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THIRD READING

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Bill No: SB 985  
Author: Strickland (R) and Seyarto (R), et al.  
Amended: 3/23/26  
Vote: 21

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SENATE ENERGY, U. & C. COMMITTEE: 15-0, 3/17/26  
AYES: Allen, Ochoa Bogh, Archuleta, Arreguín, Becker, Dahle, Gonzalez,  
Hurtado, McNerney, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Stern, Strickland, Wahab  
NO VOTE RECORDED: Caballero, Grove

SENATE EMERGENCY MGT. COMMITTEE: 9-0, 4/14/26  
AYES: Stern, Seyarto, Allen, Ashby, Blakespear, Dahle, Grayson, Pérez, Rubio

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 5/14/26  
AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

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**SUBJECT:** 911 emergency system

**SOURCE:** Author

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**DIGEST:** This bill 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 a 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% 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.

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. 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 stated that the regional approach was not viable given the challenges associated with the handling of calls during the transition period, the inability 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. During this interim period, Cal OES intends 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 the 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 2026; (2) migrating all PSAPs to the statewide provider by June 2030, and (3) decommissioning legacy 911 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.

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

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, Cal OES estimates ongoing costs of \$237,000 annually (General Fund) for one position through the duration of NG 9-1-1 implementation to manage accelerated reporting timelines and required updates that are stipulated in this bill.

**SUPPORT:** (Verified 5/14/26)

CAL FIRE 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:** (Verified 5/14/26)

None received

**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.”

Prepared by: Cassie Royce / E.M. /  
5/16/26 10:00:04

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