

911 PLANNING GUIDE

AMBULANCE
FIRE-POLICE
SHERIFF

67064
79019

NCJRS

MAY 2 1980

ACQUISITIONS

Published by Nebraska Telephone Association

POLICY

The telephone companies of Nebraska are interested in providing the public with the fastest and easiest method of calling for help in an emergency. Many companies believe that the 911 emergency system best meets this need. The telephone companies in Nebraska are ready to cooperate and work with the various safety agencies and governmental officials in planning for the establishment of the 911 service.

**This booklet is published by the Nebraska Telephone Association
to provide information about 911.**

What is 911?

911 is a universal emergency telephone number that can be dialed to summon emergency services within a community.

How does 911 work?

1. A citizen, reporting an emergency dials 911.
2. The call is automatically routed through the telephone central office to a communications center.
3. The call is received at the communications center by a dispatch operator who is assigned to incoming calls. This particular procedure can be handled one of three ways, depending on the preference of the communications center director:
 - a. An operator handles all calls routed to him regardless of the degree of emergency.
 - b. A primary operator determines the emergency calls and relays them to a secondary operator who handles the call. The primary operator retains and handles non-emergency calls.
 - c. A primary operator handles the true emergency calls and routes the non-emergency calls to a secondary operator.

4. The emergency operator determines the extent and nature of the problem and obtains information concerning identity and location of the caller.
5. The dispatch operator notifies the appropriate organization of the nature and location of the problem.

This entire process, properly handled, should take a matter of seconds to ensure that the caller gets the help he truly needs.

How does a community get 911?

The implementation of a 911 system in a community is most effective when it has the support and commitment of key public officials in appropriate levels of government. Once this support has been pledged, it's up to the various public safety agencies (police, fire, ambulance, sheriff departments) to agree to participate in the 911 system. Telephone companies officials should be included in much of the organizational planning, since they can offer assistance and advice on service configurations. Once the system is in operation, it is the responsibility of the communications center director or other person in governmental authority to handle the organization of the center. The telephone company

will, of course, handle all maintenance of telephone company provided equipment and lines for the center.

Do any towns have 911?

As of January 1975, there were approximately 60 Nebraska communities with an operating 911 emergency system.

Who pays for the 911 system?

The telephone company usually pays for the equipment additions and rearrangements in the central offices necessary to accommodate the 911 number.

The community that is getting 911 service pays for the trunk lines from the central offices to the communications center, lines from the center to the various jurisdictional agencies and any telephone equipment needed at the communications center, and its operating costs.

There is no charge to the 911 caller for local calls.

What agencies are eligible to participate in the 911 system?

Those organizations that serve the public in emergency situations: fire department, police, sheriff, ambulance service, etc. At the very least, it is recommended that the police and fire department be included in the basic 911 service arrangement. Ideally, ambulance services should be part of the 911 systems also. Additional agencies such as rescue squads, suicide prevention centers, poison control centers, etc. may also be served through the central answering bureau.

Who handles the organization of the communications center?

That's up to the community. After the emergency agencies have agreed to cooperate in the 911 system, the mayor, city manager, public safety director or other persons in authority may appoint an independent agency to handle the organization of the communications center. Or one of the

emergency agencies involved may be assigned the responsibility — just so all agencies agree on the handling of their calls.

Is 911 used for administrative calls to the Agencies as well as emergency calls?

No. The use of 911 should be restricted solely to the handling of emergency calls. This allows a reasonable assurance to the public that access to emergency communications facilities will always be open.

What are some of the advantages of the 911 system?

First, 911 is an easier number to remember than the many seven-digit numbers for the different emergency agencies. Secondly, 911 eliminates the necessity for the citizen to decide on the proper course of action. Rarely does an emergency situation require the help of just one emergency agency. And a 911 operator is trained to know what agencies should be summoned to aid in any emergency situation. Thirdly, a 911 system increases the quality of all emergency services in a community. And finally, as a universal number, the traveler can report an emergency as quickly as the hometown resident.

What are some of the disadvantages that are cited about 911?

It's been argued that the 911 system may increase the amount of time an emergency service takes to respond once a call for service is received. This argument disregards, however, the fact that 911 **decreases** the amount of time between detection of an emergency and reporting by the private citizen. The overall result is almost always a saving of time between detection of an emergency and dispatching of an emergency service.

It's also been argued that a 911 system might be more easily overloaded than the present reporting system. That's very unlikely. Most present systems have one administrative telephone number for each emergency agency that handles both emergency and administrative calls. With a 911 system, a community gains at least two 911 lines devoted specifically to emergency calls. And each emergency agency usually keeps their administrative lines to handle non-emergency calls.

Are there any auxiliary services that enhance the 911 system?

Yes, There are three services that are available in some areas. One is hold and re-ring. This service allows the 911 operator to call back a 911 caller to get further information about an emergency. This is especially helpful when dealing with children or excited callers who forgot to give the location of the emergency or other necessary information. Hold and re-ring also allows a 911 operator to trace bomb threats or false alarms.

Another auxiliary service is forcible disconnect. This allows the 911 operator to disconnect a non-emergency call that is tying up the 911 line.

Dial-tone-first is another service that can be extended to coin telephones. Dial-tone-first allows a caller to dial certain three-digit numbers, such as 911, without first depositing a coin.

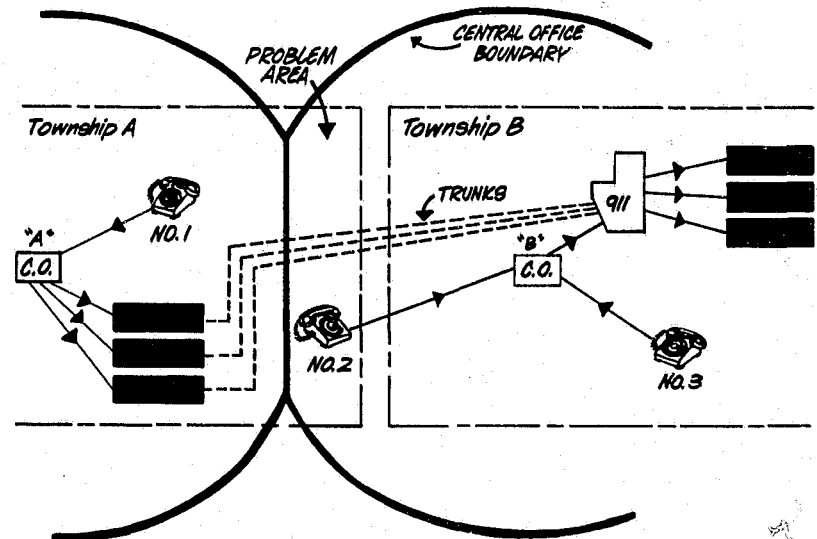
While these services enhance a 911 system, they are by no means necessary to the implementation of the system. Consult your local telephone company for specific information on these auxiliary services, as they might not be universally available.

How are 911 calls handled when they go across Agency jurisdictional boundaries?

The following three examples are representative of problem situations, but there may be many others. In each situation, we are talking about two adjacent communities: township A and township B.

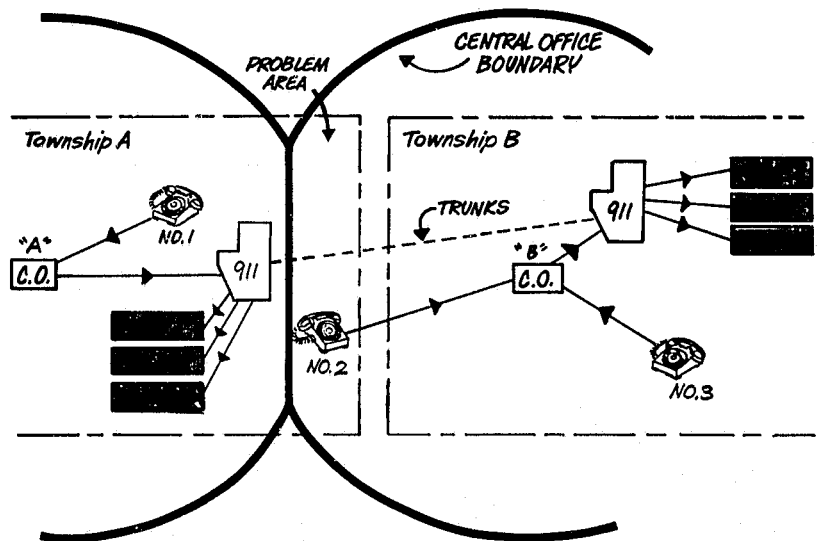
FIRST SITUATION

In the first situation, township B has 911 service and township A does not. All emergency calls within township B go to the 911 communications center, then to the appropriate emergency agencies. In township A, most of the emergency calls go directly to the emergency agencies. However, telephone number two in township A is served by the central office in township B and therefore has 911 service. So all emergency calls from phone two go to the 911 communications center in township B, then on to the appropriate emergency agencies in township A.

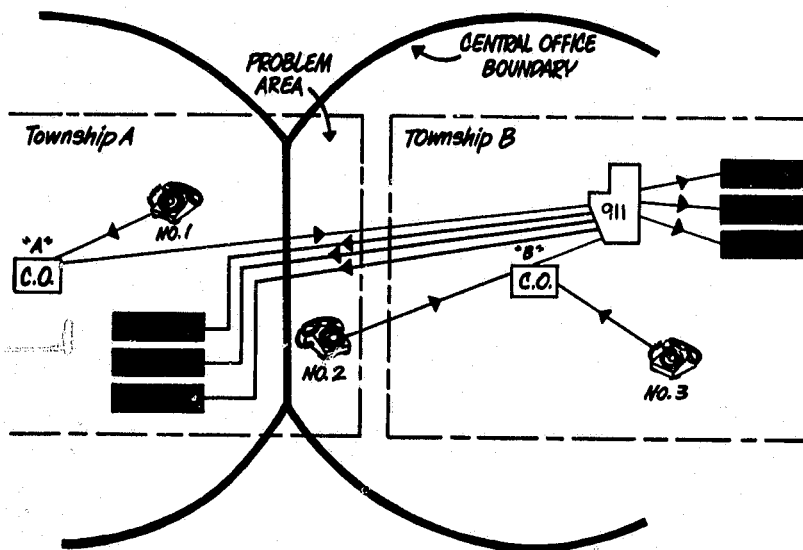


In the second situation, both township A and township B have 911 service, with separate communication centers serving each township. As in the first situation, all emergency calls within township B go to the 911 communications center in that township, then to the appropriate emergency agencies. However, telephone number two in township A is served by the central office in township B, and therefore has its calls routed to the communications center in township B. From there the calls go to the 911 center in township A and on to the appropriate emergency agency in that township.

SECOND SITUATION



THIRD SITUATION



In the third situation, both township A and township B have 911 service, but they are both served by the same communication center in township B. All emergency calls within township B go to the 911 communications center, then to the appropriate emergency agencies in township B. All emergency calls within township A (phones one and two) go to the 911 center in township B, then to the appropriate agencies in township A.

Why has there been a problem with acceptance of 911 in some areas?

According to an independent study made by the Franklin Institute Research Laboratories (FIRL) in March 1970, the major problem with acceptance of the 911 system is that of cooperation between government and public safety agencies. Apparently, many agencies feel they can handle their emergency calls better than a single answering center. The FIRL study concludes:

“Public safety organizations must realize that their primary functions will not be jeopardized by 911, but rather, will eventually benefit because intelligent central dispatch will maximize the efficient use of emergency resources.”

It is vitally important that any community planning 911 service contact their local telephone company.

This information is provided as a public service by your local Telephone Company.