



**SANTA CRUZ REGIONAL 9-1-1**  
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# **Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 Strategic Plan**

## **2022 – 2026**

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## **Mission and Organizational Values**

### **Mission Statement**

Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 is dedicated to serving as the vital link between the public and public safety organizations through responsiveness and technical excellence while in partnership with its Users and employees.

### **Values**

Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 articulates its values in the key documents “A Successful NetCom Employee” and “Customer Bill of Rights.” When SCR9-1-1 surveyed its employees and its Users these rose to the top as the most important values of this agency and its people:

Communication: We clearly communicate our ideas, needs, and expectations

Professional: We care about the quality and efficacy of our work

Service-oriented: We prioritize the needs of our customers (co-workers, Users, and citizens)

Teamwork: We support our co-workers and Users and work together cooperatively

Excellence: We are committed to performing to the best of our ability

Competent: Our work product is professional and accurate

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(Additional Organizational Values)

Respect: We show others respect in all workplace interactions

Accountable: We take responsibility for our actions, decisions, and their outcomes

Inclusive: We are open to different experiences, ideas, and opinions

Collaborative: We cooperate with others to find solutions and generate ideas

Resilient: We accept mistakes and feedback as part of the learning process

Leadership: We develop ourselves and others in support of common goals

Supportive: We care for and strengthen each other

Honest: We are direct and truthful

Dedication: We are committed to our shared purpose

**Strategic Plan Initiative Area One:**  
**Cultivate Our Employee-Focused Culture**

From its inception, SCR9-1-1 has actively engaged with its employees. Every three years, employees are surveyed, given an opportunity to provide input on how the organization is managed and identify what is going well here and what needs improvement. Employees also have many avenues to contribute to organizational change and improvement such as through participation in Task Teams, as the Dispatcher Staff Representative, and on standing and ad hoc committees such as the Technical Operations Advisory Committee (TOAC) and the Training, Hiring, And Recruitment Committee (THARC).

This employee-focused mentality is an essential element of who SCR9-1-1 is as an organization and the goals throughout the strategic plan are intended to maintain this culture. In particular the goals in this section and in the succession planning area are meant to enhance the employee's experience at work.

**GOAL: Increase Dispatcher Staffing Levels.**

Currently, the organization suffers from employee turnover and significant understaffing in the Dispatch unit. Following the great recession of 2008, the Authority reduced spending by allowing dispatcher staffing levels to drop to minimums. After taking on additional duties providing public safety communications services to San Benito County, staffing increased by hiring dispatchers from that county. However, regular employee turnover and years of cautious spending and lean budgets resulted in the agency being understaffed for years. The scope of the challenge increased during the pandemic years, with employees seeking greater work life balance and the large amounts of overtime preventing them from achieving that balance. The following are some key objectives planned to help achieve this goal:

- Beginning immediately and continuing until the Authority's Operations Division is fully staffed, hire and hold training academies at least twice per year.
- As the Authority has authorization for overflow positions, once Operations is fully staffed, continue to recruit and hire on an annual basis.
- Convene the Training, Hiring, And Recruitment Committee (THARC) during the 2022-2023 fiscal year to evaluate the recruitment process and recommend changes to help increase the long-term success rate with new hires.
- In order to allow for greater employee interaction, especially in providing feedback, coaching, and mentoring, evaluate the possibility of reducing the Operations Supervisors' span of control by adding one supervisor position in FY 2024/25.
- During FY 2022/2023, form a Social Media Task Force to increase our social media presence in order to educate our community and showcase our organization for potential employees, striving for one social media post per week.

**GOAL: Increase Employee Retention through Employee Recognition and Appreciation Initiatives and Wellness Programs, including Peer Support.**

In common with many public agencies as well as private corporations, SCR9-1-1 is struggling to recruit and retain personnel, especially in Operations where employees must work in-person. The goal is to reduce turnover by hiring the right people for this difficult job and by finding ways to increase employee satisfaction. Employee satisfaction may be increased through various means including more and better employee recognition, providing professional development opportunities, and improving the workplace environment. These objectives are planned in support of this goal:

- Implement a virtual employee recognition program to increase opportunities for employer recognition as well as providing a tool for peer-to-peer recognition. (Completed June 2022)
- To increase employees' sense of belonging and place in Authority history, assign permanent employee badge numbers and issue new badges. (Completed June 2022)
- Update the Employee Recognition Policy to support additional recognition and appreciation activities.
- During calendar year 2022, develop a Promotional Onboarding Plan to better support newly promoted employees as they transition to a new position. (Completed September 2022)
- Beginning with Fiscal Year 2022/2023, schedule Continuing Education (CE) training days for all personnel at least annually.
- During the 2023 calendar year, review and update the Dispatcher classifications, in collaboration with the employee bargaining unit, to incorporate reference to California's first responder status and to modernize the list of job duties to reflect current and future expectations.
- Maximize use of our State-provided funding for external trainings to send staff especially Dispatchers, to relevant training classes and conferences that are eligible for reimbursement.
- When Supervisor staffing/responsibilities permit, work to restore the employee mentor program.
- As Dispatcher staffing increases, conduct recruitments to add members to the Peer Support Team, and provide onboarding and training to new team members.
- To improve the likelihood of retaining new hires, add a Supervisor panel to the peer review schedule to better evaluate Dispatcher candidates' understanding of and suitability for the job. (Completed August 2022)

**GOAL: Evaluate Staffing Levels and Deployment Models**

Because of the nature of the Authority's responsibility, it is not possible to reduce employee workload or expectations when staffing levels are low. From the number of 9-1-1 calls received to the amount of field-initiated activity to what natural disasters or major emergencies will occur in any given shift, SCR9-1-1 staff must be prepared and able to respond. The current staffing

models (how many dispatchers are needed, and how staff is deployed) have not been evaluated for several years.

- During calendar year 2023, complete a staffing deployment study, possibly utilizing the Project RETAINS system designed by industry Association of Public Safety Communications Officials.
- By January 2024, develop a proposal for part-time dispatcher positions in preparation for labor negotiations.
- If part-time positions are approved by the Union and the Board, and when staffing levels are sufficient, open an internal recruitment for part time dispatchers.
- During FY 2023/2024, investigate the possibility of designing dispatcher schedules to allow 15 minutes of transition at the end of the shift to engage in decompression or stress management activities before heading home.
- Work collaboratively with User Agencies to implement changes related to California Assembly Bill 988, which will implement 24/7 crisis response teams for behavioral health incidents and may require new triage protocols for dispatchers and increased collaboration with the local 9-8-8 center.

## **Strategic Plan Initiative Area Two:**

### **Commitment to Excellence**

SCR9-1-1 has long prided itself on high standards, technical excellence, and commitment to customer service. Evaluating the Authority's training and standards in the context of the modern work environment will help identify areas for improvement and confirm the pride in this organization and in the quality of the work it produces.

#### **GOAL: Revamp the Authority's Comprehensive Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Program**

The QA/QI Program previously included regular, random call reviews for newly released trainees; reviews of emergency medical triage calls; reports related to the time-based Standards of Excellence; 360-degree feedback for low frequency, high priority incident review; and regular ad hoc reporting and analysis to identify performance trends and create programs for reviewing and improving performance. The program partially declined due to lack of staff resources and partially due to implementation of the new Motorola CAD which necessitated complete re-creation of all relevant reports, an effort which continues to this day.

- Develop a new administrative position for Support Services and request funding for said position during FY 2022/2023 budget development. (Completed July 2022)
- Recruit and hire a new Support Services Administrative Analyst during FY 2022/2023.
- Under the direction of the General Manager and in collaboration with the Operations Division Manager, the Support Services Administrative Analyst will develop the framework for an updated Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement program during calendar year 2023.
- By July 2024, the Support Services Administrative Analyst will have a process for completing random call reviews for quality assurance, and providing feedback to dispatchers on at least a quarterly basis.

#### **GOAL: Evaluate and Update the Authority's Standards of Excellence**

The Standards of Excellence are a set of time-based criteria for call-taking and dispatching. There are different metrics for Law, Fire, and EMS. The Authority's performance as measured by these Standards is published each year in our Annual Report. In addition, dispatchers' compliance to the Standards are documented in their annual performance evaluation. The management team proposes a re-evaluation of the Standards to ensure they encompass our Users' expectations, comply with state and national standards, and can be used to provide meaningful information about the Authority's performance to its Board and Community.

- Beginning in FY 2022/2023, in collaboration with Dispatchers and User Agencies, review the current Standards of Excellence and assess their relevance to today's expectations and reporting needs.

- As suggested by the Users Committee and/or Dispatchers, update the Standards of Excellence to incorporate new metrics, develop reports to measure overall compliance to the new metrics, and provide training and feedback to Dispatchers.
- During FY 2022/2023, the Support Services Analyst will work with Systems and Operations to develop performance dashboard reports for Dispatchers to provide real-time feedback on the Authority's compliance to the current Standards.

#### GOAL: Review and Update Training Programs

SCR9-1-1 utilizes an in-house academy training program to take entry-level recruits from public safety novices to excellent dispatchers. The Authority's homegrown Instructors and CTOs (Communications Training Officers), with support and oversight from a Supervisor, keep the training program operating. The training is routinely updated and is well-managed by the Instructors. It is recommended the training program be evaluated for compliance to standards as well as the opportunity for improvements that may contribute to long-term employee success.

- Beginning in FY 2022/2023, validate the SCR9-1-1 Entry-Level Training Academy is still aligned with current California POST (Peace Officer Standards and Training) requirements for Dispatchers.
- Beginning in FY 2022/2023, review California POST requirements for Dispatchers as they pertain to Continuing Education and develop a plan to align in-house training to match those requirements.
- After FY 2023/2024, evaluate the potential for becoming a POST-certified agency.
- During FY 2022/2023, identify training opportunities suitable for Lead Dispatchers.
- During FY 2022/2023, identify Leadership academies suitable for newly promoted and current Supervisors.
- During FY 2023/2024, develop a plan to allow SCR9-1-1 staff to participate in local agency training drills.

### **Strategic Plan Initiative Area Three:**

#### **Enhance Use of Technology**

Today's public safety employees are expected to be familiar with and successfully utilize a variety of technology solutions, from standard office productivity suites (like Google Workspace or Microsoft Office365) to specialized technology like the Motorola PremierOne CAD (Computer-Aided Dispatch) used by the Authority. The Authority needs to provide its employees with access to modern, reliable, and efficient technology solutions, and the training and resources to use those solutions effectively.

#### **GOAL: Optimize Use of Current Systems**

Historically, new technology solutions are deployed, providing useful new features and functionality. Initial training is provided showcasing some of the new features, but as new employees are hired and software updates are applied, admin staff workload doesn't always allow time to explore new features much less figure out how to turn them on and train staff on the new features. The Authority has many systems in use that are under-utilized and the following goals focus on improving use of existing technology.

- During 2022, utilizing the Technical Operations Advisory Committee (TOAC), explore new CAD features in the Motorola P1 version 4.5 upgrade and implement those that will improve usability and support dispatchers in their day to day activities.
- During 2023, utilizing the Task Teams and Users Committee, explore new Mobile features in the Motorola P1 version 4.5 upgrade and implement those that will improve usability and support field personnel in their day to day activities.
- During FY 2023/2024, replace and upgrade the P1 CAD hardware under the extended warranty agreement.
- During FY 2023/2024, evaluate the latest P1 CAD release to plan for future implementation of new features that help streamline the dispatch operation.
- Beginning in 2022, perform annual evaluations of the Authority's cybersecurity position.

#### **GOAL: Prepare for Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1)**

The State of California is aggressively pursuing a plan to transition PSAPs (Public Safety Answering Points) to "NG9-1-1" infrastructure by the end of 2023. That means moving away from legacy solutions like on-premise analog phone systems, and siloed, private networks to the NENA i3 standard: secure IP-based networks. These "networks of networks" connect PSAPs with each other, and with regional, state, and nationwide 9-1-1 infrastructure to deliver emergency "callers" of not just voice phone calls but also the potential to deliver additional data points (such as On-Star crash logs, cell phone video from an RP, etc.) that may help the field responders be more efficient and informed as they respond to calls for service.



- During the NG9-1-1 deployment in California, identify opportunities for additional technology solutions made possible by the NG9-1-1 infrastructure and consider plans for obtaining and deploying these solutions.
- During 2023, explore additional functionality available through the Rapid Deploy solution provided by the State as part of NG9-1-1.
- Explore opportunities for collaboration and cooperation with other PSAPs due to the NG9-1-1 implementation, such as shared backup centers.
- Evaluate SCR9-1-1's ability to meet User expectations that may come along with NG9-1-1.
- Beginning no later than January 2025, undertake a review of the User Agency contracts to evaluate and update the definitions of "Basic Communications Services" and "Discretionary Communications Services" especially to reflect changes due to NG9-1-1.
- Utilizing members of the Technical Operations Advisory Committee (TOAC), review cloud-based 9-1-1 phone systems as they become approved via the CalOES purchasing contract, in order to select and install a new calltaking solution during FY 2023/2024.

#### GOAL: Collaborate with Users on Adoption of New Technology

As User agencies seek to enhance their situational awareness through the deployment of new technologies, they often seek solutions that directly or indirectly affect SCR9-1-1. For instance, Fire agencies chose to begin using Tablet Command instead of P1 Mobile or P1 Handheld. This is because Tablet Command felt more user-friendly from their perspective and they are able to collaborate with other agencies such as CalFIRE using that platform. But, it had an unintended consequence of creating some challenges in dispatch as some functions were not available which increased voice traffic on Fire Red and reliance on Fire Pod dispatchers to manage some tasks. The below objectives will help SCR9-1-1 manage change while still remaining responsive to its User Agencies.

- Monitor the state-funded alert and warning solution for its ability to meet SCR9-1-1 and User Agency needs with the goal of transitioning to this solution when it has all the necessary features.
- Increase User-level access to the Authority's alert and warning solution in order to maintain on-call lists and send their own callouts.
- During FY 2022/2023, develop a process to allow SCR9-1-1 to review and approve new technology that interfaces with the Dispatch Operations or Technologies, before it is purchased.
- Starting immediately, engage personnel from User Agencies in NetCom systems feature reviews and implementation by sharing information from vendor conferences and distributing release notes prior to major upgrades.
- Develop training for Users on enhancements in systems that affect them or that they use (such as P1 Mobile/Handheld).
- Beginning in FY 2022/2023, schedule an annual Technology Summit workshop for SCR9-1-1 personnel and/or User personnel in order to: review existing systems and

features; consider upcoming system upgrades and enhancements; develop funding needs for budget planning; incorporate User training and/or feedback.

- Evaluate the use of Smart9-1-1 or other enhanced caller information databases as a secondary tool to provide enhanced services to the communities served by SCR9-1-1.

**Strategic Plan Initiative Area Four:**  
**Administration Modernization**

Prior to 2012, the Authority received an accreditation from CALEA (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies) which prompted at least bi-annual reviews of policies and procedures. Since dropping the accreditation process due to staffing concerns, many policies and job descriptions have fallen out of date. Moreover, the Joint Powers Authority agreement was signed in 1991 and last amended in 1994. This initiative seeks to confirm the agency's compliance with modern laws and regulations as well as increasing employee pride by updating job descriptions and policy to better encompass the complex, skill-based work performed here at SCR9-1-1.

**GOAL: Review Authority Policy and Procedure**

- By October 2022, establish an ad hoc Board sub-committee in order to complete a review of policy series 100 through 2000. (Completed September 2022)
- By July 2023, complete a review of policies in series 100 to series 2000 and obtain Board approval for recommended updates. Policies that require Union input will be deferred until MOU negotiations commence in early 2024.
- During calendar years 2023 and 2024, Staff will review and update internal policies in series 3000, 7000, 8000, and 9000.

**GOAL: Review and Update the Joint Powers Authority Agreement**

- Update the JPA to modify the section on termination, removing the reference to 35 years.
- Update the JPA to define the ownership of CAD data and other records held by the Authority on behalf of its User Agencies.
- Update the JPA to update the list of User Agencies.
- Update the JPA to have a Treasurer rather than a Controller.

**GOAL: Review Authority Job Descriptions**

- By December 2022, update the NeoGov portal with all current job descriptions, salary schedules, and benefits.
- By December 2024, review all job descriptions and update as necessary to accurately reflect the current work performed, and forecast projected new job requirements.

**GOAL: Identify Building Improvement Projects and Develop Funding**

- By October 2022, establish an ad hoc Board sub-committee in order to develop a capital funding proposal. (Completed September 2022)
- Starting in calendar year 2024, investigate potential for refinance of Lease Revenue Bonds to provide funding for certain building improvements.

- Evaluate the costs and seek funding to replace the Authority’s roof and HVAC systems.
- Evaluate the costs and seek funding to replace the Authority’s backup generator.
- Evaluate the costs and seek funding to replace or repair the Authority’s water storage tank.
- Evaluate the costs and seek funding to upgrade the Authority’s parking lot gate.
- Evaluate the costs and seek funding to remodel the Authority’s kitchen and break room area.
- Evaluate the costs and seek funding to replace the Authority’s carpet, refresh paint, and update ceiling tiles.
- Evaluate the costs and seek funding to improve the employee locker rooms.
- Investigate alternatives to add Administrative office space at the Authority’s primary location.
- Investigate the possibility of partnering with the City of Santa Cruz to install solar panel covered parking at the Authority.
- Investigate the possibility of partnering with the City of Santa Cruz to install a battery backup solution at the Authority.
- Investigate the possibility of partnering with the City of Santa Cruz to install electric vehicle charging stations at the Authority.

**Strategic Plan Initiative Area Five:**  
**Build a Succession Planning Framework**

As Supervisors and Managers move on to new opportunities or retire, it's critical to develop Staff who are ready, willing, and able to take on new challenges by promoting into management roles. This work should start with evaluating the management and staff roles at the center, considering what skills and training are necessary to be successful in those roles. After that, the organization can develop a plan to create training programs and mentoring assignments that will help current staff build the skills they need to promote to leadership roles in the organization.

**GOAL: Evaluate Management Team Roles and Skills**

- During Fiscal Year 2022/2023, conduct an assessment of existing management and administrative personnel to document the skills, knowledge, training, and abilities that they have.
- During Fiscal Year 2022/2023, Division Managers will document the skills, knowledge, training, and abilities needed by staff in their division.
- During Fiscal Year 2023/2024, based on the outcomes of the previous two goals, the management team will perform a gap analysis to identify skills that need to be improved through training, coaching, or additional staff positions or assignments.

**GOAL: Create Professional Development Opportunities**

- Starting in Fiscal Year 2023/2024, develop a training plan to develop key skills for existing personnel within each division.
- Starting in Fiscal Year 2023/2024, the Operations management team will evaluate the responsibilities of Lead Dispatchers and make recommendations for new or different requirements.
- When staffing permits, restore the Administrative Lead assignment to provide Leads with an opportunity to develop new skills and experience professional growth.
- When staffing permits, explore the possibility of administrative assignments for Dispatcher IIs to explore other areas of the organization, develop new skills, and experience professional growth.
- During Fiscal Year 2024/2025, design training and development opportunities to help Staff build skills and to promote an ongoing path for internal advancement to positions such as Supervisor, Division Manager, and General Manager.