
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Senator Henry Stern

Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: SB 985 **Hearing Date:** 4/14/2026
Author: Strickland
Version: 3/23/2026 Amended
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Cassie Royce

SUBJECT: 911 emergency system

SUMMARY: Requires the Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to submit specified reports to the Legislature regarding the implementation of California's Next Generation 911 (NG 911) system.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Warren 911 Emergency Services Act which specifies that 911 is the primary emergency telephone number for contacting emergency services within the state, and sets requirements for the 911 system.
- 2) Designates Cal OES as the agency responsible for administering the state's 911 emergency telephone system, including local dispatch centers known as Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), with funds from a 911 customer surcharge on intrastate communication service.
- 3) Establishes the State 911 Advisory Board, comprised of 11 members appointed by the Governor from specified public safety agencies and emergency communications associations to advise Cal OES on technical and operational standards for the 911 system, funding for the system, and proposed additional 911 projects and studies.
- 4) Requires Cal OES to develop a plan and timeline for the testing, implementation, and operation of an NG 911 system, including text to 911 services.

This bill:

- 1) Directs Cal OES to submit quarterly reports to the Legislature on the development and implementation of a NG 911 system in California and requires the reports to include current year and total spending on the NG 911 system's development and implementation.
- 2) Specifies that the quarterly reports must also include the following:
 - a) Documentation of progress and challenges towards implementing the NG 911 system.
 - b) Proposed solutions to identify challenges and the costs associated with potential solutions.
 - c) Identified impacts to timelines and expected dates of completion for solutions to address implementation challenges.
- 3) Requires Cal OES to submit a copy of each quarterly report to the chairs of the legislative budget committees, appropriate budget subcommittees, and to the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), according to specified deadlines.
- 4) Provides that Cal OES shall submit quarterly reports as specified by this bill until NG 911 has been fully implemented and the legacy 911 system has been retired.

Background

Author's statement. According to the author, "Emergency response is a core function of government, and 911 is the lifeline that connects the public to those critical emergency services. Californians should never have to wonder whether the system will work if they find themselves in a life-or-death situation. This administration made big promises and spent hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars, but failed to deliver a functioning, upgraded emergency response system. Instead, many 911 callers faced busy signals or were unable to get through at all. The Fix 911 Act provides transparency and legislative oversight so this never happens again. Accountability is not optional when public safety is at stake."

Statewide 911 System. California's existing 911 system includes 438 PSAPs that receive about 28 million 911 voice calls per year. These calls are dispatched to local first responders including police, ambulance, fire, medical and other emergency service providers. About 80 percent of all 911 calls are from wireless devices.

The Public Safety Communications Office within Cal OES administers the state 911 system, reviews local PSAPs' 911 equipment and operations, and reimburses

their reasonable costs for planning, implementation, and maintenance of approved 911 systems. The California Chapter of the Emergency Number Association (CALNENA) represents the state's PSAPs and provides research, planning, and training to support 911 dispatchers and the state 911 system. The State 911 Advisory Board advises Cal OES on operation, funding, and long-range planning for PSAPs and the state 911 system.

Prior NG 911 implementation problems with a regional approach. SB 1211 (Padilla), Chapter 926, Statutes of 2014, directs Cal OES to develop a plan and timeline for the new system. The implementation of NG 911 is intended to help transition the 911 system to technologies that can better accommodate communications over an internet-based telecommunications system. Until this transition occurs, PSAPs continue to use largely outdated legacy systems built on deteriorating hardware.

Originally, Cal OES designed NG 911 as a regional system that used separate contractor vendors for each of four regions and a statewide backup provider. Two physical systems were connected to each PSAP (one primary and one backup). Each of the regional vendors established connectivity to each PSAP to increase redundancy. If any one vendor were to have an outage, the other vendors could continue providing services statewide.

Between 2021 and 2024, Cal OES began transitioning 23 PSAPs to the NG 911 system. However, in late 2024, Cal OES paused the project as reports emerged identifying major flaws during this transition period, including dropped calls, outages, and the inability to route calls to the correct responding agencies. In several circumstances, affected PSAPs indicated that the NG 911 failures impacted emergency response capabilities at the local level and may have delayed emergency services.

By November 2025, Cal OES presented a Transition Plan to the State 911 Advisory Board and submitted a report to the Legislature on the status and plans for NG 911. In developing the report on the updated plan, Cal OES indicated they met with the initial 23 PSAPs that had partially transitioned voice calls, the regional vendors, the California Department of Technology (CDT), and the Advisory Board. Overall, Cal OES stated that the number of vendors involved increased the complexity during the transition and during troubleshooting, and that the regional approach was not viable, given the challenges associated with the handling of calls during the transition period, the ability to resolve issues among the vendors; and, the burdens of testing on PSAP staff.

Current implementation planning with a statewide model. In both the Transition Plan and the report to the Legislature, Cal OES proposed a new approach, shifting to a statewide, rather than a regional system, and the use of transitional elements to assist PSAPs as they migrated to the new statewide model. In February 2026, Cal OES released its Implementation Plan describing the next steps forward in implementing this new approach. According to the plan, Cal OES will initially enter into an interim contract to move the 23 partially-transitioned PSAPs to the network provided by the current statewide provider within the next 90 days. Cal OES also indicates that during this interim period, they intend to focus on transitioning the Los Angeles region PSAPs prior to the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic games, as well as other PSAPs with urgent needs.

After this interim period, Cal OES envisions implementing the new NG 911 approach in the following three phases: (1) establishing long-term contracts with statewide NG 911 providers, in partnership with CDT; (2) migrating all PSAPs to the statewide provider, and (3) decommissioning legacy 911. Cal OES anticipates awarding the long-term contracts in 2026, resuming the process of transitioning additional PSAPs in June 2027, completing the transition of all PSAPs by June 2030, and taking the legacy system offline by July 2030.

Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) report. Concerns about transparency and oversight for NG 911 development persist. In February 2026, the LAO issued a report on the new statewide NG 911 proposal. The report noted a lack of transparency regarding the errors that occurred under the regional system and an absence of sufficient information about concrete steps Cal OES will take to ensure that the same mistakes are not repeated in the development of a statewide system.

The LAO's report recommended the following:

- a) Pause the transition to the statewide approach until Cal OES provides sufficient information or seek an independent, third-party evaluation.
- b) Establish quarterly fiscal reports and monthly progress reports to the Legislature.
- c) Consider long-term governance options and oversight.

The reporting requirements in this bill are consistent with the quarterly reporting requirements recommended by the LAO.

Cal OES response. Cal OES shared its written comments in response to the LAO report with the Committee. Cal OES writes that the statewide approach will resolve the inadequacies and flaws of the regional model because every element of the NG 911 system will be standardized and backed up. That requirement applies to

specific technical components and to the overall combination of components. The NG 911 provider will supply not only backup technology configurations within a data center, but also multiple data centers, and multiple distribution networks utilizing separate physical paths to allow for failover, or the transition from one network to another when issues arise.

Using the statewide approach and open procurement, Cal OES states that they will require potential providers to describe their capabilities to protect the state from component failures, distribution failures, and entire service failures. Cal OES will also require providers to demonstrate the use of those capabilities in live NG 911 systems where the capabilities can be verified. Cal OES will require the use of consistent operation and reporting that follow industry-standard support and operations processes. Cal OES indicates that, together, these capabilities will allow the NG 911 providers to deploy solutions that work 99.999% of the time and protect all areas of the state without the risk involved with custom solutions.

Prior/Related Legislation

SB 670 (McGuire, Chapter 412, Statutes of 2019) establishes reporting requirements for telecommunications outages that impact 911 services and directs telecommunications providers to submit specified reports to Cal OES when such outages occur.

SB 1211 directs Cal OES to develop a plan and timeline for the testing, implementation, and operation of the NG 911 system.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

SUPPORT:

CALFIRE Local 2881
California Association of Highway Patrolmen
California Chapter of the National Emergency Number Association
Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association
Riverside County Sheriff's Office

OPPOSITION:

None on file

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: In support of this bill, CALNENA writes that, "From the perspective of those working in 9-1-1 centers every day, our mission is

simple: ensuring that every person in California has reliable and immediate access to emergency services when they need it most. When someone dials 9-1-1, the public's primary concern is that the system is reliable and efficient. It is our responsibility, at both the state and local level, to ensure that expectation is met – every single time. Advancing the Next Generation 9-1-1 project will ensure that when Californians reach out for help, 9-1-1 professionals are prepared, always ready to answer the call and that help is on the way. While not the entire solution, we believe that more oversight of the implementation of the NG911 system is imperative. [This] measure is a step in the direction of transparency, and for this reason we are happy to support it.”

DUAL REFERRAL: Senate Committee on Energy, Utilities and Communications and Senate Emergency Management Committee