original design of the facility, outlined key considerations and challenges related to its use and expansion.

The assessment of the Canale Fire Training Center as a potential centralized dispatch site reveals both opportunities and significant challenges. Regulatory constraints, operational needs, and infrastructure requirements must be thoroughly evaluated before proceeding with any plans for conversion or expansion.

The Canale Center could serve as a temporary location for a start-up countywide Fire/EMS communications center. The facility includes a fortified EOC area that could be retrofitted to support the center's operations. While this space would require modifications and may compromise long-term suitability and sustainability, it presents a practical and feasible option for a temporary setup. Regarding the Canale Fire Training Facility, it is structurally sound, but expanding its footprint is restricted by county codes. Adding a second floor to the central core area would be costly, and the existing metal roof is not sustainable for long-term use. Additionally, while the facility has become a centralized training hub for law enforcement, its age and limitations in space and infrastructure make it less suitable for expanding into a countywide dispatch center.

Overall, none of the current facilities, including the Canale Fire Training Facility, appear fully suitable for expansion or enhancement into a centralized countywide fire and EMS dispatch center. Each facility has unique limitations—whether it be space, staffing, technological compatibility, or training infrastructure—that could hinder the effectiveness of a consolidated operation. A thorough assessment of potential new locations or significant renovations to existing facilities, along with comprehensive planning and stakeholder engagement, will be essential to establish a more robust and efficient dispatch system for the region.

## Key Findings

**Background and Initial Assessment:** Sykes received structural drawings from 1991 and noted that the facility is landlocked due to environmental and zoning constraints. Regulatory programs, particularly in the Pinelands and under Green Acres, have historically limited development options.

Collaboration with original structural engineer Butch Zare and Mike Fedorko revealed that significant expansion would require costly interior structural modifications and geotechnical testing.

**Operational Concerns:** The facility has busy conference and meeting rooms, raising concerns about operational impacts if these spaces were repurposed.

Nearby firehouse facilities were evaluated but deemed unsuitable for their current mission.

**Structural and Site Considerations:** The building features a steel and masonry support structure, though rebar is not uniformly distributed.

Concerns regarding the roof and foundation integrity were noted, alongside the potential need for new electrical and mechanical systems.

Zoning restrictions governed by the Coastal Area Facilities Review Act and Green Acres could complicate any expansion efforts.

**Environmental and Utility Factors:** The site benefits from proximity to major roadways but faces constraints due to its classification as a restricted growth area.

Current utility provisions are limited; the site was initially built without a central sewer utility, and current capabilities for gas, water, and electricity should be assessed.

Consideration of communications infrastructure, including fiber and radio data, is necessary.

**Broader Context and Previous Efforts:** Sykes has experience working on centralized facilities for police and fire services, noting that previous projects in the county were halted due to cost and political factors.

The county has an in-house architect and civil engineering team, and a dedicated Atlantic County Improvement Authority facilitates construction projects, indicating a collaborative approach to future developments.

## 5.7 Technology Needs

The establishment or enhancement of the Atlantic County Fire/EMS Countywide Dispatch Center will require a comprehensive modernization of its technology infrastructure to ensure efficient, reliable, and responsive emergency communications. At the core of these upgrades, a next-

generation Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system will be essential to manage emergency call intake, resource allocation, and real-time incident tracking. This system should be seamlessly integrated with a Fire and EMS Records Management System (RMS) to ensure proper documentation, reporting, and post-incident analysis.

The 9-1-1 telephony system, along with administrative phone lines, must be upgraded to NG9-1-1 capabilities, allowing for advanced data integration, including text-to-911, multimedia messaging, and location-based services. Additionally, an enhanced logging recorder system is critical for compliance, quality assurance, and incident reviews—capturing not only voice traffic but also CAD data, radio transmissions, and digital communication logs. The radio system must also be robust and interoperable, ensuring seamless communication between agencies, mutual aid partners, and first responders in the field.

## 5.8 Emerging and Future Technologies

As emergency communication centers face increasing demands, artificial intelligence (AI) and automation are emerging as critical tools to support and enhance dispatch operations. AI-driven call-handling prompts can assist dispatchers by analyzing spoken language in real-time, suggesting response protocols, and automatically verifying critical caller information. This technology helps reduce call-processing time and enhances situational awareness, ensuring the most effective response.

AI can also play a transformative role in quality assurance (QA), automating call reviews to ensure compliance with protocols, identifying training opportunities, and streamlining dispatcher feedback. These systems can analyze thousands of calls efficiently, flagging issues such as incorrect triage decisions, delayed dispatches, or procedural inconsistencies—leading to continuous operational improvement.

Additionally, AI-supported non-emergency call handling and triage can alleviate workload pressures by managing low-priority or informational calls, such as medical advice inquiries, road hazard reports, or fire safety concerns. AI-powered virtual assistants can provide automated status updates, answer frequently asked questions, and direct callers to self-service options, allowing human dispatchers to prioritize critical emergencies.

Looking ahead, predictive analytics and machine learning may enhance resource allocation and incident forecasting, identifying high-risk areas based on historical data, weather conditions, and ongoing emergencies. Automated vehicle location (AVL) tracking, drone-assisted incident assessment, and real-time data sharing across emergency services will further optimize response times and improve coordination.

By integrating these next-generation technologies, the Atlantic County Fire/EMS Countywide Dispatch Center can significantly enhance service delivery, reduce dispatcher workload, and improve overall emergency response efficiency. These advancements will ensure that the center remains at the forefront of modern public safety communications, ready to meet both current and future challenges.

## 5.9 Preparing for NG9-1-1 in Atlantic County

The transition to NG9-1-1 is essential for Atlantic County's Fire/EMS Countywide Dispatch Center to enhance emergency response capabilities and meet evolving public safety needs. NG9-1-1 enables the receipt and processing of multimedia communications, including text-to-911, images, video, and real-time location data, improving situational awareness and emergency response. To prepare for this transition, Atlantic County must focus on network infrastructure upgrades, interoperability planning, and staff training to effectively implement and utilize NG9-1-1 features.

One of the key steps in preparation is to ensure that the Emergency Services IP Network (ESInet) is in place and capable of routing NG9-1-1 calls efficiently. This requires collaboration with regional and state authorities, telecommunications providers, and NG9-1-1 service vendors. Additionally, updating the 9-1-1 telephony system and integrating it with GIS-based call routing will allow dispatchers to access the most accurate, real-time caller location data—critical for both urban and rural response scenarios.

## 5.10 Overcoming Funding Hurdles

One of the most significant barriers to implementing NG9-1-1 in Atlantic County is funding constraints, particularly given the limitations of financial support from the State of New Jersey. Currently, New Jersey collects 9-1-1 surcharges on phone bills to fund emergency communications; however, much of this revenue is redirected to non-9-1-1 programs, leaving local PSAPs responsible for funding their own technology upgrades. This has created a financial burden on counties and municipalities, making it difficult to modernize aging infrastructure.

To address these funding challenges, Atlantic County may need to explore alternative financial strategies, including:

- **State and Federal Grants:** Seeking federal funding through programs such as the 911 Grant Program, administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), can provide financial support for NG9-1-1 implementation.
- **Regional Partnerships:** Coordinating with neighboring counties to form shared service agreements can reduce costs by consolidating infrastructure and resources.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Partnering with vendors or telecom providers may offer cost-sharing opportunities for technology upgrades.
- **Local Funding Initiatives:** Identifying opportunities within county budgets or municipal funding mechanisms can help support critical infrastructure investments.

## 5.11 Limitations of Current PSAPs

Many legacy PSAPs (Public Safety Answering Points) in New Jersey, including those in Atlantic County, operate on outdated infrastructure that is incompatible with NG9-1-1 capabilities. Traditional analog 9-1-1 systems rely on circuit-switched networks, which limit the ability to process modern emergency communications such as text messages, video, and real-time medical data from wearable devices. Additionally, inconsistent GIS data, lack of interoperability between PSAPs, and limited cybersecurity protections make these systems vulnerable to delays, errors, and cyber threats.

Transitioning to NG9-1-1 will require overcoming these limitations by implementing IP-based call routing, integrating GIS data for location accuracy, enhancing cybersecurity measures, and ensuring seamless interoperability across agencies. While the path to NG9-1-1 is complex, careful planning, collaboration, and proactive funding strategies will position Atlantic County to deliver more effective and resilient emergency communications in the years to come.

## 5.12 Scalability of the Atlantic County Fire/EMS Dispatch Center

The projected staffing and space requirements for the Atlantic County Fire/EMS Dispatch Center are based on industry-standard calculations for call volume, incident response, and administrative support. However, the center must be designed to scale efficiently depending on how many agencies participate at the launch and how many may join in the future.

### 5.12.1 Initial Implementation and Growth Strategy

To ensure a cost-effective and adaptable rollout, the center should follow a tiered implementation model:

- **Phase 1:** Core Operations – Launch with a baseline number of dispatch positions and personnel based on committed agency participation. Staffing and infrastructure should support immediate needs while allowing for expansion.
- **Phase 2:** Gradual Expansion – As additional fire/EMS agencies opt in, the center must be capable of adding workstations, dispatchers, IT infrastructure, and radio channels without disrupting operations.
- **Phase 3:** Long-Term Scalability – Future-proofing the facility with pre-configured workspace, expandable CAD/RMS integrations, and redundant network capacity ensures seamless onboarding of new agencies.

### 5.12.2 Facility and Technology Scalability

**Workstations and Physical Space** – The dispatch floor should be designed to accommodate modular workstations that can be activated as demand increases. Dedicated training or backup stations can be converted into operational positions as needed.

**CAD/RMS and Data Infrastructure** – The system should support multi-agency configurations, allowing new departments to be onboarded with minimal downtime. Cloud-based or hybrid CAD solutions provide flexible deployment.

**Radio and Telephony Expansion** – Additional radio talkgroups, IP-based 9-1-1 telephony, and NG9-1-1 call routing should be planned for incremental growth.

**Staffing and Scheduling** – Hiring and training should align with projected increases in call volume, ensuring the center remains adequately staffed without overextending resources.

### 5.12.3 Future Considerations for Law Enforcement Dispatch

While the center is focused on fire and EMS, the design should allow for potential law enforcement integration in the future. This may require secure radio channels, CJIS-compliant data access, and enhanced CAD/RMS features for police-specific dispatch needs. However, these additions should be structured so they do not impact fire/EMS service delivery and can be implemented only if a separate law enforcement dispatch function is formally established.

## 6. LONG-TERM FACILITIES PLAN

A Long-Term Facilities Plan evaluates the feasibility of establishing a countywide Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) versus maintaining regional centers in Atlantic County. The plan would encompass an assessment of existing facilities, a proposed capital improvement strategy, and a cost analysis for constructing a high-security data center. However, this plan would be an interim plan until the Atlantic County decides on whether to utilize the existing regional centers or establish a new center.

### 6.1 Current Facilities Assessment

#### 6.1.1 Methodology

Data was collected through site visits, interviews, and observations at various PSAPs. Stakeholders, including PSAP directors, call takers, dispatchers, and response agency representatives, participated in individual interviews and focus groups. However, overall participation was limited, with only 36 percent of PSAPs engaging fully.

#### 6.1.2 Common Themes Identified

**Space Limitations:** Most facilities are cramped, restricting future growth and operational efficiency. Many lack adequate backup areas, which could hinder operations during emergencies.

**Staffing Challenges:** Across facilities, staffing shortages and concerns about workload were prevalent. Many PSAPs reported that existing staff felt overburdened, especially following consolidations that increased responsibilities without corresponding increases in personnel.

**Technological Compatibility:** Several facilities experience issues with outdated or incompatible equipment, which complicates communication and coordination among agencies. The need for modernized systems is crucial for efficient operations.

**Satisfaction and Resistance to Change:** While staff in some PSAPs expressed satisfaction with their current systems and a preference for local control, this sentiment may conflict with the broader goal of a unified approach. Resistance to consolidation was noted, particularly in facilities where personalized service is valued.

**Training Gaps:** There is a recognized need for improved training protocols, especially as some staff take on multiple roles. Current training does not consistently meet the needs of evolving emergency response requirements.

## 6.2 Benefits and Challenges of a Countywide Center Versus Regional Centers

Transitioning to a more efficient emergency dispatch system in Atlantic County necessitates a thorough examination of both centralized and regional operational models. Significant investment in infrastructure and technology, along with robust stakeholder engagement, will be essential for enhancing public safety response and optimizing resource management.

### 6.2.1 Benefits of a Countywide Center

**Efficiency:** A centralized operation could streamline processes, reduce redundancies, and improve response times due to improved technology, updated policies and procedures, and use of protocols and ICS

**Standardization:** Adopting uniform protocols improves service delivery and supports consistent, high-quality training across all teams.

**Resource Allocation:** Implementing a centralized management structure can enhance resource distribution efficiency and drive cost savings

### 6.2.2 Challenges of a Countywide Center

**High Initial Costs:** Building a new facility demands significant capital investment, impacting budgets and funding allocation

**Transition Difficulties:** Shifting to a centralized model may encounter resistance from local agencies and staff, creating potential hurdles in operational alignment

**Geographic Considerations:** A single central location may not provide equitable access to all communities potentially, affecting response times and efficiencies.

### 6.2.3 Benefits of Regional Centers

**Local Control:** Maintaining operational autonomy enables agencies to maintain established relationships and tailor response strategies to community needs

**Reduced Transition Risk:** Retaining existing systems minimizes disruptions and facilitates a smoother integration process."

**Tailored Services:** Regional centers can customize their operations to better meet the agency and local needs.

## 6.2.4 Challenges of Regional Centers

**Fragmentation:** Operating Multiple centers can lead to inconsistencies in service delivery and reduce overall efficiency. Multiple centers with multiple radio systems and procedures create operational silos which effects command and control, situational awareness, and common operating picture. Some consequences from lack of situational awareness and common operating picture are fragmented information, poor information flow and ineffective coordination.

**Increased Operational Costs:** Duplication of resources across centers may result in higher overall expenses.

**Communication Barriers:** Operating Multiple centers can lead to inconsistencies in service delivery and reduce overall efficiency. Multiple centers with multiple radio systems and procedures create operational silos which effects command and control, situational awareness, and common operating picture. Some consequences from lack of situational awareness and common operating picture are fragmented information, poor information flow and ineffective coordination.

## 6.3 Proposed Facilities Strategy

**Conduct a Detailed Feasibility Study:** Engage public safety architectural firm(s) to work with ADCOMM to assess potential sites for a countywide center or renovations to existing facilities, including threats and vulnerabilities of potential site(s). Public Safety architects know the Standards and laws that govern Communication and data centers, which are different than a standard office building.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** Facilitate discussions with local agencies and public safety officials to gauge support and address concerns about consolidation.

**Funding and Grants:** Explore state and federal funding opportunities to support infrastructure development and operational costs.

**Reach a consensus agreement** on whether to build a new center, renovate an existing building or consolidate into the existing regional centers.

## 6.4 Recommendations

**Assess Potential New Locations:** Identify suitable sites for a countywide PSAP that meet technological and spatial requirements.

**Pilot Program for Regional Centers:** Initiate a pilot project to establish a model for how regional centers could operate cohesively, leveraging technology for improved communication and resource sharing.

**Infrastructure Upgrades:** Prioritize technological enhancements to existing PSAPs to improve service delivery while a decision regarding a centralized facility is finalized.

## 7. GRANT PROGRAMS

By leveraging these strategies, a new dispatch-only center or secondary PSAP can identify and secure alternative funding sources to support its establishment and operations.

### 7.1 Federal Grant Programs

**Administered by:** The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

**Purpose:** Funds improvements to 9-1-1 infrastructure, including enhancements for NG9-1-1 technology and operations.

**Eligibility:** PSAPs and state agencies can apply for grants for technology upgrades, NG9-1-1 transition, and cybersecurity measures.

### 7.2 State of New Jersey 9-1-1 System and Emergency Response Trust Fund Account (Surcharge)

**Administered by:** New Jersey Office of Emergency Telecommunications Services (NJOETS).

**Purpose:** Supports state and local PSAPs in transitioning to NG9-1-1, as well as training, equipment, and infrastructure improvements.

**Challenges:** While the fund is meant for 9-1-1 system improvements, there have been historical issues with fund allocation, so direct applications and advocacy may be needed to secure these resources.

### 7.3 Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP)

**Administered by:** The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

**Purpose:** Provides funding for emergency preparedness, response, and resilience, including emergency communications and interoperable technology.

**Eligibility:** State, county, and local government entities, including regional PSAPs, can apply for HSGP funds for communications infrastructure and resiliency projects.

### 7.4 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program

**Administered by:** FEMA.

**Purpose:** Primarily aimed at fire departments and EMS but includes a component for communication and dispatch systems that directly support firefighting and EMS operations.

**Eligibility:** PSAPs involved in fire/EMS dispatch can use AFG grants for CAD systems, radio interoperability, and other critical dispatch technology.

## 7.5 Statewide Interoperability Communications Grants

**Administered by:** NJOETS and the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness.

**Purpose:** Funding for improving interoperable communications infrastructure, particularly CAD-to-CAD systems, radio interoperability, and NG9-1-1 implementation.

**Eligibility:** County and regional PSAPs looking to improve inter-agency communication and create shared systems across jurisdictions.

## 7.6 Public Safety Communications Research (PSCR) Grant Program

**Administered by:** The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

**Purpose:** Supports research and development in emergency communications technology, such as CAD-to-CAD interoperability, NG9-1-1, and cybersecurity enhancements.

**Eligibility:** While research-focused, PSAPs in partnership with research institutions can apply for grants to pilot new technologies or develop innovative solutions for PSAP operations.

## 7.7 Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

**Administered by:** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

**Purpose:** Generally used for broader community needs, but funds can be allocated for critical public safety infrastructure, especially if serving low-to-moderate-income communities.

**Eligibility:** Municipalities and counties can apply for CDBG funds to help cover dispatch center improvements as part of community resilience and safety initiatives.

## 7.8 Local and State Capital Improvement Funds

**Administered by:** State and local governments.

**Purpose:** Funding for large infrastructure projects, including PSAP renovations, technology upgrades, and new facility construction.

**Eligibility:** Counties can allocate capital improvement funds, especially for consolidation efforts that reduce long-term operating costs and increase efficiency.

## 7.9 Private and Non-Profit Grants

**Examples:** Motorola Solutions Foundation, local foundations, and non-profits focused on public safety and community resilience.

**Purpose:** Funding support for technological advancements, training, and other PSAP-related projects.

**Eligibility:** PSAPs may apply for private grants for specialized equipment, training programs, and pilot technology projects.

## 7.10 Strategic Approaches for Funding

To maximize funding, Atlantic County PSAPs should consider a **comprehensive grant application strategy** that includes federal, state, and private sources, especially for NG9-1-1, CAD systems, and training programs. By pursuing these sources, PSAPs can advance their consolidation efforts, enhance interoperability, and ensure sustainable operations through modernized, resilient infrastructure.

In New Jersey, the 9-1-1 System and Emergency Response Fee is primarily allocated to Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), which are the initial points of contact for emergency calls. Public Safety Dispatch Points (PSDPs) or secondary PSAPs, which handle dispatching services after the initial call is received, typically do not receive direct funding from this surcharge.

To secure funding for a new dispatch-only center or secondary PSAP, consider the following strategies:

**Collaborate with Primary PSAPs:** Establish partnerships with existing PSAPs to share resources and funding. By integrating services or forming consortia, secondary centers may access a portion of the funds allocated to primary PSAPs.

**Seek State Grants and Programs:** Explore state-level grants specifically designed for enhancing emergency communication services. For instance, New Jersey has initiated programs like the Public Safety Answering Point Grant Program, which provides funding for upgrades and consolidation efforts.

**Pursue Federal Funding Opportunities:** Apply for federal grants aimed at improving emergency response infrastructure, such as the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) or the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP).

**Implement Shared Services Agreements:** Collaborate with neighboring municipalities or counties to share dispatch services. This approach can lead to cost-sharing arrangements and potential access to combined funding resources.

**Engage in Advocacy and Legislative Efforts:** Work with state legislators to advocate for policy changes that allow a portion of the 9-1-1 surcharge funds to be allocated to secondary PSAPs or dispatch centers, recognizing their critical role in emergency response.

**Utilize Local Funding Mechanisms:** While New Jersey restricts local option sales taxes, counties can explore other funding avenues such as general obligation bonds, public safety fees, or capital improvement programs to finance dispatch center operations.

## 8. FINANCIAL AND LONG-TERM CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The operational and financial frameworks supporting Atlantic County's fire and EMS dispatch services are rooted in a series of shared services agreements, budget allocations, and union contracts. These agreements play a crucial role in maintaining efficient, reliable emergency communication services across the County's municipalities. This section provides an in-depth overview of these elements, including the budgets of individual PSAPs, the structure of their shared services agreements, and the terms outlined in their union contracts.

Each municipality in Atlantic County operates under unique financial and organizational structures, which include varying contract values, service terms, and union agreements. The agreements not only allocate resources effectively but also provide standardized conditions for employees and agencies, ensuring consistent service quality and operational continuity. Additionally, CPI-based adjustments and technology upgrades embedded in these agreements demonstrate a commitment to adapting to the evolving demands of emergency response. Together, these frameworks establish a foundation for potential consolidation efforts, offering a path toward streamlined and unified dispatch operations that improve response efficiency and resource management across Atlantic County.

### 8.1 Atlantic County PSAPs Budget Information, Shared Services Agreements, and Union Contracts

This study compiles budget allocations, union agreements, and inter-municipal service contracts guiding fire and EMS dispatch across Atlantic County. The agreements emphasize shared resources, quality assurance, and operational continuity, with union agreements providing clear employee conditions and job security essential to effective emergency response services.

#### Margate City

**Fire Services Budget (2024):** \$4,526,000 covering salaries, benefits, and other operating expenses.

**Equipment Allocation:** \$55,500 set for upgrades and maintenance of firefighting and emergency response gear.

**Facility and Apparatus:** \$2,320,000 reserved through 2029 for facility and equipment maintenance, ensuring safety and operational compliance.

**Union Agreement:** Communications Operators Union Agreement effective from 1/2022 to 12/2025, covering:

**Salaries and Benefits:** Defined pay scales with annual raises, overtime, holiday pay, health insurance, pension plans, and paid leave.

**Work Conditions:** Guidelines for workplace standards, grievance resolution, and employee protections.

**Organizational Structure:** Director of Public Safety: Catherine Horn; Fire Chief: Dan Adams; Administrative Staff: Deputy Fire Chief Patrick Armstrong, plus additional support roles; Four Platoons: Each led by a Captain and Lieutenant, with seven firefighters per platoon for 24/7 coverage.

## Egg Harbor Township

**Shared Dispatch Agreement:** Joint police, fire, and EMS dispatch services from 1/2022 to 12/2026.

**Contract Value:** \$2,060,071, with quarterly payments.

**Service Standards:** Adheres to Quality Assurance Review Standards, with a 6-month notice for any service changes or termination.

## Linwood City

**Shared Dispatch Agreement:** Matches Egg Harbor Township's terms, covering police, fire, and EMS dispatch from 11/2021 to 12/2026.

**Contract Value:** \$2,345,562.

## Somers Point City

**EMS Response Agreement:** Egg Harbor Township provides EMS dispatch service per agreement from 1/2019 to 12/2028.

**Dispatch Services Agreement Contract Value:** \$42,000 annually, adjusted for inflation.

**Termination Clause:** 6-month notice required.

## Longport Borough

**Dispatch Services Agreement:** Includes emergency and non-emergency dispatch services from 1/2023 to 12/2025.

**Contract Value:** \$913,436, with quarterly payments.

**Service Terms:** Standards aligned with Linwood's agreement.

## Pleasantville City

**Dispatch Services Agreement:** Covers dispatch services from 7/2019 to 12/2023.

**Contract Value:** 2023 contract \$509,740, with quarterly payments.

**Service Terms:** Like Linwood's standards.

## Gloucester County

**Buena Vista Township Agreement:** Provides police, fire, and EMS services from 6/2021 to 4/2031.

**Contract Value:** \$74,301.04 for the initial year, adjusted annually.

**Payment Terms:** Quarterly payments, covering call-taking, dispatch, records management, and data sharing.

## Hammonton

**Government Workers Union Agreement:** Covers full- and part-time employees from 1/2022 to 12/2025, including:

**Compensation and Benefits:** Salary, health and retirement benefits, working hours, and job security.

## Galloway Township

**Shared Services with Absecon:** For police, fire, and EMS services from 9/2021 to 12/2024.

**Contract Value:** \$1,424,257 (quarterly payments).

**Technology Upgrade:** CAD system enhancements to improve dispatch efficiency.

**Shared Services with Mullica Township:** Agreement active from 1/2022 to 12/2026.

**Contract Value:** \$225,438 for the first year, adjusted annually.

**CAD Maintenance Fee:** \$3,100 per year.

**Termination Clause:** 3-month notice required.

**Union Agreements:** Teamsters Local 331 (Police Communications): Active from 1/2023 to 12/2025, covering working conditions, compensation, benefits, and dispute resolution.

| CONTRACT PARTIES                                     | CONTRACT VALUE (\$)       | NOTES  |
|--|---------------------------|--|
| Margate City – Fire Services                         | 4,526,000                 | Includes salaries, benefits, and other expenses                  |
| Egg Harbor Township – Shared Services Agreement      | 2,060,071                 | Quarterly payments; 6-month notice for termination               |
| Linwood City – Shared Services Agreement             | 2,345,562                 | Quarterly payments; similar terms as Egg Harbor                  |
| Somers Point City – EMS Dispatch Agreement           | 42,000<br>(annually)      | Adjusted annually by CPI-U                                       |
| Longport Borough – Shared Services Agreement         | 913,436                   | Quarterly payments; similar terms as Linwood                     |
| Pleasantville City – Shared Services Agreement       | 2,168,199                 | Quarterly payments; similar terms as Linwood                     |
| Gloucester County – Buena Vista Township Agreement   | 74,301.04<br>(first year) | Quarterly payments; annual increases based on CPI-U              |
| Galloway Township – Absecon Shared Services          | 1,424,257                 | Quarterly payments; CAD system upgrade commitment                |
| Galloway Township – Mullica Township Shared Services | 225,438<br>(first year)   | CPI-U based adjustments; CAD maintenance fee of \$3,100 annually |

## 8.2 Key Service Terms Summary

The shared services and union agreements across Atlantic County’s municipalities provide a foundational framework for potential consolidation of fire and EMS dispatch services. These agreements reflect a commitment to consistent quality standards, resource-sharing, and financial predictability, which are essential for streamlined countywide dispatch operations. The union agreements ensure standardized employee conditions and job security, which can support workforce stability during any transition to consolidated services. Furthermore, provisions for CPI-based adjustments and technology upgrades, as seen in the agreements with Somers Point City and Galloway Township, demonstrate an adaptability to evolving service demands, a crucial factor for integrated dispatch solutions. Collectively, these agreements underscore the viability of a unified dispatch model that can enhance response efficiency, reduce redundancy, and improve coordination during major incidents, strengthening emergency service outcomes across Atlantic County.

**Quality Assurance Standards:** Contracts, especially in Egg Harbor Township, require adherence to Quality Assurance Review Standards to maintain service quality.

**Termination Notice:** Most agreements require advance notice for termination or modification (e.g., 6-months for Egg Harbor and Somers Point).

**Quarterly Payments:** Contracts such as Pleasantville City and Longport Borough specify quarterly payments.

**Coordination and Technology Upgrades:** Agreements like Galloway Township's contract with Absecon include provisions for upgrading CAD systems to enhance dispatch response.

### 8.3 Contracts with CPI-Based Adjustments

**Somers Point City - EMS Agreement:** Annual adjustments based on CPI-U.

**Gloucester County with Buena Vista Township:** Yearly increases based on CPI-U

**Galloway Township with Mullica Township:** First-year contract value with annual CPI-U adjustments.

## 9. BILLING EXAMINATION

Selecting an appropriate funding model for enhancing or consolidating PSAP services in Atlantic County requires careful consideration of local needs, financial capacities, and stakeholder support. A combination of the above methods, tailored to the county's unique context, may offer the most sustainable solution. Engaging with finance experts and legal counsel will be crucial in developing and implementing the chosen model after a decision is made for enhanced regional centers or full consolidation.

The current billing models in Atlantic County for 9-1-1 and dispatch are service contracts. Each regional center has service agreements with municipalities outside of their municipal boundaries to provide 9-1-1 call handling and/or dispatching services. These agreements are detailed in Section 8. These billing agreements are not sustainable because they are not (or do not appear to be) based on thorough impact studies that determine the staffing, technology, space, and administrative needs for both the PSAPs and the served agencies. These billing agreements therefore are not viable to support a future enhanced regional relationship between PSAPs and agencies, nor for a future full consolidation of services.

When considering the creation of a countywide Fire/EMS Secondary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) in Atlantic County, NJ, it's essential to evaluate sustainable funding models. Below are potential approaches, including examples from other New Jersey counties:

**County General Purpose Tax:** Allocate funds from the county's general tax revenue to cover PSAP operational and capital expenses.

**Pros:** Simplifies funding by utilizing existing tax structures and Ensures consistent funding without additional levies.

**Cons:** May require reallocating funds from other county services and Could face public resistance if perceived as diverting resources.

**Example:** Sussex County received state grants to upgrade its PSAP infrastructure, supplementing local funding sources.

**Shared Services Agreements:** Municipalities collaborate to share PSAP services, distributing costs based on factors like call volume or population.

**Pros:** Promotes regional cooperation and cost-sharing and Can lead to standardized services across municipalities.

**Cons:** Requires complex intergovernmental agreements and Potential disparities in service expectations among municipalities.

**Example:** The Uniform Shared Services Consolidation Act (N.J.S.A. 40A:65-1 et seq.) facilitates such agreements in New Jersey.

**Dedicated 9-1-1 Surcharge:** Implement a county-level surcharge on phone lines to fund PSAP operations.

**Pros:** Directly links funding to 9-1-1 service usage and Provides a steady revenue stream.

**Cons:** Requires legislative approval and public support and May be regressive, impacting low-income residents more.

**Example:** New Jersey imposes a statewide 9-1-1 System and Emergency Response Fee, though fund allocation has faced scrutiny.

**Fire Services Levies:** Introduce a levy specifically for fire and emergency services, funding dispatch operations.

**Pros:** Ensures funds are earmarked for emergency services and Can be adjusted based on service needs.

**Cons:** May require voter approval and Adds to taxpayers' financial burden.

**Example:** Some New Jersey municipalities have established fire districts with taxing authority to fund services.

**Balanced Contribution Methods:** Combine multiple funding sources, such as general taxes, surcharges, and grants, to finance PSAPs.

**Pros:** Diversifies revenue streams, reducing reliance on a single source and Enhances financial stability and flexibility.

**Cons:** Complex to administer and track and Requires coordination among various funding bodies.

**Example:** Counties like Camden have utilized state grants alongside local funds for PSAP enhancements.

**Real Estate Value-Based Funding:** Assess fees based on property values, directing revenue to PSAP operations.

**Pros:** Aligns funding with property wealth, potentially easing the burden on lower-income residents and Provides a predictable revenue base.

**Cons:** May be viewed as inequitable by property owners and Fluctuations in property values can affect revenue stability.

**Example:** Some municipalities use property taxes to fund local services, though this approach is less common for PSAPs.

**Usage-Based Fees:** Charge municipalities based on their proportionate use of PSAP services, such as call volume or population served.

**Pros:** Ensures equitable cost distribution based on service demand and Encourages efficient use of resources.

**Cons:** Requires accurate tracking and reporting mechanisms and May lead to disputes over usage metrics.

**Example:** Some regional dispatch centers in New Jersey allocate costs to member municipalities based on call volume.

## 10. STAFFING EXAMINATION

The staffing analysis, combined with data from the survey responses and staffing tools referenced in Section 4.2, will provide the foundation for determining the optimal staffing levels necessary to operate a consolidated Fire/EMS dispatch center effectively. The goal is to ensure that staffing is sufficient to handle peak call volumes, meet industry standards, and maintain a high level of service across all emergency response agencies in Atlantic County.

**Examination of Current Staffing:** The current staffing levels at the thirteen PSAPs across Atlantic County vary depending on the agency's size and call volume. These staffing models are based on local operational needs and existing technology, but as the county moves toward a centralized Fire/EMS dispatch center, a reevaluation of staffing requirements will be necessary. Given the regional and local variations in service area and call volume, centralization will require adjustments to staff roles, coverage hours, and staffing levels to accommodate a larger, more complex system.

**Compensation Levels:** The compensation levels across the individual PSAPs are tailored to their specific service areas and union agreements. As part of the staffing examination for a centralized center, these compensation structures will need to be reviewed and standardized to ensure competitive salaries and benefits across the new, unified operation. This will also address potential differences between municipal and county government compensation scales to ensure that staff recruitment and retention efforts align with the centralized center's needs.

**Potential Union Issues:** Union agreements across various PSAPs in Atlantic County may present challenges if employees choose to transition to a centralized dispatch center. The centralization of services could require negotiations with existing unions to align staffing models, compensation, working conditions, and operational changes. These discussions will be crucial to ensure a smooth transition, maintain employee morale, and avoid labor disruptions during the consolidation process. New hires for a secondary Fire/EMS consolidated center will require the negotiation and execution of a collective bargaining agreement.

In New Jersey, telecommunicators (call takers and dispatchers) are represented by several unions and collective bargaining units that advocate for their rights, working conditions, and compensation. Below are some of the most prominent unions, along with descriptions of their roles and memberships. Additionally, there are organizations specifically supporting fire and EMS dispatchers:

1. **Communications Workers of America (CWA):** The CWA is a national labor union that represents workers in telecommunications, public safety, and other sectors. In New Jersey CWA District 1 represents approximately 70,000 workers in the state, including telecommunicators working in public safety roles. They focus on negotiating contracts, improving wages, and ensuring fair working conditions. Source: CWA District 1 Website.

2. **CWA Local 1037** represents over 10,000 workers across 400 public and private worksites, including public safety telecommunicators. Local chapters like 1037 provide direct support and advocacy for workplace issues. Source: CWA Local 1037 Website.
3. **New Jersey Firefighters Mutual Benevolent Association (NJ FMBA):** The New Jersey FMBA represents over 5,000 career firefighters, EMTs, and dispatchers across the state. While primarily focused on firefighter representation, the NJ FMBA also advocates for EMS personnel and public safety dispatchers, especially those tied to fire and EMS operations. They negotiate contracts, ensure health and safety standards, and provide legal support for their members. Source: NJ FMBA Website.
4. **International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF):** The IAFF is a national labor union that represents professional firefighters, paramedics, and EMS workers. In New Jersey, The Professional Emergency Medical Services Association of New Jersey (PEMSA-NJ) is an IAFF-affiliated organization specifically for EMS personnel, including EMS dispatchers. PEMSAs advocates for better working conditions, fair wages, and professional training standards. Source: PEMSAs-NJ (Local 4610) Website.

**Specialized Representation for Fire and EMS Dispatchers:** While there is no single union specifically dedicated to fire and EMS call takers and dispatchers, organizations like the NJ FMBA and IAFF (via PEMSAs) include these roles in their representation. These unions focus on issues specific to EMS and fire dispatch operations, such as stress management, fair scheduling, and training.

**General Union Resources:** To find a comprehensive list of unions and collective bargaining units available in New Jersey, the New Jersey State AFL-CIO Directory is a valuable resource. It includes contact information and descriptions of unions active in the state, making it a useful tool for telecommunicators looking for representation. Source: New Jersey State AFL-CIO Directory.

**Potential Civil Service Issues:** Given that many of the current PSAPs in Atlantic County are operated under civil service rules, the consolidation may raise civil service-related concerns. These issues could include the reclassification of existing positions, changes to promotion processes, and the integration of civil service standards across all staff members in the centralized center. A thorough review of civil service rules and regulations will be required to ensure that the transition is legally compliant, and that existing staff are appropriately integrated into the new staffing model.

**Proposed Staffing Model:** The proposed staffing model for the new Fire/EMS centralized dispatch center will require a minimum of 4 - 6 operational positions (consoles) to meet industry standards for 24/7 coverage. As per staffing best practices, each fixed post position will require a minimum of six personnel, including supervisors, technical support staff (e.g., CAD technicians, GIS specialists), and clerical staff. In total, the centralized center will need approximately 36 staff members, including telecommunicators, supervisors, and technical support roles, to ensure continuous operation and adequate coverage. Staffing will also need to account for changing or varying shift hours, employee leave, and other operational requirements such as training.

This staffing model is designed to align with national standards, such as NFPA 1221, and best practices outlined by organizations like NENA and APCO. It ensures that the new center is adequately staffed to handle the increased volume of calls, coordination of emergency services, and the demands of operating a centralized facility.

## 11. TECHNOLOGY EXAMINATION – DISPATCH AND 9-1-1 SERVICES

**Adequacy of Current Equipment:** The current technologies and systems in use across the regional and individual Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in Atlantic County, including CAD systems, logging recorders, and other peripheral systems, are sufficient for their current operational needs. These systems are tailored to support each individual PSAP's current scale and service area, providing reliable functionality for dispatch and emergency response services at the local level.

**Need for Expansion of Equipment:** However, as the county moves toward the creation of a centralized Fire/EMS dispatch and 9-1-1 call center, these systems will require significant upgrades, expansions, or even complete replacements to meet the demands of a larger, more complex operational structure. A countywide centralized facility will need to accommodate a higher volume of calls, manage a larger geographic area, and support more fire and EMS agencies. As a result, current technologies will need to be scaled up to ensure seamless operation, integration, and coordination across all services. If the existing/legacy systems cannot be expanded to support a countywide Fire/EMS dispatch operation, then new systems will need to be purchased, implemented, and interfaced with the legacy systems to allow for voice and data interoperability, situational awareness, and service efficiencies.

**Future Technology Needs and Associated Costs:** To effectively support the centralization of dispatch operations, new or expanded technologies will be required. This includes upgrading or new CAD system to improve functionality such as run orders and recommendations, which will help optimize response times and ensure fire and EMS agencies receive the most accurate and timely information. Additionally, the integration of peripheral systems such as logging recorders, GIS systems, and communication infrastructure will be crucial to ensure interoperability between regional dispatch centers and the centralized facility. These technology upgrades will come with associated costs, including both hardware and software investments, as well as potential ongoing maintenance and training expenses.

**Examination of 9-1-1 Equipment, Technology, and Services:** The examination of current 9-1-1 equipment and services reveal that while the existing infrastructure supports the individual PSAPs effectively, it is not equipped to manage the increased demands of a consolidated system. Expanding and upgrading the 9-1-1 infrastructure will be necessary to ensure reliable service across the county, with particular attention paid to call routing, data sharing, and emergency service coordination.

**Comparison of Centralized Versus Individual Call Centers:** When comparing the future technology and costs associated with a centralized call center versus maintaining individual PSAPs, the consolidation will require a larger upfront investment in technology, systems integration, and infrastructure upgrades. However, over time, a centralized system will provide operational efficiencies and cost savings by reducing duplication of systems, streamlining equipment and personnel needs, and enhancing coordination between emergency response

agencies. The transition to a countywide system will be complex and costly, but it offers significant long-term benefits in terms of improved response times, system interoperability, and resource allocation.

As detailed in the Options and Recommendations section of this report, the transition to a centralized Fire/EMS dispatch and secondary 9-1-1 call center will involve significant technological investments. The costs associated with expanding, upgrading, or replacing current systems to support countywide consolidation are outlined in the recommendations. These costs include the necessary upgrades to the current CAD systems, enhancements to run orders and recommendations functionality, and the integration of peripheral systems such as logging recorders and GIS mapping tools.

The Options and Recommendations section also provides a breakdown of the costs involved in transitioning from individual PSAPs to a centralized operation. While there will be initial higher expenditures for hardware, software, and infrastructure to accommodate the increased scale, the long-term cost savings from improved operational efficiency and system interoperability are anticipated. The centralization will reduce duplication of efforts and resources across individual centers, resulting in more effective use of county resources, better coordination among fire and EMS agencies, and improved service delivery to the public.

This cost analysis ensures that the proposed technological upgrades and consolidations align with the long-term goals for enhanced service delivery while remaining mindful of budget constraints. The future technology costs will be carefully managed to ensure that the benefits of centralization justify the initial investment and that the county is positioned for sustainable growth and efficiency in emergency response operations.

## 12. POTENTIAL ADDITION AND INTEGRATION OF COUNTY SERVICES

Atlantic County's consideration of a centralized or regional Fire and EMS dispatch center presents an opportunity to integrate additional county services. The secure and resilient design of a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) makes it an ideal facility to house other critical functions, enhancing operational efficiencies and sharing costs across multiple county departments.

### 12.1 Opportunities for Integration

**Data Center Services:** A data center integrated within the PSAP can centralize data storage and management for municipal and county agencies.

**Benefits:** Enhanced data security and streamlined access; Cost-sharing for infrastructure and maintenance; Scalability to meet growing data needs, including GIS and incident tracking.

**Secure Compartmentalized Information Facilities (SCIFs):** Including SCIFs can provide a secure environment for handling sensitive information.

**Benefits:** Compliance with federal and state security requirements; Protection of classified and sensitive data; Support for confidential operations and inter-agency collaboration.

**Emergency Operations Center (EOC):** Co-locating an EOC within the PSAP enhances crisis management and response capabilities.

**Benefits:** Centralized command for multi-agency operations; Immediate access to real-time dispatch and situational data; Improved coordination during emergencies.

**Public Health and Medical Operations Center:** A dedicated public health operations space can support response efforts during health emergencies.

**Benefits:** Centralized coordination with healthcare providers and EMS; Secure storage for medical supplies and resources; Integration with emergency response systems.

**Training and Development Facilities:** Including training facilities support continuous professional development for dispatchers and emergency personnel.

**Benefits:** On-site certification and simulation-based training; Enhanced preparedness and inter-agency collaboration; Potential revenue from external training programs.

**County IT and Cybersecurity Operations Center:** A central hub for IT services and cybersecurity monitoring ensures secure and efficient technology operations.

**Benefits:** Real-time defense against cyber threats; Centralized IT support for county and municipal systems; Improved disaster recovery and continuity planning.

**Transportation and Fleet Management Hub:** A centralized hub for vehicle maintenance and dispatching optimizes fleet operations.

**Benefits:** Shared maintenance facilities for emergency and non-emergency vehicles; Enhanced coordination of vehicle deployment during emergencies; Cost savings through reduced redundancy.

**Public Utilities Management Center:** A utilities management center supports real-time monitoring and response to infrastructure issues.

**Benefits:** Centralized oversight of water, power, and waste systems; Shared GIS tools for infrastructure mapping and maintenance; Improved coordination during utility disruptions.

**Community Emergency Shelter or Evacuation Hub:** Designing the PSAP to serve as an emergency shelter provides a secure location for displaced residents.

**Benefits:** Multi-purpose space for evacuation and sheltering; On-site resources for disaster recovery efforts; Use as a community event space during non-emergency periods.

**County Records and Archiving Center:** A secure, climate-controlled space for storing county records ensures their safety and accessibility.

**Benefits:** Protection of vital documents; Improved access to digital and physical records; Centralized management of public and emergency documents.

**Emergency Communications and Media Hub:** A media hub within the PSAP can serve as the central point for public communication during crises.

**Benefits:** Centralized press briefings and public information dissemination; Real-time updates through social media and public alerts; Enhanced transparency and public trust.

**Regional Economic Development and Planning Office:** Co-locating a regional planning office can enhance coordination of development projects.

**Benefits:** Collaborative planning for infrastructure and economic growth; Enhanced GIS support for planning and emergency services; Centralized management of long-term regional projects.

**Co-Working Space for Nonprofit and Community Organizations:** Providing co-working space for nonprofits can foster collaboration and support community-focused initiatives.

**Benefits:** Reduced operational costs for local nonprofits; Strengthened partnerships between public and private sectors; Expanded community outreach and service delivery.

## 12.2 Design and Construction Considerations

PSAP facilities are inherently designed to withstand extreme conditions, making them ideal for housing critical county functions. Key considerations include:

**Resilience:** Fortified structures and redundant systems ensure continuous operation during disasters.

**Scalability:** Flexible designs allow for future expansions and service integrations.

**Sustainability:** Energy-efficient systems reduce costs and have an environmental impact.

**Building Sustainable and Resilient 9-1-1 Facilities for Emergency Communications:** A modern 9-1-1 emergency communications center must be designed to provide uninterrupted service, even under the most challenging conditions. In Atlantic County, New Jersey—an area susceptible to hurricanes, flooding, severe storms, and potential man-made threats such as cyberattacks or physical sabotage—emergency facilities must prioritize sustainability and resilience. Designing redundancy, utility stability, and disaster preparedness is critical to ensuring public safety when emergencies strike.

### **Sustainability as a Foundational Principle - Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Integration:**

**Goal:** Minimize environmental impact while maintaining operational readiness.

Design facilities to use energy-efficient HVAC systems, LED lighting, and building materials that reduce energy consumption. Incorporate renewable energy systems, such as solar panels with battery storage, to provide a sustainable backup power source. Implement green building certifications such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) to ensure long-term operational cost savings and environmental compliance.

**Water Conservation:** Install low-flow plumbing fixtures and a rainwater harvesting system to ensure water availability during emergencies. Design drainage systems to manage stormwater runoff effectively, preventing flooding in and around the facility.

**Sustainable Materials and Construction:** Use durable, locally sourced, and sustainable materials that can withstand wear and tear, reducing the need for frequent repairs. Prioritize insulation and design features that optimize temperature control to reduce reliance on mechanical systems.

**Redundancy in Critical Utilities:** To ensure uninterrupted 9-1-1 operations, redundancy in all critical utilities must be integrated into the design.

## Power Redundancy:

**Primary Power:** A direct connection to a robust electrical grid capable of supporting the facility's full load.

**Backup Power:** Dual generators with independent fuel sources (e.g., diesel and natural gas) and fuel reserves capable of supporting continuous operation for at least 7–14 days.

**Battery Backup (UPS):** An uninterruptible power supply (UPS) system to bridge the gap during generator startup and maintain operations for sensitive equipment.

**Internet and Communications Redundancy:** Multiple Internet Providers: Contract with at least two independent ISPs (Internet Service Providers) to reduce the risk of a single point of failure.

**Physical Path Diversity:** Ensure diverse cable routes for internet connectivity to prevent disruptions from localized damage.

**Satellite Backup:** Establish a satellite internet backup system for additional connectivity during widespread terrestrial outages.

**Water and Sewer Redundancy:** Use on-site water storage tanks for potable water. Include redundant sewer systems or septic tanks for wastewater management in case of municipal system failures.

**Threat and Vulnerability Preparedness:** Given the specific threats in Atlantic County, NJ, 9-1-1 facilities should be designed to withstand natural and man-made disasters:

## Natural Disasters:

**Hurricanes and Coastal Storms:** Facilities must be constructed to withstand Category 5 hurricane winds (up to 157 mph) and elevated above the floodplain to mitigate storm surge and flooding.

**Flooding:** Include flood-resistant construction materials, elevated equipment rooms, and perimeter drainage systems to protect against water damage.

**Earthquakes:** Design using seismic reinforcement techniques to ensure stability during minor seismic events.

## Man-Made Threats:

**Cybersecurity:** Deploy robust cybersecurity measures, including firewalls, encryption, and isolated networks for critical communications systems.

**Physical Security:** Use blast-resistant walls, reinforced entry points, and 24/7 surveillance to protect against physical attacks.

**Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) Protection:** Shield sensitive electronics from EMP events using surge protectors and Faraday cage enclosures.

**Severe Weather Preparedness:** Install lightning protection systems to safeguard electronic equipment. Equip the facility with adequate HVAC systems to maintain functionality during extreme heat or cold.

### Operational and Strategic Design Considerations:

**Geographic Location:** Place the facility in a low-risk area, away from coastal zones and hazardous material sites, while ensuring proximity to critical infrastructure.

**Backup Facilities:** Designate and equip a secondary 9-1-1 center that mirrors the main center's capabilities to serve as an alternate location during extended outages.

**Resilient Communications Infrastructure:** Employ redundant radio towers and microwave links with overlapping coverage areas to ensure communication continuity with emergency responders.

**Personnel Preparedness:** Incorporate living quarters, kitchens, and storage for extended-stay supplies to accommodate staff during long-duration emergencies. Provide ergonomic workstations and soundproofing to minimize stress and fatigue for telecommunicators.

## 12.3 Stakeholder Collaboration

By integrating additional county services, Atlantic County can maximize the utility and cost-effectiveness of its centralized or regional PSAP. This approach not only enhances public safety but also optimizes shared resources to benefit the broader community.

We recommend convening a stakeholder workshop to further explore integration opportunities, assess service requirements, and outline a detailed implementation roadmap.

Successful integration requires collaboration among county stakeholders to:

- Identify specific service needs.
- Conduct feasibility and cost-benefit analyses.
- Develop phased implementation plans for seamless transitions.

## 13. OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 13.1 Overview of Options and Analysis Process

A phased consolidation approach allows Atlantic County to modernize its dispatch infrastructure while managing costs effectively. Each option benefits from targeted technology upgrades, ensuring that the county remains resilient and responsive to evolving emergency communication needs. By leveraging funding opportunities and prioritizing interoperability, Atlantic County can build a robust, scalable system that enhances public safety and operational efficiency.

ADCOMM's comprehensive evaluation of Atlantic County's fire and EMS dispatch system included a thorough review of budgetary impacts, shared services agreements, and operational models. The assessment encompassed PSAP technology needs and their associated costs. This section provides a detailed analysis of three options for consolidation, incorporating PSAP technology upgrade considerations to support operational efficiency, scalability, and NG9-1-1 readiness.

### 13.2 RECOMMENDED – Option 1: Establishing a Countywide Fire/EMS PSAP and Dispatch Center

**Recommendation:** Establish a Countywide Primary Fire/EMS Communications Center with Universal Calltaking.

Atlantic County should establish a countywide, primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) dedicated to Fire and EMS communications, where all initial 9-1-1 calls will be processed by **Universal Calltakers**. These calltakers will be fully trained in handling all types of emergency calls, including fire, EMS, and law enforcement incidents. Law enforcement-run PSAPs will transition to secondary PSAPs, receiving transferred calls and real-time data via CAD-to-CAD interoperability. This model enhances coordination, streamlines emergency response, and improves operational efficiency across all agencies.

Establishing a countywide, primary Fire/EMS communications center with Universal Calltaking will optimize 9-1-1 call handling, streamline emergency response, and improve coordination between fire, EMS, and law enforcement agencies. This scalable model ensures a future-ready emergency communications system that adapts to evolving public safety needs across Atlantic County.

#### Key Benefits:

**Universal Calltaking for All Emergencies** – The Fire/EMS PSAP will employ Universal Calltakers who are fully trained in call handling protocols for fire, EMS, and law enforcement incidents. This ensures efficient call processing, appropriate dispatch decisions, and reduced handoff times.

**Specialized Fire/EMS Dispatching** – While all initial calls are processed by Universal Calltakers, Fire/EMS incidents will be immediately assigned to dedicated Fire/EMS dispatchers for optimized resource management.

**Seamless Law Enforcement Coordination** – Calls requiring police response will be transferred to law enforcement PSAPs, with real-time data sharing via CAD-to-CAD solutions to ensure immediate situational awareness.

**Improved Redundancy and Resiliency** – A single, countywide communications center enhances system redundancy, minimizes call-routing inefficiencies, and ensures uninterrupted service during system failures or high-demand incidents.

**Scalability for Future Growth** – The center will be designed to scale based on participation, allowing fire and EMS agencies to join at launch, with the potential for future law enforcement consolidation if needed.

### **Steps for Implementation:**

#### **1. Develop a Countywide Consolidation Plan**

Conduct a feasibility study to determine staffing, technology, and operational needs for full countywide Universal Calltaking and Fire/EMS dispatch operations.

Establish financial commitments from the county, townships, and participating agencies to ensure long-term sustainability.

Identify the optimal facility location to support countywide emergency communications while maintaining seamless coordination with law enforcement agencies.

#### **2. Build a Resilient, Future-Ready Facility**

Secure or develop a facility that meets all regulatory, operational, and technological requirements, with redundant power, communications, and IT infrastructure.

Incorporate resilience measures against coastal flooding and severe weather to ensure uninterrupted service.

#### **3. Deploy Advanced Public Safety Technology**

Implement NG9-1-1 to improve call routing, location accuracy, and emergency response.

Utilize a countywide Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system integrated with law enforcement CADs via CAD-to-CAD interoperability for seamless data sharing.

Deploy Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping and automated vehicle location (AVL) for real-time fire and EMS resource tracking.

Integrate artificial intelligence (AI) tools for call triage, dispatch decision support, and automated quality assurance.

#### 4. Train and Staff a Universal Calltaking Workforce

Hire and train Universal Calltakers capable of handling fire, EMS, and law enforcement calls, ensuring they are proficient in multi-discipline emergency response protocols.

Develop specialized Fire/EMS dispatch teams within the center to handle fire and medical resource allocation while ensuring law enforcement calls are efficiently transferred.

Invest in cross-training programs to enhance flexibility and preparedness for various emergency scenarios.

Offer competitive retention incentives to attract and maintain experienced professionals.

**Coordination with Law Enforcement PSAPs:** As the primary PSAP, the countywide Fire/EMS center will process all 9-1-1 calls in Atlantic County using Universal Calltakers trained to handle any emergency situation. Calls requiring law enforcement response will be transferred to secondary law enforcement PSAPs, where CAD-to-CAD interoperability solutions will facilitate real-time data exchange. This ensures law enforcement agencies receive immediate and accurate information, enhancing situational awareness and coordination.

### 13.2.1 Recommendation 2: Adopt a Phased Approach to Consolidation

**Goal:** Implement a structured strategy to achieve full Fire/EMS dispatch consolidation, building capacity while minimizing disruptions to ongoing operations.

#### Steps for Implementation:

##### **Step 1: Establish Consensus and Governance**

The initial step focuses on building consensus among stakeholders and establishing a governance framework to guide the consolidation effort.

**Governance Agreement:** Develop a formal agreement that outlines the framework for collaboration and accountability. Key elements include:

- Identifying participating agencies and municipalities.
- Roles and responsibilities of each entity in the consolidated system.
- Funding mechanisms, including shared cost responsibilities and potential revenue sources.
- Ownership and maintenance of tangible assets such as facilities, technology, and networks.

- Defined relationships with primary PSAPs, including coordination protocols.
- Dispute resolution mechanisms to handle conflicts effectively.

This step ensures that all parties are aligned and committed to the consolidation process.

### ***Step 2: Form a Planning Group***

Establish a planning group to design and document the development of the consolidated Fire/EMS dispatch center.

**Composition:** Include representatives from fire and EMS agencies, municipalities, the county, primary PSAPs, and technical and operational experts.

The planning group will:

- Define the organizational structure of the new PSAP, including staffing levels, roles, and supervisory needs. (See Appendix F – Sample Organization Chart).
- Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) tailored to Fire/EMS operations.
- Plan the transition of personnel from existing PSAPs, including training programs and role definitions.
- Adopt and adapt job descriptions based on those listed on the NJ.gov website<sup>1</sup>.
  - Note that the NJ.gov definitions were established in 2004.
  - Future negotiations with unions will allow for developing a pay structure, i.e., a salary and benefits package with career growth including a pay scale that gains a 10% increase as employees rise through positions.
- Outline technical specifications and interoperability requirements for CAD, NG9-1-1, GIS, and radio systems.
- Create a detailed timeline, including milestones for construction, technology deployment, and operational start dates.
- Identify contingency plans for unforeseen delays or challenges.

The planning group ensures that every aspect of the consolidation is accounted for, and that stakeholder input is integrated into the process.

### ***Step 3: Execute the Consolidation Plan***

Carry out the comprehensive plan under the authority established in the governance agreement.

**Facility Construction or Renovation:** Identify and prepare the site for the consolidated Fire/EMS PSAP, ensuring it meets operational, technical, and security requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://info.csc.nj.gov/jobspec/06984.htm>

**Technology Implementation:** Acquire and deploy state-of-the-art systems, including NG9-1-1, CAD, GIS, and radio interoperability solutions. Ensure all systems are redundant, resilient, and interoperable with primary PSAPs.

**Operational Planning:** Finalize and implement SOPs to ensure consistency in dispatch protocols across all participating agencies.

**Intergovernmental Agreements:** Formalize agreements with law enforcement PSAPs to define operational relationships, backup plans, and mutual aid protocols.

**Staff Recruitment and Training:** Recruit qualified personnel for the consolidated center and provide comprehensive training for new and transitioning staff to ensure consistency in operations.

**Transition and Backup Plans:** Develop and implement transition strategies that ensure uninterrupted services during the migration to the new center. Include plans for temporary backup operations in case of technical or operational disruptions.

This approach focuses directly on establishing a fully consolidated Fire/EMS PSAP serving Atlantic County. This ensures:

- A single, streamlined system for dispatching all Fire/EMS resources countywide.
- Improved efficiency, redundancy, and specialization.
- Centralized management and oversight of Fire/EMS operations, eliminating the need for phased regional pilots.

**Ensure Stakeholder Engagement:** Throughout both phases, maintain regular engagement with municipal leaders, fire chiefs, EMS directors, and other stakeholders. Hold workshops and collaborative planning sessions to align priorities, address concerns, and secure buy-in.

### 13.2.2 Recommendation 3: Leverage Funding Opportunities

**Goal:** Maximize funding sources to offset capital and operational expenses associated with establishing a Fire/EMS Secondary PSAP.

#### Steps for Implementation:

**Pursue State and Federal Grants:** Apply for relevant grant programs, such as those available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and New Jersey Office of Emergency Telecommunications Services (OETS). These programs often provide funding for communication center upgrades, disaster resilience, and public safety infrastructure.

**Explore Shared Services Agreements:** Negotiate shared services agreements with municipalities and neighboring counties to reduce overall operational costs. This approach can distribute

financial responsibility across multiple jurisdictions while ensuring equitable access to Fire/EMS dispatch services.

**Consider Revenue-Generating Opportunities:** Investigate the feasibility of implementing surcharges (e.g., for wireless and VoIP services) or utilize cost-recovery mechanisms that reinvest funds into the ongoing operation of the Fire/EMS PSAP.

### 13.2.3 Recommendation 4: Invest in Technology Upgrades

**Goal:** Equip the Fire/EMS Secondary PSAP with advanced technologies that enable seamless communication and resource coordination across Atlantic County.

#### Steps for Implementation:

**Implement NG9-1-1 Systems:** Transition to NG9-1-1 technologies to enhance call routing, location services, and data transmission for Fire/EMS responses. NG9-1-1 systems provide the backbone for improved situational awareness, enabling dispatchers to access real-time data, including multimedia and GIS mapping.

**Integrate CAD and GIS Tools:** Deploy integrated CAD systems that connect Fire/EMS responders directly to dispatch data, enhancing decision-making during emergencies. Leverage GIS for precise location tracking, resource deployment, and situational analysis, particularly in complex fire or mass-casualty incidents.

**Ensure System Interoperability:** Develop technical solutions that allow the Fire/EMS PSAP to communicate with neighboring counties and agencies. Interoperability between CAD systems, radio networks, and emergency management tools is critical for efficient mutual aid and multi-jurisdictional operations.

### 13.2.4 Recommendation 5: Enhance Staffing and Training

**Goal:** Ensure that the Fire/EMS PSAP is staffed with well-trained professionals capable of handling the complexities of fire and EMS dispatch operations.

#### Steps for Implementation:

**Recruitment Strategies:** Develop recruitment programs that target experienced fire and EMS dispatchers, emphasizing career growth opportunities within the new consolidated PSAP. Consider regional job fairs and partnerships with local colleges offering public safety programs.

**Comprehensive Training Programs:** Implement a robust training curriculum that includes simulations, crisis management exercises, and certifications in fire/EMS dispatch protocols. Ensure all staff are trained to handle both fire and medical emergencies and can seamlessly integrate with on-the-ground responders.

**Address Staffing Shortages:** To mitigate anticipated staffing challenges during the consolidation process, explore alternative staffing models such as staggered shifts, part-time positions, or a reserve pool of on-call dispatchers.

### 13.2.5 Recommendation 6: Collaborate with Stakeholders

**Goal:** Ensure a smooth transition to a countywide Fire/EMS PSAP through continuous engagement with all fire and EMS agencies.

#### Steps for Implementation:

**Form Advisory Committees:** Establish advisory committees comprising fire chiefs, EMS directors, municipal leaders, and labor representatives. These committees will guide the transition, address operational concerns, and provide ongoing feedback to improve the system post-implementation.

**Regular Workshops and Town Halls:** Host workshops and town halls to communicate updates, discuss consolidation timelines, and gather input from all stakeholders. These events foster transparency and trust, reducing resistance to change.

Creating a specialized secondary Fire/EMS dispatch center requires significant technology investments to ensure optimal performance, seamless integration with existing systems, and compliance with NG9-1-1 standards.

| OPTION 1: ESTABLISHING A FIRE/EMS SECONDARY PSAP AND DISPATCH-ONLY CENTER |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Pros</b>   | <p><i>Enhanced Specialization:</i> Tailored systems for fire and EMS dispatch improve accuracy and speed.</p> <p><i>Operational Focus:</i> Dedicated systems for fire and EMS streamline incident management.</p> <p><i>Increased Resilience:</i> Provides redundancy and continuity during high call volumes or system failures.</p>  |
| <b>Cons</b>   | <p><i>High Initial Investment:</i> Capital-intensive infrastructure and technology upgrades.</p> <p><i>Operational Complexity:</i> Potential challenges in coordinating with primary PSAPs. Introducing a secondary PSAP may result in a call delay, potentially increasing the time it takes for a call to be answered.</p> <p><i>Potential Duplication:</i> Overlapping functions may occur without clear delineation.</p> |
| <b>Technology Upgrade Options and Costs</b>                               | Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) System: Cost: \$500,000 - \$1,000,000 (includes installation, licensing, and integration).   |
| <b>Purpose</b>  | Enables efficient resource management, closest-unit dispatching, and real-time incident tracking.  |
| <b>NG9-1-1 Readiness</b>  | Cost: \$250,000 - \$400,000 for ESInet integration.  |
| <b>Purpose</b>  | Ensures compatibility with multimedia communications (text, images, videos).   |

**OPTION 1: ESTABLISHING A FIRE/EMS SECONDARY PSAP AND DISPATCH-ONLY CENTER**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Radio and Telephony System Enhancements</b> | Cost: \$600,000 - \$800,000 for multi-channel radio consoles and SIP-based phone systems.  |
| <b>Purpose</b>                                 | Supports seamless communication between dispatch and field units.  |
| <b>Centralized Logging Recorder</b>            | Cost: \$150,000 - \$300,000.   |
| <b>Purpose</b>                                 | Records all communications for incident review and quality assurance.  |
| <b>Associated Cost Considerations</b>          | <i>Capital Expenditures:</i> High upfront costs for facility and technology setup.<br><i>Operational Costs:</i> Ongoing maintenance, licensing, and staffing expense.<br><i>Funding Sources:</i> State and federal grants, such as the 9-1-1 Grant Program and Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG). |

### 13.3 Option 2: Consolidate into the Three Regional Centers

This option leverages existing regional centers in Egg Harbor Township, Galloway Township, and Hamilton Township, with targeted technology upgrades to enhance interoperability and efficiency. The three regional centers would stay under the individual control of the townships to include the employees, however, the standards for service, training, and staffing would come under the authority of the County. The standards would be adopted via a memorandum of understanding (or some other equally legitimate agreement) by the County and the Townships and should follow industry standards for call handling, dispatch, training, and staffing. Enforcement of the standards would be tied to funding and accountability spelled out in service level agreements between and among the County and the Townships benefiting the served agencies.

**OPTION 2: CONSOLIDATE INTO THE THREE REGIONAL CENTERS**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Pros</b>  | <i>Maintains Operational Autonomy:</i> Each center retains some control over operations.<br><i>Reduces Transition Risks:</i> Uses existing facilities, minimizing the need for new infrastructure.<br><i>Promotes Standardization:</i> Encourages consistent policies and procedures across centers. |
| <b>Cons</b>  | <i>Inconsistencies:</i> Without standardization technology, disparities in service quality may arise.<br><i>Limited Scalability:</i> Future expansions may require significant reconfigurations.   |
| <b>Technology Upgrade Options and Costs</b>  | CAD-to-CAD Integration Cost: \$200,000 - \$400,000 per center.<br>Unified CAD System (Long-Term Goal): Cost: \$2,000,000 - \$3,000,000 for a single countywide CAD system.   |
| <b>Purpose</b>   | Facilitates seamless data sharing between regional centers.  |
| <b>Radio System Upgrades:</b> <i>If the current 800 MHz system meets consolidation needs, no additional costs are required, as it supports</i> | \$500,000 per center.  |

**OPTION 2: CONSOLIDATE INTO THE THREE REGIONAL CENTERS**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <i>interoperability, capacity, and coverage. Routine maintenance and operational costs will be covered under existing budgets. If the system has limitations, enhancements will be needed to address potential coverage gaps, capacity limits, or compatibility issues with newer dispatch technologies (e.g., NG9-1-1, CAD systems):</i> <b>Cost (if enhancements are needed):</b> |  |
| <b>Purpose</b>  | Enhances communication capabilities and ensures redundancy.  |
| <b>ESInet Integration</b>   | Cost: \$200,000 - \$300,000 per center.  |
| <b>Purpose</b>  | Prepares centers for NG9-1-1 functionality.  |
| <b>Centralized Logging Recorder</b>   | Cost: \$150,000 - \$300,000.   |
| <b>Associated Cost Considerations</b>   | <p><i>Transition Costs:</i> Cover overlapping operations during migration to shared systems.</p> <p><i>Training Expenses:</i> Ensure staff are proficient in new technologies.</p> <p><i>Funding Options:</i> Shared services agreements with municipalities and state-level funding programs.</p> |

### 13.4 Future Goal – Option 3: Consolidate All Centers into One Countywide Center

The most ambitious option involves creating a single, fully integrated countywide PSAP. This requires significant upfront investment but offers long-term operational efficiencies. This should be the long-term goal of the County’s public safety community.

**OPTION 3: CONSOLIDATED ALL CENTERS INTO ONE COUNTYWIDE CENTER**

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>Pros</b> | <p><i>Economies of Scale:</i> Centralization reduces redundancy and operational costs.</p> <p><i>Standardized Operations:</i> Streamlines policies, procedures, and training.</p> <p><i>Enhanced Resource Allocation:</i> Allows dynamic distribution of resources based on real-time data.</p> <p><i>Improved Situational Awareness:</i> Centralizing information, streamlining communication, and leveraging shared technologies. Enables better decision-making, faster response times, and enhanced coordination across emergency services..</p> |
| <b>Cons</b> | <p><i>High Capital Investment:</i> Substantial funding required for construction and technology upgrades.</p> <p><i>Complex Transition:</i> Involves significant organizational and operational changes.</p>   |

| <b>OPTION 3: CONSOLIDATED ALL CENTERS INTO ONE COUNTYWIDE CENTER</b>  |   |
|---|---|
|   | <i>Potential Loss of Local Expertise:</i> Centralization may affect knowledge of specific regional needs. |
| <b>Technology Upgrade Options and Costs</b>   | Integrated CAD System: Cost: \$2,500,000 - \$4,000,000.   |
| <b>Purpose</b>  | Centralizes dispatch operations for all emergency services.   |
| <b>NG9-1-1 Implementation</b>   | Cost: \$500,000 - \$700,000.  |
| <b>Purpose</b>  | Supports advanced communication features, improving emergency response.                                   |
| <b>Enhanced Radio Network with Countywide Coverage:</b> <i>If the current 800 MHz system meets consolidation needs, no additional costs are required, as it supports interoperability, capacity, and coverage. Routine maintenance and operational costs will be covered under existing budgets. If the system has limitations, enhancements will be needed to address potential coverage gaps, capacity limits, or compatibility issues with newer dispatch technologies (e.g., NG9-1-1, CAD systems):</i> <b>Cost (if enhancements are needed):</b> | \$500,000 per center.   |
| <b>Purpose</b>  | Enhances communication capabilities and ensures redundancy.   |
| <b>Centralized Logging and Analytics</b>  | Cost: \$300,000 - \$500,000.  |
| <b>Purpose</b>  | Provides comprehensive data for incident review, training, and performance improvement.                   |

## 14. ASSOCIATED COST CONSIDERATIONS

### 14.1 Cost Comparison of Operating Multiple Law Enforcement PSAPs Versus a Single Countywide PSAP

Atlantic County currently has 23 municipalities, with 13 PSAPs operated by law enforcement agencies, each varying in terms of modernization, staffing, and operational efficiency. The cost of operating and maintaining these 13 PSAPs differs significantly, as some facilities are well-equipped and adequately staffed, while others face challenges related to outdated equipment, staffing shortages, and underdeveloped infrastructure. These variations in operational readiness directly impact the costs for maintenance, technology upgrades, and staffing needs.

#### 14.1.1 Current Cost Structure of Multiple Law Enforcement PSAPs

Operating 13 individual PSAPs incurs a variety of costs that can vary significantly based on the level of equipment and staffing in each. These costs include:

**Infrastructure and Facility Maintenance:** Each PSAP requires a dedicated facility with its own communication systems, power supply, backup systems, and IT infrastructure. For older or underfunded PSAPs, these maintenance costs can be disproportionately high, especially if the facility lacks modern redundancy measures and environmental controls.

**Staffing and Training:** Each PSAP is responsible for recruiting, training, and retaining personnel to operate the system. As staffing levels vary, some PSAPs are stretched thin with overtime costs and challenges related to turnover, while others may have an overstaffed workforce. Ensuring each staff member is adequately trained in modern NG9-1-1 technology, call handling protocols, and interoperability systems adds ongoing costs for training and certification. Additionally, PSAPs that are not adequately staffed may require contract staffing or reliance on mutual aid to maintain service levels, leading to increased operational expenses.

**Technology Upgrades and Integration:** Many of the existing PSAPs operate on varying levels of technology, with some employing outdated phone systems, CAD systems, and radio communications that are costly to repair or upgrade. PSAPs that are well-equipped may still face challenges integrating their technology with other agencies in the county or with state systems, further increasing integration costs.

**Redundancy and Backup:** Given the dispersed nature of these PSAPs, ensuring that all facilities have sufficient backup power systems, redundant communication lines, and emergency protocols in place is essential for continuity of service during disasters or high-volume incidents. This redundancy comes with its own set of costs, particularly in smaller PSAPs where the technology infrastructure may need significant updates to align with current resiliency standards.

### 14.1.2 Cost Considerations for a Single Countywide PSAP

A single countywide PSAP, with a centralized operations hub for Fire/EMS and potentially law enforcement, would provide several cost efficiencies over maintaining multiple, independent PSAPs. These include:

**Economies of Scale:** A single, unified PSAP would allow for consolidated staffing, shared resources, and pooled operational costs across all agencies. Rather than each municipality maintaining separate staff, equipment, and infrastructure, costs could be reduced through centralized purchasing, bulk technology upgrades, and shared training programs for dispatchers. This would result in reduced overhead costs in staffing, training, and technology maintenance.

**Reduced Infrastructure Maintenance Costs:** A single facility housing the countywide PSAP would streamline facility maintenance, including power backup, data management systems, and redundancy measures. In contrast, 13 separate facilities require a much higher overall investment in maintaining and upgrading their infrastructure. This would also reduce the costs associated with upgrading aging technology across multiple locations.

**Simplified Technology Integration:** Instead of each PSAP operating on different systems or struggling with compatibility issues, a single countywide system would streamline technology upgrades, allow for more efficient integration with neighboring agencies, and facilitate the shared use of technology across the county. The use of modern, interoperable CAD and NG9-1-1 systems across all agencies would reduce the need for costly integration efforts.

**Operational Efficiency:** A single countywide PSAP would streamline operational processes by eliminating the need for redundant or overlapping staff, facilitating faster dispatching, and ensuring a more coordinated response across all agencies. This would directly improve response times, reduce cross-agency communication errors, and lower operational costs over time. Additionally, shared call-taking resources could be utilized during peak times, reducing the need for each PSAP to maintain capacity for peak call volumes independently.

### 14.1.3 Projected Savings and Future Costs

The overall cost savings of transitioning to a single countywide PSAP would likely be significant, with potential reductions in both operational costs and infrastructure spending. However, transitioning from a multiple PSAP model to a single PSAP would require substantial initial investment in technology, staff training, and facility development. Over the long term, these initial costs would be offset by the reduced redundancy, more efficient staffing models, and streamlined technology systems.

The transition would also position Atlantic County to better access future funding opportunities, particularly those tied to NG9-1-1 and interoperability grants, which may be more accessible to centralized systems. Given that many of the law enforcement PSAPs are operating on varying levels of modernization, this countywide approach would also allow for standardization of technology and operations, which could unlock additional savings in maintenance and future system upgrades.

In comparing the costs of operating and maintaining 13 independent law enforcement PSAPs with a single countywide PSAP, the latter presents a more sustainable and efficient model. While initial costs for consolidation would be higher, the long-term savings in staffing, infrastructure, and technology upgrades would provide a more cost-effective solution. This approach not only benefits Fire/EMS operations but also prepares Atlantic County for future growth, ensuring scalability and interoperability with other agencies across the county.

**Construction Costs:** For a new facility, estimated at \$10,000,000 - \$15,000,000.

**Operational Costs:** Centralized systems reduce redundancy but require robust maintenance.

**Funding Strategies:** State incentives, federal grants, and bond issuance for capital projects.

**Costs per Option Including and Excluding Radio Enhancements:** Radio and/or Telephony enhancements may not be needed or may be acquired by the County as a separate budget item.

|  |   |                                    |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| <b>OPTION 1:<br/>SECONDARY PSAP</b>        | Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) System    | \$500,000 - \$1,000,000            |
|  | NG9-1-1 Readiness                       | \$250,000 - \$400,000              |
|  | Radio and Telephony System Enhancements | \$600,000 - \$800,000              |
|  | Centralized Logging Recorder            | \$150,000 - \$300,000              |
|  | <b>Subtotal for Option 1</b>            | <b>\$1,500,000 - \$2,500,000</b>   |
| <b>OPTION 2: REGIONAL<br/>CENTERS</b>      | CAD-to-CAD Integration                  | \$200,000 - \$400,000 per center   |
|  | Unified CAD System (Long-Term Goal)     | \$2,000,000 - \$3,000,000          |
|  | Radio System Upgrades (if needed)       | \$500,000 per center               |
|  | ESInet Integration                      | \$200,000 - \$300,000 per center   |
|  | <b>Subtotal for Option 2</b>            | <b>\$3,100,000 - \$4,900,000</b>   |
| <b>OPTION 3:<br/>COUNTYWIDE<br/>CENTER</b> | Integrated CAD System                   | \$2,500,000 - \$4,000,000          |
|  | NG9-1-1 Implementation                  | \$500,000 - \$700,000              |
|  | Enhanced Radio Network (if needed)      | \$500,000                          |
|  | Centralized Logging and Analytics       | \$300,000 - \$500,000              |
|  | Construction Costs                      | \$10,000,000 - \$15,000,000        |
|  | <b>Subtotal for Option 3</b>            | <b>\$13,800,000 - \$20,700,000</b> |

## 14.2 Sources for Cost Projections

The cost projections provided in this report are based on industry standards, recent procurement data, and benchmarks from similar projects across the United States. These sources provide a robust foundation for estimating both technology and facility-related costs, ensuring that the projections are accurate and reflective of current market conditions. This comprehensive approach allows for informed decision-making in planning and implementing PSAP consolidation initiatives. Below are the key sources and references used to estimate the costs of PSAP technology upgrades, facility construction, and associated infrastructure:

**National Emergency Number Association (NENA) Cost Guidelines:** Reference: NENA provides industry-standard cost estimates for NG9-1-1 implementations, including ESInet integration, CAD system upgrades, and supporting technologies. Source: [[www.nena.org](http://www.nena.org)](<https://www.nena.org>)

**Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Public Safety Reports:** Reference: FCC reports detail technology costs for public safety communication systems, including radio networks and NG9-1-1 readiness. These reports also provide insights into operational cost considerations for PSAPs. Source: [[www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov)](<https://www.fcc.gov>)

**Department of Homeland Security (DHS) SAFECOM Program: Reference:** SAFECOM offers cost estimates for interoperable communication technologies, such as radio systems, CAD systems, and logging recorders, critical for consolidated dispatch operations. Source: [[www.dhs.gov/safecom](http://www.dhs.gov/safecom)](<https://www.dhs.gov/safecom>)

**State of New Jersey Office of Emergency Telecommunications Services (NJOETS):** Reference: NJOETS provides regional cost data and funding models for PSAP upgrades, including CAD-to-CAD integration and NG9-1-1 readiness in New Jersey. Source: [[www.nj.gov](http://www.nj.gov)](<https://www.nj.gov/911>)

**Vendor Proposals and Procurement Data: Reference:** Cost estimates are informed by recent procurement data from leading public safety technology vendors, such as Motorola, Harris, and Zetron, who provide quotes for CAD systems, radio consoles, and centralized logging solutions. Source: Vendor-provided quotes and RFP responses for similar PSAP projects.

**Case Studies from Peer Counties:** Reference: Cost benchmarks from counties like Fairfax County, VA, and Maricopa County, AZ, which have implemented PSAP consolidations, including facility and technology upgrades. Source: Published project summaries and county-level reports.

**International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and Local Government Facilities Management Reports:** Reference: IAFC and local government facility reports provide benchmarks for public safety building costs, including new construction, retrofitting existing structures, and operational facility requirements. Source: [[www.iafc.org](http://www.iafc.org)](<https://www.iafc.org>) and municipal facilities studies.

**Construction Industry Data (RSMeans):** Reference: RSMeans provides standardized construction cost data, including estimates for building new PSAP facilities and retrofitting existing structures to meet public safety requirements. This includes costs for site preparation, utilities, and security infrastructure. Source: [[www.rsmeans.com](http://www.rsmeans.com)](<https://www.rsmeans.com>)

### 14.2.1 Recommended Option 1 - Operational Cost Projections: Staffing and Day-to-Day Operations

Following the capital cost projections for the facility and technology required for a consolidated fire and EMS dispatch operation—including investments in the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, NG9-1-1 readiness, radio and telephony system enhancements, and centralized logging

recorder—it is equally important to consider the ongoing operational costs associated with running the center.

These operational costs encompass more than just the maintenance and licensing of technology systems; they also include the critical human component. Staffing, supervision, quality assurance, training, and day-to-day operational expenses represent a significant portion of the annual budget for such a facility. A total of 36 full-time positions, including dispatchers, supervisors, and support staff, are projected to meet the needs of this operation.

The annual operational cost projections for the consolidated center, based on regional benchmarks and typical staffing requirements, are detailed below. This projection provides a starting point for understanding the costs associated with the transition. When combined with the initial capital investment, this information will help stakeholders make informed decisions regarding the feasibility and planning of such an initiative. These estimates are provided as a range to account for variations in salaries, benefits, training expenses, and facility overhead:

1. Annual Staff Compensation - The projected compensation costs for 36 full-time employees, including salaries and benefits:
  - Low Estimate: \$2,340,000.
  - High Estimate: \$3,060,000.
2. Annual Training Costs - Training is essential to maintain operational effectiveness and compliance with industry standards. Estimated annual training costs:
  - Low Estimate: \$108,000.
  - High Estimate: \$180,000.
3. Facility Operations - Day-to-day facility costs, including utilities, supplies, and general overhead:
  - Low Estimate: \$50,000.
  - High Estimate: \$100,000.
4. Total Annual Operational Costs - Combining all elements, the total annual operational costs for the center are projected as follows:
  - Low Estimate: \$2,498,000.
  - High Estimate: \$3,340,000.

### Categories of Transition Costs

1. **Maintaining Current Operations During Transition - Cost Components:** Current PSAP operations must continue uninterrupted while the new PSAP is established. Includes potential overtime costs for staff covering vacancies created by any employees that may be transitioning to the new operation.

Estimated Costs:

- Low Estimate: \$500,000.
- High Estimate: \$800,000.

(Depends on the number of PSAPs impacted and their staffing requirements during transition.)

2. **Staff Recruitment and Placement - Cost Components:** Recruitment of new staff (advertising, screening, and onboarding). Development of position descriptions and qualifications for the new PSAP. Placement of any current PSAP employees into the new structure (employee evaluations, matching roles, etc.).

Estimated Costs:

Low Estimate: \$250,000.

High Estimate: \$400,000.

3. **Training - Cost Components:** Training for new hires, including onboarding and operational procedures. Cross training for any transitioning employees to ensure they meet the new organization's standards and protocols.

Estimated Costs:

Low Estimate: \$300,000.

High Estimate: \$500,000.

4. **Standing Up Administrative Functions - Cost Components:** Establishing budget, finance, human resources, and operational oversight functions within the existing county organization. Includes initial staffing and infrastructure setup (e.g., software for HR, payroll, and accounting).

Estimated Costs:

Low Estimate: \$150,000.

High Estimate: \$300,000.

5. **Technology Integration During Transition - Cost Components:** Temporary solutions to bridge systems (e.g., CAD or telephony) between current PSAPs and the new center. Data migration and testing to ensure seamless transfer of operations.

Estimated Costs:

Low Estimate: \$150,000.

High Estimate: \$300,000.

6. **Total Projected Transition Costs** - When combining all the remaining categories, the projected costs for the transition phase are as follows:

Low Estimate: \$1,350,000.

High Estimate: \$2,300,000.

Summary Total Transition Costs:

Low Estimate: \$1,350,000.

High Estimate: \$2,300,000.

**Timeline and Contingencies** - The timeline for transition costs is typically distributed over 12-24 months, depending on the complexity of the migration. Key contingencies include:

- **Employee Retention Risk:** Uncertainty around current employees transitioning to the new organization may increase costs.
- **Technology Delays:** Issues with CAD or other systems integration may result in unanticipated expenses.
- **Labor Market:** Recruiting and onboarding new staff may take longer if the local labor market is constrained.

## Source Citations

The projected operational and transition costs are based on a combination of industry standards, research studies, and experience with public safety communications consolidation projects. Below is a breakdown of the sources and rationale used to develop these estimates.

### *Operational Costs*

**Salaries and Benefits:** Public safety dispatcher salary ranges were informed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data for Public Safety Telecommunicators and regional salary benchmarks for New Jersey and similar areas.

- **Source:** U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023) - Median salary for dispatchers nationally is around \$47,460, but salaries in New Jersey are higher, often in the range of \$60,000–\$85,000 due to cost of living and union contracts.
- **Regional data for salaries** were also extrapolated from publicly available job postings for dispatchers and supervisors in New Jersey and nearby states.

**Training Costs:** Training cost estimates were based on industry standards for onboarding and ongoing training of public safety employees (e.g., APCO training guidelines).

- **Source:** APCO International (Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials) - Estimated onboarding training costs for dispatchers typically range from \$3,000–\$6,000 per employee annually.

**Facility Operations:** Costs for utilities, maintenance, and supplies are based on benchmarks from other public safety facilities, scaled to the size and scope of the proposed center.

- **Source:** National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) - Guidelines for PSAP facility operations costs, including ongoing maintenance and support.

### *Transition Costs*

**Maintaining Current Operations:** Maintaining operations during consolidation was estimated using lessons learned from studies on public safety consolidation projects (e.g., the State of Connecticut's dispatch consolidation plan, which included dual operations during the transition period).

- Source: Public Safety Communications Consolidation Case Studies - Connecticut Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection (DESPP) and similar projects in Colorado and Michigan.

**Staff Recruitment and Placement:** Recruitment and onboarding costs were extrapolated from industry standards for public sector hiring, including time for job posting, applicant screening, interviews, and placement.

- Source: Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) - Reports on average recruitment costs (\$4,000–\$6,000 per employee) scaled for multiple positions.

**Training Costs:** Similar to operational training costs, transition training accounts for onboarding new employees and cross-training existing ones.

- Source: APCO International and local government training initiatives for PSAP employees during transitions.

**Standing Up Administrative Functions:** Budgeting, HR, and finance costs are based on the implementation of administrative functions in similar consolidation efforts (e.g., consolidated county government systems in Illinois and Texas).

- Source: International City/County Management Association (ICMA) - Case studies on public safety consolidations.

**Employee Transition Support:** Costs for employee placement, career counseling, and retention incentives were drawn from best practices in public sector mergers and restructuring.

- Source: National Association of State 9-1-1 Administrators (NASNA) - Recommendations for handling staff transitions in consolidation projects.

**Technology Integration:** Data migration, system bridging, and technology testing costs are based on prior CAD and NG9-1-1 implementation projects.

- Source: National Emergency Number Association (NENA) - NG9-1-1 deployment guides, which outline typical costs for system migrations and integrations.

## Cost Comparisons

These estimates were cross-checked with publicly available reports from other counties and regions that have completed PSAP consolidation, including:

- State of Colorado PSAP Consolidation Feasibility Study (2020).
- Camden County, NJ PSAP Consolidation: Regional salary data and recruitment costs were reviewed.
- Michigan’s Statewide 9-1-1 Dispatch Consolidation Report: Provides benchmarks for operational and transition costs.

- Charleston County, SC Consolidated Dispatch Center; multiple documents, studies, and history acquired through supporting the consolidation from 2007-2014.
- Previous studies conducted by Ms. Bush, include Atlantic County NJ, State of Connecticut, State of Maine, State of Iowa: 2010-2021.

## 15. BENEFITS OF CONSOLIDATION TO FIRE AND EMS SERVICES

Consolidation Improves Situational Awareness and Impacts Response Times for 9-1-1 and Dispatch Centers. Of specific benefit to Fire and EMS response agencies is the physical consolidation of 9-1-1 and dispatch centers as it enhances situational awareness by centralizing operations, streamlining communication, and leveraging shared technologies. These improvements directly impact response times, a critical metric in emergency management, by enabling faster, more coordinated resource deployment

Direct Impact on Response Times: Physical consolidation not only improves situational awareness but also significantly reduces response times by:

- Eliminating delays in data transfer and communication.
- Optimizing resource allocation through advanced technologies.
- Standardizing dispatch procedures for consistency and efficiency.

Faster response times save lives and property, making physical consolidation a crucial strategy for enhancing public safety operations.

| CENTRALIZED INFORMATION FLOW            |   |
|---|---|
| <i>Unified Data Collection:</i>         | Consolidated centers gather all emergency call data in one place, reducing delays in disseminating critical information.<br>Dispatchers across different services (law enforcement, fire, EMS) access the same real-time data, ensuring quicker action on incoming calls. |
| <i>Impact on Response Times:</i>        | Reduces delays caused by fragmented or incomplete information, allowing dispatchers to assign units immediately after a call is received.   |
| IMPROVED COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION |   |
| <i>Closer Collaboration:</i>            | Dispatchers and call takers from various agencies work together in the same facility, eliminating the need for time-consuming interagency communications.   |
| <i>Cross-Agency Coordination:</i>       | In multi-agency incidents, real-time communication between fire, EMS, and law enforcement is streamlined, ensuring a cohesive response.   |
| <i>Impact on Response Times:</i>        | Reduces the time spent coordinating between agencies, leading to faster deployment of all necessary resources.  |
| ACCESS TO SHARED TECHNOLOGY AND TOOLS   |   |
| <i>Integrated CAD and GIS Systems:</i>  | Shared CAD and GIS provide live tracking of units, incident locations, and traffic conditions. Features like closest-unit dispatch allow for the most efficient resource allocation.  |
| <i>Advanced Dispatch Tools:</i>         | Real-time alerts, automated call prioritization, and resource recommendations improve decision-making speed.  |
| <i>Impact on Response Times:</i>        | Ensures that the nearest available units are dispatched quickly, minimizing travel time to the incident scene.  |

| <b>REDUCTION IN CALL TRANSFERS</b>                        |  |
|---|--|
| <i>Fewer Inter-PSAP Transfers:</i>                        | In a consolidated system, call transfers between PSAPs are eliminated or significantly reduced. All relevant information is captured and processed within the same center. |
| <i>Impact on Response Times:</i>                          | Reduces the time lost in transferring calls and relaying information, allowing dispatchers to deploy units immediately.  |
| <b>ENHANCED DECISION-MAKING</b>                           |  |
| <i>Real-Time Resource Visibility:</i>                     | Consolidated centers provide a comprehensive view of all available resources, enabling dispatchers to allocate units dynamically.  |
| <i>Proactive Resource Management:</i>                     | During high-demand periods or large-scale emergencies, dispatchers can anticipate resource needs and pre-position units for quicker response.                              |
| <i>Impact on Response Times:</i>                          | Improves the speed and accuracy of dispatch decisions, ensuring resources are allocated where they are needed most without delay.  |
| <b>FASTER AND MORE ACCURATE DISPATCH</b>                  |  |
| <i>Unified Response Protocols:</i>                        | Consolidation ensures that all dispatchers follow standardized protocols, reducing errors and ensuring consistency.  |
| <i>Pre-Built Response Plans:</i>                          | For common emergencies like structure fires or vehicle accidents, consolidated centers can implement pre-built response plans, saving critical time.                       |
| <i>Impact on Response Times:</i>                          | Reduces the time spent determining response protocols, allowing for quicker dispatch of units.   |
| <b>ENHANCED SUPERVISION AND QUALITY CONTROL</b>           |  |
| <i>Centralized Oversight:</i>                             | Supervisors monitor all operations in real-time, providing immediate assistance/intervention when needed.  |
| <i>Quality Assurance Programs:</i>                        | Continuous monitoring and after-action reviews help identify inefficiencies and implement improvements.  |
| <i>Impact on Response Times:</i>                          | Ensures that dispatch operations are optimized over time, consistently reducing delays in the response process.  |
| <b>IMPROVED INTEROPERABILITY</b>                          |  |
| <i>Seamless Communication Across Jurisdictions:</i>       | Consolidated centers integrate communication systems, enabling effective coordination with neighboring jurisdictions.  |
| <i>Mutual Aid Efficiency:</i>                             | Requests for mutual aid are streamlined, ensuring timely support from external agencies.   |
| <i>Impact on Response Times:</i>                          | Enhances response speed for incidents requiring cross-jurisdictional collaboration, reducing delays in aid arrival.  |
| <b>ENHANCED SITUATIONAL AWARENESS FOR MAJOR INCIDENTS</b> |  |
| <i>Incident Command Support:</i>                          | Consolidated centers provide a complete operational picture to Incident Command, ensuring informed decision-making during large-scale emergencies.                         |
| <i>Simultaneous Incident Monitoring:</i>                  | Dispatchers can manage multiple incidents efficiently, identifying patterns or connections between events.   |
| <i>Impact on Response Times:</i>                          | Ensures faster resource deployment in complex, multi-incident scenarios by providing a clearer situational overview.   |

# 16. STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION AND FUTURE COLLABORATION

## 16.1 Overview

Building a unified emergency communication system in Atlantic County will require all stakeholders to actively participate in shaping and implementing future changes. Through inclusive and transparent processes, the county can address current gaps and lay the foundation for a more efficient and effective dispatch system.

A significant challenge during this study was the varying levels of participation from fire agencies and the limited engagement from police departments and municipalities that operate Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). While initial input from many stakeholders was invaluable, follow-up data collection efforts faced obstacles, and some police agencies and municipal leaders hesitated to engage, as they were not directly involved in the study. This variability impacted the study's comprehensiveness and could pose challenges for advancing future consolidation or regionalization efforts.

## 16.2 Fire Agency Participation

Fire agencies contributed crucial insights during the study's early phases. However, logistical and operational constraints hindered full participation in follow-up data collection for some. This led to gaps in key data, such as call volumes and resource allocation, which could affect the depth of the study's findings.

## 16.3 Police and Municipal Hesitancy

Most PSAPs in Atlantic County are part of municipal police departments, and their exclusion from the study likely contributed to hesitancy. Concerns over losing operational control and the potential impacts of proposed changes created resistance to engagement, leading to:

**Data Gaps:** The study lacked a complete picture of current PSAP operations.

**Future Collaboration Risks:** Without early involvement, stakeholders may be less inclined to support or implement recommendations.

## 16.4 Impact on Study Outcomes

The uneven participation affected the study in three key areas:

1. **Incomplete Data:** Limited follow-up engagement created analytical gaps.

2. **Reduced Buy-In:** Stakeholders may resist recommendations if they feel their concerns were not fully addressed.
3. **Implementation Challenges:** Hesitancy now may translate to resistance during future consolidation efforts.

## 16.5 Path Forward

For future success, robust and sustained engagement from all stakeholders—fire, police, EMS, and municipal leaders—is essential.

## 16.6 Recommendations

1. **Proactive Engagement:** Involve all stakeholders early and maintain collaboration through advisory committees or working groups.
2. **Support and Incentives:** Provide administrative support and offer incentives such as grants or funding for technology upgrades to encourage participation.
3. **Transparent Processes:** Share data openly and involve stakeholders in decision-making to build trust and ensure recommendations meet operational needs.
4. **Policy Encouragement:** Explore policies or agreements that encourage or require participation in future studies or regionalization efforts.

## 17. COMMUNITY MEETINGS: A PATH TO EDUCATION, CONSENSUS, AND BUY-IN

The upcoming community meetings are a vital step in advancing Atlantic County's public safety communications. By fostering education, consensus, and buy-in, these sessions will help pave the way for a more efficient and effective dispatch system that benefits all residents.

Following the delivery and acceptance of the Fire and EMS Dispatch Study, Atlantic County will host three community meetings to engage residents and stakeholders. These meetings present a crucial opportunity to educate the public on the study's findings, foster dialogue, and build consensus around potential consolidation or regionalization efforts.

### 17.1 Purpose of the Community Meetings

#### 17.1.1 Educating the Public

**Informing on Study Findings:** Attendees will gain insight into the current state of emergency dispatch services, including identified challenges and the benefits of proposed changes.

**Explaining Options:** The meetings will outline the three options explored in the study—maintaining regional centers, creating a fire-only dispatch center, or full countywide consolidation—and the potential impacts on response times, efficiency, and cost.

**Clarifying Myths and Misconceptions:** Transparent communication will address any misconceptions about loss of local control, service quality, or operational changes.

#### 17.1.2 Building Consensus

**Encouraging Open Dialogue:** Community members, municipal leaders, and public safety officials will have the opportunity to voice concerns, ask questions, and provide feedback.

**Fostering Collaboration:** By involving diverse voices, the meetings can identify shared priorities and address resistance through collaborative problem-solving.

**Highlighting Success Stories:** Examples from other counties that have successfully consolidated services will be shared to demonstrate potential outcomes and best practices.

#### 17.1.3 Gaining Public and Stakeholder Buy-In

**Demonstrating Public Support:** Public input can strengthen the case for any proposed changes, showing elected officials that there is community backing for improvements.

**Empowering Stakeholders:** Engaging fire, police, EMS, and municipal representatives in the decision-making process ensures their expertise and concerns shape the path forward.

**Establishing Trust:** An open and transparent process builds trust in the county's commitment to enhancing public safety while balancing operational and financial considerations.

## 17.2 How the Meetings Will Drive Change

These meetings are more than informational sessions; they are a catalyst for action. By creating a forum for discussion and collaboration, the county can:

**Align Stakeholder Goals:** Ensure that fire, EMS, police, and municipal leaders are unified in their understanding of the benefits and challenges of consolidation.

**Incorporate Public Input:** Tailor solutions based on community needs and preferences.

**Set the Stage for Implementation:** With public and stakeholder buy-in, the county will be better positioned to move forward with recommended changes.

## 18. ADDRESSING KEY ISSUES AND IMPLEMENTATION

### 18.1 Current Structure of Atlantic County PSAPs

In Atlantic County, all Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) are municipally owned and operate as integral parts of local police departments. This organizational structure has historically served the dual purpose of handling law enforcement dispatch and acting as a primary point of contact for fire and EMS emergencies. However, this setup presents challenges for consolidating services and achieving operational efficiency. 13 PSAPs for 23 municipalities with multiple radio systems and procedures create operational silos which effects command and control, situational awareness, and common operating picture. Some consequences from lack of situational awareness and common operating picture are fragmented information, poor information flow, ineffective coordination, and failure to adapt to changing conditions which leads to confusion, miscommunication, potentially poor decision-making due to incomplete or inconsistent information, delayed response, and resource misallocation.

### 18.2 Creation of Secondary PSAPs or PSDPs

If fire and EMS dispatch services are separated from existing police-operated PSAPs, it results in the establishment of a secondary PSAP or Public Safety Dispatch Point (PSDP). These secondary centers handle calls transferred from the primary PSAP for fire and EMS response. This creates additional steps in the emergency response process, as 9-1-1 calls must be transferred or data shared between the primary and secondary centers, potentially delaying dispatch and increasing the risk of communication errors.

### 18.3 Call and Data Transfers: Potential Solutions

#### 18.3.1 CAD-to-CAD Integration

**Purpose:** Allows seamless data sharing between primary and secondary PSAPs, minimizing the delay caused by call transfers.

**Benefits:** Improves data accuracy, reduces redundancy, and enables real-time information sharing.

**Challenges:** Implementation costs and the need for compatibility between different CAD systems across municipalities.

### 18.3.2 Universal Call Takers

**Purpose:** These call takers are trained to handle all emergency call types—police, fire, and EMS—within a centralized county-run PSAP.

**Benefits:** Eliminates the need for call transfers, improving response times and streamlining operations.

**Challenges:** Requires extensive cross-training and reorganization of existing workflows.

## 18.4 Recommendations: Decisions and Stakeholder Engagement

### 18.4.1 Establishing a Decision-Making Framework

The success of any consolidation effort hinges on the engagement of county decision-makers and stakeholders. Atlantic County must first determine which model—enhancing regional centers, creating a fire/EMS-only dispatch, or full consolidation—best suits its operational needs. This decision can be made through a series of steps:

**Stakeholder Workshops:** Bring together municipal leaders, police, fire, and EMS chiefs, as well as public representatives. These workshops should aim to identify operational pain points, share best practices, and align on a collective vision.

**Data-Driven Analysis:** Use call volume, response time data, and financial modeling to evaluate each consolidation option's potential impact.

### 18.4.2 Incentivizing and Encouraging Participation

**Funding Support:** Provide grants or financial assistance for municipalities that opt into a countywide system or support regional enhancements. This could include subsidizing CAD-to-CAD integration or training for universal call takers.

**Operational Benefits:** Highlight the improved response times, cost savings, and enhanced public safety that centralized systems offer.

**Policy Mandates:** If voluntary participation remains limited, the county could explore regulatory measures to require participation, particularly for municipalities that depend on mutual aid or neighboring dispatch services.

### 18.4.3 Building Trust and Buy-In

**Transparency:** Regularly communicate the consolidation process, its benefits, and expected outcomes to all stakeholders.

**Pilot Programs:** Start with smaller-scale pilots, such as a single regional center adopting universal call takers, to demonstrate feasibility and success.

## 18.5 Impact of These Changes

Implementing these recommendations can drive significant improvements in Atlantic County's emergency response system:

**Enhanced Efficiency:** Reducing or eliminating the need for call transfers streamlines the dispatch process, cutting down response times.

**Improved Interoperability:** CAD-to-CAD solutions and universal call takers foster better coordination across services and jurisdictions.

**Cost Efficiencies:** Shared infrastructure and economies of scale reduce operational redundancies and long-term costs.

**Stronger Public Safety:** Centralized oversight ensures consistency in training, protocols, and resource allocation, improving outcomes during emergencies.

## 19. CLOSING STATEMENT

By taking these steps, Atlantic County can modernize its emergency communication system, aligning with best practices and preparing for the challenges of the NG9-1-1 era. It is critical to maintain the momentum of this initiative therefore ADCOMM recommends continuing to engage professional services in the decision-making process and the next phases of planning the future of Atlantic County's Fire and EMS services.

# APPENDIX

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- A PSAP Surveys and RFI, RFI Responses, and Interview Results Database
- B RFI and Research Documentation
- C Sample Agreement
- D Sample Organization Chart

**APPENDIX A:  
PSAP Surveys and RFI, RFI Responses,  
and Interview Results Database**

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# PSAP Surveys and RFI, RFI Responses, and Interview Results Database

ADCOMM applies data collection and analysis using Smartsheet. The data belongs to Atlantic County and remains accessible long after the project's completion.

Below is a link to all of the following:

- PSAP Surveys and RFI
- RFI Responses
- Interview Results Database

<https://app.smartsheet.com/dashboards/RxfG88hX5Q2pGp9rxqH2pxpvXXQf46qXJjwWCQj1>

## **APPENDIX B: RFI and Research Documentation**

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## REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

|                    |   |                        |                |
|--------------------|---|------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Project No:</b> | PN 0741 – Atlantic Co-NJ                          | <b>Date Requested:</b> | March 13, 2024 |
| <b>RFI No.:</b>    | PN 0741 RFI #001                                  | <b>Due Date:</b>       | March 28, 2024 |
| <b>RFI Name:</b>   | Centralized Fire/EMS Dispatch & 911 Documentation |                        |                |

|                 |  |                 |                  |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|------------------|
| <b>To:</b>      | (1) Timothy Kreischer<br>(2) John Garry                        | <b>From:</b>    | Sherri Bush, ENP |
| <b>Title:</b>   | (1) Shared Services Coordinator<br>(2) AC Emergency Management | <b>Title:</b>   | Technical Lead   |
| <b>Company:</b> | Atlantic Co NJ   | <b>Company:</b> | ADCOMM           |

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Ref. File(s):</b> | Historical Records & Reports<br>Proposed Facility Deed(s) & Ownership Documents<br>Proposed Facility Blueprints & As-Built Drawings & Documentation<br>Organization Charts for All Participating Agencies (Fire, EMS, and PSAPs)<br>Capital Improvement Plans and Other Strategic Planning Documents to Include Technology Replacement/Update Plans for Impacted PSAPs<br>Existing Billing Model(s)<br>County's and Agencies' 2023-2024 Budgets<br>Current Compensation Budgets & Program Structure for Participating Agencies, include PSAPs<br>All Active Collective Bargaining Agreements for Participating Agencies and PSAPs<br>All Active/Current Technology Contracts and Service Level Agreements |
|----------------------|---|

### RFI Description

#### Purpose:

The purpose of this Request for Information is to obtain the background and current documentation necessary to allow ADCOMM to fully understand the history of Atlantic County Fire/EMS agencies', specifically the dispatch service.

The Feasibility Study Scope of Work contains key tasks toward a complete study. These tasks include the following:

1. Historical Background Investigation: Research past attempts to consolidate dispatch and 911 services in Atlantic County.
2. Legal Authority Examination: Control over proposed facility. Legal examination to adhere to prevailing state and federal laws
3. Managerial and Supervisory Chain of Command: Applicability of civil service approvals. Table of organization.
4. Facilities Examination: Adequacy of current facilities
5. Long-Term capital improvement plan examination: Financial and Long-Term Capital Improvement Plan. Budget preparation and examination
6. Billing Examination
7. Staffing Examination: Compensation levels. Potential union issues. Potential civil service issues

Technology Examination – Dispatch

- a. Adequacy of current equipment
- b. Need for expansion of equipment
- c. Future technology and associated costs for central dispatch and individual dispatch centers

All other statistics, demographics, and technologies inventory are collected via survey, interviews, observations, and facility tours.

## RFI Response

# APPENDIX C: Sample Agreement

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# Sample Agreement

The following is a sample agreement that demonstrates intent and content:

## *Intergovernmental Agreement for Consolidated Fire and EMS Dispatch Services*

*This Agreement is made and entered into as of [Effective Date], by and between [County Name], a political subdivision of the State of New Jersey (hereinafter referred to as the "County"), and the municipalities listed in Exhibit A, each a municipal corporation of the State of New Jersey (hereinafter collectively referred to as the "Municipalities").*

*WHEREAS, the County and the Municipalities recognize the benefits of consolidating fire and emergency medical services (EMS) dispatch operations to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and improve response times; and*

*WHEREAS, the New Jersey Uniform Shared Services and Consolidation Act, N.J.S.A. 40A:65-1 et seq., authorizes local units to enter into agreements for shared services; and*

*WHEREAS, the parties desire to establish a framework for the governance, operation, and funding of a consolidated dispatch center to serve the fire and EMS needs of the participating Municipalities.*

*NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual covenants and promises herein contained, the parties agree as follows:*

### *1. Purpose*

*The purpose of this Agreement is to establish a consolidated dispatch center (hereinafter referred to as the "Dispatch Center") to provide fire and EMS dispatch services to the County and the participating Municipalities, thereby enhancing public safety and operational efficiency.*

### *2. Governance Structure*

#### *a. Dispatch Center Board (DCB):*

*i. Composition: The DCB shall consist of one representative from the County and one representative from each participating Municipality.*

*ii. Responsibilities: The DCB shall oversee the operations of the Dispatch Center, including but not limited to budget approval, policy development, and performance evaluation.*

#### *b. Executive Director:*

*i. Appointment: The DCB shall appoint an Executive Director to manage the day-to-day operations of the Dispatch Center.*

*ii. Duties: The Executive Director shall be responsible for staffing, training, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and implementing policies set forth by the DCB.*

### 3. Funding and Cost Allocation

- a. *Budget: The Executive Director shall prepare an annual budget for the Dispatch Center, subject to approval by the DCB.*
- b. *Cost Sharing: Operating costs shall be allocated among the County and the Municipalities based on a formula considering factors such as call volume, population, and assessed property values. The specific formula shall be detailed in Exhibit B.*
- c. *Capital Expenditures: Costs for capital improvements or major equipment purchases shall be shared as agreed upon by the DCB, with consideration given to the proportional benefit to each party.*

### 4. Term and Termination

- a. *Term: This Agreement shall commence on [Effective Date] and continue for a period of [Number] years, with automatic renewals for successive [Number]-year terms unless terminated as provided herein.*
- b. *Termination: Any party may withdraw from this Agreement by providing [Number] months' written notice to the other parties. Withdrawal shall not relieve the withdrawing party of its financial obligations incurred prior to the effective date of withdrawal.*

### 5. Dispute Resolution

*In the event of a dispute arising under this Agreement, the parties agree to engage in mediation before pursuing any legal action. If mediation fails, disputes shall be resolved in the Superior Court of New Jersey, [County] Vicinage.*

### 6. Miscellaneous

- a. *Amendments: This Agreement may be amended only by a written instrument executed by all parties.*
- b. *Severability: If any provision of this Agreement is found to be invalid or unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall continue in full force and effect.*
- c. *Governing Law: This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of New Jersey.*

*IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed this Agreement as of the date first above written.*

*[County Name]*

*By: \_\_\_\_\_*

*Name: \_\_\_\_\_*

*Title: \_\_\_\_\_*

*Date: \_\_\_\_\_*

*[Municipality Name]*

*By:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Name:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Title:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

\*Note: This sample agreement is for illustrative purposes only. Parties should consult legal counsel to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.\*

## **APPENDIX D: Sample Organization Chart**

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# Atlantic County, New Fire Service Dispatch Advisory Board

