

From: Seattle Community Surveillance Working Group (CSWG)
To: Seattle City Council
Date: June 4, 2019
Re: Privacy and Civil Liberties Impact Assessment for Computer-Aided Dispatch (Seattle Police Department)

Executive Summary

On April 25, 2019, the CSWG received the Surveillance Impact Report (SIR) on Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD), a surveillance technology used by the Seattle Police Department (SPD) included in Group 2 of the Seattle Surveillance Ordinance technology review process. This document is CSWG's Privacy and Civil Liberties Impact Assessment for this technology as set forth in SMC 14.18.080(B)(1), which we provide for inclusion in the final SIR submitted to the City Council.

This document first provides recommendations in this executive summary, then provides background information, key concerns, and outstanding questions on CAD technology (SPD).

Our assessment of CAD (SPD) focuses on three major issues rendering protections around this technology inadequate:

- (1) No specific policies defining purpose of use.
- (2) Lack of clarity on data retention in CAD system.
- (3) Lack of clarity on internal and third party access to CAD data.

Recommendations

We recommend that SPD adopt clear and enforceable rules that ensure, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) The purpose of use must be clearly defined as emergency operations, and the operation and data collected by the tool must be explicitly restricted to that purpose only.
- (2) Data retention within CAD, to the extent there is any, must be limited to the time needed to effectuate the emergency operations purpose defined.
- (3) Data sharing with third parties, if any, must be limited to those held to the same restrictions.
- (4) Clear policies must govern operation, and all operators should be trained in those policies.

Background on Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) (Versaterm)– Seattle Police Department (SPD)

CAD¹ is a software package, provided by Versaterm,² utilized by the SPD's 9-1-1 Center to assist 9-1-1 Center call takers and dispatchers with receiving requests for police services, collecting information from 9-1-1 callers, and providing dispatchers with real-time patrol unit availability. The technology consists of a set of servers and software deployed on dedicated terminals in the 9-1-1 center, in SPD computers, and as an application on patrol vehicles' mobile data computers and on some officers' smart phones. The CAD system automatically receives the telephone number, and if available, the name and location of the caller from the West VIPER telephone system³ for calls placed to 9-1-1. Non-emergency calls and associated phone numbers are not automatically entered into CAD. If the call is determined to be a request for police services, call takers and dispatchers then manually enter additional information into CAD, such as the nature of the emergency, and create a CAD event to facilitate a police response.

¹ <https://www.versaterm.com/vcad>

² <https://www.versaterm.com/>

³ <https://www.west.com/safety-services/public-safety/call-handling-suite/>

The system automatically routes the information recorded by CAD into SPD's Records Management System (RMS) where additional information, such as police reports and supplementary material, is stored.⁴

Overall, our major concerns focus on the use of CAD and/or collected data for purposes other than those intended, over-retention of data, and data sharing with third parties (e.g., law enforcement agencies).

Key Concerns

- (1) **There is no policy defining the purpose of the technology and limiting its use to that purpose.** SPD appears to have no specific policy defining the purpose of use for CAD and limiting its use to that purpose.
- (2) **It is unclear whether and what data is retained within CAD and SPD's Records Management System (RMS).** While the SIR makes clear that CAD data is automatically transferred to SPD's RMS, it is unclear what data, if any, the CAD system itself retains and for how long. If the CAD system does retain some data (for example, call logs) independent of the RMS, and that data is accessible to the vendor, appropriate data protections should be put in place.
- (3) **It is unclear which internal and third parties have access to SPD's CAD data.** Section 2.5 of the SIR states: "SPD's authorized users of CAD include all sworn personnel, 9-1-1 Center staff, and other civilian staff whose business needs require access to this data." "Other civilian staff" and the "business needs" requiring access to CAD data are not clearly defined, and it would be helpful to ensure access to CAD data (to the extent any is stored in CAD) clearly tracks with personnel who have a defined need to access such data. In addition, if any third parties access that data, those third parties are not delineated, nor are any parameters or restrictions for their access and/or use laid out.

Outstanding Questions

- Does the CAD system itself store data? If so, what data and for how long? Who can access that data?
- Which third parties have access to SPD's CAD data, and for what purposes may they use it?
- Why are public comments from ACLU-WA and CTAB not included in the SIR transmitted to the CSWG?

Depending on the answers to the questions above, the recommendations above may be modified and/or additional recommendations added.

⁴ 2019 Surveillance Impact Report SPD Computer-Aided Dispatch, Section 2.3, page 9.