

# OIG IN BRIEF

## Why OIG Did This Report

Many New Orleanians share the belief that the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) is understaffed. NOPD is the single largest expenditure of the City's general fund, and the significant anticipated costs of the NOPD consent decree will increase its costs even further. It is essential that any additional personnel costs be supported by sound data.

The OIG conducted an analysis of NOPD's workload based on citizens' demand for service to determine whether NOPD needed more officers to accomplish its mission to provide "professional police services to the public." OIG identified the number of sworn officers and non-sworn personnel employed by NOPD in May 2013 and determined how those officers were deployed and how many officers were assigned to answer citizen-generated calls for service.

The OIG then examined the number, type, prioritization, and amount of time spent on citizens' calls for service and combined the citizen call-for-service demand with a calculation of the portion of officer time available to answer calls versus other essential policing functions. The analysis resulted in staffing estimates that revealed the number of officers needed to meet citizen call-for-service demand compared to the number of officers assigned to answer calls for service in May 2013.

*A report to the City of New Orleans and the Superintendent of the New Orleans Police Department, May 28, 2014.*

View OIG report I&E 12-010. For more information contact Nadiene Van Dyke at (504) 681-3200 or [nvandyke@nolaoig.org](mailto:nvandyke@nolaoig.org).

## ***New Orleans Police Department Staffing and Deployment: Meeting the Demand of Citizen Calls for Service with Existing Resources***

### **What OIG Found**

***OIG's analysis revealed that answering calls for service appeared not to be a priority for the NOPD, and the number of NOPD officers assigned to answer calls for service did not meet the demand.***

Only 21 percent of NOPD sworn officers' primary assignment was to answer citizen-generated calls for service, and more than one district commander spoke of the "burden" of citizens' requests for assistance. And the force was top-heavy: ranking officers supervised an average of 3 to 4.3 officers, well above the recommended average of one police supervisor to every seven to eight staff.

In addition, NOPD practices made meeting citizens' call-for-service demand challenging. For example, districts held less urgent calls for service before and during shift changes, resulting in long wait times for callers and a backlog of calls waiting for officers as they started their shifts. The analysis indicated that officers rarely caught up to the demand. Also, NOPD's response protocols relied primarily on only two priority levels to classify all calls for service, making it difficult for NOPD to triage calls for service effectively.

NOPD's methods for categorizing and documenting citizen calls for service deprived the department of valuable information that could be used to deploy officers more effectively. First, the two largest categories of calls for service—37 percent of all calls—were "complaint other" and "disturbance other." NOPD would have a difficult time determining the true nature of more than a third of its calls due to the use of these non-specific categories. Second, travel times, response times, and on-scene times could not be analyzed, because officers did not record arrival times for 13 percent of calls. Evaluators determined conclusions drawn from the existing data would be unreliable.

### **What OIG Recommended**

***The OIG made several recommendations designed to increase the number of officers answering calls for service without increasing NOPD's overall force strength AND to reduce the demand on the police to answer calls that do not require the specific training and expertise of law enforcement officers.***

Policy and management decisions govern how NOPD deploys its existing officers, and NOPD leaders could make immediate changes to increase the number of officers available to answer calls for service. For example, NOPD had sworn officers assigned to positions that did not require law enforcement training, such as desk duty, vehicle and building maintenance, and information technology. NOPD also assigned officers to specialized units at the district level; these officers could be immediately available to answer calls for service.

The City should seek state and local legislative changes to reduce the call-for-service demand: cities nationwide have found more efficient ways to handle responses to burglar alarms and minor traffic accidents, 21 percent of all citizen-generated calls. NOPD should adopt policy and procedure to implement these changes.

In brief, NOPD leaders must make it clear—both to all NOPD personnel and to the public—that answering citizens' calls for assistance is important and seek ways to deploy its existing manpower to meet the demand. The OIG provided policy makers and police leaders with the information and recommendations in this report in an effort to ensure the most effective and efficient use of scarce taxpayer dollars.