

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-24-106783](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Each year, millions of Americans call 911 for help during emergencies. However, the nation's 911 systems rely on aging infrastructure that is not designed to accommodate modern communications technologies. Some states, localities, and federal agencies that operate 911 call centers are upgrading to NG911, which offers benefits such as the ability to process images, audio files, and video. While deploying NG911 is the responsibility of entities that operate call centers, some federal agencies also support implementation.

House Report 117-402 includes a provision for GAO to review federal agencies' progress implementing NG911 and federal efforts to assist entities with NG911 implementation. This report examines (1) efforts by federal agencies with 911 call centers to implement NG911 and challenges associated with implementation; and (2) how federal agencies have supported state, local, and federal NG911 implementation since 2022, and the views of federal officials and stakeholders on how the federal government could further support implementation.

GAO reviewed relevant laws; information from agencies that operate 911 call centers or support others in implementing NG911; and information from public safety associations involved in 911-related efforts. GAO also interviewed federal officials from the four agencies that provide support for NG911, the 11 agencies that operate 911 call centers (including managers of five federal 911 call centers), and stakeholders from five public safety associations.

View [GAO-24-106783](#). For more information, contact Andrew Von Ah at (202) 512-2834 or vonaha@gao.gov.

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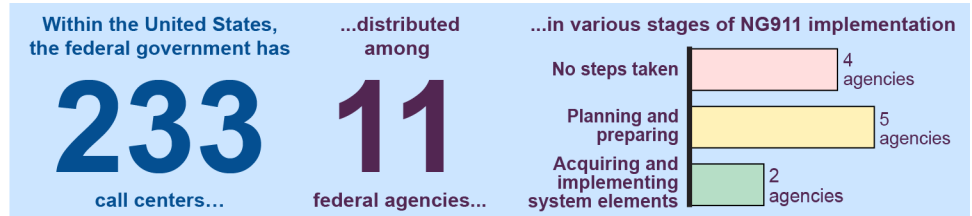
NEXT GENERATION 911

Some Federal Agencies Have Begun Planning, but Few Have Upgraded Their Call Centers

What GAO Found

GAO identified 11 federal agencies that operate several hundred 911 call centers throughout the U.S. on military installations, in national parks, and in other federal facilities. According to officials, seven of the federal agencies with 911 call centers—all within the Department of Defense—have begun to plan for and implement Next Generation 911 (NG911). NG911 is an updated service intended to improve communications with callers and among call centers and first responders. With no federal requirement to implement NG911, officials from the four other agencies said they had not taken any steps to upgrade their systems. Officials from the 11 agencies cited challenges associated with implementing NG911, including funding priorities, maintaining interoperability with state and local call centers, cybersecurity risks, and increased data management responsibilities. For example, an official from one agency said the benefits of upgrading their systems may not justify the costs, and therefore NG911 was not a priority for the agency. These challenges are similar to those faced by state and local 911 call centers that GAO discussed in prior work ([GAO-18-252](#)).

General Status of Next Generation 911 (NG911) Implementation at Federal Agencies with 911 Call Centers, as of June 2024



Source: GAO analysis of agency data and interviews with agency officials. | GAO-24-106783

Four federal agencies with roles in NG911 implementation have provided support for implementation efforts by state, local, and federal agencies and 911 call centers. Per their statutory roles, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency has supported NG911 implementation by conducting outreach on topics related to cybersecurity and the Federal Communications Commission has adopted rules to facilitate the transition to NG911 for various originating service providers. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and National Telecommunications and Information Administration have discontinued some activities related to NG911 implementation since the lapse in their authority over general 911 issues in 2022. However, both agencies have continued to provide some resources and coordination among federal and state stakeholders.

Federal officials and public safety stakeholders generally agreed that dedicated federal funding and prioritizing NG911 funding within agencies would help support NG911 implementation. Some federal officials said that incorporating NG911 planning into agency strategic planning and goals related to public safety communications could help ensure agencies take further steps toward implementation, like assessing feasibility and budgetary planning. However, federal officials and stakeholders had differing views on the usefulness and necessity of assigning an agency to lead coordination of federal efforts and to track nationwide progress in implementing NG911.