



Next Generation 9-1-1

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Next Generation 9-1-1 project?

The Next Generation 9-1-1 project is California's initiative to modernize the 9-1-1 system so it works better for the way people communicate today and is more reliable and secure during emergencies.

California's current 9-1-1 system has served the state for decades, but much of it was built in the 1970s and relies on older technology. Next Generation 9-1-1 replaces that aging system with a modern, digital network that can better handle emergency calls and support newer tools and features over time.

This project is about making sure Californians can reach help quickly and that 9-1-1 dispatch centers have a stronger, more resilient system to receive calls and respond when every second counts.

When did Cal OES launch the NG 9-1-1 project?

California began work on Next Generation 9-1-1 in 2019, when the state started building a new system to replace aging 9-1-1 technology.

At the time, the state moved forward with a regional model that split California into four interconnected regional systems, with a separate statewide backup system. As that work moved forward, Cal OES and its partners built and tested major pieces of the new network, and 23 of California's more than 440 local 9-1-1 dispatch centers began the transition to the new NG 9-1-1 regional system for voice calls.

In early 2025, Cal OES paused adding new dispatch centers to the regional systems after identifying serious interoperability problems. That pause allowed the state to take a closer look at what was not working and determine the best path forward to build a more reliable statewide system for California.

What is the status of the NG 9-1-1 project?

Cal OES has resumed work to roll out Next Generation 9-1-1 across California using a statewide system approach. To keep work moving and maintain reliable service, Cal OES established a bridge contract with Atos, the previous operator of the statewide backup 9-1-1 system.

That bridge contract helps stabilize current operations, including the state's legacy 9-1-1 system, while accelerating deployment in key areas, especially the Los Angeles area ahead of the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The focus now is on building a unified and stronger statewide system, keeping service dependable during the transition, and making sure the work moves ahead with clear oversight and accountability.

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Is there sufficient oversight of the NG 9-1-1 project and the state's 9-1-1 system?

Cal OES acknowledges the need for greater oversight and transparency for the NG 9-1-1 project. In alignment with other large-scale state technology initiatives, we are collaborating with the California Department of Technology to strengthen independent project oversight. This provides stronger reporting, earlier identification of issues, and closer monitoring of project performance for greater accountability.

The most recent budget signed by Governor Newsom requires independent evaluation and auditing of the NG 9-1-1 project, changes to the 9-1-1 Advisory Board governance, and timelines moving forward. Specifically, the budget requirements include:

- **INDEPENDENT TECHNICAL EVALUATION** — Cal OES will contract with the RAND Corporation to evaluate the NG 9-1-1 project and provide recommendations. The budget allocates \$2 million for this purpose.
- **AUDIT** — Authorizes the California State Auditor to conduct an audit and includes \$1 million for that purpose.
- **QUARTERLY REPORTS** — Reports to the Legislature are required each quarter starting October 2026 on the development and implementation of NG 9-1-1.
- **9-1-1 ADVISORY BOARD CHANGES** — The 9-1-1 Advisory Board Chair will be elected by the members of the Board at the first meeting of the calendar year, or at another time the board deems appropriate. The Board can enlist independent experts for their advice.
- **STATEWIDE PERMANENT RFP** — The Request for Proposal for a long-term statewide NG 9-1-1 solution will not be released until 60 days following the completion of the independent evaluation, and Cal OES has reported to the Legislature its response to the evaluation.
- **BRIDGE CONTRACT** — The bridge contract with Atos remains in effect and statewide NG 9-1-1 deployment under this contract continues.

Why did Cal OES pause implementation of the NG 9-1-1 project?

Cal OES paused implementation of NG 9-1-1 after local 9-1-1 dispatch centers raised concerns about how the regional system was performing in real-world operations.

To better understand those concerns, Cal OES met with each of the 23 local dispatch centers on the NG 9-1-1 regional system. They gathered direct feedback on what was working, what was not, and what needed to change.

That review found problems with the regional approach, including operational issues, complicated system dependencies, and challenges for call takers. In some cases, calls were delivered without location information, transfers were blocked, and dispatch centers had to manually reroute calls. Based on those findings, Cal OES determined that moving forward with the regional approach would not adequately resolve those issues, so the project was paused to reassess the path forward.

Next Generation 9-1-1 FAQ cont.

Why did California choose a regional NG 9-1-1 approach when it launched the project?

When California first launched NG 9-1-1, the regional approach was seen as an innovative way to modernize a very large and complex system. With more than 440 local 9-1-1 dispatch centers across the state, the idea was to build multiple regional systems with one statewide backup provider to add redundancy and reduce the risk of a single failure affecting the entire state.

In practice, that approach created a patchwork of individual systems that created unnecessary interdependencies. Those interdependencies made the system more complicated to operate and made it difficult to quickly transition to the statewide backup provider when a regional provider experienced problems.

Why move from a regional approach now?

Cal OES is moving away from the regional NG 9-1-1 approach because it did not deliver the reliability California's 9-1-1 system requires.

The regional system experienced repeated problems and unacceptable disruptions. Specifically, core NG 9-1-1 services faced critical failures including dropped calls, failed transfers, poor audio, and missing location data. Poor interoperability between regional provider systems complicated operations and delayed stabilization during outages.

Because of issues with the regional provider systems, since fall 2025, only one local 9-1-1 dispatch center had continued receiving NG 9-1-1 voice calls from a regional provider. The other 22 were transitioned to the statewide backup provider.

Based on those lessons, Cal OES determined that the regional model would not provide the long-term reliability, resilience, and stability California requires. Moving to a statewide NG 9-1-1 system is the best path to deliver a modern, secure 9-1-1 system that works for the public and the dispatch centers that rely on it every day.

When did you first discover there were problems with the regional networks?

Cal OES began identifying problems with the regional NG 9-1-1 system from the time the first local 9-1-1 dispatch centers transitioned to it. Once the problems grew to the point that Californians were at risk, Cal OES paused regional NG 9-1-1 implementation to determine the appropriate course forward to protect public safety. That pause was a deliberate decision to protect Californians and avoid moving ahead with an approach that was not meeting the state's needs.

Cal OES cannot allow Californians to remain exposed to a system that has proven unreliable. Resetting the project reflects oversight, accountability, and a commitment to course-correct when the facts show a different path is needed.

California is now moving quickly but carefully to transition to an improved NG 9-1-1 system that is more reliable, more secure, and better positioned to serve the public for the long term.

Next Generation 9-1-1 FAQ cont.

Will the improved system solve the problems identified with the regional approach?

Yes. The improved system will bring California's NG 9-1-1 to a level that reflects industry best practices and eliminates the persistent complexities and flaws of the regional system. The improved statewide system resolves the core interoperability flaws of the regional system, reducing points of failure.

The improved system includes multiple data centers and built-in redundancy to enhance reliability and resilience. It also streamlines operations by eliminating duplicate connections, and aligning with the successful deployment of NG 9-1-1 systems in other states.

Are Californians safe today?

Yes. California's legacy 9-1-1 system remains operational statewide and continues to handle emergency calls.

At the same time, the legacy system is aging and lacks the resiliency of a modern NG 9-1-1 system, which is why Cal OES is moving with urgency to complete this transition. NG 9-1-1 will give California a more reliable and resilient emergency communications system and provide dispatch centers and first responders with better tools and information to help them respond more effectively.

That is why Cal OES is taking a careful but urgent approach to this transition. The goal is to reduce reliance on the aging legacy system and deliver the modern, dependable 9-1-1 system Californians need and deserve.

How much progress has been made on the NG 9-1-1 project?

California has already made significant progress building the foundation for NG 9-1-1.

Cal OES has installed core NG 9-1-1 infrastructure statewide, and every local 9-1-1 dispatch center now has access to text-to-9-1-1. The state has also upgraded some dispatch centers, including added power and HVAC improvements to support the new system. In addition, 23 local 9-1-1 dispatch centers have already moved from the legacy system to NG 9-1-1 voice services.

California is building the largest NG 9-1-1 system in America. California's system will ultimately connect 447 dispatch centers serving nearly 39 million people. That's bigger than the 9-1-1 systems of 40 other states combined. That scale is exactly why Cal OES is focused on getting this transition right and building a modern, reliable, statewide 9-1-1 system that can serve Californians for the long term.

By comparison, Vermont has 11 dispatch centers and Arizona has 78. Los Angeles County alone will be one of the largest NG 9-1-1 deployments in the world when it comes online before the 2028 Olympics.

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How much has been spent on this project so far?

To date, more than \$500 million has been spent on contracted services to implement NG 9-1-1. Most of this funding went toward monthly NG 9-1-1 system access, similar in concept to paying for home internet service.

Other costs include the installation of NG 9-1-1 infrastructure across the state.

How important is call processing equipment to the implementation of NG 9-1-1?

Call processing equipment, or CPE, is the equipment local 9-1-1 dispatch centers use to receive and manage emergency calls. It is a critical part of the overall 9-1-1 system, but it is separate from the NG 9-1-1 network itself. The two systems work together, and both need to function reliably for 9-1-1 service to work as intended.

Local dispatch centers are responsible for their own call processing equipment, and that equipment must meet national standards. Cal OES supports those upgrades by providing funding, contracts, and procurement assistance to help dispatch centers modernize their systems.

Are there concerns moving Los Angeles-area dispatch centers to NG 9-1-1 in advance of the 2028 Olympics and Paralympics?

The stakes for Los Angeles ahead of the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games are high, and Cal OES shares the urgency of getting this right. Further delays would only increase risk by reducing the time available to complete the transition and validate system performance. Cal OES is moving quickly and deliberately to implement a safe, reliable NG 9-1-1 system before the Games. Through detailed planning and close coordination with local partners in a LA Regional Working Group, potential issues are being identified and addressed well in advance of deployment.

Our focus is on moving forward now with strong safeguards, rigorous testing, and local input so Californians and visitors are served by a modern, resilient 9-1-1 system when the Games begin.

Why is regional interoperability so difficult? Isn't it the same as cross-border interoperability among states?

No. Cross-border 9-1-1 transfers between states are much simpler than transfers between NG 9-1-1 regions within California.

Today, when a 9-1-1 call is transferred between California and another state, it is generally handled as a basic voice transfer. By contrast, transfers between NG 9-1-1 regions within California were designed to carry not just the voice call, but also location information and other data dispatchers rely on to make quick decisions during an emergency.

That makes in-state regional transfers far more complex. In practice, the different regional provider systems were not built to work smoothly with one another, and those interoperability problems became a major weakness in the regional design. The updated design for California is intended to eliminate that complexity and create a more consistent, reliable 9-1-1 network across California.