

Challenges Facing Idaho's 911 System

Evaluation Report – Part II
March 2026

Office of Performance Evaluations
ope
Idaho Legislature

Promoting confidence and accountability in state government.



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From the director

March 2026

Members
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee
Idaho Legislature

In September, we reported that Idaho's transition to Next Generation 911 will not be sustainable without Legislative action. This report examines the broader challenges facing the local 911 centers that serve as the critical link between Idahoans in crisis and the first responders who help them.

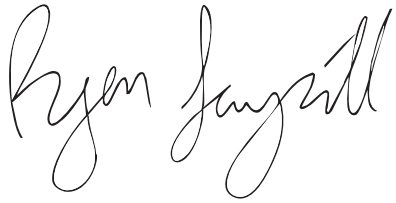
Most of Idaho's 911 centers report that they are under financial strain, including 94 percent of those serving communities with fewer than 25,000 people. Nearly two-thirds of centers have call-handling equipment nearing the end of life; about the same proportion do not have enough staff to meet their current demands.

Two facts stand out about Idaho's 911 system. First, the $1 per phone line fee that funds much of Idaho's system has not changed since 1988, despite inflation and reported needs of centers. Second, Idaho has nearly twice as many 911 centers and twice as many employees as Utah, despite Idaho's population being much smaller. Adjusting the fee or consolidating centers seem like obvious recommendations.

However, we make neither of these recommendations for the same reason: Idaho does not have a statewide entity that collects data and can help balance the desire of Idahoans for their government to be as local as possible with fiscal responsibility. We recommend the Legislature evolve the Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission into a statewide program with the authority to contract, manage the Next Generation 911 transition, and collect the information the state and Legislature needs to ensure that Idaho's 911 system is efficient and effective.

Governor Little, the Military Division, and the Commission, in their written responses, report that they stand ready to work with the Legislature to modernize Idaho's 911 system.

Sincerely,



Ryan Langrill, Director
Office of Performance Evaluations



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OPE extends its sincere gratitude to the 911 centers that participated in our survey and provided their time and facilities for interviews and site visits.

Executive summary

Why we were asked to do this study

During the 2025 legislative session, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee directed us to evaluate Idaho's emergency communications system (911 system). Study requesters cited concerns about system sustainability, outdated technology, and the state's transition to Next Generation 911 (NG911).

We completed the first phase of work, *Sustainability of Idaho's Transition to Next Generation 911*, in September 2025. The report focuses on the lack of statewide support despite the statewide nature of the NG911 rollout. We found that the funding source used for the transition to NG911 is currently insufficient to sustain a NG911 system beyond 2030.

The first report of this two-phase evaluation did not evaluate funding and resources to support local 911 center operations, nor did we assess broader issues. This report focuses on the requesters' additional concerns about challenges in maintaining current 911 systems.

What we found

Idaho's 911 centers operate under financial and operational strain. The funding model has not kept pace with the increasing complexity of emergency communications technology. Workforce challenges, like recruiting and retaining qualified staff, add pressure. Idaho also likely operates more 911 centers than call demand requires, but the state lacks reliable data to assess efficiency.

Underlying each of these challenges is that Idaho does not have a statewide 911 program with authority to collect data, establish standards, lead long-term planning, and oversee the statewide transition to NG911.

Local control remains central to Idaho's 911 system. However, the NG911 transition is statewide in scope. A statewide 911 program could reduce risks to individual counties and address challenges to the 911 system as a whole.

Idaho's 911 centers are under strain with the current funding model.

Idaho's primary 911 centers rely on two key sources of funding: fees collected on phone lines and allocations from county or city budgets. The fee is capped at $1 per line, set when the Emergency Communications Act was enacted in 1988. Use of the phone-line fees is governed by federal law and Idaho statute. Idaho statute places additional restrictions on how the fee may be used beyond federal guidance, including prohibiting its use for staffing costs of emergency communications officers. The state restrictions on the use of phone-line fees mean that the responsibility for salaries and benefits must come from city or county general funds.

While the fee has not changed, the operational cost structure of 911 centers has changed substantially. One main driver of that cost structure change is that technology has changed significantly since 1988, and is used more in how 911 calls are routed, received, and services are dispatched.

In a survey of primary 911 centers, officials at 911 centers reported that funding was a significant concern, with 64 percent of survey respondents disagreeing that their center receives enough funding to provide the dispatch services their community needs. Technology and staffing were identified as the most challenging areas to fund within existing budgets.

We found that funding is a concern for most 911 centers, but it disproportionately affects 911 centers serving fewer than 25,000 residents. Ninety-four percent disagree that they receive sufficient funding (representing 16 out of 33 responding 911 centers).

Idaho's 911 centers face staffing challenges that impact daily operations.

Idaho's 911 centers face staffing and retention challenges, especially with the emergency communications officers who receive and dispatch calls for emergency services. In our survey, 83 percent of respondents ranked staffing and retention among the top three operational challenges. Two-thirds of respondents (67 percent) reported they do not have sufficient staffing to meet workload demands, and 56 percent reported unfilled positions often or always (exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1

Most surveyed 911 centers face staffing challenges.



Note: This exhibit summarizes results from three survey questions. (1) Respondents ranked eight topics from 1 (most challenging) to 8 (least challenging) (n=40). (2) Respondents indicated their level of agreement, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with the statement, "our 911 center has sufficient staffing to meet operational demands" (n=43); and (3) Respondents reported how often their 911 center has unfilled positions, using a scale from always to never (n=43). We combined response categories for reporting.

Notably, 911 centers serving more than 25,000 residents are more affected by staffing challenges. Seventy-nine percent do not have sufficient staffing to meet workload demands, and 68 percent have unfilled positions often or always (representing 19 out of 43 responding 911 centers). This is likely because larger 911 centers have more positions to fill and face more competition.

Compensation increases are difficult for some 911 centers. Staffing costs are funded entirely through local budgets, which shape decisions about wage levels. This means that compensation

increases can create trade-offs and reduce the ability to raise wages for other positions, such as law enforcement. Additionally, 911 centers reported challenges competing with neighboring counties with larger populations or budgets.

Idaho has made efforts to address staffing challenges and recognize the public safety role of emergency communications officers. Idaho is one of the states that has reclassified emergency communications officers as first responders and extended the same benefits to them as those provided to law enforcement.

Idaho's 911 system includes a relatively high number of 911 centers and staff compared to call demand.

We examined why Idaho has 48 primary 911 centers in operation and whether that number aligned with service needs. Based on proximity, the population served, and the duplication of administrative functions, Idaho likely operates more 911 centers than necessary. However, the state lacks reliable data needed to determine how many 911 centers would operate the system most efficiently.

Using best available data from the Federal Communications Commission, we compared Idaho's system to neighboring states. These comparisons have limitations because of how states collect and report data, but they highlight potential inefficiencies.

For example, Idaho reported to the Federal Communications Commission a relatively similar number of calls per 100,000 residents to Utah, yet Idaho has 48 primary 911 centers compared to Utah's 27. A higher number of 911 centers can create potential inefficiencies, such as duplicate technology or administrative functions.

Likely because there are more 911 centers, Idaho reported to the Federal Communications Commission the most emergency communications officers per 100,000 residents across six neighboring states. Idaho employs 75 percent more emergency communications officers than Utah (637 compared to 365), even though Idaho's population is 43 percent smaller than Utah's.

Insufficient 911 system oversight limits the state's ability to address 911 challenges.

Idaho lacks a statewide 911 program that can oversee, analyze, and advocate for Idaho's 911 system. Since Idaho established its 911 system, technology and operating conditions have changed significantly. For example, the implementation of NG911 requires the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) data, whereas prior 911 systems did not. The current environment requires stronger statewide coordination to support collaboration among 911 centers, identify trends, and resolve shared issues.

The Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission was created to support collaboration among statewide officials, 911 centers, and other emergency communications partners. The Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission has helped advance Idaho's transition to NG911, but it has done so without the authority, staffing, and operational support typically needed for a statewide effort.

Recommendations

We recommend the Legislature consider evolving the Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission into a statewide 911 program with the authority to

- develop and oversee a statewide 911 system;
- maintain an advisory board of members to provide input on local needs;
- require local governments to report annual budgets and expenditures for emergency communications; and
- develop and adopt criteria to define cost responsibilities between 911 fee revenues and local governments.

In the absence of a statewide 911 program, we recommend the Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission should

- collect call-handling metrics, like call-answering time; and
- publish standards for metrics, such as call-answering time, for local 911 centers to follow.

1 Introduction

Legislative interest: Idaho's local governments face challenges in maintaining 911 systems as costs rise and technology ages.

During the 2025 legislative session, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee directed our office to evaluate Idaho's emergency communications system (911 system). Study requesters cited concerns about system sustainability, outdated technology, and the state's transition to Next Generation 911 (NG911). See appendix A for the study request.

Our office completed the first phase of work, *Sustainability of Idaho's Transition to Next Generation 911,* in September 2025. The report focuses on the lack of statewide support despite the statewide nature of the NG911 rollout.

The study requesters noted that a fee adjustment might be necessary to support the transition to NG911. Idaho's 911 centers use multiple fee types to fund 911 systems.[1] We found that the funding source used for the transition to NG911 is currently insufficient to sustain a NG911 system beyond 2030. However, the first report of this two-phase evaluation did not evaluate funding and resources to support local 911 center operations, nor did we assess broader issues. This report focuses on the requesters' additional concerns about challenges in maintaining current 911 systems.

1. This report uses the term 911 center to refer to emergency communication centers, also known as public safety answering points (PSAPs).

Evaluation approach

The goal of this evaluation was to understand how well the 911 fee revenue supports maintaining 911 systems and the needs of local entities that operate 911 centers in Idaho. This report repeats some concepts from the first report.

A central focus of our work was gathering input from local officials about the challenges they face in providing 911 services and the information they believe the Legislature should understand. We conducted site visits at five 911 centers in northern and eastern Idaho. During these visits, we interviewed multiple individuals responsible for operating 911 centers. We also interviewed secondary 911 centers, which receive calls from primary 911 centers. For this phase of work, we conducted thirteen additional interviews with 911 centers statewide. We surveyed all primary 911 centers that receive 911 calls directly from the public, with a 90 percent response rate. For a summary of survey responses, see appendix D.

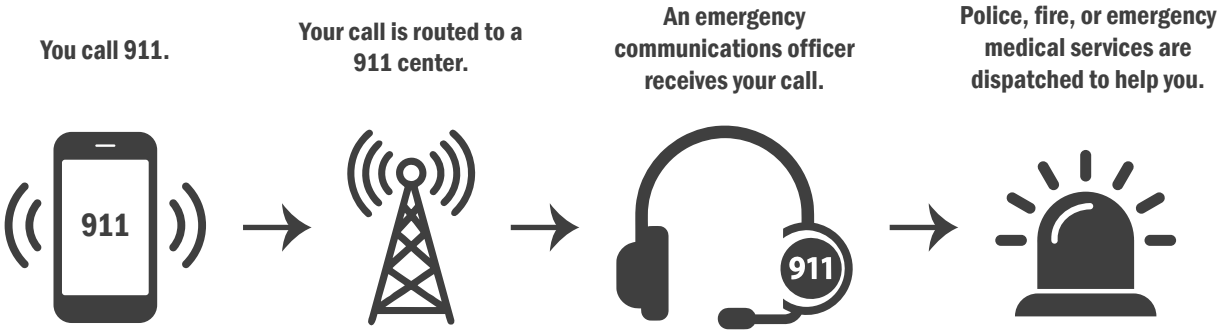
We reviewed Idaho statutes and administrative rules, as well as federal law and guidance from national organizations, including the Federal Communications Commission, the National Emergency Number Association, and the National Association of State 911 Administrators. We supplemented this work by reviewing reports from other states to identify common challenges and best practices. Appendix B describes the project scope, and appendix C describes our methods.

How Idaho's 911 system works

When someone calls 911, the call is routed to a 911 center, where an emergency communications officer answers and dispatches emergency services: law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, or a combination of responders (exhibit 2). The 911 system consists of several technical components: call-handling equipment that emergency communication officers use to answer the calls, radio systems that support dispatch operations and communication with first responders and computer-aided dispatch (CAD) systems that track calls, incidents, and the status of responding units.

Exhibit 2

When you call 911, your call is routed to a 911 center where an emergency communications officer receives your call and dispatches emergency services to help you.

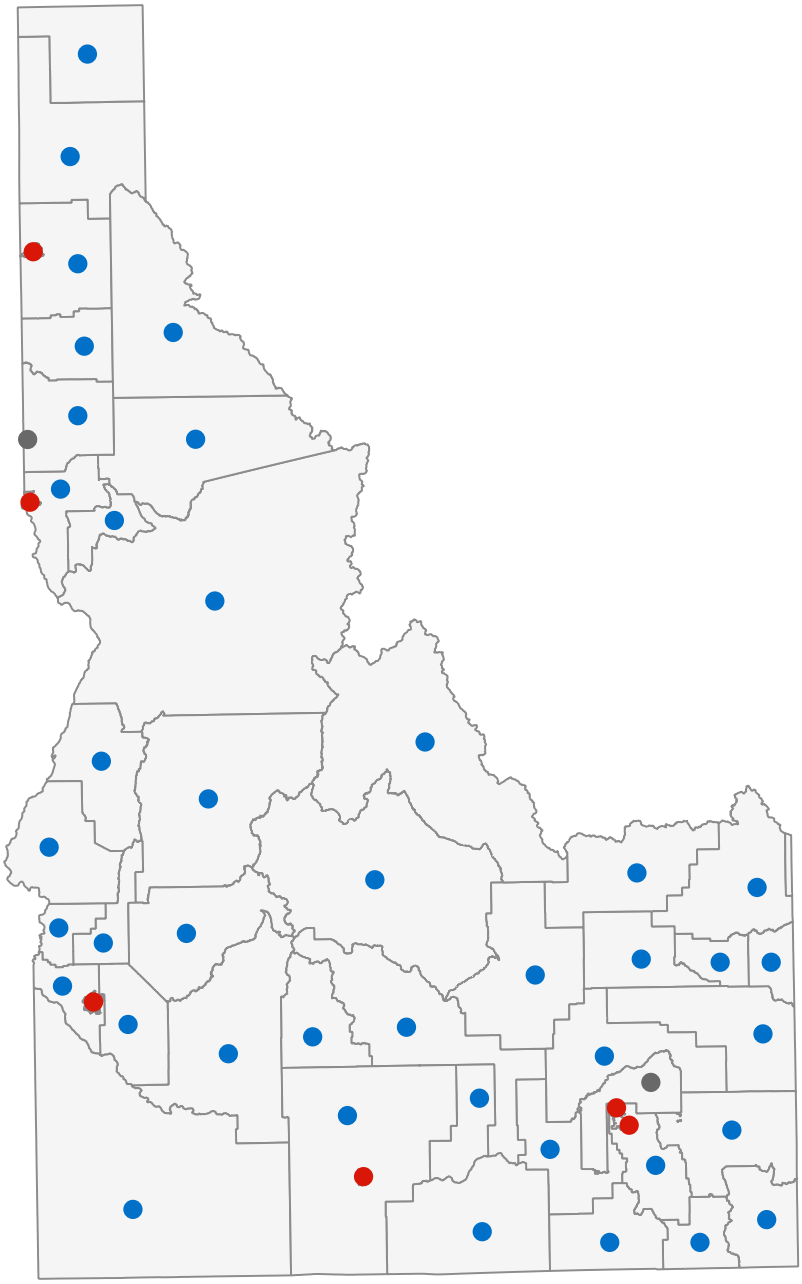


Idaho has 48 primary 911 centers that receive emergency calls from the public and four secondary 911 centers (exhibit 3).[2] Counties operate most 911 centers, though six of the primary 911 centers are city-operated, and several counties jointly operate one 911 center. County or city governments establish 911 centers and authorize the collection of an emergency communications fee from phone subscribers within their service area.

2. Primary 911 centers receive calls directly from the public (when they dial 911). Secondary 911 centers receive transferred calls or calls from other 911 centers. Secondary 911 centers do not receive the 911 fee.

Exhibit 3

Idaho has 48 primary 911 centers that receive emergency calls from the public, including six city-operated 911 centers.



Note: Dots mark the center of each center's service area, not the exact location of the 911 center. Boundaries represent service areas, which may span multiple counties and may not follow city or county lines. Dots may obscure smaller service areas. The dot representing the City of Moscow is gray because the city contracts with Washington (Whitcom). The dot representing the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe is gray because the Fort Hall Police Department, part of a sovereign nation, operates the 911 center.



While the state has no oversight of 911 centers, the Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission provides statewide coordination and assists local governments in managing emergency communications systems. In our previous report, we found that the Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission has limited authority and funding to lead a statewide 911 program.

StateComm: A unique part of Idaho's 911 system

StateComm, Idaho's State EMS Communications Center, is a secondary 911 center operated by the Bureau of Emergency Medical Services within the Idaho Military Division that dispatches emergency medical services for all of Boise County and two units in Lemhi County. StateComm also dispatches the Idaho Transportation Department statewide on the state-managed highway and interstate system. While it does not receive calls directly from the public, StateComm coordinates emergency communications for EMS, transportation incidents, hazardous materials, public health emergencies, AMBER Alerts, and other statewide incidents. StateComm is unique to Idaho and is described as "911's 911".

2 Funding challenges

Idaho's 911 system is highly decentralized, with primary responsibility for 911 center operations, funding, and staffing resting with counties and, in some cases, cities. This setup has allowed communities to maintain 911 center operations at the local level. We found that the 911 system faces increasing challenges from constrained funding mechanisms combined with aging infrastructure and rising costs.

The state has begun the transition to Next Generation 911 (NG911), intended to replace legacy systems with modern infrastructure. Our previous report highlighted concerns about statewide management and funding for NG911. In this phase, local officials reinforced uncertainty about funding sufficiency, governance, and operational impacts as NG911 implementation begins.



Idaho's 911 centers are under strain with the current funding model.

Idaho's primary 911 centers rely on two key sources of funding: fees collected on phone lines and allocations from county or city budgets.[3] Since Idaho's Emergency Communications Act was enacted in 1988, the operational cost structure of 911 centers has changed substantially. One main driver of that cost structure change is that technology has changed significantly since 1988, and is used more in how 911 calls are routed, received, and services are dispatched.

Officials at 911 centers reported that funding was a significant concern, with 64 percent of survey respondents disagreeing that their center receives enough funding to provide the dispatch services their community needs (exhibit 4). Technology and staffing were identified as the most challenging areas to fund within existing budgets.

Exhibit 4

A majority of surveyed 911 centers disagree that they receive sufficient funding to provide the dispatch services their community needs.



Note: We combined response categories for reporting. Neutral = Neither agree nor disagree. (n=33)

3. In some cases, 911 centers are funded by charges to agencies, such as fire districts, for services provided.

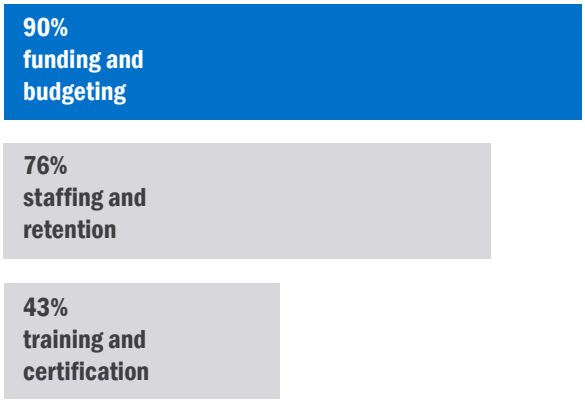
Funding is a concern for most 911 centers, but it disproportionately affects 911 centers serving fewer than 25,000 residents. Ninety-four percent disagree that they receive sufficient funding (representing 16 out of 33 responding 911 centers). See appendix F for the 911 center population estimates and map.

> **Our [911 center] is struggling to keep a single operating station in working order. Grant opportunities, revenue opportunities, and donations are all appreciated.**
>
> **– Official at a 911 center**

When asked to identify their most challenging issues, funding and budgeting emerged as a primary concern, particularly for 911 centers serving fewer than 25,000 residents. Ninety percent ranked funding and budgeting among their top three challenges, compared to 73 percent of centers overall (representing 21 out of 40 responding 911 centers) (exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5

90 percent of surveyed 911 centers serving fewer than 25,000 residents rank funding and budgeting among their top three challenges.



Note: Respondents ranked eight topics from 1 (most challenging) to 8 (least challenging). The exhibit shows the top three issues ranked as most challenging for 911 centers with fewer than 25,000 residents. Percentages do not sum to 100 percent. (n= 21)

Phone-line fees

911 centers collect a $1 monthly fee on all lines capable of making emergency calls.[4] Counties may also opt to collect an additional $0.25 per line for the enhanced emergency communications grant fee, discussed in depth in the previous report. Finally, the State Tax Commission collects a 2.5 percent fee on prepaid wireless phone lines and remits it to the Emergency Communications Fund. The Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission distributes the non-grant portion of the prepaid fee to 911 centers based on population.

Use of the phone-line fees are governed by federal law and Idaho statute. Idaho statute places additional restrictions on how the fee may be used, including prohibiting its use for staffing costs of emergency communications officers.

County or city general funds

The state restrictions on the use of phone-line fees mean the responsibility for salaries and benefits must come from city or county general funds. This funding is commonly from the county sheriff's budget.

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4. Idaho Code § 31-4804 authorizes counties and local governing bodies to set the fee in their jurisdiction through a voter approval process. The fee cannot exceed $1.00. At the time of this report, all 911 centers were collecting the full $1.00 per telephone line.

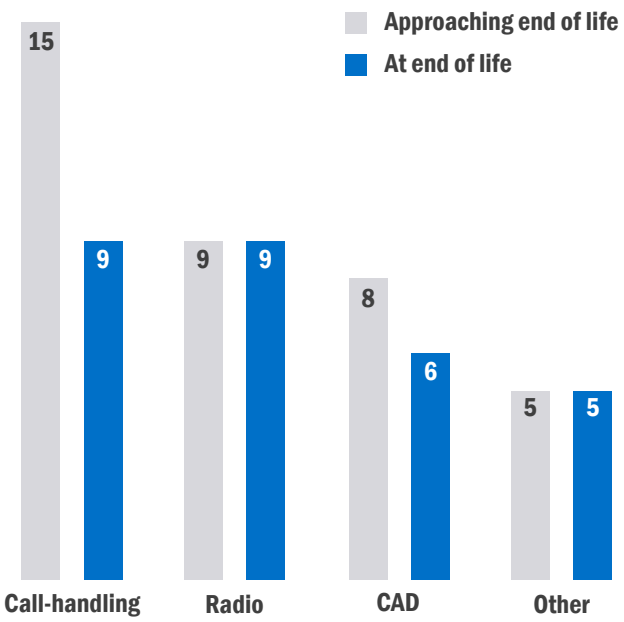


Many systems are near end of life and technology costs have increased.

Survey responses indicate widespread aging of core 911 systems. Nearly two-thirds of reported call-handling systems are expected to reach the end of life within the next two years.[5] This means the system will need to be replaced within the next two years. Radio systems used for dispatching emergency services were the second-most-frequently reported system type at or approaching the end of life (exhibit 6). Ten of the 43 responding 911 centers reported having no systems at or approaching end of life.

Exhibit 6

Call-handling and radio systems are the most frequently reported systems at or near end of life.



Note: Counts by system type represent selections rather than unique 911 centers. This exhibit combines responses from two survey questions: (1) Do you currently have any equipment or software that is at the end of its life or will reach the end of its life within the next two years? (n=43), and (2) Which systems are at or approaching the end of life? (n=32)

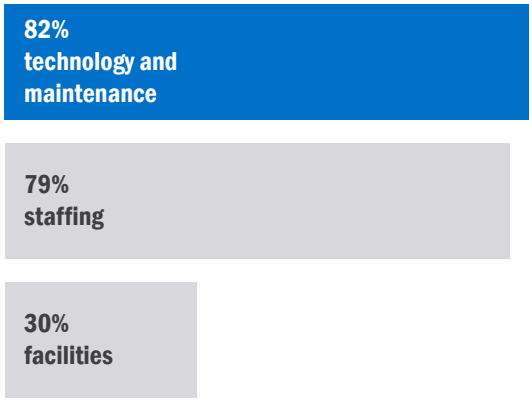
5. This includes systems approaching end of life and currently at end of life. This reflects overlapping system reports rather than distinct 911 centers.

When you call 911, you expect to get help when and where you need it. While the core purpose of 911 has not changed significantly over the past 37 years, the technology used in 911 centers has grown more complex since 1988. Today, states are transitioning to NG911, which supports text, images, video, advanced data sharing, and modernized call routing. Legacy routing systems were not designed for widespread wireless phone use, even though most 911 calls now originate from wireless phones, resulting in misrouted calls. NG911 improves routing accuracy but also introduces new and ongoing costs, including network infrastructure, cybersecurity, updated mapping, and vendor core services. Many of these costs did not exist when the 911 fee was established.

Officials at surveyed 911 centers reported that technology and system maintenance are the most challenging budget areas to fund (exhibit 7). Technology and system maintenance already strain 911 center budgets. As Idaho transitions to a statewide NG911 system, the Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission has approved grant funds to cover some technology costs for 911 centers. However, the long-term availability of those funds is uncertain. In our report, *Sustainability of Idaho's Transition to Next Generation 911*, we found that current revenue levels will not support call-handling costs or the NG911 system beyond 2030.

Exhibit 7

82 percent of surveyed 911 centers selected technology and system maintenance as the top budget challenge.



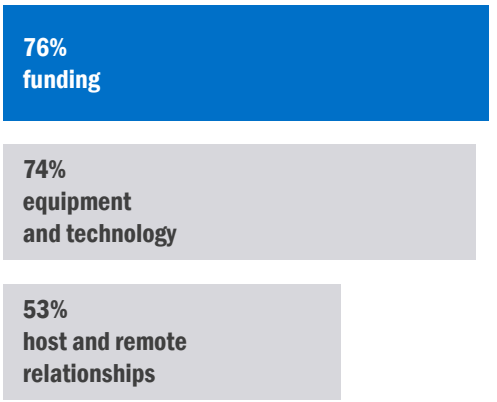
Note: The exhibit shows the three budget areas most frequently ranked as challenging to fund adequately. Respondents could select more than one option. Percentages do not sum to 100 percent. (n=33)

> **We are currently in an agreement with [a provider] to spread out the cost of new dispatch consoles because our fund balance cannot cover the entire cost and other needs of our [911 center]. Other future capital expenses, for radio communications, are expected to exceed our fund balance as well.**
>
> **– Official at a 911 center**

As the state transitions to NG911, funding emerged as the most frequently reported concern with equipment and technology as a close second. Seventy-six percent of surveyed 911 centers identified funding as a concern (exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8

Funding is among surveyed 911 centers most frequently selected concern regarding the transition to NG911.



Note: The exhibit shows respondents' top three concerns about the NG911 transition. Respondents could select more than one concern. Percentages do not sum to 100 percent. (n=38)

> **Without this state initiative, we would not be able to update and upgrade our system.**
>
> **– Official at a 911 center**

The statewide NG911 transition has the potential to address some funding challenges, particularly with technology costs. In the first phase, we raised concerns about the absence of a statewide 911 program with the authority to develop and oversee a statewide 911 system, like the statewide NG911 system. Officials at 911 centers also reported uncertainty about NG911 governance and the long-term sustainability of coordination across multiple counties. Others also expressed concern about potential changes in local autonomy. Officials also raised questions about how changes to host-and-remote relationships may affect 911 center operations.[6]

> **[We are concerned about] loss of autonomy.**
>
> **– Official at a 911 center**

6. Under the proposed NG911 system, there will be four host and remote connection regions. Find more information about the NG911 transition in our report *Sustainability of Idaho's Transition to Next Generation 911*.

3 Staffing challenges

Idaho's 911 centers face staffing challenges that impact daily operations. Center officials identified staffing and retention as the most challenging operational issues, driven by demanding working conditions, lengthy training periods, and difficulty finding candidates. While median wages are competitive with national medians, that statewide figure can hide local differences and ongoing pay challenges in some communities.

Additionally, funding constraints limit flexibility to address compensation. State actions, including reclassifying emergency communications officers as first responders and extending benefits, have improved recognition of the role's importance.



Staffing costs are a growing concern for 911 centers.

Salaries and benefits for emergency communications officers must be funded with local revenue sources, as Idaho statute does not allow 911 fees to be used for those expenses. We found that this limitation was intended to secure local funding, as the phone-line fee was insufficient, and to prioritize 911 fees for the system's technology. While this approach has been practical in securing local funding, its long-term sustainability is uncertain.

Salaries and benefits increase over time due to cost-of-living adjustments, wage growth, benefit cost increases, and staffing levels needed to support call volume. Phone-line fee revenue is intended to reflect system use, with revenue tied to the number of subscribers accessing emergency communications services. When staffing costs are an allowable use of the fee, there is at least partial alignment between increases in demand and funding capacity. Under Idaho's current law, this alignment does not exist.

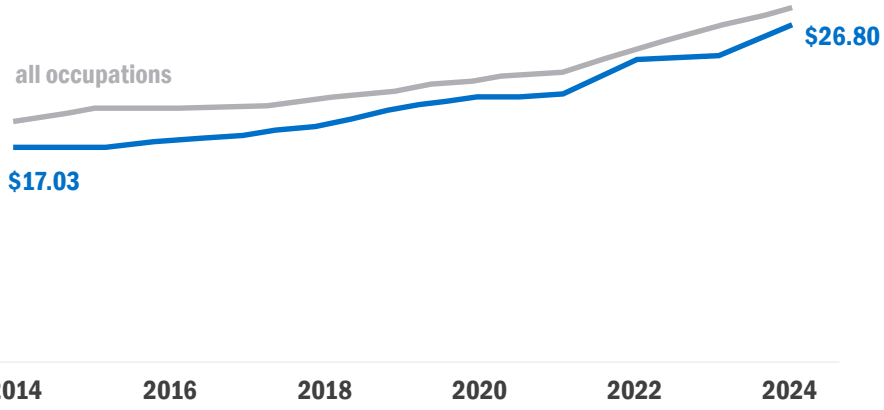
Staffing costs, one of the largest budget categories, must be supported entirely through local general funds or service fees. While local revenues may increase over time through property taxes or other sources, they are not structured to scale directly with emergency communications demand and must compete with other county priorities.

From 2014 to 2024, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics' hourly wages for Idaho emergency communications officers increased by approximately 57 percent (exhibit 9).[7] Even without adjusting for inflation, this data shows that wages represent a growing cost over time.

Exhibit 9

Idaho's hourly wages for emergency communications officers increased over time.

Comparison to all occupations, May 2014–2024



Note: Wages shown are nominal hourly mean wages for 'public safety telecommunicators' in Idaho and for 'all occupations' in Idaho. We used mean wages to reflect overall staffing cost pressures, including higher-paid lead and supervisory positions. US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, state-level data, May 2014–May 2024.

Even if Idaho statute allowed 911 fees to be used for staffing costs, that change alone may not resolve staffing cost challenges. Although the state will cover some NG911 costs, long-term cost pressures on counties and cities remain uncertain, particularly as grant funding is expected to run out by 2030. As NG911 implementation continues, ongoing technology costs may still compete with staffing needs for the limited 911 fee revenue.

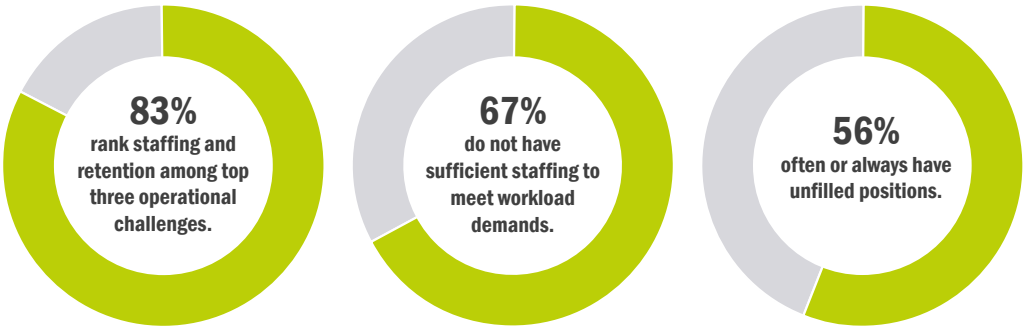
7. Across all occupations, average wages also increased over the same period.

Idaho's 911 centers face staffing challenges that impact daily operations.

Idaho's 911 centers face staffing and retention challenges, especially with the emergency communications officers who receive and dispatch calls for emergency services.[8] In our survey, 83 percent of respondents ranked staffing and retention among the top three operational challenges. Two-thirds of respondents (67 percent) reported they do not have sufficient staffing to meet workload demands, and 56 percent reported unfilled positions often or always (exhibit 10). These officers are considered first responders in Idaho.

Exhibit 10

Most surveyed 911 centers face staffing challenges.



Note: This exhibit summarizes results from three survey questions. (1) Respondents ranked eight topics from 1 (most challenging) to 8 (least challenging) (n=40). (2) Respondents indicated their level of agreement, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with the statement, "our 911 center has sufficient staffing to meet operational demands" (n=43); and (3) Respondents reported how often their 911 center has unfilled positions, using a scale from always to never (n=43). We combined response categories for reporting.

8. Idaho Code § 19-5101

Notably, larger 911 centers serving more than 25,000 residents are more affected by staffing challenges. Seventy-nine percent do not have sufficient staffing to meet workload demands, and 68 percent have unfilled positions often or always (representing 19 out of 43 responding 911 centers). This is likely because larger 911 centers have more positions to fill and face more competition. See appendix F for the 911 center population estimates and map.

Emergency communications officer positions are demanding and share challenges common to other public safety roles. These jobs require swing shifts, and the work involves exposure to psychological trauma. Officers answer calls ranging from minor traffic accidents to house fires and homicides. Center officials told us that finding candidates who are a good fit and are not overwhelmed by the work can be challenging.



Staffing issues are not unique to Idaho. In the latest Federal Communications Commission 911 fee report, many states and jurisdictions reported that underfunding results in staffing challenges.[9] In a national survey by the National Emergency Number Association and Carbyne, the top two ranked issues included vacant positions and staff burnout.[10]

Staffing concerns, like recruitment and retention, often link closely to pay. According to US Bureau of Labor Statistics data, Idaho's median wages for public safety telecommunicators are in line with the national median. Idaho's median wage was $24.56, compared with the national median hourly wage of $24.39.

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9. "Sixteenth Annual Report to Congress on State Collection and Distribution of 911 and Enhanced 911 Fees and Charges for the Period January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023", Federal Communications Commission, (Dec. 30, 2024), https://www.fcc.gov/ general/911-fee-reports.
10. Carbyne and National Emergency Number Association (NENA), The Pulse of 9-1-1: Survey Results (2025).



However, statewide alignment with national median wages masks local variation. While Idaho areas are close to the national median, not all local 911 centers meet or exceed the statewide or national median wage. For example, one county pays fewer than $17 per hour, a difference of more than seven dollars per hour.

> **Salary is the biggest concern for our [911 center] at this time.**
>
> **– Official at a 911 center**

Compensation increases are difficult for some 911 centers. Staffing costs are funded entirely through local budgets. This means that compensation increases can create trade-offs and reduce the ability to raise wages for other positions, such as law enforcement. Officials at 911 centers reported that split funding between local budgets and the 911 fee creates challenges, particularly when local budgets are already constrained. One 911 center described challenges when requesting compensation changes from its board of commissioners:

> **It is very difficult to get [our board of commissioners] to understand the need to fund additional [emergency communications officer] positions.**
>
> **– Official at a 911 center**

Additionally, 911 centers reported challenges competing with neighboring counties with larger populations or budgets. Elmore County is physically located between two counties that offer higher pay for emergency communications officers. In another example, the Kootenai County starting wage is $27.50, and the Post Falls

Police Department, located physically within Kootenai County, has a starting wage of $21.64, a five-dollar per hour difference. Another 911 center noted challenges with recruitment incentives like sign-on bonuses:

> **We cannot afford to stay competitive with our neighboring [911 centers] with regards to sign-on bonuses.**
>
> **– Official at a 911 center**

Idaho has made efforts to address staffing challenges and recognize the public safety role of emergency communications officers. Idaho is one of the states that has reclassified emergency communications officers as first responders.[11] Idaho is also among the states that have extended the same benefits to emergency communications officers that are provided to law enforcement.[12]

Idaho is one of the states that has reclassified emergency communication officers as first responders.

Research has shown that increased awareness and support for the emergency communications officer community can lead to improved health and well-being. These actions represent a positive step in providing recognition for the position and in addressing staffing challenges.

11. 2019 Idaho Sess. Law 162-163
12. 2022 Idaho Sess. Law 899-900

4 System efficiency

Idaho likely operates more 911 centers than needed relative to call volume, but inconsistent statewide data on costs and call demand prevent a reliable assessment of efficiency or consolidation opportunities.

Idaho operates a highly localized 911 system with limited consolidation. Some 911 centers share technology or participate in regional models, largely to manage costs. Full consolidation, or when one 911 center is decommissioned and another assumes that 911 service area, is limited in practice and operationally complex.



Idaho's 911 system includes a relatively high number of 911 centers and staff compared to call demand.

We examined why Idaho has 48 primary 911 centers in operation and whether that number aligned with service needs. No national standard defines how many 911 centers should exist based on call volume or population. Based on proximity, the population served, and the duplication of administrative functions, Idaho likely operates more 911 centers than necessary. However, the state lacks reliable data needed to determine how many 911 centers would provide 911 coverage across the state most efficiently. Two data gaps limit the ability to evaluate consolidation.

The state lacks reliable data needed to determine how many 911 centers would provide 911 coverage across the state most efficiently.

1

One, call volume data is inconsistently tracked across Idaho. Some 911 centers regularly track call volume, while others do not. Without consistent and accurate call-volume data statewide, we cannot reliably assess service demand or identify underutilized 911 centers.

2

Two, operating costs, like staffing, facilities, and technology, are not tracked consistently. During the evaluation, we requested budget and expenditure data through surveys and follow-up requests to clerks and treasurers. With this effort, we found that counties and cities do not consistently categorize or report emergency communications costs. Without standardized cost data, it is not possible to reliably compare 911 centers or estimate potential efficiencies from consolidation.



Idaho's 911 system is highly localized, and decisions about consolidation or other operational changes rest with local 911 centers that best understand their service demands, staffing constraints, and community needs. More complete, comparable statewide data would better equip local decision-makers to evaluate their own operations, like costs and staffing, in context. One example is determining whether comparable systems cost more to operate than those in neighboring counties. Another example is assessing whether differences in call volume create opportunities for shared services or call overflow agreements.

While local decision-making remains essential under Idaho's 911 system, the absence of consistent statewide information limits both local officials' ability to make informed choices and the state's ability to assess system-wide efficiency.

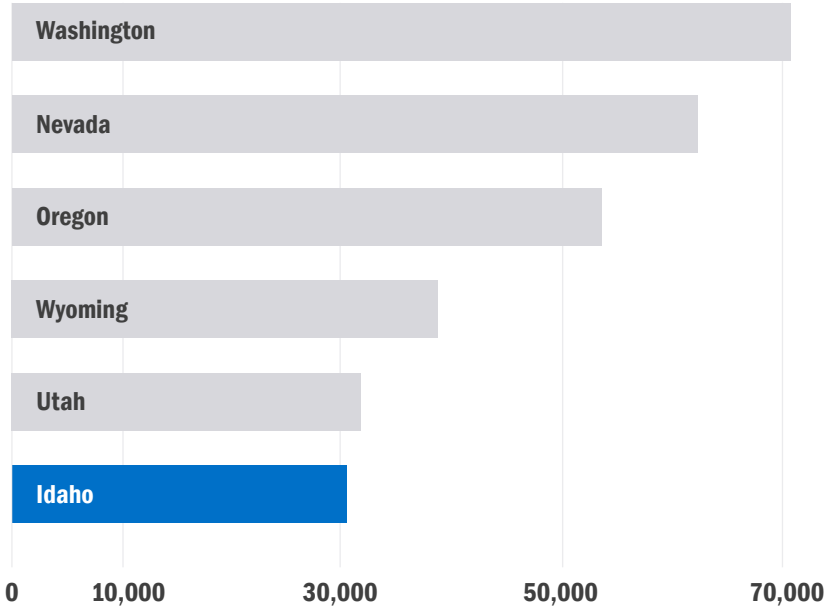
Even with these data limitations, we used the best available call volume data to provide high-level context for comparing Idaho's system to other states. These comparisons should be interpreted cautiously because differences in collection practices and reporting limit conclusions about system efficiency. However, the available data support the need for additional analysis using more complete and consistent data.

In national reporting to the Federal Communications Commission, Idaho, using best available data, reported 598,000 total calls and texts-to 911 for the calendar year 2023, ranking eighth-lowest among 48 reporting states. Compared to neighboring states that reported call data to the Federal Communications Commission, Idaho had the fewest reported calls per 100,000 residents (exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11

Idaho reported fewer 911 calls and texts per 100,000 residents than neighboring states.

911 calls and texts per 100,000 residents in 2023



Note: Montana did not report total calls to the Federal Communications Commission for the 2023 calendar year, the most recent available data. Call volume data includes text-to-911.

Despite relatively low call volumes, Idaho reported to the Federal Communications Commission more 911 centers compared to neighboring states, ranking third-highest in 911 centers per 100,000 residents.[13] Idaho reported to the Federal Communications Commission a relatively similar number of calls per 100,000 residents to Utah, yet Idaho has 48 primary 911 centers compared to Utah's 27. A higher number of 911 centers can create potential inefficiencies, such as duplicate technology or administrative functions.

13. When compared nationally, Idaho ranks 14th highest in number of 911 centers per 100,000 residents.

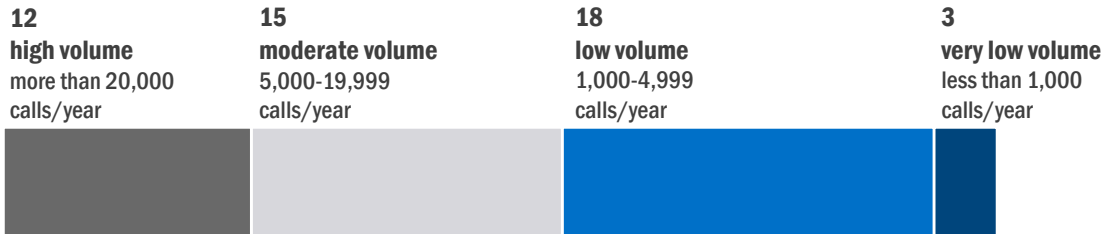
Idaho reported to the Federal Communications Commission the most emergency communications officers per 100,000 residents among neighboring states. In addition, Idaho employs 75 percent more emergency communications officers than Utah (637 compared to 365), even though Idaho's population is 43 percent smaller than Utah's. See appendix G for a comparison table. These differences suggest Idaho maintains higher 911 staffing and center coverage than neighboring states relative to population size and call volume.

Another area of concern is the number of emergency calls per 911 center. The call volume data Idaho submitted to the Federal Communications Commission has limitations. In its submission, Idaho reported that 911 centers struggled to provide the required data. Call volumes were self-reported by 911 centers and aggregated. Because not all 911 centers submitted call volume information, the state estimated missing data by averaging annual per-capita call volumes from similar agencies.

Despite data limitations, the available information suggests a notable pattern worth further investigation: Idaho has more 911 centers receiving, on average, fourteen or fewer calls per day based on annual call volume than any other call volume tier (exhibit 12). Three 911 centers receive, on average, fewer than three calls per day based on annual call volume.[14]

Exhibit 12

21 of Idaho's 48 911 centers (44%) receive, on average, fourteen or fewer calls per day based on annual call volume.

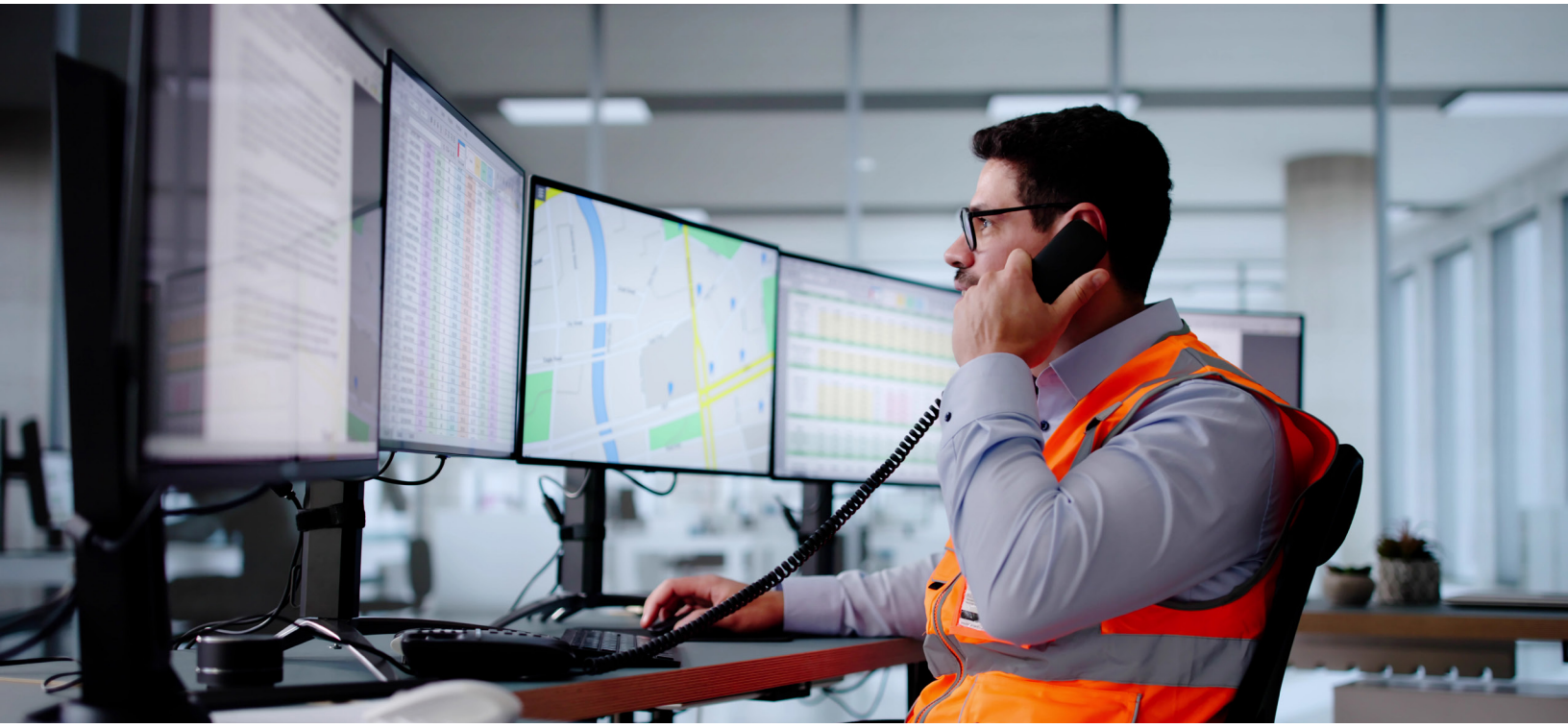


Note: We categorized 911 centers using annual call volume reported to the Federal Communications Commission for the 2024 calendar year reporting period. Call volume data includes text-to-911. The data consists of all 911 centers (48), but some values are estimates based on the best available information. Values are annual averages and do not represent actual daily call volume.

14. This data might overrepresent or underrepresent Idaho's actual call volume due to reporting issues.

Idaho's call volume data suggest a mismatch between call demand and the number of operating 911 centers. However, call volume alone is not sufficient to assess efficiency and must be considered alongside other factors, like operating and consolidation costs.

Although some 911 centers may have low 911 call volumes, we heard from 911 centers that emergency communications officers often perform duties beyond emergency call-taking and dispatch. In some 911 centers, these staff serve as the phone operators for the entire law enforcement agency, enter records data, oversee jail operations, or even staff a 24-hour front desk after hours.



Idaho's 911 centers rely on shared technology, rather than full consolidation.

The needs for consolidation vary, and consolidation can take several forms, including co-location, fiduciary, physical, regionalization, shared technology, and virtual (exhibit 13). Consolidation of emergency communications has become more common nationwide as the cost of 911 technology increased and the geographic need for local 911 centers has changed. We found that Idaho used shared technology as a common form of consolidation.

Exhibit 13

There are multiple types of consolidation that a 911 center can participate in.

Type	Definition
Co-location	When two or more 911 centers share the same physical location but are managed separately.
Fiduciary	When one 911 center receives and handles funds for both centers.
Physical	When one 911 center is decommissioned and another center becomes responsible for both service areas.
Regionalization	When two or more 911 centers join together in a formal, mutually beneficial relationship.
Shared technology	When two or more 911 centers only share technology or equipment without sharing the same location.
Virtual	When two or more 911 centers operate functionally as one even if they operate out of different locations.

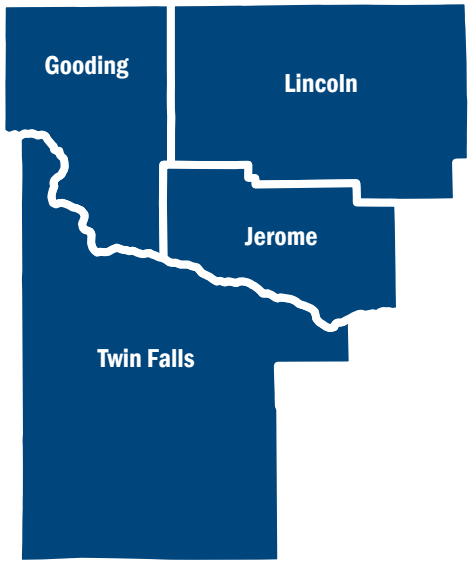
Counting Idaho's 48 primary 911 centers overstates the extent of independent operations, as some centers share technology and avoid some duplicative costs. When asked about consolidation, officials most often refer to physical consolidation, where one center is closed and merged with another. The understanding of the types of consolidation varied across the state.

In practice, some 911 centers have already consolidated key functions by sharing technology. Cost has driven shared technology arrangements. Rather than buying multiple backroom equipment, 911 centers benefit from sharing that equipment. In another example, three separate 911 centers share a single technology budget, which is managed by one of the entities. We heard similar models described across the state. In our survey, respondents most often reported sharing equipment and software. These arrangements indicate that technology sharing has the potential to improve efficiency in Idaho's 911 system.

Idaho also uses regionalization, a more formal consolidation model. The Southern Idaho Regional Communications Center (SIRCOMM), located in Jerome, combines emergency communication services for the Gooding, Lincoln, Twin Falls, and Jerome counties (exhibit 14).[15] This regional model was established to share costs and provide emergency communication services to smaller counties and cities that may not have the resources to operate a center independently.

Exhibit 14

Idaho's Southern Idaho Regional Communications Center (SIRCOMM) provides 911 coverage for four counties.



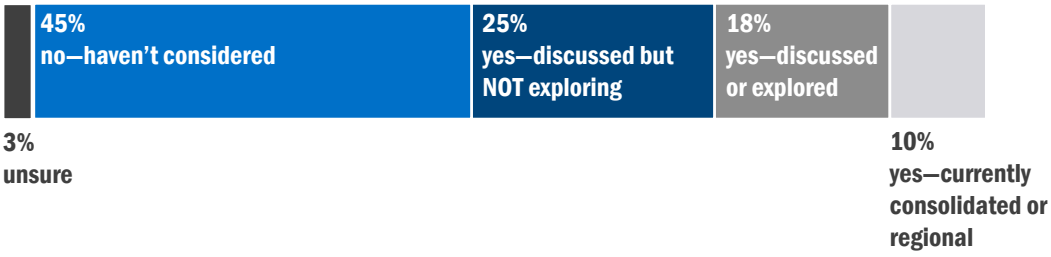
15. The City of Twin Falls is no longer part of this regional model and operates its own 911 center. Twin Falls County still is. SIRCOMM covers medical dispatching for the City of Twin Falls.

Consolidating 911 centers is unappealing to local officials and operationally complex.

Consolidation is not mandated at the state level, but it was a topic we heard about frequently throughout this study. We found that closing or merging 911 centers is largely unappealing to local officials at 911 centers and would be operationally complex. Forty-five percent of surveyed 911 centers reported not having considered consolidation. In addition, 25 percent reported having discussed consolidation but deciding not to explore it (exhibit 15).

Exhibit 15

45 percent of surveyed 911 centers have not considered consolidation and 25 percent have discussed but have decided not to explore consolidation.



Note: We abbreviated response categories for reporting. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding. (n=40)

Seven 911 centers (18 percent) reported having explored consolidation but were not currently part of a consolidated model, indicating perceived benefits alongside persistent barriers.

> "We have offers out to other [911 centers] to share resources."
>
> — Official at a 911 center

> "We have aggressively tried to consolidate our system to save money."
>
> – Official at a 911 center

During this study we identified three primary barriers to consolidation.

1

One, consolidation requires upfront investment. Some 911 centers expressed interest in shared technology or physical consolidation but encountered barriers. For example, Idaho does not have a statewide radio system. Instead, local governments operate independent systems, some of which are incompatible. While a center could potentially take calls for another jurisdiction, it could not dispatch responders without changes to the radio system.

2

Two, 911 centers frequently reported concerns about potential losses in service quality and local control. We found that 911 centers value maintaining close working relationships between emergency communications officers and other first responders. We found that 911 centers viewed local control as essential to service quality and community trust. During the study, we observed reluctance among some 911 centers when the topic of consolidation arose.

> **"The main benefit of consolidation is to reduce costs, but counties want to maintain autonomy.**
>
> **– Official at a 911 center**

3

Three, the need for physical space and redundancy complicate consolidation. Suitable space for consolidated 911 center operations may be unavailable, requiring the construction of a new facility or the relocation to an existing facility, which would require a significant upfront investment. Emergency communications require redundancy to maintain 911 service during natural disasters or other disruptions. That redundancy typically involves a second location capable of assuming 911 service if the primary center is down. In practice, that backup space either remains vacant much of the time or is located in a separate emergency communications center.

Idaho's role in consolidation

Idaho has not established legislative intent regarding the number of 911 centers statewide. This has left operational decisions, like consolidation, to local governments. If the Legislature wants to encourage or support consolidation, the state would need to take a more active role. Under current Idaho law, decisions to consolidate remain with local governments. Without additional state direction, incentives, or policy changes, consolidation is likely to continue only where local conditions make it possible.

Can the state encourage consolidation among local 911 centers?

Idaho has attempted to encourage consolidation among local entities through financial incentives. One example is school district consolidation, where concerns mirrored those facing 911 centers: multiple entities operating in proximity, serving small populations, and duplicating administrative functions.

In 2007, the Legislature authorized incentives to encourage school district consolidation.[16] The law funded feasibility studies, allowed severance offers to employees, and provided post-consolidation funding protections. Both districts would continue to receive full funding for seven years, after which the consolidated district retained a portion of the formula savings. As of this report, no school districts have used these incentives to consolidate.

911 centers are funded differently from school districts. However, the state could consider appropriating funds specifically to encourage consolidation using similar incentive-based approaches.

Consolidation in Idaho has occurred largely through shared technology and regional arrangements rather than formal closing of 911 centers. The Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission has encouraged these approaches by prioritizing grant funding for collaborative projects. However, this approach is constrained in the near term. Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission grant funds are largely committed to the NG911 transition, limiting opportunities to incentivize consolidation over the next five years, and likely beyond, unless the grant fee is increased.

16. 2007 Idaho Sess. Law 18-34

5 System governance

Idaho has not established statewide performance standards, such as expectations for how quickly 911 calls should be answered. Without clear guidance, accountability largely depends on local discretion.

Idaho lacks the statewide information needed to support well-informed decision-making for its 911 system. Idaho does not operate a statewide 911 program, and data is not collected consistently across local 911 centers. The lack of data limits the state's ability to assess funding adequacy or evaluate system efficiency. While the Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission plays a coordinating role, its statutory authority and access to reliable, consistent data is limited.

Idaho lacks statewide standards for how quickly 911 calls are answered.

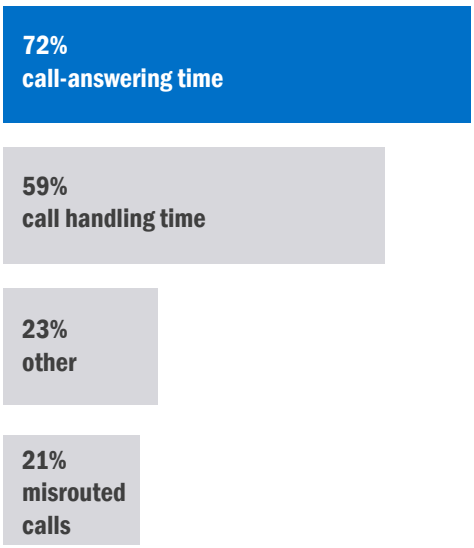
A 911 call placed in one Idaho community may be answered in seconds. The same call placed elsewhere may take longer. Both outcomes meet current law and reflect different potential experiences for residents. This is because Idaho has no statewide standards guiding how quickly a 911 call should be answered. The National Emergency Number Association (NENA) states that 90 percent of calls should be answered within 15 seconds, and 95 percent within 20 seconds.

Seventy-two percent of surveyed 911 centers report tracking call-answering time but do so without a statewide standard (exhibit 16).

Exhibit 16

Idaho has not established a statewide standard for call answering time, even though it is a standard performance metric tracked by surveyed 911 centers.

When asked about metrics tracked, 72 percent of 911 centers track call-answering time.



Note: Respondents could select more than one option. Percentages do not sum to 100 percent. (n=39)



We did not evaluate how long it takes for 911 calls to be answered in Idaho. Instead, this finding focuses on the lack of state standards. Without a standard to follow, there is a risk that call-answering time varies by location, staffing levels, and local practice. Although 911 centers likely aim to provide the best 911 service, we heard a range of responses when asking about call-answering times, including:

> Calls need to be picked up within 15 seconds.
>
> Center does not track answering times but usually tries to answer by the second ring.
>
> Calls might ring a few times during large call volume times, but are usually answered immediately.

Beyond call-answering times, the state could set other call-quality standards. Typically, when you call 911, you expect to receive service the first time you call. However, call transfers can occur for several reasons. Under the current system, calls can be misrouted to the wrong 911 centers, which we covered in our report, *Sustainability of Idaho's Transition to Next Generation 911*.

Some states have taken steps to improve the 911 caller experience. For example, Utah identified call transfers as a call-handling issue and addressed it by implementing NG911 to improve call routing and by establishing a standard that fewer than 2 percent of calls be transferred.

Beyond misrouted calls, Idaho 911 centers reported that call transfers occur for several reasons. One common reason is that some centers cannot dispatch emergency medical services or provide emergency medical dispatch. This includes giving pre-arrival instructions, such as CPR guidance, to callers. As a result, the caller experience varies across centers. Some centers provide emergency medical dispatch, while others must transfer medical calls to another center, even when emergency medical services are already en route. We did not assess the public impact of call transfers.

If Idaho were to establish standards for 911 performance, such as call-answer times or limits on call transfers, it would need an enforcement mechanism. Currently, Idaho lacks the authority to enforce such standards and can only issue guidance. By comparison, Utah withheld funding from 911 centers that did not comply with established standards.

Guidance from The National 911 Program and National Association of State 911 Administrators recommends that a statewide 911 program have the authority to define and require specific 911 standards, including call answering and response times.



Recommendation: The Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission, in the absence of a statewide 911 program, should collect call-handling metrics, like call-answering time.

Recommendation: The Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission, in the absence of a statewide 911 program, should consider publishing standards for metrics, such as call-answering time, for local 911 centers to follow.

Idaho's 911 fee can be interpreted differently by 911 centers.

Another role of a potential statewide 911 program, identified in our previous report, is oversight of how 911 fees are used. Idaho statute provides limited clarity on allowable uses of the fee. We heard from 911 centers that interpretations of the statute vary. Some rely on governing boards, others on legal counsel, directors, county commissioners, or Federal Communications Commission guidance. These interpretations vary across jurisdictions, leading to frustration and uneven practices statewide. For example, within a single county, an agency may rely on the county prosecutor's guidance, but that guidance can shift when the prosecutor changes.

A statewide 911 program could issue guidance to establish consistent standards for allowable fee use. Without clearer statutory direction or stronger statewide guidance, differences in how 911 centers interpret the 911 fee limit a consistent basis for oversight on how the 911 fee is used.

We also found that the current statute does not reflect the operational needs of modern 911 systems. For example, 911 centers increasingly require specialized technology and new staff types that were not contemplated when the statute was last updated. This gap complicates budgeting and long-term planning.

Incomplete or inaccurate statewide 911 cost data impedes policymaking.

We found that counties do not consistently track 911 operating budgets and expenditures. This is likely due to the highly localized nature of 911 centers and the lack of guidance from the state. Another complication is that staffing costs are often excluded from 911 center budgets and instead embedded in other budgets, such as county sheriff's offices or city departments.[17]

For this evaluation, we sought to pinpoint the full cost of operating 911 systems, including staffing. We requested budget and expenditure data through a survey to all primary 911 centers. We also made direct data requests to county clerks and treasurers. We found that clerks often had to manually add staffing costs for our purposes, indicating that this information is not routinely tracked or reported within 911 center budgets. While this approach provided insight into system costs, the data has limitations due to differences in how local governments track and report expenses as well as an incomplete data set. See appendix C for our methods.

Even with these limitations, the data show wide variation in how local governments fund 911 centers. We found that the share of costs paid from local government funds versus 911 fee revenues varies across jurisdictions and from year to year. For complete tables of revenues and expenditures, see appendix E.[18]

Incomplete and inaccurate data limits our ability to determine total system costs and assess whether 911 fees, including the $1.00 fee, achieve their intended purpose.

17. Counties submit annual consolidated balance sheets, but 911 costs are often embedded in other budgets, limiting transparency and statewide cost tracking.

18. We did not receive complete financial information from every 911 center.



Recommendation: The Legislature should consider requiring local governments to report annual budgets and expenditures for emergency communications to the Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission in the absence of a statewide 911 program. This reporting should use a standardized reporting framework.

Other states have implemented similar steps. Montana, like Idaho, operates a highly localized 911 system. However, Montana maintains a state 911 office that collects financial information, such as revenue and expenditures, from local 911 centers. Idaho does not have a 911 program, but the Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission could fulfill this role in the absence of a statewide 911 program.



Recommendation: The Legislature should direct the Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission, in the absence of a statewide 911 program, to develop and adopt criteria to define cost responsibilities between 911 fee revenues and local governments.

Despite anecdotal evidence that funding for 911 centers is insufficient, we are not recommending increasing or decreasing the 911 fee. Operational costs are tracked inconsistently, and the state has not defined how much of the 911 system the fee is intended to fund.

Insufficient 911 system oversight limits the state's ability to address 911 challenges.

Idaho lacks a statewide 911 program that can oversee, analyze, and advocate for Idaho's 911 system.[19] Since Idaho established its 911 system, technology and operating conditions have changed significantly. For example, the implementation of NG911 requires the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) data, whereas prior 911 systems did not. The current environment requires stronger statewide coordination to support collaboration among 911 centers, identify trends, and resolve shared issues.

The Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission was created to support collaboration among statewide officials, 911 centers, and other emergency communications partners. The Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission has helped advance Idaho's transition to NG911, but it has done so without the staffing and operational support typically needed for a statewide effort. The Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission relies on volunteer committees and has one full-time 911 program manager and one full-time 911 grants and agreement manager.

19. We identified this as a key finding in our prior report, *Sustainability of Idaho's Transition to Next Generation 911*.

Unlike other states, Idaho does not operate a statewide 911 program. Exhibit 17 summarizes key findings from this report and highlights how a statewide 911 program could benefit Idaho through improved system-level analysis.

Exhibit 17

A stronger statewide 911 program could benefit Idaho.

	Currently:	A statewide 911 program could:
Phone-line fees	Idaho lacks a consistent statewide understanding of 911 system costs, local contributions, and expenditures.	Collect standardized financial data from 911 centers, enabling the state to assess system costs and support evidence-based fee proposals and adjustments.
NG911	Idaho is implementing NG911 through a grant and contract managed by a single county, rather than through a statewide program.	Provide statewide oversight and accountability for NG911 implementation by managing contracts and funding in a way that reflects statewide responsibility and supports long-term sustainability.
Consolidation	Idaho lacks consistent statewide operational data, such as call volume and response times, needed to evaluate consolidation or shared services.	Collect comparable operational data to help local decision-makers identify opportunities to improve service efficiency.
Standards	Idaho lacks a coordinated approach to developing, supporting, and applying consistent 911 standards across centers.	Develop and support statewide standards for core 911 functions, data reporting, and performance measurement, improving consistency with 911 service across the state.
Strategic Planning	Idaho lacks a system-wide, long-term planning approach for 911 operations and technology.	Lead system-wide strategic planning to identify statewide needs and anticipate emerging technology and operational challenges.

Note: The exhibit illustrates how a statewide 911 program could address current data and oversight gaps while preserving local decision-making.

As outlined in exhibit 17, Idaho lacks a statewide 911 program with sufficient authority and capacity to address gaps in oversight of funding, data, standards, and long-term planning. While local control remains central to 911 operations, the absence of a statewide 911 program limits coordination and accountability, particularly as Idaho transitions to NG911. Based on these findings, we reaffirm our prior recommendation for a statewide 911 program.



Recommendation: The Legislature should consider amending statute to evolve the Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission into a statewide 911 program with the authority to develop and oversee a statewide 911 system. A statewide 911 program should maintain an advisory board of members to provide input on local needs.

A Study request

Josh Wheeler

DISTRICT 35,

Bannock, Bear Lake, Bonneville, Caribou, Teton Counties

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House of Representatives

State of Idaho

COMMITTEES

Business

Health & Welfare

Local Government

February 5, 2025

Dear JLOC Co-Chairs,

We are requesting a comprehensive report to assess the current state of emergency communications systems across Idaho and provide recommendations regarding the adoption of Next Generation 911 (NG911) technology. The report should focus on the escalating costs and technological challenges associated with maintaining and upgrading 911 systems statewide, specifically the need for a fee adjustment to support the transition to NG911 technology.

Idaho counties are currently facing significant challenges in maintaining existing 911 systems due to rising costs and outdated technology. The existing infrastructure is at its end of life, and the state must take steps to ensure a smooth migration to Next Generation 911, a more advanced and reliable system that will support modern communication methods, including texting, video calls, and data-sharing for better emergency response.

However, the implementation of NG911 requires substantial funding. In addition to the inherent cost of deploying these systems, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adjusted its allowed expense guidelines for 911 fees in 2019. This change necessitates a corresponding update to Idaho's statute governing the 911 fee structure, which has not been adjusted since its establishment in 1988. The current fee structure does not align with the increasing costs of modernizing emergency communications systems, and without a corresponding fee adjustment, Idaho counties lack sufficient funding to implement NG911 systems.

In an effort to better understand the issues facing Idaho's emergency communications system we request the Office of Performance Evaluation investigate the issue and provide information and make recommendations based on some example questions:

-What type of equipment/system are most PSAPs currently using?

-What failures are occurring in this system?

-Is state comm seeing failures as well?

-What funding is available? Local and state?

-What can this funding be used for?

-When was the last time the funding amount was changed/updated?

-Is the funding amount adequate?

-Why is funding decreasing at the local and state level?

-Where does the Idaho State Public Safety Communications Commission fit into this system?

-Where does State Comm fit into this system?

-Where do the telecommunications carriers fit into this system?

- How does the access line location address on a bill impact funding?

-Is moving to Next Gen 911 the next step for our state?

-How much would it cost to move to NG911?

A report from OPE answering these questions and others could educate the stakeholders on the issues surrounding Idaho's emergency communications system and help inform policy decisions for how the system can be improved.

Sincerely yours,

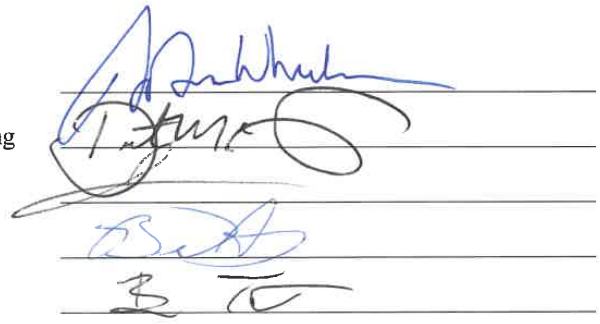
Representative J. Wheeler

Representative D. Manwaring

Representative J. Redman

Senator Ben Adams

Senator Ben Toews



B Scope

This evaluation is part two of a two-part evaluation. This part focused on:

- examining how local entities manage, operate, and support 911 services;
- assessing funding sources and expenditures used to sustain 911 operations, including the $1.00 emergency communications fee and other local revenues;
- identifying key challenges faced by local entities, including those related to staffing, technology, and the transition to NG911; and
- developing findings and recommendations to strengthen Idaho's 911 system and support its long-term sustainability.

C Methods

This evaluation is the second part of a two-part evaluation. The goal of this evaluation is to understand the challenges and needs of local entities that operate 911 centers in Idaho. We conducted a survey, interviewed key stakeholders, conducted site visits, analyzed financial data, and reviewed existing literature to inform our evaluation. This appendix includes our methods and limitations of our study.

We reviewed survey results and interview/site visit notes to identify recurring themes and differences across centers, and we used these themes to inform our findings. We summarized information at a statewide level and did not attribute individual comments to specific centers. The focus of this report is on the 911 system in Idaho, rather than individual entities.

Survey

We distributed a survey to primary Idaho 911 centers to collect information related to 911 operations and funding. The contact list was compiled by the Idaho Military Division's 911 Program Manager and identified individuals most appropriate to respond on behalf of each center. Survey respondents primarily included directors, sheriffs, and lead dispatchers. For a summary of survey responses, see appendix D.

The survey was emailed on November 5, 2025. Reminder emails and follow-up phone calls were conducted through November and December. The survey closed on December 17, 2025. Of the 48 emergency communication centers contacted, 43 submitted at least one response for a 90 percent response rate. Not all respondents answered every question; the number of responses for each question is reported in the corresponding exhibit.

Some respondents were unable to provide financial data through the survey. In those cases, we requested financial data separately from county or city clerks and treasurers. The compiled financial data, partially received from survey responses, are in appendix E.

Interviews and site visits

As part of this evaluation, we conducted interviews with thirteen centers statewide. For a full list of stakeholders interviewed in the previous part of this evaluation, see *Sustainability of Idaho's Transition to Next Generation 911*.

We conducted site visits with five entities in northern and eastern Idaho, as well as one secondary 911 center. We selected centers to reflect geographic diversity as well as differences in size and governance structure. These visits allowed us to observe operational differences and allowed 911 staff to explain what is unique about their work, describe the challenges they face, and share what they want the Legislature to know.

Financial data

We requested financial information that is not readily available through public sources for five fiscal years (FY21 through FY25). We initially requested this information through the survey and received some financial data through that method. However, not all centers provided financial information through the survey, and some did not respond to the survey at all. To improve coverage, we made separate financial data requests through follow-up emails and information requests to counties, cities, and other agencies involved in managing or reporting 911 center finances. In many cases, the individuals who provided financial information did not complete the operational portions of the survey.

Fewer than or more than 25,000 residents

To compare survey responses by jurisdiction size, we categorized 911 centers based on the population served using 2024 US Census Bureau data. We used the Census Bureau's Vintage 2024 population estimates for counties and the 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for cities. We subtracted the population of cities with separate 911 centers from county population totals to estimate the population served by each county-operated center.

After calculating population served, we grouped centers into two analytic categories: those serving fewer than 25,000 residents or more than 25,000 residents.

Following this initial classification, we reclassified Bannock County and the Nez Perce County/Lewiston system to reflect shared 911 system funding and governance structures. In both systems, 911 fee revenue and technology budgets are managed at a system level. Staffing costs are funded at the 911 center level. We aligned the population category with that system-level structure because population size affects 911 fee collections and technology costs.

This categorization was used solely for descriptive comparison of survey responses and to assess whether patterns identified in interviews were reflected in the survey results. It was not our intent to create a categorization system for 911 centers.

Literature and data review

Our work for this evaluation draws on the foundational research conducted in *Sustainability of Idaho's Transition to Next Generation 911*, including our review of federal and state requirements and national guidance on emergency communications. We supplemented that work with additional research specific to this section, including updated National Emergency Number Association publications and a nationwide scan of quality assurance practices, consolidation strategies, and staffing challenges. We also used information from Idaho's neighboring states (Washington, Oregon, Utah, Montana, and Nevada), along with Federal Communications Commission data, to support comparisons. We built on our previous work using the same project team, which allowed us to carry forward and expand on what we learned earlier in the evaluation.

Limitations

This report relies on information that 911 centers and local governments self-reported through our survey and follow-up requests. Some survey questions asked for perceptions or judgments, and those responses may not reflect verified facts. Some survey terms may be interpreted differently by respondents. For example, the survey asked about "sufficiency" but did not define the term, so responses reflect individual perceptions rather than a uniform standard.

Some respondents were more familiar with day-to-day operations

than with financial records and may not have been able to answer all financial questions. To better understand the reliability of the financial information provided, the survey included a confidence question. Seventy percent of survey respondents were very confident or somewhat confident in their ability to answer financial questions.

The financial information collected has substantial limitations and may not be directly comparable across jurisdictions. 911 centers track budgets and expenditures using different accounting structures, and some costs may be recorded across multiple budgets or funds rather than tracked as a single total. For example, personnel costs and shared services may be spread across departments. Respondents may also have interpreted the request differently, which could affect what was reported and how figures were calculated.

Not all jurisdictions were able to provide complete information for all requested fiscal years, including the most recent year. We requested this information between November 2025 and January 2026 and did not independently validate it against other sources. We present the data in appendix E for transparency and to document what jurisdictions provided, but it should not be interpreted as a complete or fully verified accounting of 911 center revenues and expenditures.

The Federal Communications Commission report data used in this study also has limitations. The underlying information is self-reported by 911 centers and compiled at the state level by the Idaho Military Division's Office of Emergency Management 911 Program Manager. Not all agencies provided data, so estimates and the best available information are used.

The evaluation scope is provided in appendix B. Because our scope was limited, we did not evaluate the quality of Idaho's 911 system or conduct a statewide survey of 911 caller experiences.

D Summary of survey responses

This appendix presents results from selected quantitative survey questions. We excluded some questions because they contained potentially identifying information or appeared in another appendix. For our methods, see appendix C. The compiled financial data, partially received from survey responses, are presented in appendix E.

Exhibit 18

Q1

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement: Our PSAP has sufficient staffing to meet current operational demands.

Response	Count
Strongly agree	2
Agree	8
Neither agree nor disagree	4
Disagree	20
Strongly disagree	9

Q2

How often does your PSAP have unfilled positions?

Response	Count
Never	2
Rarely	4
Sometimes	13
Often	12
Always	12

Q3

Which call metrics does your PSAP collect and track? Select all that apply.

Response	Count
Call answering time	28
Call handling time	23
Misrouted calls	8
Other	9

Q4

Do you currently have any equipment or software that is at the end of its life or will reach the end of its life within the next two years?

Response	Count
Yes, approaching end of life	25
Yes, currently at end of life	15
No	10

Q5

Which systems are at end of its life or will reach the end of its life within the next two years? Select all that apply.

Response	Count
Call-handling	22
Radio	15
CAD	10
Other	6

Q6

Does your PSAP operate 24 hours a day 7 days a week (24/7)?

Response	Count
Yes	40
No	0

Q7

Please rank the following topics from 1 (most challenging) to 8 (least challenging) for your PSAP

Response	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6	Rank 7	Rank 8
Staffing and retention	23	7	3	2	1	1	3	0
Funding and budgeting	9	13	7	3	5	2	1	0
Technology, maintenance, and upgrades	3	4	9	11	4	6	3	0
Training and certification	0	8	5	6	4	7	10	0
Failures and outages	0	3	8	4	12	6	7	0
Interoperability	2	1	5	9	8	10	4	1
NG911	2	3	3	5	6	8	12	1
Other	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	38

Q8

What resources or coverage are you sharing with other PSAPs?

Response	Count
Equipment	21
Software	22
Our 911 center does not share resources with other 911 centers	9
Coverage (e.g. answering calls or dispatching for another 911 center)	9
Other	4
Staff (e.g. call takers, supervisors, technical staff)	4
Facilities	1

Q9

Has your PSAP discussed or considered consolidation or joining a regional model (not including host-and-remote connections)?

Response	Count
No, we have not considered it	18
Yes, we have discussed but have decided NOT to explore consolidation	10
Yes, we have discussed or explored consolidation	7
Yes, we are currently consolidated or part of a regional model	4
Unsure	1

Q10

What concerns do you have about transitioning to Next Generation 911? Select all that apply.

Response	Count
Funding	29
Equipment/technology	28
Host and remote relationships	20
Staffing needs (e.g. training)	15
Cybersecurity	13
Other	3

Q11

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement: Our ECF fund balance is sufficient to meet our operational needs.

Response	Count
Strongly agree	0
Agree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	11
Disagree	9
Strongly disagree	5

Q12

Regardless of funding source, which budget areas are most challenging for your PSAP to fund adequately? Select all that apply.

Response	Count
Staffing (e.g. salary, overtime, benefits)	26
Technology and maintenance	27
Facilities and operations (e.g. rent, insurance, utilities)	10
Training and quality assurance	7
Not applicable	1
Other	1

Q13

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement: Our PSAP receives sufficient funding to provide the dispatch services our community needs.

Response	Count
Strongly agree	0
Agree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	8
Disagree	16
Strongly disagree	5

Q14

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement: Changes in Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission (IPSCC) grant availability or amount have affected our PSAP's ability to maintain operations.

Response	Count
Strongly agree	3
Agree	10
Neither agree nor disagree	16
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	2

E Collected financial information

This appendix includes financial information provided by counties, cities, and 911 centers during this study. The financial information is rounded to the nearest dollar. Some of the 911 centers did not provide information and are omitted from this appendix.

We are confident that the data included in this appendix is an accurate representation of the data that was shared with us, but we could not verify that the data that was shared with us reflects actual fee revenue, budgets, or expenditures for 911 centers.

The data is self-reported, was not independently validated, and may be incomplete or not directly comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in accounting practices and how respondents interpreted our request. The data shared with us for this study may be inconsistent. For example, some included staff salaries within their budgets, while others may not have. At least one entity reported expenditures, including salaries, but their budget did not include salaries.

For our methods, including limitations of this data, see appendix C.

Exhibit 19

How confident are you in your ability to answer questions about your PSAP's budgets, revenues, and expenditures?

Response	Count
Very confident	12
Somewhat confident	14
Not very confident	9
Not at all confident	2

911 fee revenue (FY21-FY25)

What is your PSAP's revenue from just the $1.00 emergency communications fee for each fiscal year listed below?

PSAP	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Ada County	$7,108,866	$7,268,540	$7,447,270	$8,641,083	$8,753,450
Adams County	$53,606	$53,520	$58,323	$52,923	$56,633
Bannock County	$847,284	$903,968	$1,027,794	$1,010,068	$980,415
Benewah County	$114,317	$106,584	$110,369	$110,805	$114,368
Bingham County	$461,218	$489,776	$506,667	$526,007	$527,801
Blaine County	$393,848	$395,005	$386,822	$391,824	$332,366
Boise County			$104,854	$112,157	$95,000
Bonner County		$617,457	$603,981	$572,397	$626,373
Bonneville County	$1,388,213	$1,445,055	$1,527,814	$1,569,929	$1,494,307
Boundary County	$153,227	$143,685	$142,470	$144,151	$144,331
Canyon County	$1,528,873	$1,592,554	$1,612,939	$1,646,063	$1,716,580
City of Lewiston	$686,000	$686,000	$686,000	$686,000	$686,000
City of Nampa			$1,203,000	$1,260,000	$1,304,000
City of Twin Falls	$479,368	$509,581	$493,466	$541,960	$487,186
Clark County	$11,167	$11,638	$10,523	$11,880	$10,431
Clearwater County	$101,105	$101,515	$105,598	$106,204	$96,968
Custer County	$59,244	$62,220	$55,312	$55,625	$53,904
Elmore County	$388,820	$413,693	$405,694	$416,711	$429,479
Franklin County	$153,230	$154,763	$163,754	$168,009	$164,321
Fremont County	$147,268	$144,826	$159,044	$156,095	$159,713
Gem County	$213,227	$225,384	$225,384	$230,090	$261,318
Idaho County	$189,291	$203,969	$193,924	$202,788	$209,123
Kootenai County	$1,391,612	$1,510,947	$1,565,131	$1,606,094	$1,570,650
Latah County	$246,343	$206,704	$239,352	$220,803	$214,110
Madison County	$368,174	$403,367	$396,791	$406,102	$418,221
Minidoka County	$228,056	$233,445	$232,724	$240,579	$229,962
Oneida County	$91,730	$83,416	$59,295	$62,288	
Owyhee County	$125,058	$143,627	$117,660	$157,117	$146,046
Power County	$78,829	$80,529	$80,463	$87,422	$86,644
Shoshone County	$152,232	$152,274	$149,318	$148,508	$142,653
Sircomm	$1,744,659	$1,817,724	$1,844,189	$1,945,968	
Teton County		$137,000	$135,000	$150,000	$152,000
Washington County	$109,516	$118,127	$116,998	$121,216	$127,621

Budgets (FY21-FY25)

What is your PSAP's budget for each fiscal year listed below?

PSAP	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Ada County	$9,532,960	$7,305,433	$9,216,651	$11,194,378	$12,409,031
Adams County	$66,522	$68,859	$73,000	$74,000	$65,000
Bannock County	$890,607	$907,253	$983,952	$1,011,426	$997,500
Benewah County	$166,750	$170,906	$175,071	$172,731	$171,561
Bingham County	$697,008	$673,756	$679,969	$699,057	$665,501
Blaine County	$1,934,781	$2,150,561	$1,971,252	$2,023,764	$2,257,000
Boise County			$145,918	$146,446	$137,667
Bonner County		$2,306,252	$3,258,453	$2,944,387	$3,080,551
Bonneville County	$2,982,686	$2,953,420	$2,890,220	$2,782,920	$3,006,820
Boundary County	$172,750		$128,300	$137,540	$157,650
Canyon County	$20,333,855	$1,319,376	$1,293,666	$1,405,178	$1,443,682
City of Lewiston	$11,500	$11,500	$11,200	$20,375	$20,375
City of Nampa			$1,122,000	$1,100,000	$1,448,000
City of Twin Falls	$1,373,109	$1,606,328	$1,622,273	$1,576,174	$1,672,904
Clark County	$36,000	$66,667	$66,667	$66,667	$67,411
Clearwater County	$496,431	$537,030	$527,468	$615,981	$749,408
Custer County	$190,000	$414,621	$325,000	$325,000	$240,000
Elmore County	$596,771	$641,985	$766,486	$815,962	$1,126,007
Franklin County	$522,630	$510,683	$516,473	$558,269	$638,620
Fremont County	$145,200	$152,000	$146,200	$159,954	$156,200
Gem County	$985,778	$870,925	$1,055,928	$1,280,391	$1,220,631
Idaho County	$891,262	$1,021,266	$1,215,593	$1,222,867	$1,359,299
Kootenai County	$4,183,705	$4,929,432	$5,435,222	$4,504,386	$5,780,249
Latah County	$380,882	$382,430	$385,060	$410,860	$429,130
Madison County	$900,000	$1,000,000	$1,100,000	$1,200,000	$1,300,000
Minidoka County	$1,337,534	$1,316,580	$768,856	$891,382	$1,388,110
Owyhee County	$800,000	$800,000	$750,000	$750,000	$750,000
Power County	$159,600	$173,600	$182,600	$184,600	$185,600
Shoshone County	$229,200	$292,261	$242,211	$267,197	$162,517
Sircomm	$3,282,520	$4,161,521	$3,937,433	$4,046,497	$4,275,088
Teton County		$670,000	$692,000	$761,000	$709,000
Washington County	$277,250	$237,250	$223,250	$223,250	$225,250

Expenditures (FY21-FY25)

What are your PSAP's actual expenditures for each fiscal year listed below?

PSAP	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Ada County	$5,442,494	$7,194,091	$5,733,109	$8,956,084	$7,464,287
Adams County	$73,425	$59,278	$62,408	$41,769	$43,414
Bannock County	$863,889	$880,035	$954,433	$981,083	$967,575
Benewah County	$172,832	$189,246	$121,395	$146,238	$126,001
Bingham County	$566,411	$662,053	$567,192	$986,644	$643,658
Blaine County	$1,699,383	$1,773,182	$1,767,859	$1,898,046	$2,027,426
Boise County			$104,584	$56,703	$101,708
Bonner County		$1,744,794	$2,074,842	$2,342,732	$2,111,601
Bonneville County	$2,523,287	$2,815,388	$2,683,766	$2,704,470	$1,152,522
Boundary County			$125,380	$122,945	$140,000
Canyon County	$1,637,317	$1,099,384	$1,057,204	$1,351,196	$1,247,079
Chubbuck Police	$10,967	$9,906	$10,269	$10,484	$10,771
City of Nampa			$945,000	$713,000	$1,289,000
City of Twin Falls	$1,317,747	$1,252,884	$1,423,043	$1,485,781	$1,922,226
Clark County	$31,862	$27,742	$61,479	$69,172	$66,778
Clearwater County	$384,155	$505,163	$530,373	$639,997	$621,244
Custer County	$50,575	$123,570	$23,781	$17,115	$53,782
Elmore County	$518,866	$540,707	$548,255	$652,656	$732,177
Franklin County	$579,756	$447,456	$518,689	$603,844	$606,993
Fremont County	$460,828	$607,064	$588,763	$596,627	$595,542
Gem County	$759,630	$651,093	$681,450	$1,133,727	$797,214
Idaho County	$693,790	$900,589	$948,449	$918,237	$878,169
Kootenai County	$4,024,903	$4,187,638	$4,226,589	$4,933,021	$5,615,782
Latah County	$271,424	$189,591	$228,096	$185,194	$195,560
Madison County	$875,000	$975,000	$1,075,000	$1,175,000	$1,275,000
Minidoka County	$643,314	$622,107	$685,121	$766,713	$840,989
Oneida County	$115,464	$76,457	$105,923	$121,567	
Owyhee County	$750,503	$800,026	$731,355	$690,194	$696,561
Power County	$140,101	$121,834	$79,341	$114,454	$89,803
Shoshone County	$197,134	$215,700	$178,768	$102,091	$159,846
Sircomm	$3,361,161	$3,702,503	$3,829,762	$3,675,357	
Teton County		$393,000	$422,000	$506,000	$528,000
Washington County	$85,664	$85,595	$130,585	$81,834	$77,930

F 911 center population estimates

This appendix includes the population estimate categories used when reporting on survey results from 911 centers with fewer than or more than 25,000 residents. See appendix C for our methods.

Exhibit 20

911 center population estimates

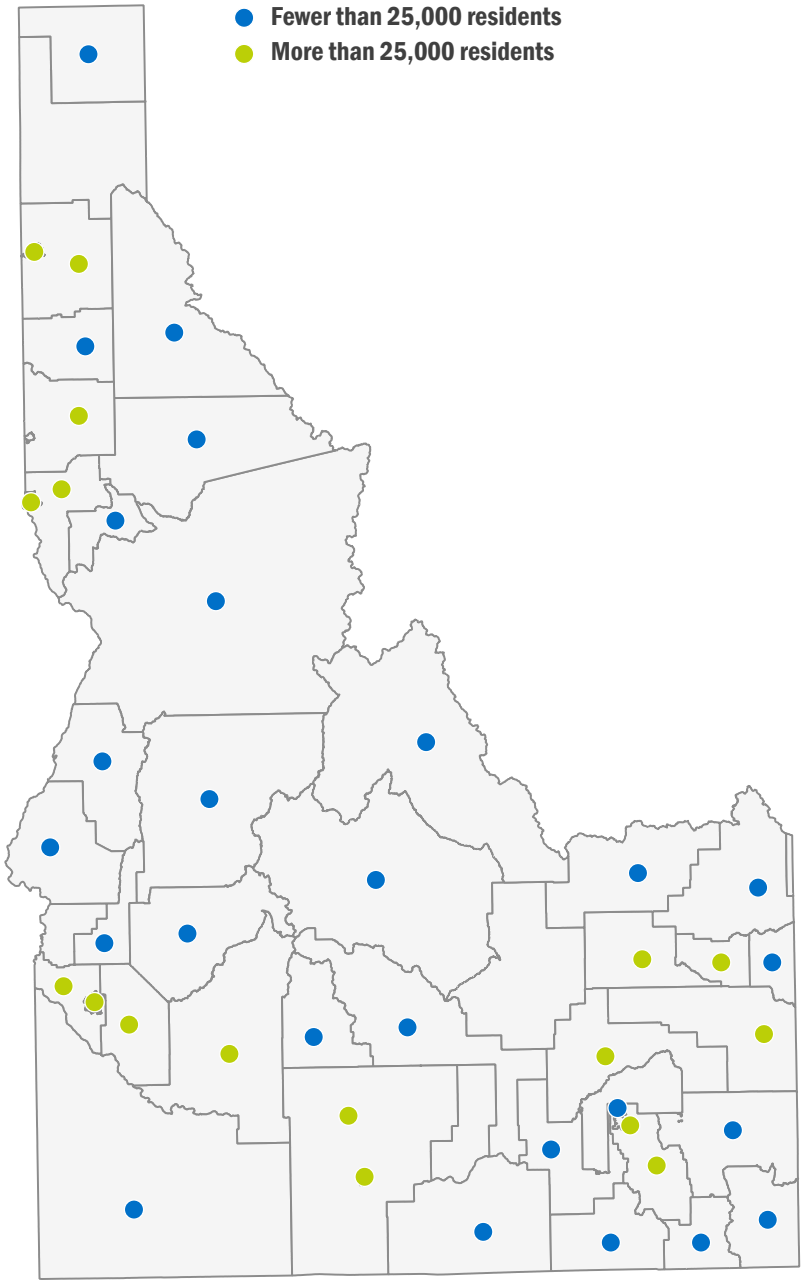
Fewer than 25,000 residents (n=26)	More than 25,000 residents (n=17)
Adams County	Ada County
Bear Lake County	Bannock County*
Benewah County	Bingham County
Blaine County	Bonneville County/ Idaho Falls
Boise County	Canyon County
Boundary County	City of Lewiston
Camas County	City of Nampa
Caribou County	City of Twin Falls
Cassia County	Elmore County
Chubbuck Police	Jefferson County
Clark County	Kootenai County
Clearwater County	Latah County
Custer County	Madison County
Franklin County	Nez Perce County*
Fremont County	Pocatello Police
Gem County	Post Falls Police
Idaho County	SIRCOMM
Lemhi County	
Lewis County	
Oneida County	
Owyhee County	
Power County	
Shoshone County	
Teton County	
Valley County	
Washington County	

Note: Bannock County and the Nez Perce County/Lewiston system were categorized based on

shared 911 system funding and governance structures. In both systems, 911 fee revenue and technology budgets are managed at a system level. Staffing costs are funded at the center level.

Exhibit 21

Idaho map of 911 centers with fewer than or more than 25,000 residents.



Note: This exhibit visually shows the data from exhibit 20. Not all 911 centers are labeled as they did not respond to the survey. Dots mark the center of each center's service area, not the exact location of the 911 center.

G Federal Communications Commission data

The data presented in this appendix is from the Federal Communications Commission's *Sixteenth Annual Report to Congress on State Collection and Distribution of 911 and Enhanced 911 Fees and Charges*.

Exhibit 22

911 fee report data of neighboring states

State	2023 population estimate	Primary 911 centers	911 centers per 100,000 residents	Total calls and texts	Calls and texts per 100,000 residents	Total ECOs	ECOs per 100,000 residents
Idaho	1,971,122	48	2.4	598,803	30,379	637	32.3
Montana	1,131,302	58	5.1	unavailable	unavailable	192	17.0
Nevada	3,214,363	12	0.4	2,001,447	62,266	9	0.3
Oregon	4,253,653	43	1.0	2,280,446	53,611	793	18.6
Utah	3,443,222	27	0.8	1,091,413	31,697	365	10.6
Washington	7,857,320	49	0.6	5,538,967	70,494	1,381	17.6
Wyoming	585,067	28	4.8	226,263	38,673	63	10.8

Note: ECO = emergency communications officer

H Responses to the evaluation

> There is still room to improve Idaho's emergency response operations, and I welcome the opportunity to continue addressing those challenges. ... Our first responders deserve the strongest possible support infrastructure and resources to continue their critical work protecting public safety.
>
> — Brad Little
> Governor of Idaho



> IMD is willing to work with the legislature, Governor's Office and stakeholders in drafting legislation for this purpose. An incremental approach to changes would likely be best, with implementation of these recommendations to occur simultaneously followed by potential adjustments to funding instruments. It would be imperative, however, for the funding to follow the reorganization.
>
> — Major General Timothy J. Donnellan
> The Adjutant General



> The investigation and resulting report provide an important opportunity to strengthen Idaho's statutory framework, enhance transparency, and reinforce fiscal stewardship of limited 911 telephone surcharge revenues and grant funds.
>
> — Sheriff Andy Creech (Payette County)
> Chairman of the Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission



Governor Brad Little
State Capitol :: Boise, Idaho 83720
(208) 334-2100 :: gov.idaho.gov

March 11, 2026

Director Ryan Langrill
e Evaluations
[address redacted]
[address redacted]

Dear Director Langrill,

Thank you for sharing the Office of Performance Evaluation's (OPE) report on Idaho's 911 systems. As I've stated previously, there is still room to improve Idaho's emergency response operations, and I welcome the opportunity to continue addressing those challenges.

First and foremost, I want to recognize and thank all the first responders in our state for their continued work and sacrifice in maintaining Idahoans' safety. "Our first responders deserve the strongest possible support infrastructure and resources to continue their critical work protecting public safety."

I concur with and support the Idaho Military Division's response to the OPE report. The Idaho Military Division is the administrative agency for the Idaho Public Safety and Communications Commission, and I will be directing the division to provide my office with courses of action to address the concerns listed in the report.

However, as noted in the report, some policy changes will require additional resources to implement. Consideration of resource limitations must be taken into account to address the gaps in the current plan for next generation 911 implementation in Idaho.

Again, thank you for sharing this important study, and I look forward to continuing Idaho's success in improving Idaho's public safety communications.

Sincerely,

Brad Little
Governor of Idaho

BRAD LITTLE
GOVERNOR

MILITARY DIVISION, STATE OF IDAHO
4040 W. GUARD STREET
BOISE, IDAHO 83705-5004

TIMOTHY J. DONNELLAN
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

10 March 2026

valuations
[address redacted]
[address redacted] Suite 202

To the Office of Performance Evaluations:

The Idaho Military Division would like to express our sincere thanks to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee and the Office of Performance Evaluations for their efforts to develop findings and recommendations to strengthen Idaho's 911 system and support its long-term sustainability. 911 is a foundational public safety capability, and IMD believes this issue is of critical importance. As the state agency assigned to provide administrative support to the Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission (IPSCC), IMD is invested in future 911 development.

The IMD supports local control of Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). Local officials know their jurisdictions best, and a retention of operational oversight ensures that determinations are informed by those most closely involved. IMD does support efficiencies provided through statewide information compilation, standardization of cost eligibility, and the development of statewide 911 systems and infrastructure, however operations at the PSAP should remain locally driven.

The Idaho Military Division supports the recommendations identified in the report. IMD analysis of each of these recommendations are outlined below.

- Statewide collection of call-handling metrics
    - IMD supports the collection of call-handling metrics as a data source to inform an understanding of the emergency communications ecosystem in Idaho. Analysis of this data may substantiate the benefits of future efficiencies. IMD does not believe it to be the role of the division to recommend or mandate PSAP consolidation based on this data but believes incentivization through funding, and local determinations on what would work best is the most appropriate method for any potential future consolidation efforts.
- Local government reporting of budgets and expenditures for emergency communications
    - Funding has clearly been identified as an issue for sustainable operation of a functional 911 system. Future statutory changes may be required to adjust the fee structure, however clear data to develop funding need projections are made more challenging due to lack of a comprehensive understanding of fiscal impact. In order to substantiate future funding strategies, decision makers will need to have data to support

rational yet adequate funding proposals. IMD recommends this data include not only 911 related costs, but also those related to all emergency communications in order to develop comprehensive strategies and solutions.

  - Efficiencies such as statewide platforms, a state 911 program and streamlining of PSAP operations can be incentivized through the grant funds created by the $0.25 fee. As funding data is compiled and reconciled against the system needs, IMD recommends analysis of whether potential fee increases should be made to the $1 fee provided directly to PSAPS, to the $0.25 fee provided for grant funding, or to both.

- Develop cost criteria for fee funding
  - Differences currently exist in interpretations of what 911 funds can be used for, creating a situation where costs may be allocated differently across jurisdictions. Clear guidance that applies equally across the state would set a level playing field. This guidance should reference FCC eligibility criteria, and recognize that emergency communications are comprised of more than only 911 systems.
- Create state 911 program
  - Governance of a state program would require input from local jurisdictions and state agencies in order to be successful. Greater responsibility assigned to a state program would benefit from the advice from organizations directly involved in emergency communications. A balance would need to be struck that would empower the benefits of a statewide program while understanding the realities and needs of the local jurisdictions which it would support.
  - Statewide initiatives such as Next Generation 911 require contracting ability at the statewide level. Alternate strategies have been required to acquire goods and services, placing undue burden on local jurisdictions. A state program with contracting ability backed by state procurement processes would allow more efficient roll-outs of statewide initiatives.
  - Fiscal efficiencies have already been realized through the statewide roll-out of Next Generation 911. The purchasing power achieved through all jurisdictions joining together results in lower costs to all stakeholders. This model must be continued if Idaho seeks to provide sustainable and capable 911 services to its citizens.
  - IMD also offers potential roles the agency may play in adoption of these recommendations. A state program would be instrumental in accomplishing many of the recommendations contained within the report. Given that state code assigns the IPSCC to the IMD and the division currently provides human resource management, accounting and finance services, and administrative support to the IPSCC, it is logical for the agency to incorporate the 911 program, should one be created. It would be critical, however, for adequate staffing and funding to be provided to this program in order to accomplish the important work it would be tasked with.

Legislative action is likely required to set standardized data reporting requirements, statewide cost criteria as well as a state program. IMD is willing to work with the legislature, Governor's Office and stakeholders in drafting legislation for this purpose. An incremental approach to changes would

likely be best, with implementation of these recommendations to occur simultaneously followed by potential adjustments to funding instruments. It will be imperative, however, for the funding to follow the reorganization.

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Timothy Donnellan
Major General
The Adjutant General, Idaho

IDAHO PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Andy Creech — Chairman
Idaho Sheriff's Association

Dave Lent
Idaho Legislature-Dist 33

Tyler Jussel-Capt
Idaho State Police

Kent Searle, Cassia County Commissioner
Idaho Association of Counties

Sheriff Matt Clifford-Ada County
Idaho Sheriffs Association

Tyler Lewis-Capt
Idaho Fire Chiefs Association

Jason Peirce-Deputy Director
Idaho Technology Authority

Wayne Denny-Director
Idaho State EMS

Ben Roeber-Director
ID Office of Emergency Management

Mitch Copstead-Capt
DIGB 1

Deputy Marci Willimas
DIGB 2

Stephanie Johnson-Ada Co
DIGB 3

Todd Quast-Cassia Co
DIGB 4

Adam McKinney-Vice Chair
DIGB 5

Sheriff Samuel Hulse, Bonneville County
DIGB 6

John Wheaton
Idaho Tribal Representative

From: Sheriff Andy Creech, Chairman, Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission
To: Joint Legislative Oversight Committee
Date: March 13, 2026
RE: Challenges Facing Idaho's 911 System

I. Executive Summary

The Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission (IPSCC) appreciates the leadership of Co-Chair Senator Wintrow, Co-Chair Representative Redman, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee, and the Office of Performance Evaluation for their comprehensive review of Idaho's 911 system. The Commission shares the Legislature's commitment to ensuring that every community in Idaho has access to a reliable, resilient, and modern emergency communications system.

The investigation and resulting report provide an important opportunity to strengthen Idaho's statutory framework, enhance transparency, and reinforce fiscal stewardship of limited 911 telephone surcharge revenues and grant funds. The IPSCC welcomes this review as a constructive step toward ensuring long-term sustainability, accountability, and operational effectiveness in the delivery of 911 services.

The report identifies several key areas requiring attention, including:

- Increased legislative clarity and support for the IPSCC
- Expanded authority necessary to effectively oversee a statewide NG911 environment
- Transition from legacy 911 infrastructure to Next Generation 911 (NG911)
- Enhanced financial processes and reporting requirements

These issues are central to Idaho's transition from a legacy 911 system to a modern NG911 platform. As this transition progresses, the IPSCC must be equipped with appropriate statutory authority to:

- Enter into and manage contracts for NG911 Core Services
- Provide oversight of statewide NG911 implementation
- Administer and monitor grant-funded infrastructure projects
- Standardize financial reporting processes

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- Ensure compliance with reporting requirements by PSAP governing entities
- Maintain sufficient staffing to support statewide coordination and oversight

While the report references a "State 911 System" or "Statewide 911 System," the Commission believes it is important to preserve Idaho's longstanding commitment to local governance. Idaho is a home rule state that values decision-making at the level closest to the people. The IPSCC supports a statewide NG911 framework that establishes uniform standards, ensures interoperability, and coordinates critical infrastructure, while allowing local PSAP governing entities to retain operational control within the structure of IPSCC grants and program requirements. This balanced approach preserves local accountability while advancing statewide consistency and resilience.

The report also notes Idaho's comparatively high number of Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) relative to population and suggests consolidation as a potential cost-saving measure. While consolidation may warrant careful evaluation, a significant barrier not fully addressed in the report is the condition and funding of Idaho's radio infrastructure.

Although modern call-handling systems increasingly allow collaboration and shared services, radio systems used to dispatch first responders often lack the interoperability, coverage, and redundancy necessary to support consolidation. Meaningful consolidation would require substantial investment in repeater upgrades, interoperability gateways, expanded network connectivity, and additional radio towers. At present, limited funding is available to support these improvements. Without concurrent investment in radio infrastructure, consolidation efforts may not achieve the anticipated operational efficiencies.

The IPSCC remains committed to working collaboratively with the Legislature to improve Idaho statutes and administrative rules governing 911 services. The Commission is dedicated to honoring both the letter and intent of Idaho law and to ensuring responsible stewardship of surcharge revenues and grant funds.

The continuation of Next Generation 911 services beyond the initial investment is not sustainable past FY2030 under the current funding structure. Legislative action will be necessary to increase grant revenue in order to sustain and operate the statewide NG911 system for the citizens of the State of Idaho.

Above all, the IPSCC's highest priority is the continued reliability and advancement of 911 services in Idaho. The Commission is committed to the successful statewide deployment of NG911 and to ensuring that all Idaho communities—urban and rural alike—receive a consistent, secure, and dependable level of emergency communications service.

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II. Background and Context

Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in Idaho are governed under Idaho Code, Title 31, Chapter 48. This statutory framework, enacted in 1988, established and funded 911 services throughout the state. Idaho Code § 31-4804 authorized the collection of a 911 telephone surcharge, allowing local governments overseeing consolidated PSAPs to impose a surcharge of up to $1.00 per line with voter approval.
Subsequent legislation expanded this framework by authorizing participation in a statewide grant program administered by the IPSCC, funded through an additional $0.25 surcharge pursuant to Idaho Code § 31-4819. The allowable expenditures under Idaho Code § 31-4804(5) were last substantively updated in 2016 and do not currently align with FCC-21-80A1 911 Fee Diversion Rules B-2-37 . The IPSCC is established and granted authority under Idaho Code §§ 31-4815 and 31-4816.

The original legislative intent of the surcharge and grant structure was to support the implementation and long-term development of a consistent and reliable 911 system across Idaho. Over the past four decades, emergency communications technology has evolved significantly. Legacy infrastructure has been phased out, and national standards for NG911 have been developed by the National Emergency Number Association (NENA). These standards establish a framework for interoperable, secure, IP-based emergency communications systems capable of supporting voice, text, data transmission, and enhanced location accuracy.

The IPSCC coordinates modernization efforts among participating counties through consolidated grant projects and statewide initiatives. To fulfill its statutory responsibilities, the Commission operates with the support of several subcommittees:

- The Grants Subcommittee oversees administration and monitoring of surcharge-funded grants and advises on fiscal accountability and eligible expenditures.
- The Technical Subcommittee provides guidance on system standards, interoperability requirements, cybersecurity considerations, and long-term modernization planning.
- The PSAP Training Committee coordinates regional training and oversees an annual statewide conference to promote operational consistency and professional development.
- The NG911 Committee provides oversight and strategic guidance for NG911 deployment, standards compliance, and coordination among participating jurisdictions.
- The Legislative Committee develops draft legislation, collaborates with legislators, and evaluates the operational and fiscal impact of proposed statutory changes.

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Idaho is currently in the deployment phase of NG911 implementation. NG911-compatible call-handling equipment has been ordered, and installation planning is underway. A formal statewide rollout plan is being finalized to ensure a coordinated transition.

As Idaho advances toward full NG911 capability, modernization of radio infrastructure remains a critical unfunded parallel priority. Without interoperable and updated radio systems, many NG911 benefits—including call failover and geographic redundancy—cannot be fully realized. Strategic investment in radio infrastructure will be necessary to maximize the effectiveness of NG911 implementation.

III. Response to Major Findings and Recommendations

1. OPE Finding
The IPSCC, in the absence of a state 911 program, should collect call-handling metrics, such as call-answering time.

IPSCC Response
The IPSCC agrees with this recommendation. Standardized collection of call-handling metrics will improve transparency, support statewide analysis, and assist in identifying service gaps and performance trends.

Action Taken or Planned
The IPSCC currently conducts annual surveys of PSAP governing entities. Future surveys will incorporate standardized call-handling metrics. The Commission will develop consistent definitions and reporting formats to ensure uniform data collection. Analytics software included in the Next Generation 911 Core Services will help meet this recommendation by FY2027-2028.

2. OPE Finding
The IPSCC should consider publishing standardized performance metrics for local 911 centers.

IPSCC Response
The IPSCC agrees. Establishing standardized performance metrics will promote consistency, support benchmarking, and enhance transparency.

Action Taken or Planned
The Commission will collaborate with legislators, industry experts, and PSAP stakeholders to develop appropriate metrics. Completion is anticipated by June 2027. Legislative authority requiring participation in reporting would further improve data completeness and reliability.

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3. OPE Finding
The Legislature should require standardized reporting of annual emergency communications budgets and expenditures.

IPSCC Response
The IPSCC agrees that standardized reporting would improve transparency, planning, and fiscal accountability. Legal analysis will be necessary to determine appropriate statutory language and scope.

This recommendation may require adjustments to financial systems at both the state and local levels. While some changes may be minimal, others could result in additional costs.

Action Taken or Planned
The Commission will work with key stakeholders, including the Legislature, Idaho Association of Counties, Association of Idaho Cities, and the Idaho Sheriff's Association. Given the scope of this recommendation, legislation is anticipated for consideration during the 2028 session.

4. OPE Finding
The Legislature should direct the IPSCC to define cost responsibilities between 911 fee revenues and local government funding.

IPSCC Response
The IPSCC agrees that clearly defined cost responsibilities would improve transparency and alignment between revenue sources and expenditures.

Action Taken or Planned
The Commission will develop proposed criteria and reporting methods. Legislative changes may be necessary to streamline provider payments and establish consistent reporting requirements. Stakeholder engagement will be required, and legislation is anticipated for consideration during the 2028 session.

5. OPE Finding
The Legislature should consider evolving the IPSCC into a statewide 911 program with authority to oversee a statewide system.

IPSCC Response
The IPSCC agrees that additional statutory authority would strengthen statewide coordination and support NG911 implementation. Expanded authority would improve contract management, standards enforcement, and data collection.

Action Taken or Planned
This recommendation represents a significant structural change and will require extensive stakeholder engagement. Legislative proposals may be introduced over multiple sessions, with implementation likely occurring over several years.

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IV. Commitment to Transparency and Collaboration

The IPSCC is committed to continued collaboration with the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee, the Office of Performance Evaluation, the Idaho Legislature, PSAP administrators, and local government officials to ensure that the development and deployment of NG911 occurs in a consistent and coordinated manner throughout Idaho.

The Commission is committed to supporting legislative efforts that enhance annual reporting and data transparency. We will clearly identify measurable NG911 milestones so progress can be effectively tracked and reported as the transition advances.

V. Conclusion

The IPSCC is dedicated to establishing appropriate standards and overseeing the transition to NG911, which will significantly improve emergency communications services for the citizens of Idaho. We are committed to ensuring that these services are consistent, reliable, and accessible across all regions of the state.

The Commission recognizes the limitations of available revenue to support this program. While additional funding mechanisms may be necessary in the future, the IPSCC remains committed to responsible stewardship of existing funds. We will use available resources prudently to develop and sustain a modern, resilient, and interoperable 911 system.

The IPSCC will continue to engage with the Legislature on matters related to public safety communications and encourages ongoing collaboration with legislators and stakeholders to strengthen Idaho's emergency communications framework.

Sincerely,

Andy Creech
Chairman, IPSCC
Sheriff-Payette County

Find the report at legislature.idaho.gov/ope



Office of Performance Evaluations
Idaho Legislature

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