

Richmond Department of Emergency Communications Citizen Survey 2022

OVERVIEW

The Richmond Department of Emergency Communications (DEC) conducted a survey of adult (aged 18 and older) Richmond residents, July 26-Sept. 30, 2022. It was conducted, in part, to fulfill the requirements of the national Public Safety Communications Accreditation that DEC annually renews from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies Inc. (CALEA). The survey was administered online on the CrowdSignal platform and on paper at community events during that time frame. It covered the overall agency performance, overall competence of agency employees, emergency communications officers' attitudes toward citizens, community concerns, and recommendations and suggestions for improvements. It also included questions in order to determine the best way to reach the community with 911 public education messaging. Demographic questions were added at the end of the survey to ensure that responses were from those who lived, worked or studied in Richmond and that different neighborhoods and racial groups were surveyed. As much as possible, the survey followed accepted standards for conducting accurate survey research.

The survey results will remain confidential and that information, as well as an appeal to providing accurate information, was included in the instructions to respondents. Results will be posted on the DEC website, so that residents can access the survey results. As incentives for completion, respondents at community events were offered a prize of a travel mug or water bottle. All who completed the survey online or at events had the option to be entered into a drawing for a Ring Video Doorbell. The winner, Lauren Jones, was chosen at random from all valid entries and received her prize Nov. 7, 2022.

With adjustments as needed, the survey will be repeated at least once every three years, so that changes in citizen responses can be monitored.

RESULTS

Overall

A total of 296 valid survey respondents completed surveys online and on paper at community events. Respondents who lived in the city of Richmond came from 15 different zip codes.

The largest age group for respondents was the 30-39 category. Of the respondents who selected a racial category, 58% selected "white," while 29% selected "black or African American." Only nine respondents indicated that they were employed with partner agencies of DEC.

Survey results showed that the citizens of Richmond have a positive perception of the Richmond Department of Emergency Communications. Of the total number of 296 valid survey respondents, 51% ranked the overall performance of the department as "excellent" or "good." For employee competence, 61% chose "excellent" or "good." Fifty-nine percent agreed that employees treat all citizens with respect, and 64% agreed that employees are courteous.

Asked whether they had concerns about the services provided by the department, 34% provided responses, and 31% offered suggestions or recommendations for improvements. The 364 responses that

were provided for these two questions primarily addressed slow answering of calls, attitude of call-takers and the need for more staff and higher pay.

The paper survey responses were entered online manually, so that they could be combined with online survey responses. Full results are available on pdf charts attached. Here are some of the significant results:

Types and times of calls:

More than 66% of respondents indicated they called 911 in Richmond on a cellular (mobile) phone, and nearly 60% were in 2014 or later.

Performance ranking:

Question 3 asked: Based on your interactions, how do you rate the overall performance of the Richmond Department of Emergency Communications?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ I have not had any interactions.
- ☐ I don't know.

The highest response to this important question was 32% "good." The second highest percentage was 28% for "excellent." "I have not had any interactions," was selected by 17%, followed by 14% for "fair." Only 8% selected "poor," and the remaining selected "I don't know."

Employee competence

Based on your interactions, how do you rate the competence of employees of the Richmond Department of Emergency Communications?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ I have not had any interactions.
- ☐ I don't know.

The highest response was 32% for "excellent," followed by 30% for good. Nearly 17% reported having no interactions, while 12% selected "fair," and 5% chose "poor."

Employee attitudes:

Responses to questions regarding employees treating citizens with respect and being courteous found positive results. For the question on whether employees treat employees with respect, 32% chose "agree,"

and 27% selected “strongly agree.” For the question on whether employees are courteous, 40% chose “agree,” and 24% selected “strongly agree.”

Demographics:

Respondents were asked to provide their zip code, if they lived in the city of Richmond. Respondents came from these zip codes:

23220 (25) Fan District; 23227 (19) Brook Hill; 23225 (16) Forest Hill area; 23223 (12) Church Hill; 23221 (11) Museum District; 23224 (11) Manchester; 23222 (10) East Highland Park; 23234 (4); 23219 (2) and 23226 (2)

One each: 23238, 23235, 23229, 23230, and 23231

The largest age group for respondents was the 30-39 category with 33% of respondents, followed by 18% in the 18-29 age group, and 16% ages 60-69.

The final question asked respondents which racial group they most closely associated with, and the highest percentages were 58% “White,” 29% “Black or African American,” and 7% “Multiple races.”

Concerns and Suggestions

Do you have any concerns about the services provided by the Richmond Department of Emergency Communications?

Do you have any recommendations or suggestions for improvements to the Richmond Department of Emergency Communications?

Of all comments for concerns and suggestions, a total of 32 were comments and suggestions related to hiring more staff and increasing pay. There were 21 regarding concerns with the answering of 911 calls, which included no answer at all (8), long wait time (6), being put on hold (5), had to call back more than once (2), and answering machine (2). A total of 12 comments related to the attitude of call-takers, which included not listening (3), seeming uninterested (2), rude (2), curt/demanding (2), and slow (1).

Of all comments, 12 were positive, praising the work of the DEC staff.

Of all comments, 9 were related to slow or nonresponse. The DEC has no control over the partner agencies’ response.

Exchanging information

For the question asking respondents how DEC should exchange information with them, 68% chose “social media,” while 34% selected “email.”

Comparison to 2019 Survey

Many fewer respondents completed the 2022 than the 2019 survey: 296 compared to 968. For the future, DEC may need to consider paid advertising and the offering of more or larger prizes to attract more respondents.

While respondents continued to provide positive responses to questions of department performance, employee competence and employee attitudes, they were more likely to choose “agree” rather than “strongly agree,” as in 2019. In addition, there were more responses to questions about concerns and suggestions for improvement. In 2019, 24% responded, while 34% provided responses in 2022. While they continued to offer concerns about the speed of answering 911 calls and the attitude of call-takers, responses were more likely to focus on the need to hire more staff and increase the pay of employees than in 2019. The issue of calls being sent to the wrong emergency communications center, which accounted for 10 comments in 2019, was absent entirely in 2022 comments.

The selection of a method of communication changed from the highest selection for “email” in 2019 to 68% for “social media” in 2022.

The percentage of respondents who identified as “Black or African-American” decreased from 40% in 2019 to 29% in 2022, while the percentage who identified as “white” increased from 48% to 58%. The age group of the most respondents changed from 50-59 in 2019 to 30-39 in 2022.