

## 6.0 Unified Call Taker (UCT) Project

### 6.1 UCT Project Executive Summary

#### Executive Summary

Emergency Communications Transformation Program (ECTP) documentation describes the Unified Call Taker (UCT) Project as:

*“The UCT (Unified Call Taker) project is a part of the New York City ECTP (Emergency Communications Transformation Program) which aims to overhaul and consolidate the 9-1-1 communications centers and operational procedures in New York City, The UCT project objective is to have a single, unified call taker for all 9-1-1 calls.”*

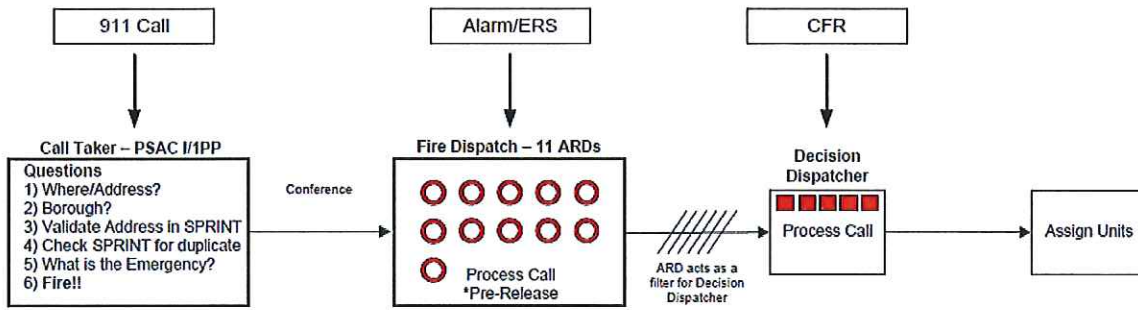
The concept of employing a single “unified” call-taker to manage 9-1-1 calls for police, fire and EMS services is an appropriate objective. Correctly employed a UCT initiative can save valuable time in getting the appropriate police, fire and EMS resources to an emergency event. The UCT methodology requires a multitude of factors to be successful including an agreed upon governance structure, stakeholder collaboration, technology systems capable of supporting UCT business processes, employing best practices, and subject matter expertise in the planning, design, configuration, training, implementation and support stages. It is our finding that the NYPD and FDNY did not successfully employ these critical prerequisites in their effort to initiate UCT in NYC, which lead to a multitude of problems which has caused the UCT project to fail.

In May of 2009 Unified Call Taking for Fire incidents was initiated. The \$19+ million UCT project has been wrought with so many management, operational, technical and personnel proficiency deficiencies that the initial UCT process had to be modified reinserting Fire call takers into the process, conferencing them with callers in order to ensure the accuracy of addressing and incident information. Plans to include Emergency Medical Call Taking into the UCT program have been tabled due to the problems encountered with the Fire roll out. It is our finding that the current UCT process is dangerous to the citizens of New York City and public safety personnel.

A high-level overview of the deficiencies includes:

- There was, and still is, is no single authority or formal governance structure regarding the planning, design, training, implementation, management and support of the UCT project
- There is no Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or formal inter-agency agreement between NYPD & FDNY concerning the UCT project
- No Cost Benefit Analysis or Return on Investment research was completed prior to starting the UCT project to identify if other more cost efficient and operationally effective options existed
- No formal baseline metrics, performance standards, performance metrics, and project objectives were developed. The only identified objective was a “single call taker”

Diagram X – Pre-UCT NYPD to Fire Dispatch 9-1-1 Call Taking Process Workflow



- New York City contracted consultant subject matter experts and refused to adhere to their appropriate recommendations regarding the successful development and implementation of a UCT project
- There is no formal inter-agency Quality Assurance (QA) program to evaluate the effectiveness of UCT
- Throughout the project both NYPD & FDNY continued to operate in their own silos with little meaningful collaboration, cooperation, and communication
- The project was managed as an Information Technology (IT) project and not an operations project which had a significant negative impact on FDNY Fire Dispatch and field operations
- Public safety 9-1-1 business processes from call-taking to dispatching are life-critical operations. The UCT project failed to incorporate life-critical standards in the decision making process
- Both NYPD & FDNY refused to examine and update their original business processes. It is noted that a number of those processes are deficient and do not incorporate public safety industry best practices)
- NYPD and FDNY CAD systems are supported by three separate geofiles which contain numerous mismatches which is a significant risk to successful public safety operations
- The UCT process has added a significant increase to the workload of the Fire Decision Dispatcher evidenced by a 124% increase in the number of CAD generated screens that the DD is has to review and act upon.
- The design and configuration of the UCT interface does not meet the requirements that allow for Fire Dispatch to operate in an efficient and accurate manner
- NYPD Call Takers did not receive adequate training for UCT responsibilities and are not proficient at handling FDNY related activity
- FDNY Fire Dispatch personnel did not receive adequate training and have made only nominal adjustments to their pre-UCT business processes
- There is no formal policy, procedure and training curriculum concerning how NYPD & FDNY would manage a significant event that resulted in a high volume of 9-1-1 calls
- Real life problems directly related to UCT business processes were identified including:
  - Wrong address
  - Unclear information to FDNY responding units
  - Miscoding of incidents
  - Misrouting of incidents
- Statistical information provided to City Hall management to demonstrate the success of the UCT project is erroneous and provides no value regarding the effectiveness of UCT related business processes
- Two years after the May 4, 2009 UCT cutover:
  - There is still confusion regarding what authority is responsible for the successful implementation and management of UCT processes. There is no executive management ownership from either agency
  - There is no single operational manager from NYPD & FDNY that completely understands the UCT interface and the impact on FDNY/Fire Dispatch operations

- There is no formal process to identify trends and patterns of UCT related problems and resolve known problems

It is our recommendation that the UCT initiative be discontinued as soon as possible and that NYPD & FDNY implement new (no cost) 9-1-1 call taking and dispatching business processes that will improve both NYPD & FDNY Communications Center operations.