Final Report
25-0000013

Compliance Audit of ACPS Response to High Priority and Emergency Incidents

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Executive Summary

What We Did

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted an audit of Animal Care and Protective Services (ACPS) to assess whether emergency and high-priority calls were handled in accordance with the department's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). We also evaluated the time lapses between when City Services received a complaint and when it was transferred to ACPS's case management system, Chameleon.

What We Found

The audit found that in the sample of 200 emergency and high-priority calls, 109 complied with SOP response time standards, and 69 were non-compliant. We could not determine compliance with the remaining 22 due to missing documentation or the absence of response time standards for certain activity types. Additionally, while most cases were transferred from City Services to ACPS's Chameleon system in a timely manner, 16 cases experienced delays exceeding 24 hours, with some taking up to 43 days to appear in the system.

What We Recommended

To enhance the timeliness and consistency of ACPS responses to emergency and high-priority complaints, the Audit Unit recommends that ACPS revise its SOP to clearly define response time expectations for all case classifications and implement internal controls to ensure accurate timestamp documentation. Additionally, the ACPS should establish formal performance standards for the transfer of calls from City Services to the Chameleon system. ACPS should also consider real-time monitoring tools to identify and address delays.

Management Response

Animal Care and Protective Services agreed to review their policies regarding response times. They will look to enhance their internal controls to manage the identified risks and weaknesses (see Appendix B).

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FINAL REPORT

Purpose

As part of the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) 2025 Annual Audit Plan, the Audit Unit conducted an audit (25-0000013) of City of Jacksonville's (COJ) Animal Care and Protective Services (ACPS) to determine if the service officers responded to emergency and high-priority calls in compliance with their Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and if the complaints received by City Services were promptly submitted to ACPS.

Background

ACPS serves as the primary municipal department responsible for animal welfare across Duval County. Annually, ACPS takes in approximately 6,000 to 9,000 animals, handling over 30,000 service calls ranging from stray rescues and medical emergencies to investigations of cruelty, neglect, and nuisance animals. ACPS has a team of 17 animal service officers and 3 senior officers. During the audit, ACPS acknowledged that staffing levels affected their ability to handle the volume of calls.

ACPS uses a case management system called Chameleon to track and manage complaints and service requests. Members of the public can submit complaints directly to Chameleon by using the online form. Alternatively, if an individual calls City Services at (904) 630-CITY, a City Services employee will manually enter the information into the system. Once the information is submitted, the case is supposed to be automatically transferred to Chameleon.

The Chameleon system assigns a priority level to each case based on the information entered. Priority levels include low, medium, high, and emergency. When the call is processed through City Services, this time is labeled as "New Date," and then when it is transferred to Chameleon, the time is labeled as "Call Date". This process should occur instantaneously, but both ACPS and City Services staff reported that there are occasional delays in the transfer of cases from the City Services system to Chameleon. Once a call is transferred into the Chameleon system, an ACPS dispatcher assigns it to an Animal Service Officer. This changes the case's status to "Dispatch" with an accompanying timestamp. ACPS employs one dispatcher, and if the dispatcher is not on duty, officers are responsible for assigning calls to themselves. When an officer begins responding to the call, he or she updates the case status to "Working", then changes it to

"Completed" once the call has been resolved. Both of these statuses include a timestamp.

Statement of Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The audit analyzed how ACPS managed the intake and response to emergency and high-priority calls. The audit reviewed these calls from November 2024 to April 2025 with a focus on compliance with the SOP requirements related to response times.

The audit sought to determine:

1. Whether Animal Service Officers responded to emergency and high-priority calls in accordance with the ACPS SOP.
2. Whether ACPS's case management system received City Service-generated complaints in a timely manner.

The Audit Unit reviewed the following laws, directives, and procedures:

- ACPS Call Prioritization Standard Operating Procedure (rev. 2020)

To conduct the audit, the Audit Unit:

- Interviewed ACPS and City Services personnel;
- Reviewed the ACPS SOP;
- Reviewed case reports of emergency and high-priority calls; and
- Created a sample size of 200 from the 6,090 total calls with an 85% confidence level and a margin of error +/- 5%.[1]

Statement of Auditing Standards

The audit was conducted in conformance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*, issued by the Institute of Internal Auditors. The standards require the OIG to plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, reliable, relevant, and useful information to support the engagement results and conclusions based upon the stated audit objectives. This Audit was also conducted pursuant to Section 1.203(c), Charter of the City of Jacksonville, and Ordinance Code, Section 602.303(a-c).

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[1] The Audit Unit selected an 85% confidence level instead of the standard 95% due to concerns raised by ACPS regarding the staff resources required to support a larger sample size. Additionally, ACPS noted that system limitations prevented the Audit Unit from independently pulling the necessary case files.
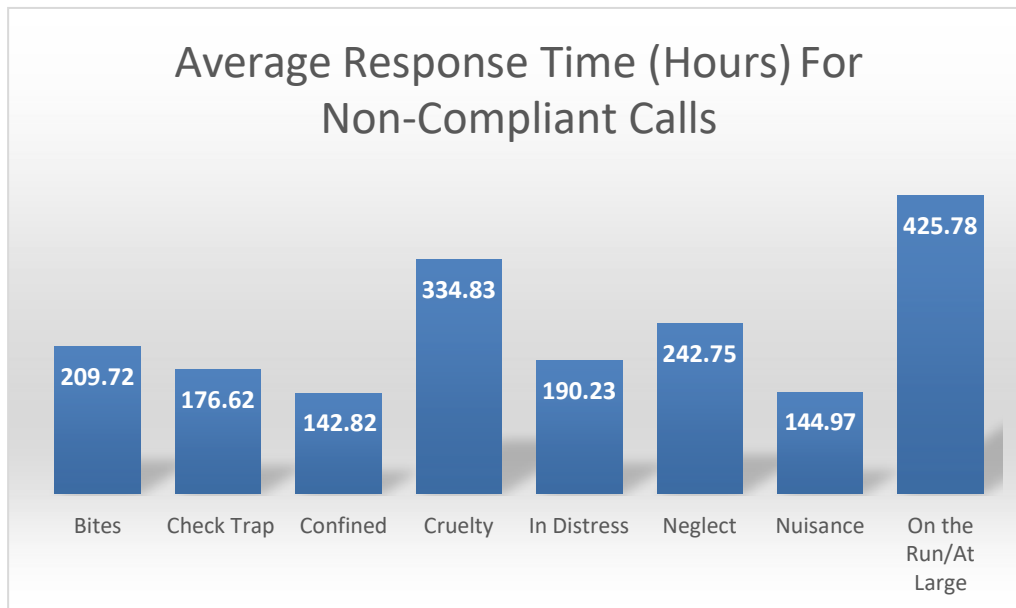
Findings and Recommendations

Objective 1: Determine whether Animal Service Officers responded to emergency and high-priority calls in accordance with the ACPS Standard Operating Procedure.

The Audit Unit reviewed 200 emergency and high-priority calls received between November 2024 and April 2025. To evaluate response times, the Audit Unit analyzed the time difference between the "Dispatch" timestamp and the "Working" timestamp recorded in the Chameleon system. These timestamps were selected instead of the "Call Date" to account for situations where calls were received outside of regular operating hours, such as overnight, and to not penalize response times for transfer delays between the City Services system and Chameleon.

Finding 1: Of the 200 cases reviewed in the sample, 109 were found to be compliant with the required response times, while 69 were non-compliant. For 6 cases, compliance could not be determined due to missing timestamps in the case records. An additional 16 cases could not be evaluated because the current SOP does not define response time expectations for those activity types. Specifically, the SOP lacks initial response time standards for cases classified as "Resources", "Dangerous", "Message", and "Breeder".

Response Time

- Compliant — 54%
- Non-Complaint — 35%
- Missing Data — 3%
- No Policy — 8%
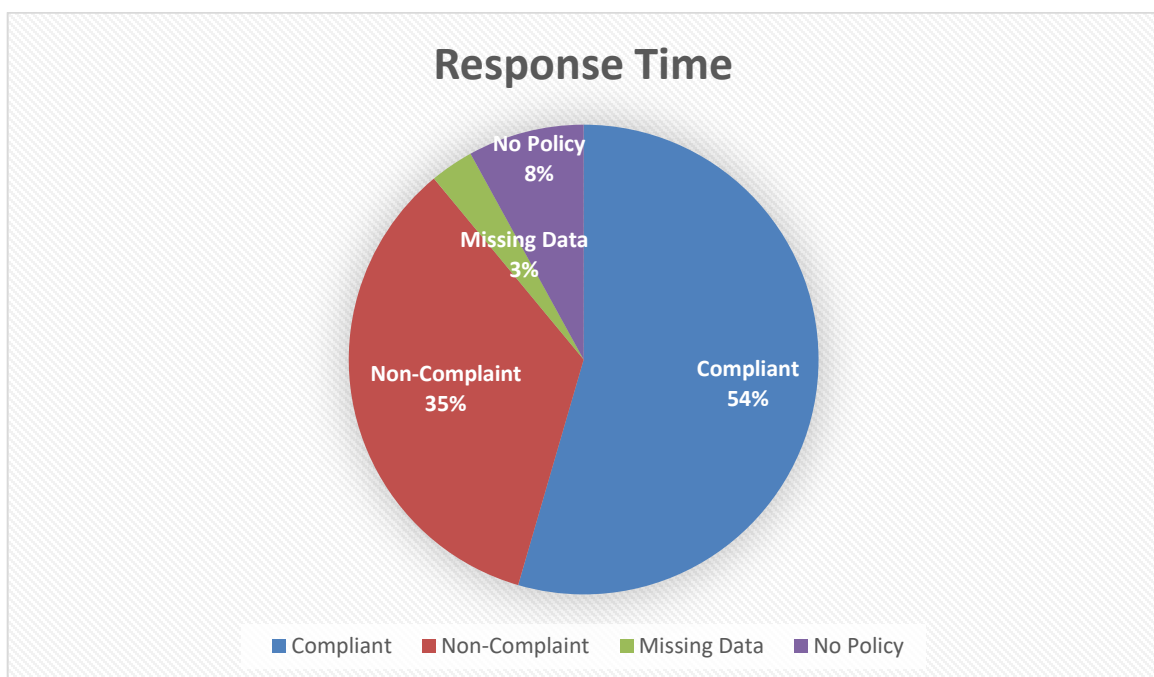
Although the majority of cases met the response time requirements, more than one-third did not. When isolating these non-compliant cases, the Audit Unit found that responses were, on average, several days past the required timeframe. According to the ACPS Call Prioritization Table within the SOP (see Appendix A), all high-priority calls must be addressed within 24 hours—except for Cruelty and Neglect cases, which must be responded to within 72 hours. In our sample, all the Cruelty cases in the non-compliant category were classified as high-priority. Emergency calls are to be responded to immediately. However, for the purposes of this audit, a response was considered compliant if it occurred within 24 hours of receipt of the call.

Average Response Time (Hours) For Non-Compliant Calls

Activity Type	Average Response Time (Hours)
Bites	209.72
Check Trap	176.62
Confined	142.82
Cruelty	334.83
In Distress	190.23
Neglect	242.75
Nuisance	144.97
On the Run/At Large	425.78

Recommendation: To improve compliance with required response times for emergency and high-priority calls, the Audit Unit recommends that ACPS strengthen its internal controls by implementing a quality assurance process to ensure accurate and complete timestamp documentation within Chameleon. Additionally, ACPS should revise its SOP to include clear response time standards for all case classifications, including Resources, Dangerous, Message, and Breeder. Establishing defined response expectations for these activity types will enhance accountability and enable more consistent performance monitoring. The Audit Unit also suggests that ACPS conduct periodic reviews of response time performance to identify and address systemic delays. If staffing issues are the cause of the non-compliant responses, then the Audit Unit recommends that ACPS address this within the constraints of their budget.

Objective 2: Determine whether ACPS's case management system received City Services-generated complaints in a timely manner.

The Audit Unit analyzed the time elapsed between when a call was received by City Services and when it was transferred into the Chameleon system. In the records, the City Services timestamp is labeled as the "New Date," while the Chameleon system records the transfer as the "Call Date." This analysis aimed to identify delays in the transfer process that could hinder ACPS's ability to respond promptly to complaints. Delays in transferring calls may prevent ACPS from becoming aware of complaints in a timely manner, potentially impacting the effectiveness of service delivery.

Finding 2: Of the cases reviewed, the vast majority were transferred promptly—under one hour. However, 16 cases experienced substantial delays, with transfers taking more than 24 hours. Among these delayed cases, the longest transfer lag was approximately 1,028 hours (about 43 days), and the average delay was 537 hours (roughly 22 days).

Activity Type	Time Elapsed (Call to New)
On the Run/At Large	1028 hrs. 5 mins.
Bite	968 hrs. 57 mins.
Bite	960 hrs. 20 mins.
On the Run/At Large	813 hrs. 36 mins.
On the Run/At Large	794 hrs. 41 mins.
On the Run/At Large	772 hrs. 2 mins.
Neglect	749 hrs. 1 mins.
Nuisance	600 hrs. 46 mins.
Bite	548 hrs. 40 mins.
On the Run/At Large	477 hrs. 33 mins.
On the Run/At Large	271 hrs. 52 mins.
Nuisance	263 hrs. 58 mins.
Cruelty	150 hrs. 41 mins.
Resources	102 hrs. 40 mins.
Check Trap	53 hrs. 50 mins.
Bite	45 hrs. 53 mins.

These significant delays would have caused all calls to fall outside of the response times required by the SOP, which ranges from 24 hours to 72 hours. For the purposes of this audit, this delay was not factored into ACPS response time.

Recommendation: To prevent delays that may hinder timely responses to emergency and high-priority complaints, the Audit Unit recommends that City

Services and ACPS collaborate to review and strengthen the call transfer process between their systems. Specifically, ACPS could establish a formal performance standard for the maximum allowable transfer time from City Services to Chameleon. Additionally, if the parties could implement automated alerts or dashboards to flag calls not transferred within a defined timeframe (e.g., one hour) it may help identify and resolve delays in real time. Finally, the Audit suggests a periodic reconciliation between City Services and Chameleon records could ensure all calls are transferred promptly and accounted for accurately.

Conclusion

This audit identified key areas where delays in call handling and procedural gaps may be impacting the ACPS's ability to respond to emergency and high-priority complaints in a timely and consistent manner. While the majority of cases reviewed were compliant with response time requirements, over one-third were not, with some responses delayed by days. Additionally, the absence of defined response time standards for certain activity types limits ACPS's ability to monitor and ensure timely service across all complaint categories.

Further, delays in transferring calls from City Services to the Chameleon system—sometimes spanning several days—introduce a serious breakdown in the response workflow. These delays can render even a prompt ACPS response untimely from the complainant's perspective, and in practice, may result in unresolved or delayed animal welfare interventions.

Addressing these issues through clearer SOP guidance, strengthened workflow oversight, and improved inter-agency coordination will support a more effective and accountable response system.

It is crucial that ACPS address the findings as they are critical to protecting the health and safety of both animals and the community. Delays in response or unclear procedures can lead to prolonged animal suffering, missed emergencies, and reduced public trust in ACPS operations. Ensuring prompt and well-documented responses supports ACPS's mission and helps safeguard animal welfare across the City of Jacksonville.

Management Response

For ACPS management's response, please see Appendix B.

Appendix A – ACPS Call Prioritization

CALL TYPE	PRIORITY	INITIAL RESPONSE TIME
In Distress	Emergency	Immediate
Assist: Verified Emergency	Emergency	Immediate
Assist: Non-emergency	High	After clearing current call if no pending emergencies
Cruelty/Neglect: Animal is in distress or imminent danger	Emergency	After clearing current call if no pending emergencies
Cruelty/Neglect: All Others	High	Within 72 Hours
Trapped Animal	High	Within 24 Hours
Confined Animal	High	Immediate
Animal At Large: Aggressive, On School Grounds	High	Within 24 Hours
Animal At Large: All others	Medium	Within 72 Hours
Bite: Currently at large - Public Safety Issue	Emergency	Immediate
Bite: All others	High	Within 24 Hours
Nuisances	High	Within 24 Hours
Affidavit Request	Low	Within 72 Hours
Trap Request	Low	Address during downtime and contact caller. Prioritize in accordance with 'at large' priority to determine response time

ACPS Call Prioritization Standard Operating Procedure (rev. 2020)

Appendix B– Management Response

Please find our formal response to OIG Audit Report 25-0000013. I want to thank you and your team for you time and collaboration. We will use these findings to continue to make our daily operations more efficient.

Response to OIG Audit Report 25-0000013
Compliance Audit of ACPS Response to High-Priority and Emergency Incidents

To the Office of the Inspector General:

Thank you for the time and effort spent conducting this audit. We appreciate the opportunity to reflect on our current processes and to improve the quality and timeliness of our response to emergency and high-priority calls. We are aligned with the overall goal of protecting the health and safety of both animals and the public and welcome the recommendations outlined in the report.

We respectfully submit the following management response:

Response to Finding 1: SOP Compliance for Emergency and High-Priority Calls

The audit found that approximately 35% of reviewed emergency and high-priority cases were non-compliant with the SOP response time requirements. While we acknowledge these findings, it is important to emphasize the following operational reality:

Many high-priority calls require extended time on scene due to the nature of the situation—severe cruelty investigations, dangerous animals at large, or emergency medical needs. These calls cannot be resolved quickly and often involve multi-hour responses, detailed documentation, coordination with law enforcement, and emergency transport.

Our current staffing level — 11 officers (2 in training), 3 senior officers, 1 assistant supervisor, 1 supervisor, and 1 dispatcher—gives us 17 personnel assigned to field and dispatch operations. However, with two officers currently on paternity leave, we have only 12 officers actively responding to calls. Once the two officers in training are cleared for full duty and the final senior officer position is filled, we will reach our full intended staffing of 18: 11 officers, 4 seniors, 1 assistant supervisor, 1 supervisor, and 1 dispatcher.

Even at full staffing, overlapping emergency incidents and after-hours demands often make it impossible to meet SOP response times across the board. The issue is not disregard for policy, but the practical limitations of current resources. We respectfully request that any analysis of SOP compliance be considered through the lens of this staffing reality and the complexity of high-priority field

work.

We are in the process of updating our SOP to define response time standards for additional activity types, including "Resources," "Dangerous," "Message," and "Breeder" calls. Clearly defined expectations will support accountability, planning, and reporting accuracy.

We also support the recommendation to implement a quality assurance process for improving timestamp documentation within Chameleon.

Response to Finding 2: Delays in Call Transfer from City to Chameleon

We appreciate the audit's recognition that most calls are transferred from the City to Chameleon in a timely manner. However, we agree that any delay—particularly those extending beyond one hour—is unacceptable and compromises our ability to respond effectively.

We are actively working with the City team to:

- Review the workflow and system interface between the City and Chameleon

- Explore automated alerts or dashboards to flag calls not transferred within one hour

- Establish formal performance expectations for call transfer timelines

- Add periodic reconciliation between the two systems to prevent missed or delayed cases

In addition to these measures, we are recommending an operational change when complainants call back with new or escalating information: an email notification should be sent directly to ACPS leadership and/or the dispatcher. Currently, new notes added to an existing call in the system do not generate alerts, and we are not notified unless we check the call manually. A direct email will allow us to respond appropriately in real time, especially when the urgency of a case changes.

Additional Context and Considerations

Staffing Capacity Must Be Part of the Solution

Many non-compliant calls involved extended scenes, after-hours responses, or multiple high-priority calls during peak periods. Without adequate staffing, it is not possible to meet all time benchmarks. Increasing officer headcount and support positions would directly improve our ability to respond within SOP timeframes, especially when dealing with simultaneous emergency calls.

Officer-Initiated Case Review

In many situations, officers begin working a case in the field before logging updates in Chameleon. This can delay status changes such as "Working" or "Completed" and make it appear as though a response was late when it was actually underway. Our updated SOP will include clearer expectations for in-field documentation and prompt status updates.

Training and Communication Improvements

We will reinforce SOP expectations with both field staff and dispatchers to ensure calls are assigned, updated, and closed consistently. We will also continue investing in dispatcher cross-training, so multiple team members are equipped to assign and monitor calls during peak hours or when coverage gaps arise.

Conclusion

We agree with the findings and recommendations in principle and are committed to the following action items:

- Revise the SOP to define clear response time standards for all call types

- Implement quality assurance checks on timestamp documentation and reporting accuracy

- Work with the City to establish call transfer benchmarks and create automated tracking tools

- Ensure that emails are sent to ACPS leadership when complainants call back with new information that escalates an open call

- Continue advocating for increased staffing levels to meet the growing demands of emergency response, public safety, and animal protection

We remain committed to transparency, improvement, and public trust. We appreciate the constructive feedback and collaboration reflected in this audit and will use it to continue improving service delivery to the residents and animals of Jacksonville.

Best,

Michael Bricker

Chief, Animal Care and Protective Services