WHERE: **WASHINGTON, D.C.**

CLIENT: **DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OFFICE OF UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS (DC OUC)**

ASAP Service Enhances Emergency Response in D.C. and Reduces 911 Telecommunicator Stress

AGENCIES SERVED

Metropolitan Police Department, DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department, Washington Transit Police, Capitol Police, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Park Police, and about two dozen more local and federal agencies.

CHALLENGE

The role of telecommunicator in the 911 community is a noble profession. The first of the first responders, telecommunicators must make life-and-death decisions in the blink of an eye, dispatch the appropriate emergency response every time, and share situational-awareness information with field responders in real time to help them be more effective and to keep them safer. They are highly skilled and experienced tacticians dealing with all sorts of emergencies every day and often every hour.

One of their most vexing challenges concerns notifications that they receive from alarm-monitoring centers, which can total in the tens of thousands each year for large 911 centers, but still are problematic even for centers that receive far fewer. It is estimated that as much as 98 percent of such notifications are false.

To determine whether an alarm is legitimate, telecommunicators must have a voice conversation with alarm-monitoring center personnel. If the alarm notification is legitimate, they then must have several more voice conversations to capture the information needed to make informed emergency response decisions. This is a time-consuming process — it can add from two to eight minutes to processing times, based on industry averages — that is prone to miscommunications and transcription errors. Even when it is confirmed that a notification is legitimate, it often is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the severity of the incident, information that is critical to determining the type of emergency response to dispatch and keeping responders as safe as possible when they arrive.

Take for example the District of Columbia Office of Unified Communications in Washington. DC OUC's emergency communications center (ECC) received 40,000 alarm notifications in 2025. Those notifications would have added from 111 hours to 444 hours to telecommunicator workloads — *each month*.

Fortunately, DC OUC implemented Automated Secure Alarm Protocol (ASAP) Service midway through 2024.

702,250
POPULATION SERVED (IN 2024)

1.4 million
CALLS HANDLED IN 2025

~40,000
ALARM NOTIFICATIONS HANDLED IN 2025

WHAT IS ASAP SERVICE?

ASAP Service is a solution that automatically and digitally delivers data generated by alarm systems directly into an ECC's computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system, without human involvement. It also helps telecommunicators prioritize the severity of an alarm notification, which speeds dispatch of the most appropriate response. ASAP Service is built on two critical standards, ASAP and the Alarm Verification Scoring standard (AVS-01) — both are accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

THE RESULTS

Many benefits resulted from DC OUC's ASAP Service implementation. Chief among them is the dramatic reduction in telecommunicator call volume. Eliminating the need for telecommunicators to handle 40,000 calls annually is no small thing, according to Heather McGaffin, DC OUC's director.

"I would need to add at least two telecommunicators to handle the amount of alarm notifications that would start flooding our 911 center again if ASAP Service was turned off." McGaffin says. "Today, our telecommunicators can focus on the calls where their skills, expertise, and certifications are needed most. They're also far less stressed."

The importance of the "far less stressed" aspect cannot be overstated. Across the nation, ECCs are grappling with staffing shortages to various levels, largely driven by telecommunicator burnout.

"Since we've automated the process, we don't have to hire additional staffing and we're relieving the staff that we already have," McGaffin says. "This enables them to focus on training more frequently so that they can identify how they can improve how we do business here in Washington, D.C."

Because alarm events are delivered directly into the center's CAD system, these calls are placed in the dispatch queue within seconds instead of minutes. Automated entry of data generated by the alarm system eliminates the back-and-forth voice calls between ECC and alarm-center personnel, eliminating miscommunication and misinterpretation, as well as transcription errors.

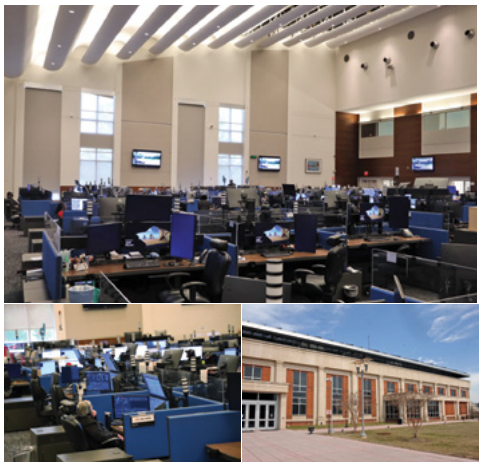
"By taking out the middleman, calls get dispatched faster and more accurately." McGaffin says.

She adds that the public has noticed the impact that ASAP Service is having on emergency response.

"In the past year and a half, the public has commented on how much quicker law enforcement officers are responding to alarms," she says. "They love that we're using an automated system to get alarms dispatched — and that's thanks to ASAP Service. It's quick, effective, efficient and reliable — it works every time we need it."

McGaffin has some advice for any public safety organization that is considering implementation of ASAP Service.

"Anytime you can automate a process within an emergency communication center, you should," she says. "If you're considering ASAP Service, I have two words: 'Do it.' The benefits it provides really are endless."



> *"Given our extremely high call volume, I would need to add at least two telecommunicators to handle the amount of alarm notifications that would start flooding our 911 center again if ASAP Service was turned off."*
>
> **Heather McGaffin**
> DC OUC Director

Ready to join ASAP?

Speak with one of our experts and save precious time. Call (920) 606-9167 info@asap911.org