

911 Gone Wrong

Unfortunate stories underscoring the importance of Enhanced 911



- ◆ **Phoenix, AZ:** A heart-attack victim suffered severe brain damage because her employer's phone system kept coworkers from calling 911. Sarah suffered a heart attack and collapsed at her Phoenix office. Coworkers tried to call 911 to summon help. However, the phone system blocked 911 service because her employer wanted employees to call an in-house emergency number instead. No warnings about blockage of 911 service were posted on the phones. Emergency help was delayed, and Sarah suffered brain damage because of being deprived of oxygen for an extended time. A lawsuit followed.
- ◆ **Chicago, IL:** A woman died in a fire at a large, multi-story building in downtown Chicago because rescue workers were unable to find her exact location. Her pleas to the dispatcher to send help to the 20th floor were in vain. The search by rescue workers brought them within yards of her location, but when they finally found her, it was too late.
- ◆ **Gaithersburg, MD:** A 39-year-old employee was found dead at his desk 10 hours after calling 911 complaining of chest pains. He was unable to provide an address when he called. Paramedics were sent to address provided by the 911 center's caller ID - the building next to the one where his body was found. Police said that an apparent phone glitch sent medical personnel to the wrong address and, finding nothing amiss, they believed the call was unfounded. According to the police, "The error is in the technology of the company phone system." The gentleman's body was found after emergency services received another call, this time from a worker at the building in which the man's office was located.
- ◆ **San Francisco, CA:** A gunman entered a high rise, killed eight people, and wounded six on three floors before encountering police and killing himself. Due to a shared telephone system, the police dispatchers thought the incident was occurring in the building next door, which significantly delayed their response time. Additionally, many of the initial 911 calls were hang-ups, either because the caller had been shot or was hiding. Some callers were too hysterical or unfamiliar with the building to accurately identify their exact location.
- ◆ **St. Paul, MN:** A student at a college campus was threatening suicide; security was unable to locate the individual based on the phone number. The police had to search the dorms, room by room until they found the student.