

## 911 disconnect: Portland auditor report finds 18,000+ calls vanished from system in 2015

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A new report from the Portland City Auditor released Wednesday said more than 18,000 calls to 911 disappeared from the city's system, potentially leaving many concerns -- and emergencies -- unanswered.

These types of calls are supposed to be followed up on in case someone hangs up or is disconnected for some reason. However, the report said cell phones don't work with their system in the way other calls would. Here's a key excerpt from the report:

*If a caller using a landline or the internet hangs up or is disconnected while waiting on hold, the system preserves the number and an operator generally returns the call to determine whether an emergency exists, in accordance with City policy. By contrast, if a cell phone caller hangs up or is disconnected, the number drops off the reader board and vanishes. The call essentially disappears through a crack in the phone system, making it look like it never happened. That the system isn't retaining the callers' phone numbers so it doesn't show that a call was ever made.*

The report comes after an investigation into a complaint against the fire department uncovered a problem with the 911 call screening system. The complaint alleged an elderly woman's death was partially due to the fire department taking "too long to respond," the report said.

While the City Auditor's office was investigating this claim (which it found to be "not substantiated"), the office discovered thousands of missing data points and flagged the loss as problematic, for reasons detailed in the report. These concerns include the possibility that emergencies may not be adequately followed up, leading to a public safety risk.

"The Reno Solution's interaction with the existing emergency communications system created a new, unintended problem: the inability to call back tens of thousands of people who are presumed to have dialed 9-1-1 on purpose," the report reads.