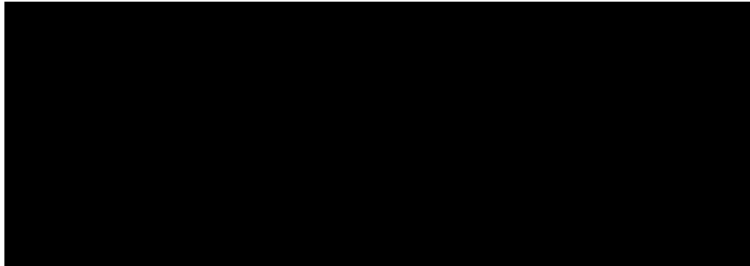




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Information Request – Information about 111 calls and the IVR system

I refer to your official information request dated 6 June 2018 regarding the Information about 111 calls and the IVR system.

The 111 system is a critical system to ensure that New Zealanders can readily access emergency services. The three emergency services work together to ensure that the system is able to adequately respond to the needs of New Zealanders.

The 111 system had been experiencing a significant increase in call volumes, which in turn led to congestion at the first answering point. The Interactive Voice Response System (IVR) was jointly identified as a solution to removing this bottleneck. The benefit of the IVR is that it can handle a significantly higher number of calls than the Initial Call Answering Point (ICAP) when there are unexpected peaks in call volumes.

Other measures have been implemented alongside IVR, such as the Police announcing a new three-digit phone number for members of the public to report non-emergency incidents. This line is for crimes that do not pose any immediate danger to the public such as burglary and vandalism and will reduce the load on the 111 system.

The IVR system was first trialled between 11pm and 5am over New Year's Eve 2016/2017. The IVR handled 270 calls between midnight and 12.15am, which was a far higher volume of calls answered and connected to emergency services than would have been handled in that period of time ordinarily. This trial demonstrated the value of the system and a decision was made to further trial the system for implementation.

A second trial was undertaken over three weeks during October and November 2017, which encompassed Labour weekend and Guy Fawkes.

The three week trial identified improvements that would support the IVR system to operate more effectively that weren't identified during the shorter first trial. Improvements included:

- The way in which shift managers were notified of IVR being active
- Procedure implemented for managing caller hang ups
- Working with Ambulance and Police on the procedure for transferring calls between agencies once they have been answered by an operator

- Change to the order of the options, which places Ambulance as the first option instead of Fire, to help address the medical related 111 calls coming through to Fire by virtue of being 1st option, and
- Change to the IVR message to make it more of an instruction to help prevent callers from pressing the first option they hear.

We are confident these changes ensured the IVR system was operating more effectively during the Auckland storm in terms of people largely being directed to the correct emergency service. As with any system as critical as 111 we continually work with our emergency services partners to review and improve our service to New Zealanders.

You have asked a number of questions. The answers are below:

1. *All correspondence, including emails with attachments, letters, text messages, and summaries of telephone conversations regarding the approach made by Police for Fire and Emergency Communications Centre staff to answer Police phone calls.*

A passing conversation on this topic was had between the National Managers of the Police and Fire Communications Centres, but was not a formal approach. On 15 November 2017, it was mentioned informally at the Comcen Management Tactical Meeting and the meeting agreed it was not a role for Fire and Emergency.

2. *I also request all correspondence, including emails with attachments, letters, text messages, social media messages and summaries of telephone conversations of staff concerns, issues and feedback raised by any staff since January 1, 2017 relating to Interactive Voice Response (IVR).*

Attached at Appendix 1 is all relevant correspondence held by Fire and Emergency.

At the 111 Quarterly meeting between Police, Fire and Emergency and Ambulance on 22 November 2017, agencies requested Spark change the order of options to feature Ambulance first to reduce the occurrence of Fire and Emergency receiving calls due to user error. Below is the relevant extract of the minute

‘Spark to re-record IVR - have wording in front and change position of options.
The group agreed that Ambulance would be first, Fire second and Police third.
New wording as follows:

This is the 111 Emergency Service. If you require Ambulance assistance, Press 2, if you require assistance from Fire Press 3, if you require Police assistance Press 4.

New wording was agreed and a new trial approval by all services that started on 22 December through to 1 February 2018.

3. *I request all correspondence, including emails with attachments, letters, text messages, social media messages and summaries of telephone conversations of concerns and issues raised by any Union and employee organisation relating to Interactive Voice Response (IVR).*

CPR instructions were briefly issued to staff to enable them to read instructions over the phone when they received a call with a patient not breathing. As part of the actions identified from the IVR trial, Fire and Emergency now responds a fire truck immediately when there is a patient not breathing (purple events) and the CPR instructions were withdrawn.

The Southern Communications Centre Manager, received a call from the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union (NZPFU) during the week of 18 December 2017. The NZPFU expressed concern regarding providing Fire and Emergency operators with CPR instructions. The CPR instructions had already been withdrawn by the National Communications Centre manager at the time of the call.

4. *And I request all correspondence, including emails with attachments, letters, text messages, social media messages and summaries of telephone conversations relating to the Good Samaritan App.*

The Good Samaritan App was discussed at the National Comcen Manager Forum on 29 – 31 May. Below is the relevant extract from the minutes:

'Assistant Director of Clinical Operations for St Johns talked about the GoodSAM app coming to the forefront of the medical world. The GoodSAM app alerts people that a patient is in cardiac arrest nearby, allowing them to possibly save a life by providing CPR if they are trained and using an AED (if available) prior to emergency services arriving. The GoodSAM creates a route using gps and doesn't give exact address therefore if Comcen then become aware that the situation has a certain security issue you haven't got the exact address and it automatically cancels the GoodSAM request.'

Attached at Appendix 2 is all relevant correspondence held by Fire and Emergency. The Good Samaritan App is administered by St Johns.

There has also been mention of the GoodSam App in some regional newsletters. The following is an extract from one newsletter:

'GoodSAM (Good Smartphone Activated Medics) App

A new app has been launched by St Johns allowing medically trained people to sign up so they can be alerted and respond to suspected cardiac arrests occurring nearby. The St Johns and Wellington Free CAD chooses GoodSAM responders from up to 1000 meters away from a suspected cardiac arrest by sending an alert to those phones. You may arrive a code purple incident where a GoodSAM responder is already providing CPR, they will step down once other emergency services arrive. The GoodSAM Guidelines have been developed to ensure you understand how to sign up and how to use the app. Please make sure you read the guidelines before signing up as a GoodSAM provider.'

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602. Note also that this response (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Fire and Emergency website.

Yours sincerely



Leigh Deuchars
Director, Office of the Chief Executive

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