

CRIME DATA OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS



REPORT TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY B
ISSUED OCTOBER 23, 2013

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LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR
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October 23, 2013

**THE HONORABLE JEAN-PAUL J. MORRELL,
CHAIRMAN, AND MEMBERS OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY B**
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Dear Chairman Morrell and Members of the Committee:

This report provides the results of our review of crime data and statistics for the city of New Orleans as requested by Senate Resolution 121 of the 2013 Regular Session.

The report contains our findings and recommendations. Appendix B contains the response to the report from the city of New Orleans.

We would like to express our appreciation to the management of the New Orleans Police Department for their cooperation, professionalism, and assistance during this review.

Respectfully submitted,

Daryl G. Purpera, CPA, CFE
Legislative Auditor

DGP/ch

NOPD 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Unreported Part I Uniform Crime Report Crimes or Insufficient Documentation

Of the 1,000 incidents we reviewed from the Computer Aided Dispatch (dispatch system) for the period January 1, 2012, to December 31, 2012, we found 319 incidents that should have been reported or, based on information available, appeared as such that they should have been reported but were not.

Improper Classification Changes to Part I Uniform Crime Report Crimes

Of the 1,419 signal change forms provided by the NOPD for the period January 1, 2012, through December 31, 2012, we reviewed 20 and found two that improperly changed the classification from a Part I Uniform Crime Report (UCR) crime to a non-Part I UCR crime. These improper changes resulted in unreported Part I UCR crimes.

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Senate Resolution 121¹ of the 2013 Regular Session requested the Louisiana Legislative Auditor's Office to review certain crime data and statistics for the city of New Orleans and make a report of his findings to the Senate Committee on Judiciary B. The city of New Orleans' crime statistics are collected by the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD).

Louisiana Revised Statute (La. R.S.) 15:1204.3² requires all law enforcement agencies, when requested by the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE), to (1) install and maintain records needed for reporting crime incident and arrest information required by the commission; (2) report to the commission as and when the commission prescribes crime incident and arrest information as required by the commission; (3) give the commission access to closed criminal case records for purposes of inspection; and (4) upon the request of the commission, provide any other such assistance, information, and data which are reasonable and available as will enable the commission to properly carry out its powers and duties. According to the LCLE, it does not require law enforcement agencies to report crime statistics. However, as a condition of participating in LCLE grant programs, the LCLE does require law enforcement agencies to report crime statistics.^A

La. R.S. 15:1204.2³ created the Louisiana Uniform Crime Reporting (LUCR) Program and placed it under the authority of the LCLE. In 1993, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) certified the LUCR, which was based on the national Uniform Crime Report (UCR) program standards. The LCLE collects, reviews, and reports the crime statistics for the state of Louisiana to the FBI's UCR Program as authorized by 28 U.S.C. §534.⁴ These crime statistics are published throughout the year in the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports.

The Uniform Crime Reporting Handbook classifies crimes as either Part I or Part II offenses. Part I UCR offenses consist of criminal homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft (except motor vehicle theft), motor vehicle theft (separate signal code), and arson. Part II UCR offenses consist of crimes such as vandalism, prostitution, drug abuse violations, drunkenness, vagrancy, and other similar offenses. The scope of our review included Part I UCR offenses^B with the exception of arson.^C

Orleans Parish and the city of New Orleans share the same boundaries. The city of New Orleans has one localized communications district, the Orleans Parish Communications District (OPCD), that receives all incoming 911 emergency calls. After identifying the nature of a caller's emergency (i.e., police, medical, or fire), operators transfer the call to the proper

^A According to LCLE grant applications for federal grants, "The law enforcement applicant agrees to begin or continue participating in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program or the Louisiana Incident Based Reporting System (LIBRS) Programs of LCLE."

^B Simple battery and simple assault were included as Part I UCR crimes for our testing purposes because they are included on the monthly form (Return A) submitted to the LCLE along with all Part I UCR crimes.

^C According to the NOPD, the New Orleans Fire Department is in charge of reporting arson to the UCR.

agency.^D The OPCD uses the Computer Aided Dispatch (dispatch system) to assign an incident number to each call and to document the caller's complaint and the response by the agency. The NOPD uses these incident numbers to uniquely identify and file reports of these incidents in the NOPD's Electronic Police Report (EPR) system.

Each crime incident generated from 911 emergency calls is assigned a signal code that corresponds to the reported crime's definition within Louisiana law, which the NOPD uses to classify crimes. Each dispatcher determines the initial signal for each incident based on information provided by the caller. The responding officer communicates with the dispatcher during and after responding to the incident and reports what occurred. If necessary, the dispatcher changes the reported signal of the incident. When the responding officer completes his initial investigation, the results are communicated to the dispatcher and the incident is "marked up" or given a disposition in the dispatch system. A description of each disposition is included below:

1. Report to Follow (RTF) - This disposition category is used when an officer determines a police report must be written for the incident.
2. Necessary Action Taken (NAT) - This disposition is used when an officer feels that he has taken the necessary action at the scene of the incident and no report is required.
3. Unfounded (UNF) - When an officer arrives on a scene and the reported incident does not appear to have occurred, the unfounded disposition is used.
4. Gone on Arrival (GOA) - This is used when the complainant or victim is not at the scene to report the crime when the responding officers arrive.
5. Duplicate (DUP) - This is used when multiple incident numbers are created due to multiple emergency calls for the same incident.
6. Voids - The complainant cancels his/her request to speak to an officer.

Once a disposition is communicated to the dispatcher, the officer has 24 hours to make changes to the incident based on his investigation. After the initial 24-hour period, any changes to the incident require a change of signal form that must be approved by a district commander.

The NOPD uses and maintains the EPR system to complete police reports and track and report crime incidents. However, not all dispatch system incidents require a police report; therefore, all dispatch system incidents are not entered into the EPR system. The NOPD generates its crime statistics from the police reports in the EPR system and not the data in the dispatch system. However, this review focused on the final signal and the final disposition of each incident within the dispatch system because the dispatch system consists of all 911 emergency calls for the entire year.

^D New Orleans Police Department, Emergency Medical Services, or the New Orleans Fire Department.

We selected 1,000 incidents for testing based on our determination of risk. For the purposes of our review, we considered an incident high-risk if it had a final signal that was a Part I UCR crime in the dispatch system data, but was not reported to LCLE. Since we based our sample selections on our determination of risk and not evenly across all data, the results of our work cannot be used to estimate the error rate for the entire population of incidents.

The procedures performed during this review included:

- (1) interviewing NOPD employees;
- (2) interviewing other persons as appropriate;
- (3) examining selected NOPD documents and records;
- (4) gathering documents from external parties; and
- (5) reviewing applicable state laws and regulations.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Unreported Part I Uniform Crime Report Crimes or Insufficient Documentation

Of the 1,000 incidents we reviewed from the Computer Aided Dispatch (dispatch system) for the period January 1, 2012, to December 31, 2012, we found 319 incidents that should have been reported or, based on information available, appeared as such that they should have been reported but were not.

According to the 2012 dispatch system data, there were 505,134 incidents assigned to the NOPD. Of the 505,134 incidents, 485,042^E incidents were not reported as Part I UCR crimes to the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE). We analyzed the 485,042 incidents in the dispatch system data that were not reported and divided them into two groups: (1) one group for incidents with a Part I UCR signal and (2) one group for all other incidents. The results of our work are illustrated and discussed in the following two sections.

Incidents Classified as a Part I UCR Crime in the Dispatch System

Incidents with final signals that were Part I UCR reportable crimes but were not reported to LCLE were reviewed to determine if the incident should have been reported.

Disposition	Number of Part I Dispatch System Incidents	Number of Incidents Reviewed	Number of Exceptions ^F
Report to Follow (RTF)	663	250	186
Necessary Action Taken (NAT)	360	150	88
Unfounded (UNF)	6,346	150	13
Gone on Arrival (GOA)	448	50	19
Duplicate (DUP) or Voids	2,319	50	1
Total	10,136	650	307

^E According to LCLE crime data, the city of New Orleans reported 20,681 crimes related to 20,092 incidents for the calendar year 2012. There are more crimes than incidents since some incidents have multiple victims.

^F An exception was any incident that had documentation in the dispatch system and/or EPR that suggests a Part I UCR crime occurred, but the incident was not reported to LCLE.

Report to Follow (RTF)

There were 663 incidents in the dispatch system data classified with a Part I UCR signal that had a final disposition of RTF. We reviewed the dispatch system data and Electronic Police Report (EPR) reports and found that 186 of the 250 reviewed had documentation that suggested the incidents were Part I UCR reportable crimes.

The questionable incidents were provided to Lieutenant Chris Lea of the NOPD's technology section for review and verification. Lt. Lea did not disagree the incidents should have been reported to the LCLE as Part I UCR crimes and made the following determinations regarding the unreported incidents.

Explanation of Exceptions	Number of Incidents
1. Computer Programming Error	124
2. No Report in Electronic Police Report (EPR) system	30
3. Not a Part I UCR Signal in EPR system	27
4. Change of Disposition/Signal to Non-Part I UCR Incident	1
5. Handwritten Reports Not Approved	4
Total	186

1. Computer Programming Error

One hundred twenty-four of the incidents in this group were not reported because of a computer programming error. Specifically, (1) certain signals were not included in the list used to report crime statistics to the LCLE or (2) the victim data was entered into the EPR system incorrectly. Lt. Lea stated that since the LLA brought these exceptions to their attention, they now have added the missing signal codes to their list, and they are now reviewing EPR reports for all Part I UCR signals regardless of victim data.

2. No Report in the Electronic Police Report (EPR) system

Lt. Lea stated that 30 of the unreported incidents should have had a report filed in the EPR system by the primary officer, but did not. The NOPD runs a weekly report of the RTF dispositions from the dispatch system that is compared to the EPR system to determine if there are any delinquent reports. A weekly "Missing Report" list is sent to all eight NOPD districts and the Orleans Parish Sheriff for resolution; however, these 30 incidents were not resolved.

For example, dispatch system data for one of the incidents reviewed indicated that a complainant called to report she was robbed at gunpoint while at a bank's drive thru ATM. The dispatch system data shows the incident was classified as an armed robbery with a gun and had a disposition of RTF; however, there is no report in the EPR system.

Since there were no police reports in EPR for these 30 incidents and the UCR Handbook requires crimes to be classified based on the facts of an agency's investigation, the incidents were not reported as Part I UCR crimes to the LCLE.

3. Not a Part I UCR Signal in the EPR system

Sixteen of the unreported incidents have police reports in EPR that contain statements in the narrative section which indicate that a Part I UCR crime did occur. For example, EPR data for one of the incidents indicated an officer responded to a residential burglary alarm (not a Part I UCR crime), but the dispatch system data showed this incident was a residential burglary (a Part I UCR crime). The police report also shows the alarm company advised the officer that all key holders were out of town; however, the incident was classified in the police report as a signal 21 (miscellaneous incident) with notes to follow up with the resident.

Two days later, the resident returned home and met with the officer and stated she discovered missing electronic devices and completed a theft affidavit form. The theft affidavit resulted in a supplemental report changing this incident from miscellaneous to residential burglary. According to Lt. Lea, this incident was not reported to the LCLE because of error.

The remaining 11 incidents are kidnappings, which is not a Part I UCR crime. However, the police reports include details which show that a Part I UCR crime (such as battery or assault) was committed during the process of the kidnappings and therefore should have been reported to LCLE. Lt. Lea stated that the NOPD is now reviewing all incidents with kidnapping signals to determine if a Part I UCR crime occurred in the process of the kidnapping and therefore should be reported to LCLE.

4. Change of Disposition/Signal to a Non-Part I UCR Incident

Four separately reported thefts of license plates occurred at a parking garage. According to Lt. Lea, three of the incidents were changed to "Duplicate" and the police report incorrectly listed the number of victims of a reportable Part I UCR crime as one instead of four. According to NOPD training materials, theft is counted by each distinct act. In this case, there were four distinct acts, and only one of the four was reported to LCLE.

5. Handwritten Reports Not Approved

Lt. Lea stated that four of the questionable incidents should have been reported to LCLE as Part I UCR crimes, but were not due to handwritten police reports that were not approved in the EPR system. He further stated that only approved police reports are reviewed for possible reporting to the LCLE.

According to Lt. Lea, there are a small number of reports that are handwritten (less than 1%). Typically, an officer enters a report directly into the EPR system and it is approved electronically by the officers' supervisor; however, the handwritten reports are manually approved by a supervisor prior to entry into EPR by a data entry clerk. Lt. Lea stated none of the four handwritten reports were marked with an approval date in the EPR system; therefore, they were not reported to LCLE.

Necessary Action Taken (NAT)

There were 360 incidents in the dispatch system data classified as a Part I UCR signal with the final disposition of NAT. Incidents that are classified as NAT are not required to have a police report. We reviewed the dispatch system data and found that 88 of the 150 reviewed had documentation that suggested the incidents were Part I UCR reportable crimes.

Lt. Lea reviewed these exceptions and did not disagree that the description in the dispatch data is consistent with a Part I UCR crime. However, there were no police reports in EPR for these 88 incidents, and the UCR Handbook requires crimes to be classified based on the facts of an agency's investigation. Therefore, the incidents were not reported as Part I UCR crimes to the LCLE.

Unfounded (UNF)

There were 6,346 incidents in the dispatch system data classified with Part I UCR related signals that had final dispositions of UNF. We reviewed the documentation available in the dispatch system for 150 incidents and found that 13 of the incidents reviewed had documentation in the dispatch system suggesting they were Part I UCR reportable crimes.

Lt. Lea reviewed these exceptions and did not disagree that the description in the dispatch data is consistent with a Part I UCR crime. However, there were no police reports in EPR for these 13 incidents, and the UCR Handbook requires crimes to be classified based on the facts of an agency's investigation. Therefore, the incidents were not reported as Part I UCR crimes to the LCLE.

Gone on Arrival (GOA)

There were 448 incidents in the dispatch system data classified with Part I UCR related signals that had final dispositions of GOA. We reviewed 50 incidents with Part I UCR signals and found that 19 of the incidents had documentation the complainant was not at the scene when the officer arrived, but there was no documentation to indicate attempts were made to contact the complainant after that.

The dispatch system data also states that several of the incidents had a response time longer than three hours. The NOPD's practice is that an incident is not reported until the complainant talks to an officer. However, when the complainant is not at the scene when the officer arrives, the officer should contact the dispatcher to make an attempt to contact the complainant.

In the 19 questionable incidents, there is no documentation in the dispatch system data showing the dispatcher attempted to contact the complainant. Lt. Lea reviewed these exceptions and did not disagree that the description in the dispatch data is consistent with a Part I UCR crime. However, there were no police reports in EPR for these 19 incidents, and the UCR Handbook requires crimes to be classified based on the facts of an agency's investigation. Therefore, the incidents were not reported as Part I UCR crimes to the LCLE. Because there was no follow up as required by NOPD policy, we were unable to determine if these incidents should have been reported.

Duplicates (DUP) and Voids

There were 2,319 incidents in the dispatch system data classified with Part I UCR signals that had final dispositions of DUP or Void. We reviewed the documentation available in the dispatch system for 50 incidents and found that one of the incidents marked as “Duplicate” (and its related incidents) were not reported as Part I UCR crimes. However, the documentation in the dispatch system suggested they were Part I UCR reportable crimes.

Lt. Lea reviewed the exception and did not disagree that the description in the dispatch data is consistent with a Part I UCR crime. However, there were no police reports in EPR for the incident, and the UCR Handbook requires crimes to be classified based on the facts of an agency's investigation. Therefore, the incident was not reported as a Part I UCR crime to the LCLE. Because there are no police reports available for review, we were unable to determine if this incident should have been reported to LCLE.

Incidents Classified as a Non-Part I UCR Crime

Incidents with final signals that appear to be signals other than Part I UCR reportable crimes were also reviewed to ensure that no Part I UCR crimes went unreported due to a non-Part I UCR signal classification.

Disposition	Number of Non-Part I Dispatch System Incidents	Number of Incidents Reviewed	Number of Exceptions ^G
Report to Follow (RTF)	70,107	100	4
Necessary Action Taken (NAT)	327,166	175	8
Unfounded (UNF)	33,443	25	0
Gone on Arrival (GOA)	17,786	25	0
Duplicate (DUP) or Voids	26,404	25	0
Total	474,906	350	12

^G An exception was any incident that had documentation in the dispatch system and/or EPR that suggests a Part I UCR crime occurred, but the incident was not reported to LCLE.

Report to Follow (RTF)

There were 70,107 incidents in the dispatch system data classified with a non-Part I UCR signal that had a final disposition of Report to Follow (RTF). We reviewed the dispatch system data and EPR reports and found that four of the 100 reviewed were incorrectly classified and resulted in these crimes not being reported to LCLE.

All four of these incidents had police reports in EPR that show three of the incidents were fights that included assaults or batteries (one included gunfire) and one incident was a theft, all of which are Part I UCR crimes. However, the dispatch system data and police reports in EPR show all four were misclassified as non-Part I UCR crimes. Lt. Lea did not disagree that the four questionable incidents were misclassified and should have been reported as Part I UCR crimes to the LCLE.

Necessary Action Taken (NAT)

Necessary action taken (NAT) is the largest disposition category with 327,166 incidents in the dispatch system data or 65% of all 911 calls in 2012. We reviewed 175 incidents from this category and found eight incidents where the dispatch system data is consistent with a Part I UCR crime, but the incident was classified as a non-Part I UCR crime and was not reported to LCLE. For example, a complainant called to report a theft of items from her back porch and the dispatcher classified the complaint as a theft in the dispatch system. According to the dispatch system data, the responding officer changed the signal to a miscellaneous incident and gave the disposition of NAT; however, the dispatch system data does not give any indication that the crime did not occur (such as Unfounded).

Lt. Lea reviewed these exceptions and did not disagree that the description in the dispatch data is consistent with a Part I UCR crime. However, there were no police reports in EPR for these eight incidents, and the UCR Handbook requires crimes to be classified based on the facts of an agency's investigation. Therefore, the incidents were not reported as Part I UCR crimes to the LCLE.

The following table indicates the categories of incidents classified as a non-Part I UCR signal with the NAT disposition. Non-Part I UCR signal crimes are not required to be reported to the LCLE.

Incidents with non-Part I UCR Classification Disposed of as Necessary Action Taken (NAT)		
Signal	Signal Description	Number of Incidents
21	Complaint	98,804
103	Disturbance	37,617
62A	Burglary Alarm	36,589
107	Suspicious Person	19,792
	All other signals ^H	134,364
	Total	327,166

^H The remaining 134,364 incidents were classified as 70 different signals. Each of the signal classifications had less than 8,341 occurrences with the exception of the traffic incidents signal which had 94,569 occurrences.

Improper Classification Changes to Part I Uniform Crime Report Crimes

Of the 1,419 signal change forms provided by the NOPD for the period January 1, 2012, through December 31, 2012, we reviewed 20 and found two that improperly changed the classification from a Part I UCR crime to a non-Part I UCR crime. These improper changes resulted in unreported Part I UCR crimes.

A signal change form is used by the NOPD to make any changes to an incident after the initial 24-hour period. Some examples of what might be changed include the address, the signal, the disposition, or the names. Once a signal change form is filled out and submitted, it is sent to the district commander for approval. We tested the signal change forms to determine if the changes were proper.

We found two incidents in the 20 signal change forms we reviewed that improperly changed a Part I UCR signal^I to a non-Part I UCR signal.^J In both cases, the documentation in the police reports show that a Part I UCR crime occurred, but the victims did not want to cooperate.

According to Lt. Lea, the willingness of a victim to cooperate should not affect the classification of the incident. Since these two incidents were improperly changed, it resulted in unreported Part I UCR crimes to the LCLE.

^I The two incidents were originally classified as aggravated assault and battery.

^J The two incidents were changed to miscellaneous and medical since the victims would not cooperate.

Recommendations

The NOPD should:

- (1) use dispatch system data to assist in reporting all Part I UCR crimes by:
 - a. prohibiting use of the disposition of Necessary Action Taken for any Part I UCR crimes;
 - b. reviewing all incidents with a Report to Follow disposition in the dispatch system and ensure there is a corresponding police report in the Electronic Police Report system; and
 - c. reviewing all incidents that have different signals in the dispatch system and the Electronic Police Report system to ensure that all Part I UCR crimes were reported to the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement;
- (2) correct the queries used to report Part I UCR crimes to the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement;
- (3) review all kidnappings and determine if a reportable Part I UCR crime occurred in the act of the kidnapping and report the crime to the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement;
- (4) identify all unapproved police reports in the Electronic Police Report system and resolve in a timely manner;
- (5) document the attempts made to complainants in the dispatch system when the disposition Gone on Arrival is used;
- (6) review all incidents with “Duplicate” dispositions with Part I UCR signals in the dispatch system to ensure they are properly reported to the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement; and
- (7) train officers and supervisors:
 - a. to correctly use signal 21s or the original signal with an Unfounded disposition; and
 - b. ensure that the correct signal is used even when a complainant does not wish to pursue charges.

LEGAL PROVISIONS

¹ **Louisiana Senate Resolution 121** provides, in part, “A resolution to urge and request the legislative auditor to review certain crime data and statistics for the city of New Orleans.”

² **Louisiana Revised Statute (La. R.S.) 15:1204.3** provides “All law enforcement agencies, correctional agencies and institutions, district attorneys and municipal prosecutors, courts having criminal jurisdiction, or any other public agency dealing with crimes or criminals, when requested by the commission, shall: (1) Install and maintain records needed for reporting crime incident and arrest information required by the commission. (2) Report to the commission as and when the commission prescribes crime incident and arrest information as required by the commission. (3) Give the commission access to closed criminal case records for purposes of inspection. (4) Upon the request of the commission, provide any other such assistance, information, and data which are reasonable and available as will enable the commission to properly carry out its powers and duties.”

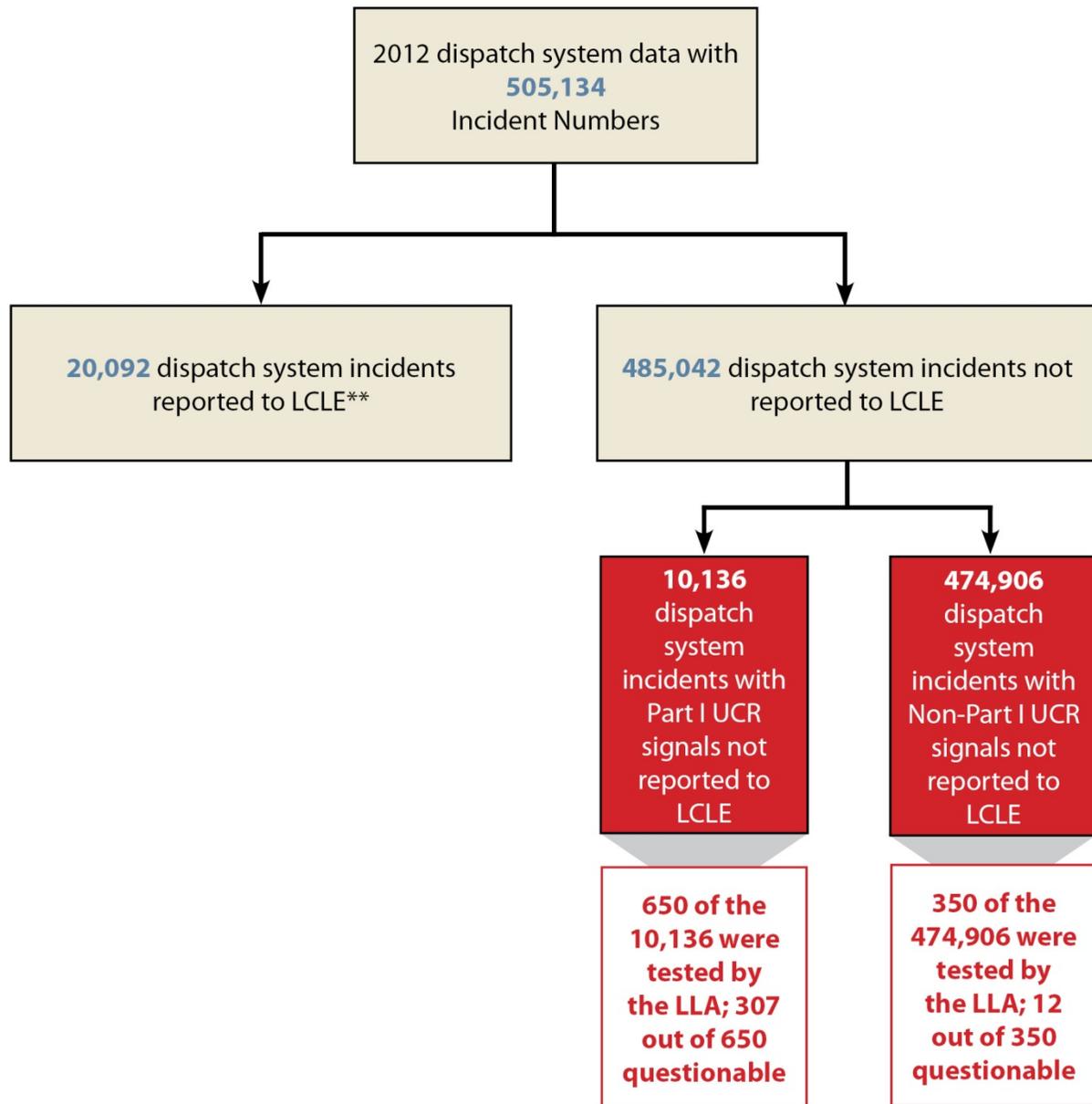
³ **La. R.S. 15:1204.2(A)** provides “There is hereby created within the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Criminal Justice, hereinafter referred to as the "commission," a Louisiana Uniform Crime Reporting System, hereinafter referred to as the "system." The commission may appoint such employees, agents, consultants, and special committees as it may deem necessary to properly manage the system.”

⁴ **28 U.S.C. §534** provides, in part, “(a) The Attorney General shall--(1) acquire, collect, classify, and preserve identification, criminal identification, crime, and other records... (c) The Attorney General may appoint officials to perform the functions authorized by this section.”

APPENDIX A

Summary of All Work Performed

Summary of All Work Performed			
Description	Population	No. Tested	Exceptions
911 Call Data*	505,134	1,000	319
Signal Change Forms	1,419	20	2



* Summary of Reviewed NOPD 911 Calls From January 1 to December 31, 2012

** The total number of crimes reported by the city of New Orleans to the LCLE was 20,681. The difference between the 20,681 Part I UCR crimes reported and the 20,092 dispatch system incidents is because some of the incidents had multiple victims, which caused the total reported crime to be higher.

APPENDIX B

Management's Response



Mitchell J. Landrieu
MAYOR

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

*715 South Broad Street
New Orleans, LA 70119*

"to protect and to serve"



Ronal W. Serpas, Ph.D.
SUPERINTENDENT

October 14, 2013

Kevin Kelley
Manager, Investigative Audit Services
Louisiana Legislative Auditor
P.O. Box 94397
Baton Rouge, La 70804-9397

Mr. Kelley,

Thank you for allowing a response to the report on New Orleans crime data, which was drafted by the Office of Louisiana's Legislative Auditor (LLA) at the request of State Senator JP Morrell and the Louisiana Legislature.

Some have alleged that the NOPD intentionally under reports crime. Let me be clear: this is absolutely false. It is vital that the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) accurately track all crime incidents. I am pleased that after five months of extensive review, the Legislative Auditors have confirmed that from top to bottom, the NOPD wants to get it right and there is no scheme to under report crime. That's why since becoming Superintendent of Police, I have put in place a number of reforms to restore the public's trust in the department. In the last three and a half years we have:

- Instituted a 'truthfulness policy' where dishonesty is cause for dismissal,
- Opened up COMSTAT meetings to the public,
- Made all calls-for-service data accessible online,
- Increased in-service training requirements,
- Put a civilian attorney in charge of the Public Integrity Bureau and embedded FBI agents in this bureau responsible for internal investigations of misconduct,
- Modernized the police reporting technology,
- Purchasing body cameras that will now be worn by field officers,
- Instituted a robust police report auditing system where supervisors visit crime scenes and randomly call back crime victims to ensure police reports are accurate.

Furthermore, the department's crime data is routinely reviewed by criminal justice experts from the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE) and the FBI. In 2010, the FBI

and the LCLE performed their own Quality Assurance Audit. In addition, on an on-going basis the NOPD conducts rigorous internal audits of police reports and crime data. Each review has concluded that the NOPD's crime reporting is accurate within a reasonable margin of error.

However, let me be clear, if there are problems, they must be corrected immediately. That is why the NOPD has cooperated completely with the Legislative Auditor. As a follow up to their report, I will also request that the LCLE, along with the FBI, work with the NOPD to further improve crime data quality. As we know, the experts on the classification and scoring of crime are the LCLE and the FBI.

We have already made a lot of progress. In 2012, the NOPD fully transitioned to our new Electronic Police Report system, leaving behind an antiquated 25-year-old mainframe which mostly relied on handwritten police reports that had to be manually inputted. Indeed, a significant number of the issues highlighted by the auditor's report were bugs in this new system. These issues have now been corrected.

Additionally, in 2010 the NOPD initiated a multi-layered auditing system to review police reports and police actions. For example, every 8-hour shift, supervisors randomly go out to crime scenes and make sure 911 calls were properly investigated and reported. We worked closely with the New Orleans Office of Inspector General to design and launch a new robust call back auditing system. The Superintendent's Office and other supervisors have randomly called back nearly 5,000 victims. If the victim allows, we audio record many of these calls and read the police report verbatim back to the victim, check the details, and make sure the police report matches what actually happened and that the final disposition matches policy.

After thousands of these audits the message is clear, the NOPD will not tolerate any false reporting by officers. Here is the point- we constantly demand that officers aggressively investigate incidents fully to find out what actually happened. Being untruthful on a police report is cause for dismissal in this police department. In our conversations with the auditors we directly discussed that from top to bottom, the NOPD wants to get it right and there is no scheme to under report crime.

For nearly five months the auditors searched for such evidence. I would like to make several comments concerning their work.

First, the LLA reviewed a small, non-random number of incidents cherry picked from over 505,000 NOPD calls-for-service. As an example of their selectivity, of the total 16 kidnappings reported to NOPD in 2012, 11 were reviewed by the auditors as a part of their sample.

Second, the result of their review is not a valid statistical analysis. The auditors explain - “our work cannot be used to estimate the error rate for the entire population of incidents.”

Third, we at the NOPD took the LLA’s work and did our own similar analysis, but instead of just taking a small ‘sample of a sample’, we actually went back and reviewed all 28,000 original incidents initially reported by 911 as a UCR Part I crime, but might not have been counted.

What we found would likely be typical of any police department’s crime data. Because of human errors there were some crimes that occurred in 2012, but were not initially reported and at the same time we found evidence of over reporting and some incidents that were accidentally counted twice. All told, we identified about 374 errors, out of 21,014 events, resulting in a 1.78 percent margin of error for New Orleans’ reported 2012 crime scoring data.

From there, the Legislative Auditor’s report almost exclusively focused on asking why some incidents initially identified by 911-dispatch as Part I UCR crimes did not result in a UCR Part I crime being reported to the LCLE.

As we learned, this is the first time the LLA has reviewed a police department’s crime data. Overall, it is an erroneous assumption made by the LLA that information provided by callers to 911 is accurate and should by and large be echoed in later police reports. The record in the 911 dispatch system is not, and according to the FBI’s data reporting rules, cannot serve as official evidence that a UCR Part I crime has occurred.

This federal standard makes a lot of sense. Information first received from someone calling 911 cannot be verified by a dispatcher in a call center. Only a trained police officer on the scene, talking to witnesses, and collecting evidence can really get the facts.

There are many, many examples where information about an incident first recorded by dispatch turns out to be simply untrue. It cuts both ways- dispatch reports a major incident that ends up being a less serious problem, and on the flip side, dispatch reports a minor incident that ends up being more serious.

In fact, after our deep dive review of all 2012 crime data we found 486 incidents originally reported by 911-dispatch as non-UCR Part I, but were changed to Part I UCR following a rigorous investigation by a trained New Orleans police officer on the street.

In conclusion, crime experts have long agreed there are significant complexities and “human error” in the scoring of crimes. In fact, experts agree there is no “perfect” reporting of crime data. In this way, crime data is different from what the Legislative Auditor usually analyzes when they cross-reference checking accounts or review payroll.

Everyday officers across the country respond to thousands of incidents and use their training to figure out what is actually going on in the street. It is an evolving process, sometimes- initial reports from 911 turn out to be inaccurate, victims and witnesses cannot be located, people at the scene give contradictory information, one incident ends up being written up in two different police reports, and over the course of an investigation new facts emerge. At the end of the day, we only have the final police report that cuts through this confusion and tells anyone who wasn't there what actually happened.

This is the nature of police work.

In New Orleans the Legislative Auditor did show some areas where we need to improve. Many of their recommendations are already being implemented. NOPD will:

- 1.) Reinforce the already established prohibition against using the disposition of Necessary Action Taken for any Part I UCR crimes;
- 2.) Review all incidents with a Report to Follow disposition in the dispatch system and ensure that there is a corresponding police report in the Electronic Police Report system;
- 3.) Correct all computer glitches that led to some crimes not being reported;
- 4.) Review all kidnappings to determine if a reportable Part I UCR crime occurred in the act of the kidnapping;
- 5.) Resolve unapproved or missing police reports in the Electronic Police Report system in a timely manner;
- 6.) Better train officers and supervisors in the correct use of Signal 21s;
- 7.) Better train officers and supervisors to ensure that the correct signal is used even when a complainant does not wish to press charges.

We are committed to this work. In the coming months we will work closely with the Legislative Auditor, the FBI, and the LCLE to determine what else the NOPD can do to ensure that the public has confidence in the work we do every day.

Sincerely,



Ronal Serpas
New Orleans Police Department
Superintendent

cc:

Mr. Andrew Kopplin, Chief Administrative Officer/First Deputy Mayor