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Department of Communications' Review of the national Triple Zero (000) operator 2014.

Question 1: Community expectations

Access to the 000 system appears to be more than adequate, easy to access, the problem in my view, and I live in a rural area of SA, is once through the level of questioning in an emergency can be quite excruciating, this is in particular in an isolated area and you may be one of a small number of people present trying to give aid to a victim who has been injured or has collapsed. I was involved in relation to a fatal vehicle accident where the ambulance was not in the area, unable to get an answer from the operator as to how long it would take because "it is not policy to advise members of the public" of this. In another instance, a member of the public was performing CPR on a cardiac arrest patient, in the town square, unable to get through on 000 to try and call an ambulance. These are not isolated incidents in our region. someone had to be despatched to the local police station

Question 2: Challenges facing the Triple Zero service

rural areas in times of crisis are often left to use their own resources, I believe that during times of extensive disaster situations, there is a need for local emergency response calls to be diverted to the local area, such as a local council office, to people who have local knowledge and could receive training in the handling of these calls to provide assistance and advice to callers. The greatest difficulty in rural and isolated areas is that 000 operators, who through no fault of theirs, do not have local knowledge, resulting in prolonged, confusing and at times unnecessary delays. It is worth noting that the rural mapping system has failed and adds to the confusion.

Question 3: Other ways of requesting emergency assistance

Again in rural areas the use of UHF radios which are still a big component could be put to good use in communities, most police and rural fire services have them in their operations rooms and this facility could be of enormous assistance during major events if managed properly and the public were to be made aware of its existence.

Question 4: Improving information

1. Name and number of caller 2. exact location of event (and if the location doesn't come up on the operators screen, accept that local response will probably know location by that name) 3. Nature of event e.g. Motor vehicle accident, Fire, medical emergency how many involved, any imminent danger and any precautions required by emergency services on approach to scene. 4. Advise caller to keep phone nearby if possible as operator may need to contact the caller again for further directions or updates.

Question 5: The role of the national Triple Zero operator

It seems that an operator who has had experience previously in emergency response services would be ideal. Former police, military, ambulance or fire people would be ideal. A system that could utilise local people to extract local knowledge in the event of disaster and major incidents could be an advantage. Many communities would have an array of unrivalled knowledge to assist in serious events, not to take over the role of the operator but to provide assistance with local knowledge

Question 6: The role of telecommunications providers

I don't believe I have adequate knowledge to comment in this area

Question 7: The role of innovators

My view is to keep it simple, the apps, trinkets, toys and various items for a community only makes it more complex. 000 is an emergency response provider, phone systems have been the main means of communicating, using apps and other means may lead to another increase in the number of malicious false alarms occurring especially if callers can place calls anonymously. Any system used should incorporate a responsibility on the user to be accountable for the use of such apps.

Question 8: Cooperation and decision-making

Overall the current 000 system generally works well, the difficulty is that it is driven by a pro forma of questions to the caller that can fail to receive the important aspect of the message, this may be due to the inexperience of the operator, the over excitement of the caller because of the emergency, don't make it so technologically driven that the communication between people fails!

Other comments

I should point out that I live in a rural area and my background for some 40 years was in emergency response, predominately in the country areas. I do not propose that we go back to the days of group emergency phones just that sometimes it does us all well to look back to see what worked well, and review that, there just might be something worth

revisiting again to improve such an essential service. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

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