

**City of Alexandria, Virginia  
 FY 2025 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP  
 Budget Questions & Answers**

**March 29, 2024**

**Question:**

Can you provide a recent staffing history for the Department of Emergency Communications, including details on authorized, filled, vacant and over-hire positions for the past 5 years, as available? Please include details of the over-hire authority discussed during FY 2024 as well as financial incentives that may work to address the current vacancy rate. (Operating Budget Page 14.34)

**Response:**

The chart below shows the staffing history for the 911 operation positions of the Department of Emergency & Customer Communications (DECC) over the last five years to include the first 6-months of FY 2024. Each year displays the budgeted and overhire positions, as well as the average number of filled and available personnel.

<b>Position Type</b>	<b>FY20</b>	<b>FY21</b>	<b>FY22</b>	<b>FY23</b>	<b>FY24</b>
911 Operations	39.0	34.0	34.0	34.0	34.0
Overhire Authority (Unfunded) - 911 Operations	-	-	-	-	2.0
<b>Total Budgeted</b>	<b>39.0</b>	<b>34.0</b>	<b>34.0</b>	<b>34.0</b>	<b>36.0</b>
Average Filled Positions	34.0	32.0	27.0	28.0	26.0
Average Unavailable*	10.0	3.0	4.0	11.0	5.0
<b>Average Available (911 Operations)</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>29.0</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>21.0</b>

\*911 Operations staff are unavailable while training

The Department consists of 3 divisions with the associated authorized positions: 911 Operations-34 positions, 311 Operation-14.5 positions, and DECC Administration-14 positions. The Department of Emergency & Customer Communication (DECC) has an authorized position strength of 62.5 positions with an unfunded overhire authority for two positions in the 911 operations division. Of the current 14.0 vacant positions, 8 positions are assigned to the 911 Operations, 1 position is assigned to the 311 Operations, and 5 positions are administrative positions. DECC’s current vacancy rate is 22.4%.

DECC continues to experience understaffing due to an increase in call volume and the number of call-taker/dispatchers available. New hires undergo 6-8 months of on-the-job training before they are fully released to work independently. These employees cannot factor into actual available staffing even though they are filling a budgeted position. When factoring the number of available positions, DECC’s current vacancy rate for the 911 operations increases to 36.1%. In May 2023, the City Manager

approved overhire authority for 2 Public Safety Communications Officer I positions. To date DECC has not filled any overhire positions due to the current vacancy in the 911 operations division.

In November 2023, Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) provided a recognition and retention grant to eligible 9-1-1 centers that provided a one-time bonus payment of \$2,500 to full-time employees and \$1,250 to part-time employees to assist in the retention of valuable trained employees, enhance call delivery resiliency and reliability, create a positive work environment, and improve recruitment. All eligible DECC employees received their recognition/retention bonus and DECC is using the one-time bonus as a recruitment tool for new hires. We are on-track to hire 5 call-taker positions on or before June 2024 that will take advantage of the \$2,500 hiring/retention bonus. Vacant positions not hired before June 30, 2023, will not be eligible and funding cannot be requested for those positions through the grant program because the grant ends in FY 2024. As an incentive, DECC could continue to provide a hiring/retention bonus for new hires of up to \$2,500 providing \$1,000 upon hiring and the remaining \$1,500.00 after completing specific phases in their training process with a retention period of 2 years. The cost of this bonus after the grant period ends will be about \$30,000 for a total of 12 full-time new hires. Since the bonus will be provided in phases, the annual cost is \$21,000.

