2025 Next Generation 9-1-1 Transition Plan

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Executive Summary

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) is updating the state's strategy to transition California from the long-standing legacy 9-1-1 system to the more modern Next Generation 9-1-1 network technology. This document is an overview of that plan. In addition to the 9-1-1 Advisory Board meetings, Cal OES will be updating stakeholders as the project moves forward.

Strengthening California's Next Generation 9-1-1 Migration Project

- **Legacy Limitations**: The 1970s-era legacy system cannot support modern capabilities like video streaming or photos.
- **Project Phases (2019–2024)**:
    1. Planning/design with public safety answering point site surveys under COVID-19 constraints.
    2. Infrastructure deployment (hardware, software, fiber, permitting).
    3. Phased public safety answering point migration—halted after 23 transitions due to significant operational disruptions.
- **Key Issues**:
    1. Public safety answering points must handle both legacy and Next Generation 9-1-1 call flows, which is a time-consuming and risky process during emergencies.
    2. Four service provider regional model creates interdependencies, delaying issue resolution across service providers, carriers, and public safety answering points.
    3. Migration testing burdens understaffed public safety answering points, already facing recruitment and retention challenges.

Findings & Design Principles

Lessons from migrated public safety answering points, service providers, peer states, and the California Department of Technology inform an updated strategy centered on four principles:

1. System Resilience – Ensure high availability via redundant paths.
2. User Experience – Prioritize intuitive, low-impact systems for call takers.
3. Minimize Complexity – Reduce failure points and interdependencies.
4. Maximize Economic Prudence – Leverage existing infrastructure.

Recommendations & Transition Plan

To deliver a world-class, resilient Next Generation 9-1-1 network:

1. Adopt the use of Transitional Elements:
    - Normalizes all incoming calls (legacy or Next Generation 9-1-1) before reaching public safety answering points, eliminating dual workflows and enabling seamless transfers.
    - Shifts testing/coordination burden from public safety answering points to Cal OES and service providers.
    - The states that have begun or completed a successful transition to Next Generation 9-1-1 are using transitional elements.
2. Streamline to a Statewide Service Provider Model:
    - Replace four regional service providers with one primary statewide provider and one backup provider. This change will eliminate the problematic interfaces and handoffs in the current process while preserving resiliency necessary for 9-1-1 services.
    - Phase 1 (Early 2026): Procure two statewide Next Generation 9-1-1 contracts.
    - Phase 2 (Beginning in Late 2026): Begin migrating all public safety answering points, starting with the 23 that are already in progress, and incorporate the use of transitional elements.
    - Phase 3 (2026–2030): As Next Generation 9-1-1 is deployed, decommission legacy 9-1-1 system components.

Fiscal Impact

The updated transition plan builds upon prior investments ($455 million through June 2025) and the foundational infrastructure installed across the state. Regional operating costs will be redirected to fund the backup statewide provider. Any additional needs will follow standard budget processes.

Conclusion & Next Steps

California's Next Generation 9-1-1 system must be reliable, intuitive, and future-proof. The updated plan—leveraging transitional technology and a simplified service provider structure—will minimize public safety answering point disruptions, accelerate migration, and ensure operational excellence. Cal OES recommends immediate procurement initiation in early 2026 to resume momentum and achieve full statewide deployment by 2030.

Introduction

Public safety, federal and state government organizations, and various standards development organizations (which are typically international in scope) are focused on migrating legacy 9-1-1 systems to more modern Next Generation 9-1-1 networks. California is no exception. California's legacy 9-1-1 system, while stable and reliable, was established in 1973, long before the existence of so many of the modern tools we have today, including the smartphone. As a result, the 9-1-1 legacy system is limited in its ability to support more modern benefits—such as video streaming and photos. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) is leading the Next Generation 9-1-1 project for the State of California.

California's 9-1-1 system includes approximately 450 public safety answering points, more commonly known as dispatch centers, which are operated and staffed by California's local governments. The staff at public safety answering points work in a challenging, dynamic environment, serving as a critical part of the state's public safety network. While local governments operate and staff the public safety answering points, Cal OES is responsible for overseeing the core technology functions of the 9-1-1 system.

The core functions of California's 9-1-1 system can be divided into three categories, as follows:

> ***Call Handling Equipment***— Every public safety answering point has a phone system, referred to as "call handling equipment," that is used to answer, record, and manage information related to 9-1-1 calls. When a member of the public dials 9-1-1, the call handling equipment allows a dispatcher to answer the call and pushes information about the caller into the dispatching system. This accelerates the process of directing the appropriate emergency resources to respond to the caller's location.
>
> ***Location Services***— While legacy phone lines were in a fixed location, cell phones and campus-based phone systems can report granular information about the location of a 9-1-1 caller. Next Generation 9-1-1 will be able to provide caller location data to the public safety answering point faster and more accurately.
>
> ***The 9-1-1 Network***— 9-1-1 calls are delivered from the caller to the dispatch center across a series of technology components referred to as the 9-1-1 network. Whether the legacy 9-1-1 network or the Next Generation 9-1-1 network, this pathway is a critical element in connecting callers to appropriate 9-1-1 dispatching centers.

Cal OES supports these core technology functions through a network of private sector contracted service providers. Cal OES monitors the health of the network and services to ensure 9-1-1 services are delivered per standards and contract requirements.

Current State of the Next Generation 9-1-1 Project

The current project can best be described in phases as follows:

> ***Phase 1: Planning and Design***—The first phase, beginning in 2019-20, focused on the planning and designing of the network. The contracted service providers began site surveys at the state's public safety answering points to determine how best to address infrastructure needs at each location. The needs of the approximately 450 public safety answering point locations varied both in the existing technology in use, staffing, and physical structure, which can all influence the infrastructure solution. These surveys were conducted in coordination with the local public safety answering point operators under the COVID-19 restrictions then underway.
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> ***Phase 2: Infrastructure Installation***—The second phase, from 2019 through 2024, included the installation of the updated infrastructure across the public safety answering points statewide. This included structural and electrical work at many public safety answering points, software, hardware, and any necessary trenching to accommodate underground fiberoptics. The service providers also worked through the permitting process governing each of the local public safety answering points. Between July 2019 and June 2024, California invested over $455 million in support of Next Generation 9-1-1 planning, installation, and operation.
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> ***Phase 3: Switching Over the Network***—Working with the service providers and public safety answering points, Cal OES executed a facilitated phased transition to move public safety answering points from legacy 9-1-1 to the Next Generation 9-1-1 network.

Project Implementation Slower than Anticipated

The migration of public safety answering points to the Next Generation 9-1-1 network has proven more challenging than expected due to unanticipated operational impacts to the public safety answering points and delays in problem resolution. While the Next Generation 9-1-1 network infrastructure has been installed across the state and is now used to deliver both location services (9-1-1 caller location) and text-to-9-1-1 to every public safety answering point, only 23 of the public safety answering points have begun the migration for voice calls.

Because project implementation was not progressing as planned, in early 2025, Cal OES paused the transition of additional public safety answering points. The pause allowed Cal OES to better understand the lived experiences of the public safety answering points and the operational challenges of the state-selected service providers who operate the Next Generation 9-1-1 network.

To better understand the issues, Cal OES engaged with the 23 migrated public safety answering points, the four service providers operating the system, other states, and the California Department of Technology (CDT). This allowed Cal OES to develop actions to improve the public safety answering points' experiences in order to strengthen the overall project before expanding to more public safety answering points.

Action Needed to Strengthen the Project

Californians deserve a world class 9-1-1 system. The Next Generation 9-1-1 system will be the backbone of the 9-1-1 system for decades; therefore, it is critical to get it right. Cal OES is taking the necessary actions to strengthen the Next Generation 9-1-1 network. The plan to do so is informed by the lessons learned through the early phases of public safety answering point migration to the Next Generation 9-1-1 network.

Cal OES' findings led to an updated strategy to transition the public safety answering points to the Next Generation 9-1-1 network. The goal of the updated plan, as outlined below, is to design an exceptional Next Generation 9-1-1 system for California that adheres to the following design principles:

> ***System Resilience***—Network availability, or uptime, is a crucial element for public safety grade systems. Systems must be designed with multiple connectivity paths to ensure high-availability and continuity of operations.
>
> ***User Experience***—The most critical resource in the 9-1-1 ecosystem is the call taker. Systems must be designed to be intuitive and user-friendly to the call taker, minimizing operational impacts on the call takers during implementation and operation, and allowing them to focus on answering calls and deploying resources.
>
> ***Minimize Complexity***—Complexity in design multiplies opportunities for failures. Systems must be designed to be only as complex as necessary to achieve the business requirements.
>
> ***Maximize Economic Prudence***—System design must leverage existing deployed infrastructure and build on equipment already deployed at public safety answering points statewide.

Opportunities to Strengthen the Next Generation 9-1-1 Project

Employ Technology Solution (Transitional Elements) Used by Other States to Alleviate Public Safety Answering Point Impacts

Under the current project construct, public safety answering points that are transitioning to Next Generation 9-1-1 network, experience significant impacts to their operations. Call takers are receiving calls from both the legacy and the Next Generation 9-1-1 network with each system requiring a different processing action. Unlike California, most other states employed what are called "transitional elements" into their projects. Essentially, transitional elements are a technology tool that packages all incoming calls before they reach the public safety answering point. This means that all calls, regardless of carrier or network, feel the same to the call handler and can, therefore, be processed the same. These transitional elements minimize disruptions to operations and alleviates work for the call takers.

For example, under today's project construct, the process for call takers transferring calls is complex and risky because California's implementation of the Next Generation 9-1-1 design does not support such call transfers between legacy and Next Generation 9-1-1. These transfers are a regular occurrence between law enforcement, fire, and medical organizations. To make a transfer, staff at public safety answering points are required to use 10-digit, non-emergency lines or find other ways to hand off callers to the appropriate dispatching entity. This limitation is a significant concern for public safety answering point staff as it is an additional step added to call handling processes, which costs valuable time and introduces the risk of mistakes in an already high-pressure environment. As noted, this issue will be resolved with the implementation of transitional elements and will improve user experience and minimize system complexities.

Lessen the Impacts to Public Safety Answering Points During Migration

Under the current project plan, migrating a public safety answering point to the Next Generation 9-1-1 network requires the staff at the public safety answering point to participate in active testing of the system. The migration of voice calls for an individual public safety answering point involves moving one carrier at a time, such as AT&T, Verizon, or Frontier, and then testing the migration. The steps are then repeated for each carrier. By implementing transitional elements, the testing will largely occur between Cal OES and the service provider, minimizing impacts to the public safety answering point. Because public safety answering points are busy handling 9-1-1 traffic, the burden of transitioning to the Next

Generation 9-1-1 system should be borne by Cal OES and the service providers whenever possible.

Streamline the Overall Construct of the Project

Today, the Next Generation 9-1-1 network is operated by four service providers, selected through the state contracting process. One is a statewide service provider that has connectivity across all the public safety answering points. The other three operate in selected regions of the state. Under this model, the statewide service provider is serving as the back-up provider should one of the regional service providers experience a problem. While this arrangement was adopted to build resiliency into the network, it has added unintended complexities by creating interdependencies between the service providers, public safety answering points, and the carriers.

Often, the interdependencies compound problems that occur in any part of the system as they have far-reaching impacts on the systems of other providers and ultimately have direct impacts on the public safety answering points. Such problems are sometimes difficult to isolate because very few issues are within the control of a single service provider. Even when a problem is isolated, resolution requires coordination amongst multiple entities. Often these entities are structured differently and have varied operational procedures. Consequently, public safety answering points have experienced unacceptable delays getting issues resolved.

Currently, we have the benefit of learning not only from California's experiences, but also from other states' experiences. Using the regionalized approach to solve for resiliency is unique to California. Knowing what we know now, Cal OES believes that any resiliency achieved through this construct is offset by the challenges from the interdependencies and the complexities.

Indeed, the same resilience, including regional redundance, can be achieved with a single, primary service provider using a statewide approach. Turning to a statewide service provider will allow the elimination of complexities and risks introduced from having multiple regional service providers. In addition, adopting a statewide approach will align with the goals of minimizing complexity while maintaining system resiliency.

In sum, it is Cal OES' role to support the local government public safety answering points with a stable, resilient, and capable 9-1-1 system. Consequently, Cal OES intends to streamline the structure of the Next Generation 9-1-1 project by lessening impacts on the public safety answering points and reducing the interdependencies between the service providers. This will be achieved, in part, by updating the overall structure of the Next

Generation 9-1-1 project to a statewide service provider model rather than the current regional model. One primary service provider will run the day-to-day operations, and another statewide service provider will serve as the back-up to ensure resiliency for the system. This will ease the burdens on the public safety answering points.

Transition Plan Phases

Cal OES' plan to transition from the regional approach to the statewide approach can be summarized in three project phases:

PHASE 1: Establish contracts with two Next Generation 9-1-1 providers—Cal OES, with the support of CDT, will execute two new Next Generation 9-1-1 contracts. Cal OES has retained industry experts to help draft the procurement requirements and expects to release an open procurement in early 2026. Cal OES and CDT are exploring options to expedite this procurement process. With the completion of the procurements, Cal OES can then establish a firm timeline and cost for the full rollout of Next Generation 9-1-1 services to all public safety answering points in California. Cal OES has encouraged the existing regional service providers to compete in the procurement.

PHASE 2: Migrate All 9-1-1 services to the Statewide Service Provider—All public safety answering points will transition onto the Next Generation 9-1-1 network. Transitional elements will be employed. Any additional buildout of the Next Generation 9-1-1 network will be coordinated. Public safety answering point migrations are anticipated to be faster and less difficult. Resilience in the network and Next Generation 9-1-1 core services will be strengthened. This phase is expected to begin late 2026. Cal OES will develop a statewide deployment plan that will incorporate the Next Generation 9-1-1 architecture updates with the execution of statewide Next Generation 9-1-1 contracts.

PHASE 3: Decommissioning Legacy 9-1-1—As progress is made in transitioning public safety answering points to the Next Generation 9-1-1 system, the legacy 9-1-1 system will no longer be needed by those public safety answering points. Cal OES plans to begin the decommissioning process when legacy 9-1-1 components are no longer needed, with full legacy decommission occurring after all public safety answering points are moved to Next Generation 9-1-1 in 2030.

Under the legacy 9-1-1 system, public safety answering points are connected to one or more of 45 local hubs called legacy selective routers. Portions of the legacy 9-1-1 system and some of the legacy

selective routers will exist until every public safety answering point has transitioned to the Next Generation 9-1-1 system.

Fiscal Impact

The expenditures between 2019 and fall 2025 for Next Generation 9-1-1 in California were substantial but not lost. The intent will be to build upon a large component of the infrastructure that already exists. Once service is shifted to a statewide approach, the regional Next Generation 9-1-1 networks will be unnecessary. The cost of operating the regions will be eliminated and those expenses will be redirected to fund the second statewide service provider contract. If any additional resources are needed beyond what is currently appropriated, Cal OES will follow the normal state budget process.

Appendix: 9-1-1 Cost

Operations Cost of Legacy 9-1-1 system and support of the approximately 450 public safety answering points in California.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Legacy 9-1-1	$27,649,194	$21,516,199	$19,853,367	$24,405,249	$29,368,202	$24,915,402	$147,707,612
Public Safety Answering Point Support	$55,876,125	$34,758,829	$37,303,073	$57,432,560	$33,889,765	$25,248,057	$244,508,408
Total	$83,525,319	$56,275,028	$57,156,439	$81,837,808	$63,257,967	$50,163,459	$392,216,020

Next Generation 9-1-1 cost

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Next Generation 9-1-1	$44,717,571	$85,248,340	$95,620,913	$55,646,851	$74,331,240	$99,719,835	$455,284,749

Legacy 9-1-1 is the cost paid to legacy 9-1-1 service providers to maintain and operate the legacy 9-1-1 system.

Public Safety Answering Point Support includes the monies directed to the public safety answering points to fund call handling systems and other components that support the operation of the local 9-1-1 services.

Next Generation 9-1-1 is the cost paid to service providers to design, build, deploy, and operate the Next Generation 9-1-1 system.