Date of Hearing: June 15, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
Rhodesia Ransom, Chair
SB 985 (Strickland) – As Amended June 10, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 33-0

SUBJECT: 911 emergency system

SUMMARY: Requires the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to provide quarterly reports to the Legislature on the development, implementation, and spending on the Next Generation 911 (NG911) system, as specified. Specifically, **this bill**:

1) Specifies this act as the "Fix 911 Act"

2) Requires Cal OES to provide quarterly reports to the Legislature on the development and implementation of, as well as total and current year funding spent on, the NG911 system in California.

3) Requires these reports to also include:

    a. A documentation of progress and challenges, as specified, related to developing and implementing NG911.

    b. Proposed solutions to any identified challenges, including any associated costs and effects on the implementation timeline

    c. Progress on any chosen solutions.

    d. Recommendations made by the State 911 Advisory Board to the office and any actions taken in response to those recommendations or any decisions made that contradict those recommendations, as specified.

4) Requires Cal OES to submit a copy of each quarterly report to the chairs of the legislative budget committees, appropriate budget subcommittees, the Assembly and Senate Committees on Emergency Management, the State 911 Advisory Board, and to the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO).

5) Requires the quarterly reports be submitted by January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1 of each year until the NG911 system is fully implemented and the legacy 911 system is decommissioned.

EXISTING LAW:

1) Establishes the Warren-911 Emergency Assistance Act to require local public agencies to maintain an emergency communication system using "911" as the primary, universal emergency response number and requires OES to coordinate the implementation of 911 systems and support local agencies in the operation and improvement of 911 systems. (Government Code § 53100 et. seq.)

2) Requires Cal OES to develop a plan and timeline of target dates for the testing, implementation, and operation of a Next Generation 911 emergency communication system, including text to 911 service, throughout the State. (Government Code § 53121)

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. (Government Code § 53115.1 -.2)

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, "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."

COMMENTS:

Author's Statement: "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."

Equity Statement: "By enabling oversight of the NextGen 911 project, SB 985 takes a critical step toward ensuring that all Californians have access to lifesaving emergency services. That includes the state's most vulnerable populations, such as those who are the victim of a violent crime or suffer a physical or mental health crisis. The prolonged delays and system disruptions that have resulted from the project thus far put these groups at risk.

Additionally, delaying integration of modern technological capabilities like texting and video calls disproportionately impacts individuals who struggle with voice-based phone calls, such as people who have a hearing impairment, a speech-related disability, or limited English proficiency. SB 985 supports more equitable access to 911 services by facilitating accountability and transparency of the system's modernization project."

Background: The state's 911 system consists of 447 local dispatch centers (also known as Public Safety Answering Points, or PSAPs) that receive emergency calls from the public and dispatch first responders to assist. Since 2013, OES has been responsible for administering this system. The State 911 Advisory Board, which consists of 11 members, is responsible for advising OES on matters related to the state's 911 system. Funding for the state's 911 system comes from a monthly surcharge on telephone customers deposited in the State Emergency Telephone Number Account (SETNA). The 911 surcharge rate for calendar year 2026 is 41 cents. SETNA is expected to receive $215 million in surcharge revenue in 2026-27.

Transitioning From Legacy 911 to Next Generation 911: OES is transitioning the state from "legacy 911" (designed to operate on copper landlines) to Next Generation 911. Next Generation

911 systems use Internet Protocol (IP)-based technology to send 911 data from one computer to another over the Internet. This technology allows 911 callers to share multimedia emergency communications (voice, video, photos, and text) and improved location data with dispatch centers. It also allows dispatchers to share this data directly with first responders. Additionally, Next Generation 911 systems can be used to automatically re-route 911 calls to other dispatch centers, which can help with high call volumes during natural disasters, large emergencies, or major events; or if one or more dispatch centers stop operating.

Original Next Generation 911 Regional Plan: California's approach originally involved dividing the state into four regions with a single statewide vendor serving as a back-up. These four regions are each served by a regional network service provider (or regional vendor) that is responsible for providing services to connect every dispatch center within their assigned region. The prime network service provider (or statewide vendor) is responsible for providing back-up services connecting all 447 dispatch centers statewide. The central purpose of this design is to ensure the system can survive failure. It does so by providing back-ups for network and core services (the software and databases needed to route emergency communications on the network) within each region and statewide, and by containing outages within a single area. The plan also required the regional and statewide networks to be interoperable without sharing any infrastructure. According to OES, Next Generation 911 network infrastructure "has been installed across the state and is now used to deliver both location services (911 caller location) and text-to-911" at all state dispatch centers.

Between July 2019 and August 2025, Next Generation 911 system development costs in accordance with the regional approach totaled $456 million. The total cost to simultaneously operate legacy 911 during these same years was $148 million. Additionally, the state provided support to dispatch centers totaling $253 million.

Delays and Issues: The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the deployment of Next Generation 911. In addition, starting in 2021, 23 of the state's dispatch centers began transitioning voice calls from legacy 911 to Next Generation 911 with some experiencing difficulties. Specifically, some of these early adopters, such as Tuolumne Couty, reported experiencing call routing problems, outages, and dropped calls. In early 2025, OES paused the transition of additional dispatch centers in order to investigate. It found four main concerns: (1) Dispatch centers did not have a clear support process when it was necessary to report a trouble ticket; (2) Complexities of the network and interdependencies between the service providers created failure points; (3) The regional approach created a situation where both the technical and operational design were significantly adjusted from industry-standard practices, introducing fragility and risk; and (4) Call handling procedures in the hybrid legacy/Next Generation 911 configuration generated additional work for dispatch center staff.

New Next Generation 911 Transition Plan: In November 2025, OES released an updated *2025 Next Generation 9-1-1 Transition Plan*. Under the updated transition plan, the state will switch from the regional approach to a statewide approach with two statewide network providers—one prime network service provider and a back-up. OES states that the switch to the statewide approach will eliminate the problematic interfaces and complexity while preserving system resiliency. It further notes that the statewide approach comports with Next Generation 911 system standards established by the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) and that it aligns with the "proven network architecture" used by other states.

OES, in February 2026, indicated that it would deploy statewide Next Generation 911 services in three phases:

> *Phase One.* In February 2026, OES reports it will execute an interim contract to move the dispatch centers that are currently using regional Next Generation 911 networks for voice calls to a statewide provider within 90 days. After these dispatch centers have been migrated, OES will focus on deploying Next Generation 911 services to the Los Angeles area, to help prepare for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic games. In addition to these priorities, up to 20 other dispatch centers (those in most urgent need) will also be moved onto the statewide network. As a final part of phase one, in the fall of 2026, OES (in partnership with CDT) will establish long-term contracts with its statewide Next Generation 911 vendor. As part of this procurement process, OES will "require the statewide provider to propose and demonstrate the ability to reach an availability level of 99.999% or better, and the ability to utilize multiple data centers, distribution networks, and aggregation sites."
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> *Phase Two.* During phase two (late 2026), OES will transition all dispatch centers to the new, long-term, primary statewide network vendor. Transitional elements will be used. This will, among other things, allow dispatch centers to move to the Next Generation 911 network individually. (OES notes that under the previous approach, dispatch centers that transfer calls amongst each other had to migrate together, in a group.)
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> *Phase Three.* The final phase of the implementation plan involves decommissioning the legacy 911 system with a target date of 2030.

LAO Report: In February 2026, the Legislative Analyst's Office released a report on the NG911 System. That report asserts the following:

1. The NG911 project is significantly delayed and the cost estimate for the new approach is unclear.
2. Changing the system will bring tradeoffs, especially those related to system redundancy.
3. There are several key questions left unanswered, including:

    a. *What Is the Nature and Scope of the Problem?* For example, have the regional networks experienced systematic technical failures or are the problems a reflection of management and coordination challenges?
    b. *Will New Plan Solve the Problem?* What evidence is there showing that the transition to a statewide approach will solve the problems identified by OES? Is there enough redundancy in the new approach?
    c. *What Other Options Were Considered?* Does the state need to transition to a statewide approach to solve these problems, or can they be solved within the regional approach as it currently exists? What other options have been explored?
    d. *How Do the Options Compare?* How do different options compare on parameters such as cost, effectiveness of addressing the problems encountered to date, and length of time to decommission the legacy 911 system?

The LAO recommends the Legislature:

1) Direct OES to pause implementation of them statewide approach until it can provide answers to the key questions.
2) Consider halting the project to allow an independent third-party to evaluate the state's options.
3) Require CAL OES to provide ongoing monthly project updates and quarterly fiscal reports.
4) Consider implementing a new governance structure to provide greater ongoing oversight of the 911 system.

Prior Reporting Requirements: The 2025 Budget Act (Wiener, Chap. 4, Stats. 2025), in order for OES to receive funds from SETNA, required Cal OES to provide four reports (quarterly) to the Legislature on the progress of the NextGen 911 project. This was later reduced to a two report requirement in trailer budget bill language (Gabriel, Chap. 5, Stats. 2025). The report requirements in these budget bills are substantively similar to the requirements this bill seeks to codify until the NG911 system is implemented and the legacy system is decommissioned.

Double Referral: Should this bill be approved, it will be referred to the Assembly Committee on Communications and Conveyance.

Related Legislation:

AB 1805 (Ransom, 2026). This bill would provide the California Department of Technology (CDT) with oversight authority over the Next Generation 911 system, requires the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to submit quarterly reports regarding the development and implementation of, and the total and current year funding spent on, the Next Generation 911 systems, and requires the California State Auditor to conduct an audit regarding the implementation of the Next Generation 911 (NG911) system by Cal OES. (Currently in Senate Rules)

Arguments in Support: According to the California Association of Highway Patrolmen, "The transition to NG911 has been underway since around 2019 with the goal of creating a more resilient, interoperable statewide network. However, the rollout has faced delays and technical challenges, and the state is now working toward a revised approach with full implementation expected closer to 2030. SB 985 requires quarterly reporting to the Legislature on NG911 progress, spending, and challenges. This helps ensure the system is implemented efficiently and actually meets field needs. CHP and other stakeholders that rely on this system will benefit from clearer timelines and oversight. For these reasons we are proud to support SB 985…"

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Cal Fire Local 2881
California Association of Highway Patrolmen
California Chapter National Emergency Number Association (CALNENA)
Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association (HJTA)
Riverside County Sheriff's Office
The California Baptist Capitol Ministry
United EMS Workers, Afscme Local 4911

Opposition

None on file.

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