

Analysis By: Doug Le

BUREAU OF EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

All Funds Budget Summary	Adopted FY 2015-16	Request Base FY 2016-17	Decision Pkgs FY 2016-17	Request Total FY 2016-17	Percent Change
Resources					
Budgeted Beginning Fund Balance	\$972,965	\$1,085,886	\$0	\$1,085,886	11.6%
Charges for Services	300,000	349,000	0	349,000	16.3%
Intergovernmental Revenues	7,627,905	7,551,426	49,821	7,601,247	-0.3%
Fund Transfers - Revenue	15,767,266	14,677,145	183,420	14,860,565	-5.8%
Miscellaneous Sources	10,000	10,000	0	10,000	0.0%
Total Resources	\$24,678,136	\$23,673,457	\$233,241	\$23,906,698	-3.1%
Expenditures					
Personnel Services	\$15,181,471	\$15,148,813	\$233,241	\$15,382,054	1.3%
External Materials and Services	952,805	819,511	0	819,511	-14.0%
Internal Materials and Services	5,423,413	4,329,535	0	4,329,535	-20.2%
Debt Service	1,395,141	1,412,541	0	1,412,541	1.2%
Fund Transfers - Expense	752,639	867,171	0	867,171	15.2%
Contingency	972,667	1,095,886	0	1,095,886	12.7%
Total Requirements	\$24,678,136	\$23,673,457	\$233,241	\$23,906,698	-3.1%
Total Bureau FTE	142.75	142.00	3.00	145.00	1.6%

Percent Change is the change from FY 2015-16 Adopted Budget to FY 2016-17 Total Requested Budget.

Key Issues**Staffing Issues**

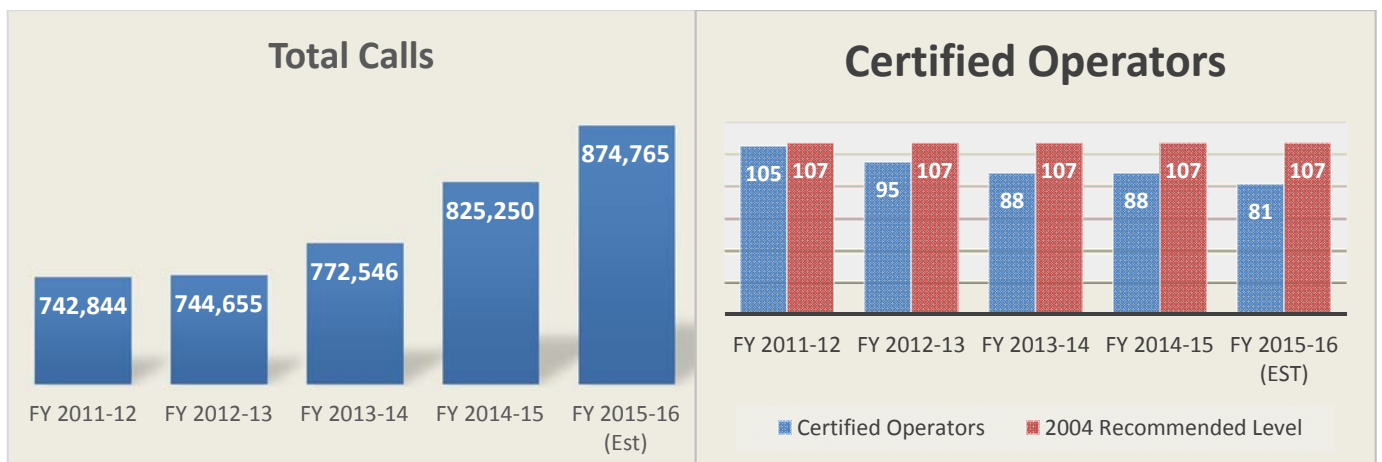
The Bureau of Emergency Communications (BOEC) continues to face challenges in hiring and retaining an adequate number of certified operators to perform call answering and dispatching duties. The bureau is losing certified operators faster than it can replace them. While this is a common challenge among public safety communication centers nationwide, the staffing issues at BOEC have intensified in recent years due to a high number of retirements and low recruitment. The FY 2016-17 Requested Budget for BOEC includes decision packages to increase the number of authorized Emergency Communications Operator positions to address this challenge.

The bureau currently has 142 authorized positions in FY 2015-16; of these, ten are call takers, 95 are dispatchers, and two are police dispatcher positions for a total of 107 authorized certified caller/dispatcher positions. In 2004, the bureau retained Matrix Consulting Group to develop a strategic plan to improve customer service and the quality of fire, police, and emergency medical services dispatching. The consultant recommended a total of 107 certified positions.

The staffing level at BOEC is also affected by the trainee certification rate. To receive certification, trainees have to go through a lengthy training period lasting between 18 to 24 months. While 9-1-1 training programs nationwide are well known for being long and demanding; Portland’s is more complex because BOEC is a combined emergency communication center providing services to multiple agencies in Multnomah County with distinct procedures. The services provided include police, fire, and medical emergencies. BOEC is one of a few combined emergency call centers for a city the size of Portland. The certification success rate has averaged about 42% with 55 staff certified from 180 hired in the last ten years. BOEC’s goal is to certify 50% of its trainees.

The overtime usage for FY 2015-16 is projected to jump 68% when compared to the previous year. The high overtime usage is projected to continue in FY 2016-17 and the foreseeable future. The factors contributing to this situation include: reduction in certified staff due to departures and promotions, increased sick leave and other leave usage, overtime being used to fund in-service training required to maintain certification, and staff time at new employee academies as presenters and/or instructors.

BOEC reported that 19 employees left the bureau in 2013. With a two-year certification time period, the bureau is still not fully caught up with its 2013 staffing level. In 2014, 12 new employees were hired, but seven of them resigned in the same year. In 2015, BOEC hired 18 new employees; of which 13 are still in training. BOEC currently carries nine vacant certified positions as of February 2016. With anticipated departures in FY 2015-16 and FY 2016-17, the bureau estimates it will be short a total of 13 positions to fill the fall and spring 2017 academies. Each year, BOEC organizes two academy sessions with approximately 11 trainees each to fill its vacant positions. BOEC needs to fill its academy sessions to ensure a steady flow of certified positions for its operations.

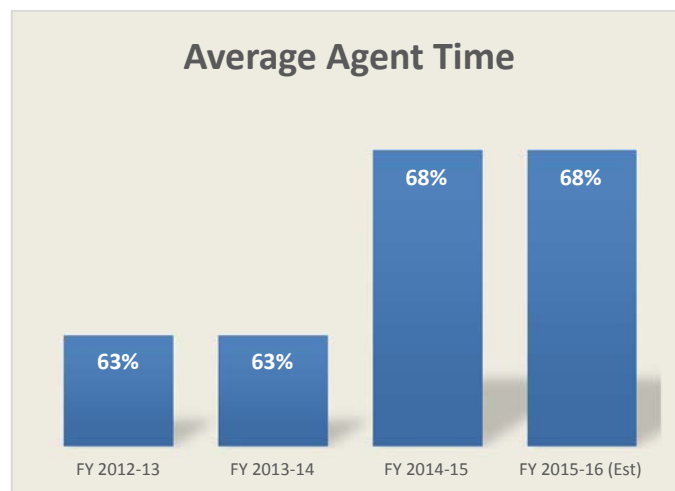


Total calls received at BOEC 9-1-1 center.

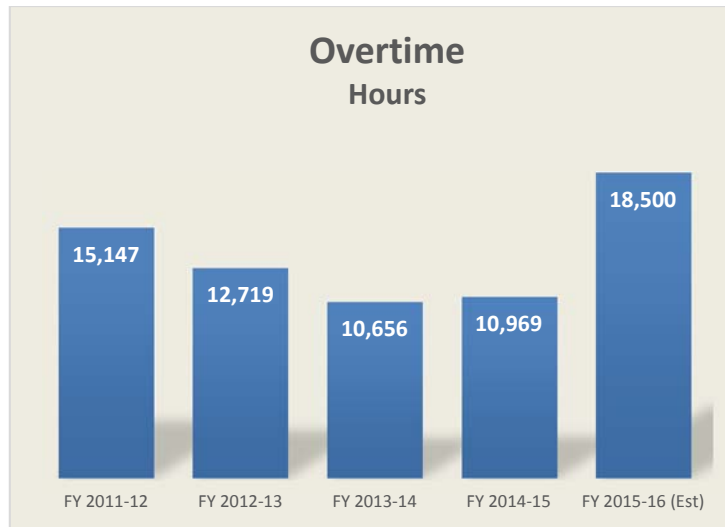
Average total certified operators versus level recommended by the 2004 report.



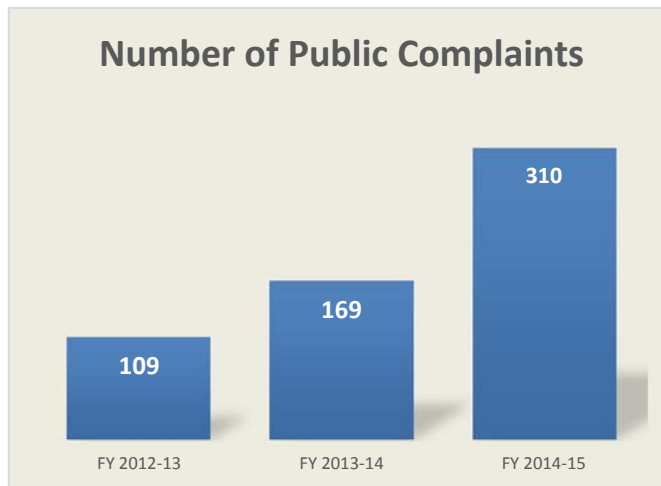
The sick leave information includes all BOEC employees. On average, the split between certified and non-certified staff is 76% certified. The bureau claims that the increase in sick leave coincides with reduced staffing levels.



This graph represents the statistical information from BOEC Call Center Management System when certified operators logged in as “Agent” to take calls or dispatch services.



In FY 2010-11 and 2011-12, there was a significant increase in overtime due to the implementation of the new Computer Assisted Dispatch. After the implementation, the overtime balanced out to about 10,000 hours. The increase in FY 2015-16 is due to decreased certified staffing.



This graph reflects the total of number of public complaints about BOEC performance in the recent three years. In January 2016, 41 complaints were recorded.

The bureau contends that because of the industry recruitment/certification challenges, long training period, and the high turnover rate, BOEC cannot fill its certified operators fast enough to operate a safe and effective emergency call center. To address this situation, the bureau requests 13 new positions for its training sessions to maintain a steady stream of trainees before they are certified and can work independently.

The information presented by BOEC confirms a staffing shortage. CBO concurs with the bureau that the current staffing and funding level is not sustainable to effectively and safely operate the City's 9-1-1 Call Center. However, CBO is concerned that the information in the 2004 consultant report is now outdated,

and would not offer the latest best practices in the industry that would be important to guide the bureau in addressing the challenges in technologies and operational issues. CBO recommends that BOEC implement a new comprehensive review of its staffing requirement as well as operations set-up, including: training, scheduling, ongoing education, and quality control. The new report would give Council and the public more confidence in BOEC staffing needs and would also provide the bureau with strategies and action plans, incorporating the latest trends in the industry on training, scheduling, and other important issues in management and operations to carry out its mission.

Decision Package Analysis & Recommendations

5% General Fund Reduction Package, EC_01, (\$858,135), (10.00) FTE

This decision package complies with the budget guidance to propose a 5% General Fund reduction. For BOEC, this reduction amounts to \$674,837 in General Fund and \$183,298 in funds from BOEC partner jurisdictions in Multnomah County.

This package would eliminate ten authorized positions resulting in the layoff of ten successful trainees and employees. Additionally, the fall 2017 academy projected to hire 11 trainees would have to be reduced to the number of vacancies available in the fall, projected to be five. Because the training period lasts up to two years, this would have a significant long term negative impact on BOEC's ability to secure adequate level of staffing for its operations. Based on the above arguments and the information presented in the Staffing Issues section above, CBO does not recommend this reduction package.

CBO Recommendation: \$0, 0.00 FTE

Add EC Dispatch Positions, EC_02 – 04, \$1,091,376, 13.00 FTE

The above three decision packages would add 13 Emergency Communications Dispatch positions to BOEC. The impact on the General Fund would be \$858,527 and the remaining \$233,119 would be funded by BOEC partners, for a total of \$1,091,376.

These positions will be used to fund trainees for the fall and spring academies as presented in the table below. These trainees are important to assure that BOEC receives an adequate ongoing supply of certified operators for its operations. CBO recognizes the importance of having the necessary funding and positions to properly staff the City's 9-1-1 communication center; however, the 2004 consultant report that BOEC relies on as a guide for its operations is outdated and should be updated with the latest development in emergency call center management and practices. (See above).

In collaboration with bureau staff, CBO reviewed the staffing shortfall for FY 2016-17, and based on the best estimates on vacancies, departures, and hiring CBO believes that the staffing shortfall level is at nine positions. Based on this information, CBO recommends ongoing funding for the equivalent of nine trainee positions in FY 2016-17 without an increase in position count. The costs for these positions would be \$594,183 in General Fund ongoing and \$161,391 in Other Funds ongoing for a total of \$755,574. The

additional funding would provide the needed resources for BOEC to fund the fall and spring academies in the next fiscal year. With regard to the additional positions requested, CBO believes that BOEC should embark on a new consultant study to provide Council with reliable and quality information on its long term staffing requirement and any changes in operations as advised by the consultant. Such a study would provide the necessary framework to plan and fund BOEC's long-term operation requirements. Because training is an important function of BOEC's operations, CBO also recommends the creation of a Training Program to track costs and performance measures to better inform Council on the bureau's efforts on this important function.

CBO Recommendation: \$755,574

Bureau of Emergency Communications	Call Taker	Sr Dispatcher	Police Dispatcher	Total
FY 2015-16 Budgeted Certified Positions	10	95	2	107
Actual Positions as of February 2016				
Certified Operators	6	73	2	81
Filled with Trainees	0	16	0	16
Vacant Positions	4	6	0	10
Total Actual Certified Positions	10	95	2	107
Possible Departures Prior to March Hire	0	(2)	0	(2)
Expected March 2016 Trainee Hire	1	8	0	9
Possible Departures Prior to Fall Hire	0	(5)	0	(5)
FY 2016-17 Fall Trainee Hire Goal	3	8	0	11
Expected Shortfall to Fill Fall Academy	0	3		3
Possible Departures Prior to Spring Hire	0	(5)	0	(5)
FY 2016-17 Spring 2016 Trainee Hire Goal	0	11	0	11
Expected Shortfall to Fill Spring Academy	0	6	0	6
Total FY 2016-17 Estimated Shortfall	0	9	0	9

The table above details the projected positions shortfall in FY 2016-17 based on departures, hiring, and academy training goals.

City of Portland
 Decision Package Recommendations
 (Includes Contingency and Ending Balance)

	Bureau Priority	Bureau Requested					CBO Analyst Recommendations				
		FTE	Gen Fund Ongoing	Gen Fund 1-Time	Other Revenues	Total Expenses	FTE	Gen Fund Ongoing	Gen Fund 1-Time	Other Revenues	Total Expenses
Bureau of Emergency Communications											
<i>Adds</i>											
EC_02 - Add 4 FTE, EC Dispatch, Sr,	01	4.00	264,079	0	71,729	335,808	0.00	264,079	0	71,729	335,808
EC_03 - Add 4 FTE, EC Dispatch, Sr	02	4.00	264,079	0	71,729	335,808	0.00	264,079	0	71,729	335,808
EC_04 - Add 5 FTE EC Dispatch Sr.	03	5.00	330,099	0	89,661	419,760	0.00	66,025	0	17,933	83,958
<i>Total Adds</i>		<i>13.00</i>	<i>858,257</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>233,119</i>	<i>1,091,376</i>	<i>0.00</i>	<i>594,183</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>161,391</i>	<i>755,574</i>
<i>Reductions</i>											
EC_01 - 5% General Fund Reduction Package	01	(10.00)	(674,837)	0	(183,298)	(858,135)	0.00	0	0	0	0
<i>Total Reductions</i>		<i>(10.00)</i>	<i>(674,837)</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>(183,298)</i>	<i>(858,135)</i>	<i>0.00</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
Total Bureau of Emergency Communications		3.00	183,420	0	49,821	233,241	0.00	594,183	0	161,391	755,574