Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Emergency Call Answering Service

Annual Review

2024

Prepared by the Department of the Environment, Climate & Communications
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1 Introduction

The Emergency Call Answering Service (ECAS) is responsible for answering all 112 and 999 calls, SMS messages (texts) and eCalls, thus providing a vital link between the caller and the Emergency Services. The ECAS seeks to establish the Emergency Service being requested, that is, An Garda Síochána (AGS), Fire Service, Ambulance Service, Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) or, in emergencies involving aircraft, the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA). The ECAS also determines the location of the caller for the purpose of routing the call to the most appropriate control centre for that Emergency Service. The call is then connected to the appropriate Emergency Service or in the case of SMS/Texts, the messages are read to the Emergency Service Operator, who responds via the ECAS Operator, and then takes responsibility for the emergency.

2 Background

2.1 Basis for the Review

Section 58B of the Communications Regulation (Amendment) Act 2007 enables the Minister to enter a contract for the operation of the ECAS.

In 2018, following a public procurement process the contract was awarded to BT Communications Ireland Limited (BTCIL). This contract is for a period of seven years, expiring in November 2025 and includes a contractual obligation on BT Ireland to provide up to 24 months of Continuation Services if requested by the Minister.

The contract provides for an annual review of the performance of the ECAS Operator including:

i. Relevant Performance Levels.

ii. Performance capabilities, including those associated with advances in technology and methods used to provide the service.

iii. Any other matters agreed for review.

This is the sixth annual review of the performance of the ECAS under the current contract.

2.2 ECAS Funding

Emergency communications are free of charge to the caller[1]. The ECAS is funded through a Call Handling Fee ("CHF") which is a fee payable by the telecommunications network operators and the telephone call service provider whenever a call or SMS is made to 999/112. The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) reviews and determines the maximum permitted CHF on an annual basis to ensure the reasonable costs of operating the service, are recoverable within the terms of the contract. Following the consultation process, based on the reasonable cost review ComReg set the CHF at €3.12 for the 12-month period from 12 February 2024 to 11 February 2025.

[1] Regulation 5 of the European Communities (Electronic Networks and Services) (Universal Service and Users' Rights) Regulations 2011

3 Location of Call Handling

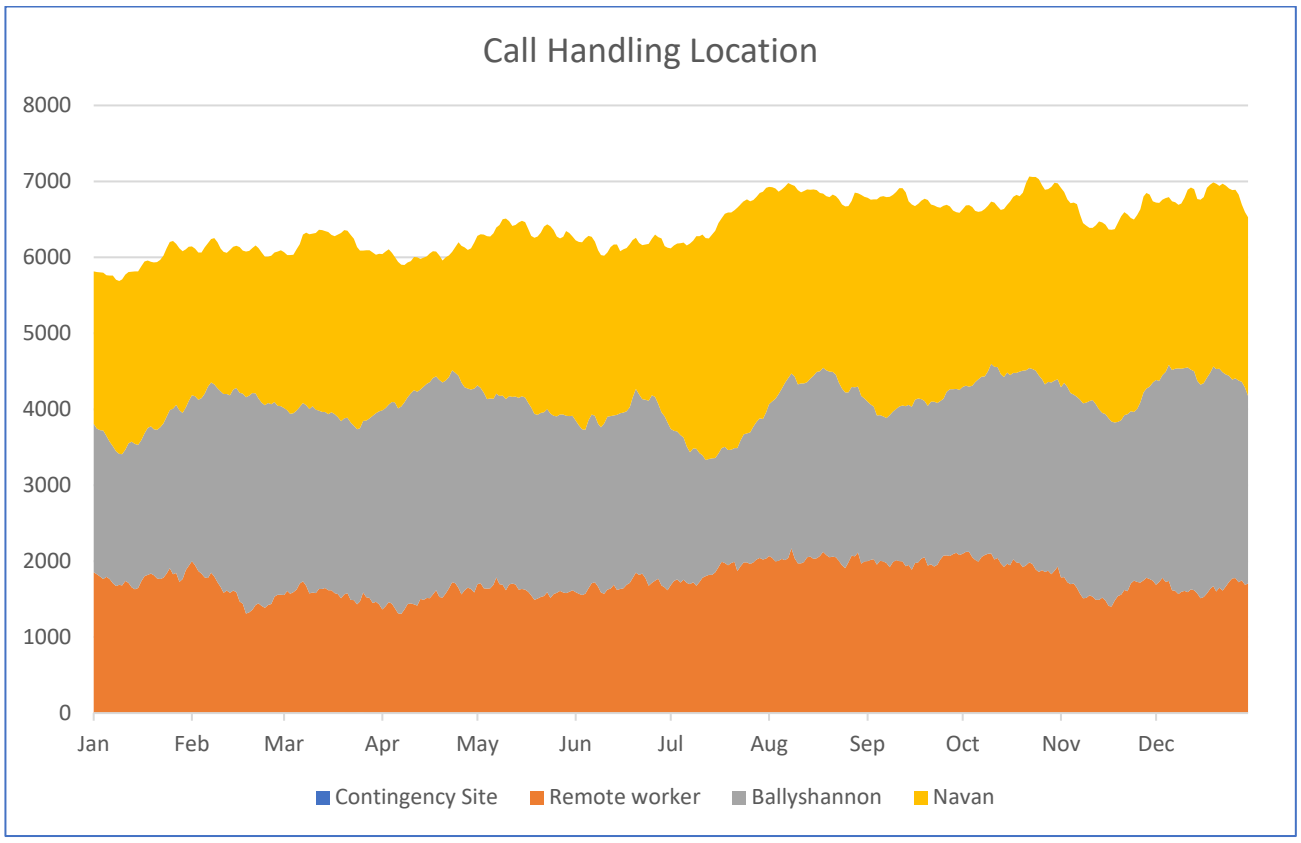
The ECAS uses two active call centres operating as one virtual centre to provide the current ECAS. These centres are located in Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal and Navan, Co. Meath.

The current solution also incorporates a permanent contingency site in Clonshaugh to be used in the event of either Navan or Ballyshannon being unavailable.

In addition, the ECAS platform also supports the provision of a secure remote/home working solution. This solution is a valuable resource in the provision of continuity of service in the event of issues arising that have an impact on the availability of staff due to extreme weather conditions or the unavailability of any one, or all, of the ECAS call centres.

Figure 1 outlines the locations from where calls were handled by the ECAS during 2024.

Figure 1: Call Handling Locations 2024 [Source: BT, 2025]



In January of this year power was lost at the Navan Call Centre due to the effects of Storm Isha. The centre immediately switched to generator power and calls to the ECAS were not affected. This demonstrates the importance of having contingency measures in place.

4 Emergency Communications

4.1 Call Volumes

In 2024 the ECAS received a total of 2,190,786 calls which represented a decrease of 272,843 or approximately 11%, from the previous year.

One factor in particular which can be attributed to the decrease was a surge in automatic false calls in 2023 which originated from Android devices following a software update. In some cases, false calls originated from a handset without the handset owner realising or being aware that their mobile phone was making an emergency call[2]. A “fix” was deployed for the issue which explains the decrease in call volumes in 2024 when compared with 2023.

In comparison with the call volumes for the previous year (2022), 2024 saw an increase of 19,857 calls.

Table 1: Annual Call Volume 2017 – 2024 [Source: BT, 2025]

Year	Volume of Calls
2019*	2,320,970
2020*	2,370,268
2021	2,380,641
2022	2,170,929
2023	2,463,629
2024	2,190,786

*** Figures include billable calls and SMS only**

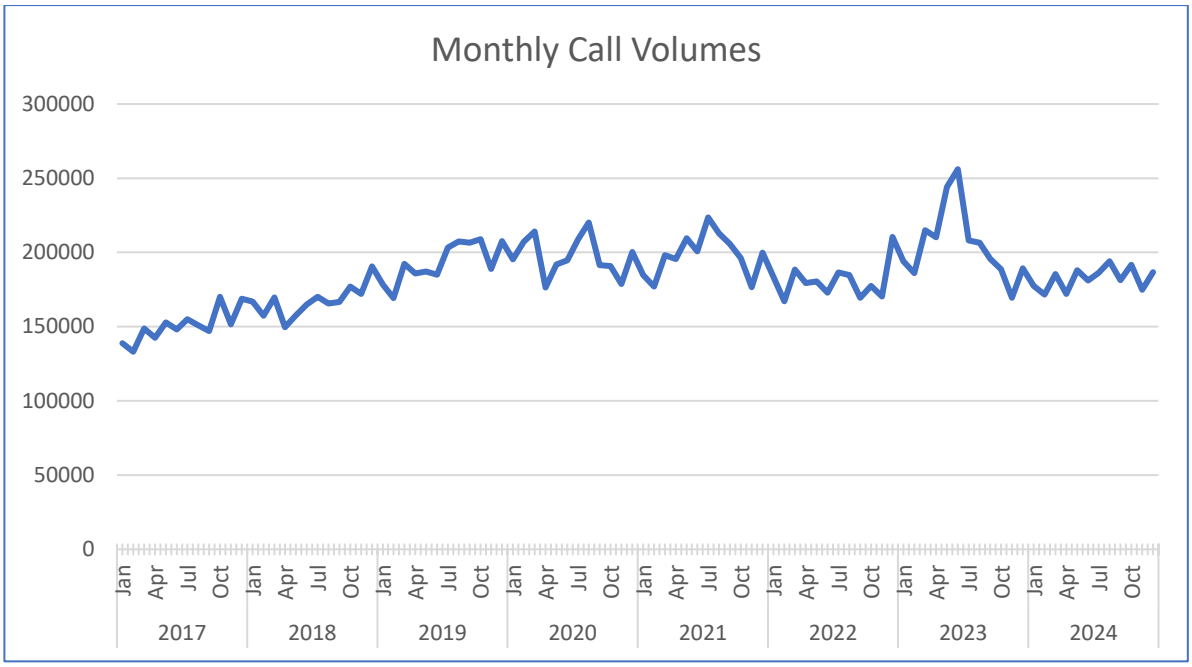
It should be noted that the number of calls connected to the Emergency Services, in 2024, increased by 111,571 which represents an increase of almost 10% on last year’s figure.

From 2017 to 2024 the average monthly call volume was approximately 184,508.

In 2024 the monthly average was 182,566 calls, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

[2] False Calls Originating from Android Devices Acknowledged by Handset Operators - EENA

Figure 2: Monthly Call Volumes 2017-2024 [Source: BT, 2025]



Factors such as atypical weather, flooding, holiday periods and even the number of weekends in a month has the potential to affect call volumes in any given month.

Halloween, 31 October, saw 8,527 calls received by the ECAS. Storm Isha on 21 January saw 7,130 calls made to the ECAS. Storm Lilian, on 23 August, generated 6,500 calls to the ECAS. While the number of calls received during Storm Darragh, on 06 and 07 December, was 6,400 and 8389 respectively. Figure 3 illustrates the variance in daily call volumes in 2024.

Figure 3: Variance in daily call volumes in 2024. [Source: BT, 2025]

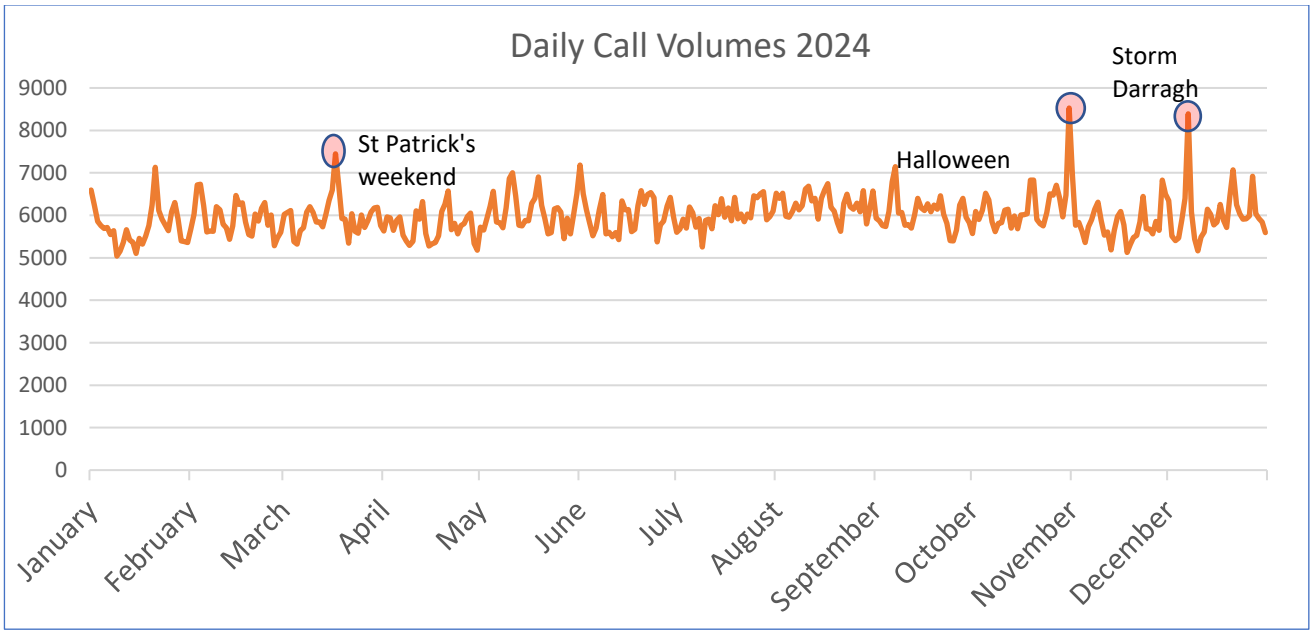
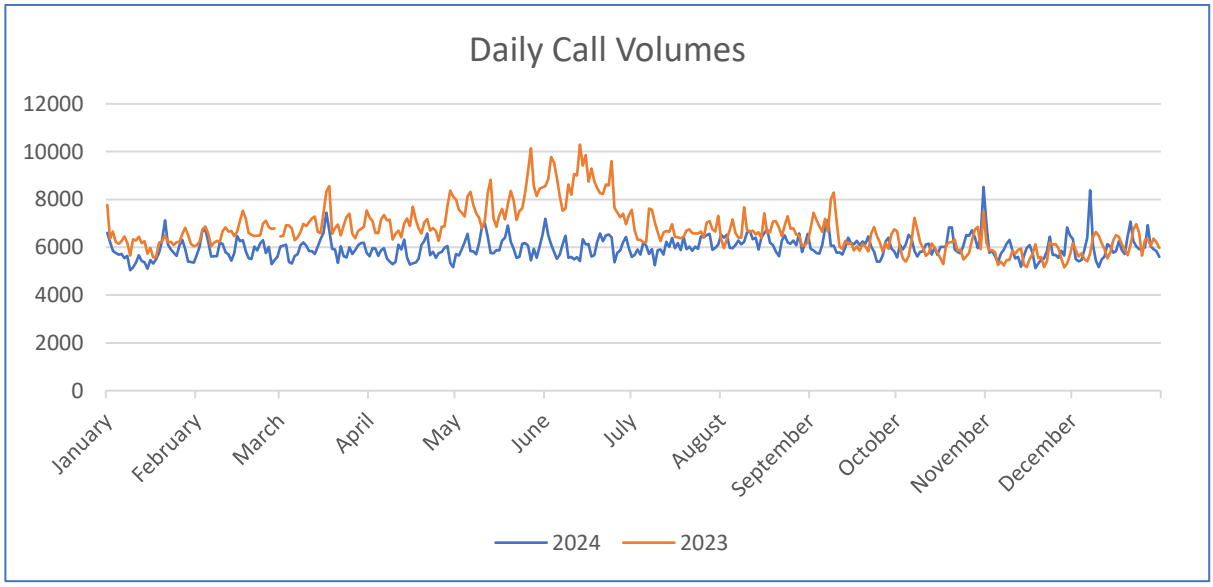


Figure 4 portrays the daily call volumes for 2023 against 2024. The significant difference in call volumes over the May to July period is clearly evident and this peak in calls in 2023 can primarily be attributed to the false calls originating from Android devices as referred to previously.

Figure 4: Daily Call Volumes 2023 vs 2024. [Source: BT, 2025]



4.2 Categories of Calls

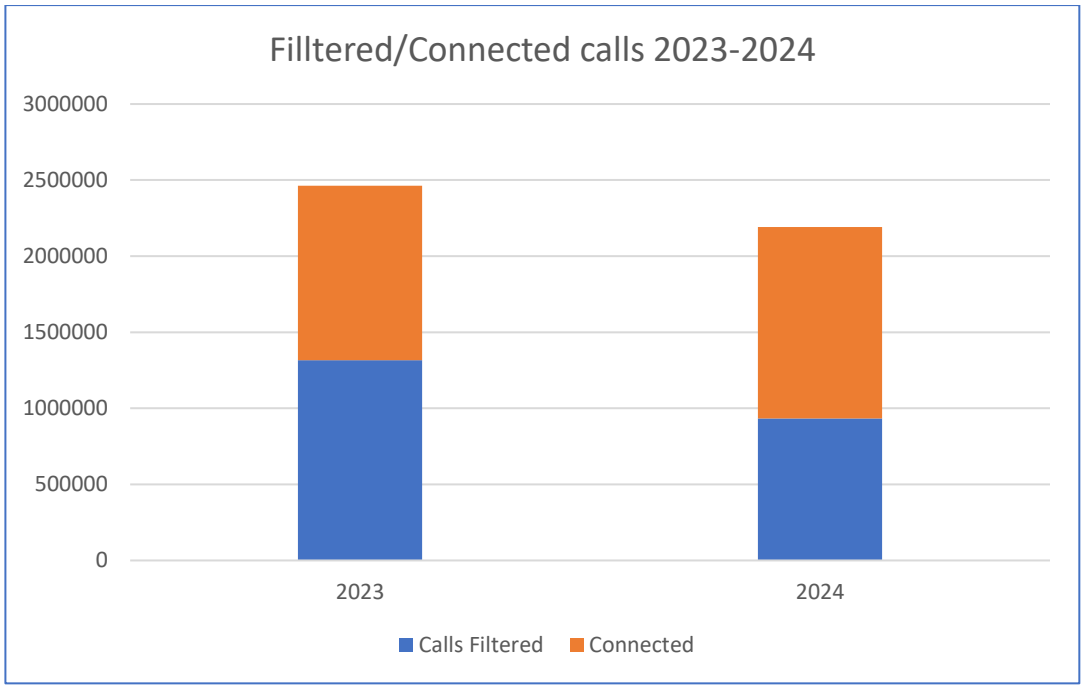
All calls to the ECAS are classified by category and a glossary of call classifications is set out in Appendix 1.

In addition to “Normal” calls, which are calls where an Emergency Service is requested and are connected accordingly, a proportion of calls from other classifications (for example, “Silent Calls”) are also forwarded to the Emergency Services, adhering to strict procedures.

Other, non-emergency calls (e.g. “Misdial”, “Customer Cancels”) are filtered out by the ECAS, ensuring only genuine emergency calls are onward connected to the emergency services.

In 2024 the percentage of calls filtered was 42.6% (56.4% in 2023) with 57.4% of calls connected to the Emergency Services (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Filtered and Connected Calls – 2023 vs 2024. [Source: BT, 2025]



While figures for 2024 show a decrease in overall volume of calls to the ECAS, Table 2 shows an increase in the percentage of 'Normal Calls' received of over 11% based on the total calls from that year.

Table 2: Percentage Call Volume per Classification [Source: BT, 2025]

Call Classification	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Normal Calls	36.7%	34.7%	38.1%	46.9%	43.2%	54.4%
Silent Calls	32.9%	28.6%	27.6%	32.7%	39.9%	33.9%
Noisy Calls	16.6%	19.1%	15.9%	4.8%	1.5%	0.7%
Other	13.8%	17.5%	18.4%	15.5%	15.4%	10.9%

† Percentage totals may be subject to rounding

"Silent Calls" saw a decrease from 2023 of 238,414 calls (24%). However, this is likely due to the significant increase of false calls originating from Android devices in 2023.

In 2024, "Noisy Calls" continued to decrease from 38,142 to 15,901 (58%) in volume from the previous year.

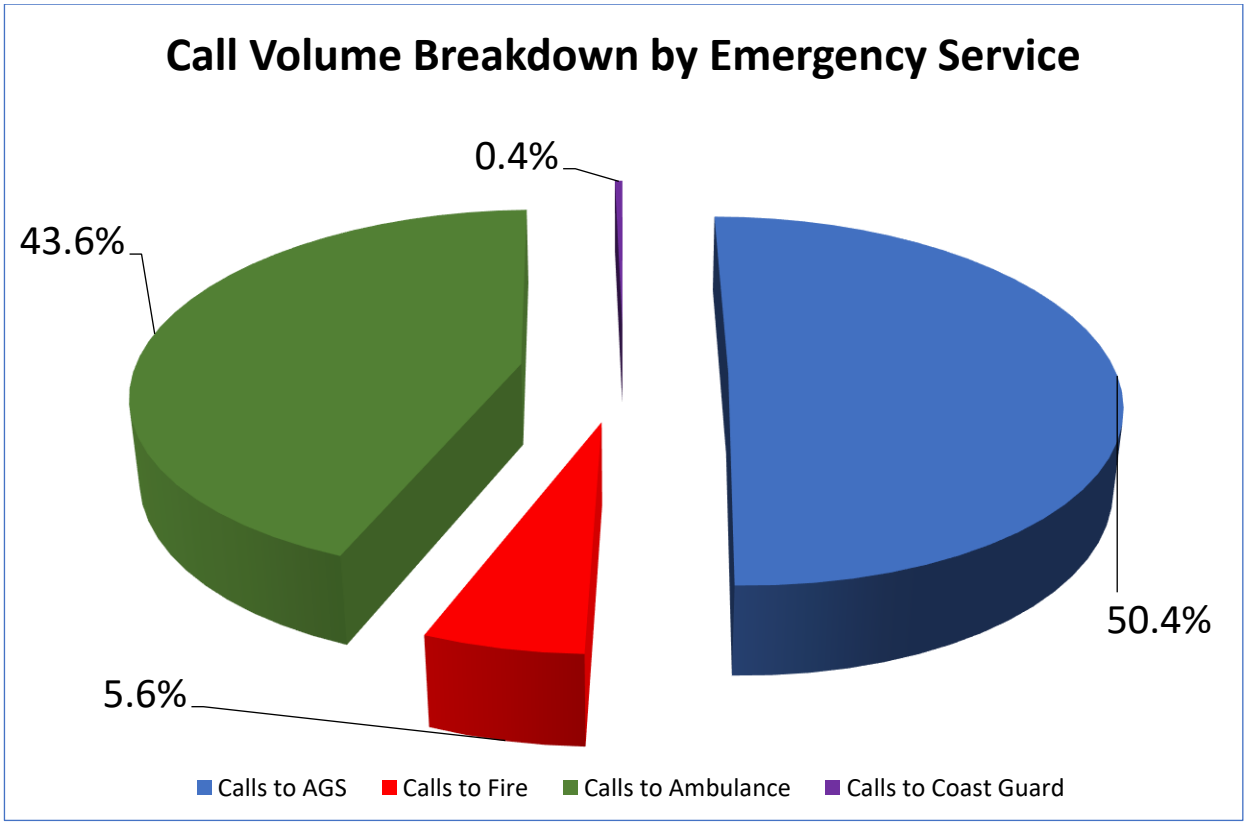
Other call categories (for example "Non-ES Help", "Cleared without speech", "Misdials") saw a decrease in call volumes of 37% in 2024.

Table 3: Call Volumes per Classification* [Source: BT, 2025]

Call Classification	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Normal Calls	852,888	823,871	905,925	1,019,126	1,063,522	1,191,520
Silent Calls	763,730	679,112	656,500	710,671	981,908	743,494
Noisy Calls	385,016	452,340	379,481	103,565	38,142	15,901
Other	321,594	416,291	438,735	337,567	380,057	239,871
Total	**2,323,228**	**2,371,614**	**2,380,641**	**2,170,929**	**2,463,629**	**2,190,786**

In 2024 the majority of calls forwarded to the Emergency Services were connected to An Garda Síochána, at 50.4% of the calls, followed by the Ambulance Service with 43.6% of the calls. Fire Services and Coast Guard made up the remaining 6% of calls received.

Figure 6: Call Volume Breakdown 2024 [Source: BT, 2025]



4.3 eCall

eCall is an emergency call that is triggered either manually, by vehicle occupants, or automatically as soon as an in-vehicle sensor detects an impact from a serious collision. When activated, eCall establishes a voice connection with the ECAS.

All new types of cars and light commercial vehicles approved for manufacture after 31 March 2018, must have the 112-based eCall system installed. The ECAS system has the capability to enable it to receive eCalls and connect them to the Emergency Services.

In 2024 a total of 17,961 eCalls were received. 1,630 of the eCalls received were device initiated (activated automatically). 15,403 of the eCalls received were activated manually. 928 eCalls were received from Third Party Service Providers.

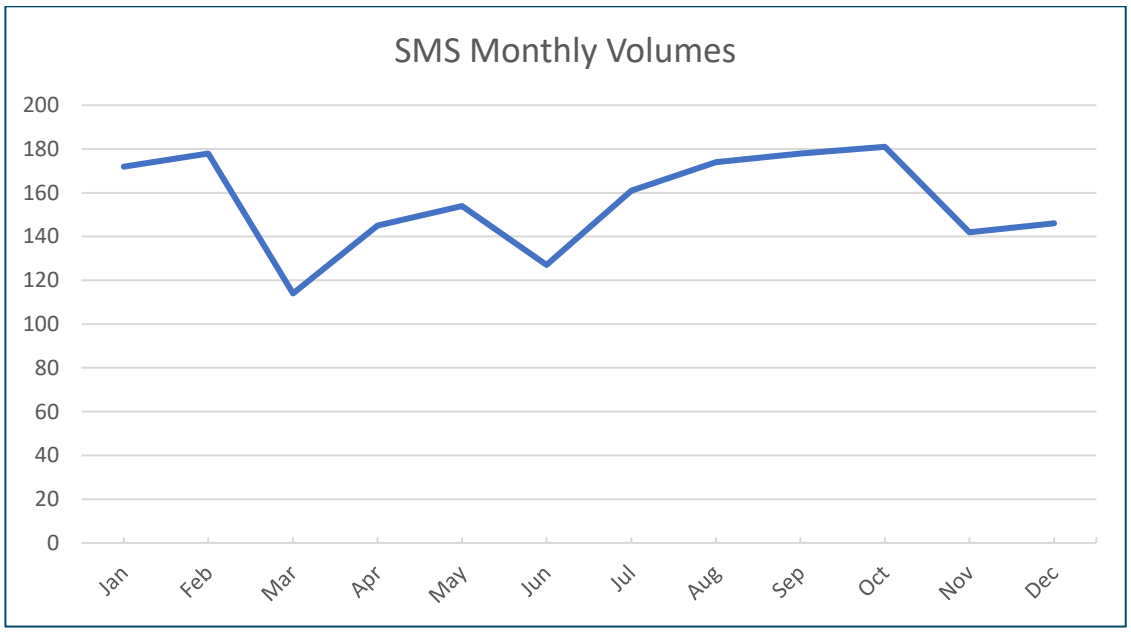
The total number of eCalls received in 2024 increased by 5,911 (49%) on those received in the previous year.

ECAS Operators spent over 434 hours dealing with eCalls in 2024.

4.4 SMS/Text Messages

The ECAS handled 1,872 SMS/Text messages in 2024, which saw a decrease of approximately 8% on the volume received in 2023. More than 970 of the messages received were onward connected to one of the emergency services.

Figure 7: Monthly SMS/Text Volumes 2024 [Source: BT, 2025]



5 Quality of Service

5.1 Overview

The ECAS has handled over 13.7 million calls since the commencement of the current contract. In that time, they have filtered out over 7.5 million calls, freeing up the time and resources of the Emergency Services to deal with genuine emergency calls.

The Minister and BT Ireland have agreed a set of KPIs (Table 4) to measure the performance of the services and system provided by the ECAS Operator. The ECAS submit daily, monthly, and quarterly reports to the DECC and ComReg in line with the terms of the contract.

The Department also carries out Monthly Audits of Emergency Calls, to monitor call handling procedures and quality of service. In 2024 ECAS achieved 99.81% call handling accuracy which is above the 99% threshold.

Table 4: KPIs for 2024

ID	KPI Title	Frequency	Performance Level	2024 average
1	ECAS Availability	Monthly	99.999%	100%
2	Missed Calls	Monthly	Zero missed calls during the measurement period	0
3	Standards Certification	Monthly	Valid / Current Certificate	Y
4	Potential Blocked Emergency Calls	Monthly	All available inbound capacity must not be fully utilised for more than two (2) seconds at any point throughout the Measurement Period.	0
5	Average Emergency Call Abandon Rate *(excl. calls <1s)*	Hourly & Daily	<5% of calls reported as a daily average.	0.44%
6a	Average Speed of Answer *(excludes delays > 10s)*	Hourly & Daily	<1.3s for 98% of calls reported as a daily average.	99.50%
6b	Average Speed of Answer	Hourly & Daily	<1.3 sec for 98 % of calls reported as a daily average.	98.07%
7a	Accessibility Index (Hit Rate) *(excludes delays > 10s)*	15-minute intervals & Daily	95% of calls daily answered within 3 seconds	97.75%
7b	Accessibility Index (Hit Rate)	15-minute intervals & Daily	95% of calls daily answered within 3 seconds	93.17%
8	Connected Call – Average Call Routing Time *(excl. abandoned & unrouted calls)*	Hourly & Daily	<18 seconds for 90% of routed calls reported as daily average.	15.2
9a	Average Call Handling Time – Connected Calls *(excluding delays >10sec)*	Hourly & Daily	<55 seconds reported as a daily average.	53.3
9b	Average Call Handling Time – Calls Connected	Hourly & Daily	<60s reported as a daily average.	67.5
10	Average Call Handling Time – Filtered calls	Hourly & Daily	<20 seconds reported as a daily average.	16.5
11	Transfer Accuracy	Monthly	<0.25% of hand offs routed to wrong Emergency Service	0.07%
12	Call Handling Accuracy	Random sample of 50 calls per ECAS Operator per month.	At least 99% per ECAS Operator Centre	99.81%
13	Caller or Emergency Service complaints against the ECAS.	Monthly	2 per month or 1 for every 200,000 calls	0

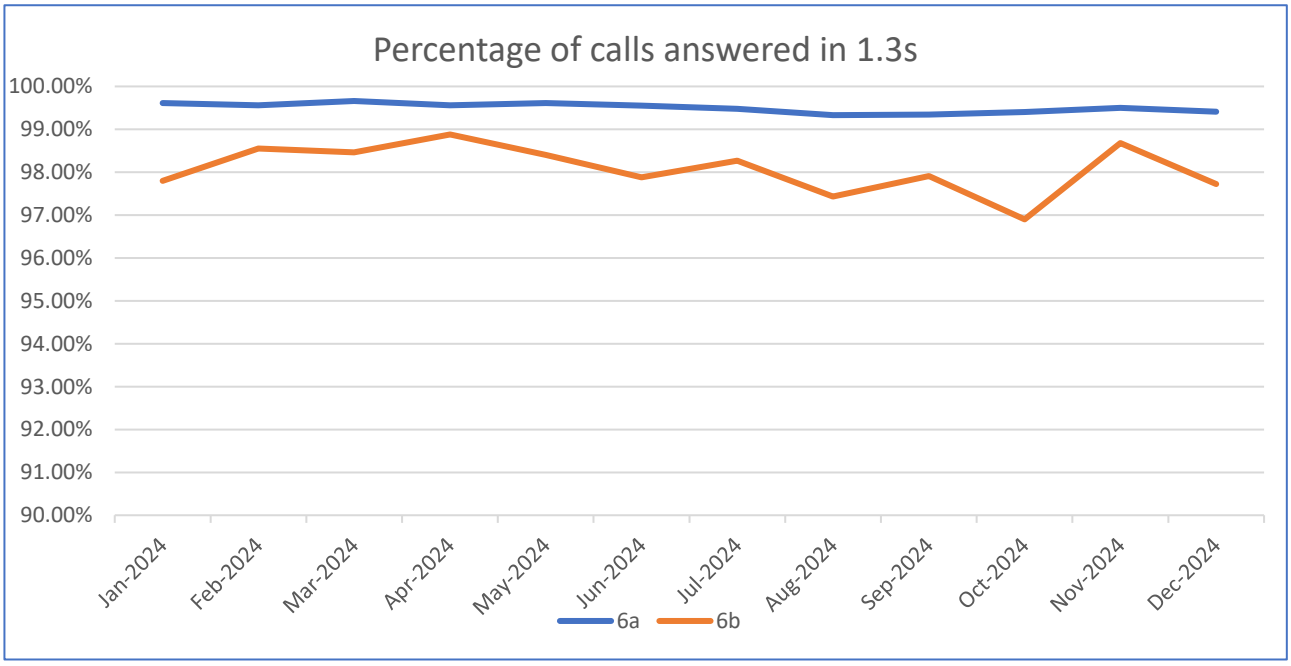
5.2 Percentage of Calls Answered within 1.3 seconds.

The ECAS are required to answer 98% of calls within 1.3 seconds as per KPI 6 in Table 4 above. In June 2023 a change request was approved whereby KPI 6 was amended to provide the true measure of the ECAS performance by essentially removing the impact caused by external factors from the calculation. It is now reported as follows:

- KPI 6a introduced a threshold for Emergency Service answer times as being capped at 10 seconds. Average Emergency Service answer times are calculated for every 15-minute period within a measurement period. Where the ES average answer time for a 15min period exceeds 10 seconds, calls that fail to be answered within 1.3 seconds within that segment are excluded from this calculation.
- KPI 6b continues to calculate the original measurement.

This change was reviewed by the Department in January 2024 and this approach continued throughout 2024. The Department continues to monitor both measurements.

Figure 8: Percentage of calls answered within 1.3 seconds. [Source: BT, 2025]



5.3 Accessibility Index

KPI 7, Accessibility Index (“Hit Rate”), requires that 95% of 15-minute segments in a day meet the criteria where 95% of Emergency Calls are answered within 3 seconds in each segment. However, in conjunction with the changes made to KPI 6, KPI 7 is now reported as follows:

- KPI 7a introduced a threshold for Emergency Service answer times as being capped at 10 seconds. Average Emergency Service answer times are calculated for every 15-minute

period within a measurement period. Where the ES average answer time for a 15min period exceeds 10 seconds, that segment is excluded from this calculation.

- KPI 7b continues to calculate the original measurement.

The average 'Hit Rate' for 2024 was 93.17% which is below the allowable threshold of 95%. When external factors, such as the time taken to connect to the Emergency Services, were considered, the average Hit Rate was 97.75%.

This change was reviewed by the Department in January 2024 and this approach continued throughout 2024. The Department continues to monitor both measurements.

5.4 Call Handling Time

Call handling time performance is monitored by a number of KPI's, which are set out in Table 4 (above). Connected calls take significantly longer to handle on average than other categories of calls due to the time taken to obtain details from the callers and ensuring the correct handover procedures are followed to accurately connect the caller to the correct Emergency Services Control Centre. KPI 9 measures the average length of time taken from when an emergency call is answered by the ECAS Operator until monitoring, by the ECAS Operator, ceases. This KPI has, since 2020, been reported on as follows:

- KPI 9a excludes the time it takes the Emergency Services to answer (ring time) the emergency call, this provides a clearer measurement of ECAS performance. Calls were monitored for an average of 53.3 seconds which is within the performance level of 55 seconds.
- KPI 9b includes the ring time, an increase in the time taken for Emergency Services to answer has resulted in the average of 67.5 seconds, not meeting the performance level of 60 seconds. The Department took actions to raise this with the relevant emergency services.

6 Service Enhancements

6.1 Migration to NG-Platform

BT plc undertook to upgrade the ECAS II platform. The project development was overseen by DECC and ComReg. In June 2024, migration to the NG platform began and was rolled-out to ECAS Operators on a phased basis to ensure integrity and availability of the service. Migration was completed by the end of August with no issues reported and no disruption for users of the service during the migration period.

The NG-platform supports all service requirements as set out in the original statement of requirements. It also includes updates to core components for call processing, workstations, agent monitoring, the management portal and the management information system. The platform also featured upgrades to call recording, call routing and continued home working support.

The NG-Platform meets or exceeds functionality capabilities required for the ECAS.

6.2 Advanced Mobile Location (AML)

Advanced Mobile Location (AML) is a technology on smart phones that works automatically by identifying the smart phone's co-ordinates and sending the details within an SMS when an emergency number (112/999) is called. The availability of AML sent with mobile Emergency Calls that terminate at the ECAS has steadily increased since its formal launch in Ireland in October 2017. When an Emergency Communication is made on a compatible Android or Apple device, AML is activated, and the caller's location details are automatically passed to the relevant Emergency Service.

ECAS received 1,858,115 calls from mobile phones in 2024. AML was available on 61% of these phone calls, and an average of 65% of all SMS messages received.

7 Services for Persons with Disabilities

The Department is committed to enabling access by persons with disabilities to the Emergency Services. The Department along with the ECAS regularly monitors advances in technology as part of a continuous improvement process to develop the 112/999 services, particularly for persons with disabilities.

Over the coming years, new means of communicating with the ECAS will be facilitated to ensure compatibility, interoperability, quality, reliability, and continuity of emergency communications in the European Union. For example, Real Time Text is a requirement to be provided by June 2025 under the European Accessibility Act. This is discussed further in Section 7.2.

7.1 112 SMS/Text

SMS/Text messages are received and answered by the ECAS operator and where necessary the Emergency Service requested is contacted and the ECAS Operator acts as a relay between the texter and the emergency service operator using the text message service.

112 SMS texts are free of charge to the texter. The is no longer a requirement to pre-register for the service.

7.1.1 Limitations of 112 SMS/Text Service

There are, however, some inherent limitations with the use of SMS/Text technology as it is not a real-time service and there is no guarantee of delivery. Therefore, if no reply is received to an SMS/Text within 2 minutes, the ECAS recommends that a texter sends a second 112 SMS/Text. However, if a person is in a position to make a voice call to 112 or 999, then it is advised that the person does so.

Further information is available on the website 112 Website - SMS Service.

7.2 Real Time Text

Real Time Text (RTT) is a requirement of the European Accessibility Act (Directive 2019/882/EU)[3] and must be supported by the existing ECAS and available to all users by June 2025.

RTT is seen as an enhancement of the current text-based service allowing the recipient (the ECAS) to see immediately what the sender is typing character by character. RTT calls from devices include an audio channel at the same time. Compared to traditional text-based services RTT will allow for greater interaction, interpretation, and anticipation between the caller and the Operator. In effect an

[3] Directive - 2019/882 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

RTT communication can be considered as a voice conversation in typed format. It allows for instantaneous text communication with real-time interaction between users and the ECAS.

Ireland is one of the first countries in Europe to deliver RTT on native devices. RTT for 112 went live in December 2024 on the Vodafone network on limited devices.

8 ECAS Certification

The ECAS has secured and maintained the following certifications:

- **ISO9001** - sets out the steps necessary to adopt a quality management system. It is designed to help organisations ensure they meet the needs and expectations of both customers and other interested parties, based on internationally recognised quality management principles set out by the International Standards Organisation (ISO). BTCIL have continued to maintain ISO9001 accreditation throughout 2024.
- **ISO27001** - is the globally recognized standard for an Information Security Management Systems (ISMS). It provides a comprehensive framework for establishing, implementing, maintaining, and continually improving an organization's information security management. This standard helps ECAS manage the security of assets such as employee data, customer information, business continuity plans, IT infrastructure, software applications, databases, and physical records. By adhering to this certification, the ECAS can enhance their resilience to cyber-attacks, ensure data integrity, confidentiality, and availability.

  Throughout the reporting period, the ECAS have continued to maintain the high standards prescribed by this framework. This is mainly due to the rigorous controls in place, strict management of these controls and tight audit schedule which consists of two internal audits and two external audits annually. ECAS transitioned to the latest version of the standard, ISO27001:2022 in late 2024.
- **ISO22301** - is an international standard for Business Continuity Management (BCM), which provides a documented management framework to protect against or reduce the likelihood of disruptive events. The ISO22301 standard permits the ECAS to prepare for, respond to, and recover from such disruptive events when they arise.

  The ECAS has continued to manage and maintain accreditation for ISO22301 throughout 2024 and no ‘Non-Conformities’ or ‘Opportunities for Improvement’ have been raised during audit periods.

9 Governance

The ECAS is managed through a number of forums: the ECAS Emergency Services Forum, the ECAS Liaison Forum and the ECAS Industry Forum. Each group meets quarterly throughout the year.

The **ECAS Emergency Services Forum** acts as the Project Board for the ECAS and is chaired by the Department. It consists of representatives of An Garda Síochána, the National Ambulance Service, the Fire Service, the Irish Coast Guard, the Irish Aviation Authority, the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage and the ECAS. Its role is to act as an advisory board and advise the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications on the management of the Emergency Call Answering Service.

The **ECAS Liaison Forum** consists of officials from the Department and the management team of ECAS. They review operational performance, operational matters arising, and service enhancements.

The **ECAS Industry Forum** is chaired by ComReg and consists of representatives of ComReg, the Department, the ECAS Operator and the Telecoms Industry. This Forum facilitates discussion on telecommunications issues relating to the ECAS.

Appendix 1

Call Classification	Definition	Speech Present?
Normal	A normal call where a person makes a service request, and the call is connected to an Emergency Service.	Yes
Cleared Without Speech	A call where the caller clears the call without making a service request.	No
Silent Calls	A call which remains open without the caller speaking. These calls are triaged according to the Silent Calls procedures.	No
Repeat Silent Calls	'Silent Calls' which present to the ECAS a number of times within a given timeframe and are onward connected to AGS in line with procedures.	No
Noisy Calls	A false call which is generated on a fixed line network, which tend to be weather related. Noise on the line, no communication possible.	No
Abusive	A call from members of the public that are abusive to the ECAS Operator where no request for an Emergency Service is made.	Yes
Non-ES Help	A call where the caller makes a request for a service outside of the four named Emergency Services.	Yes
Misdials	A call where the caller indicates that they have made an error in calling the ECAS.	Yes
Customer Cancels	A call where the customer speaks and cancels the call.	Yes
Abandoned	A call that terminates before it can be presented to the next available ECAS Operator.	No