

OETS

Update

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If Your PSAP is Getting 9-1-1 Calls from 500 Miles Away, You May Be a Regional PSAP

In spite of all of the efforts to maintain your PSAP as the sole provider of 9-1-1 service to your community, technology may have turned you into a regional PSAP. And on a bigger scale than you would think.

From the beginning we were told to get the location. That was the single most important information. In many cases verifying the address was sufficient. For some the address and municipality was needed. Now you may have to get the address, municipality, county, state and maybe country of your next 9-1-1 caller.

It sounds far-fetched but we have learned of this happening to several PSAPs. Just last month we learned of a company in New Jersey who had a new IP Telephone system installed in all of their offices throughout the county. When an employee in one their Florida offices called 9-1-1 it was answered by a PSAP here in New Jersey.

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609-386-2578 08:24:34 12-02-10
BERAMCO INC
000012          TERRI
                   LANE
BURLINGTON TWP          NJ
BLDG 5
SUITE 100 FLR          BUSN
PILOT # 609-386-9800    ESN 1103
BURLINGTON CO COMM 609
BURLINGTON TWP PD 609 386-1000
INDEPENDENT FC #1      267-8300
ENDEAVOR EMS 609       387-1111
                   LEC BELAT
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The ALI screen showed the main office here in New Jersey with no indication of it being an extension, off premises phone, or anything other than a "typical" 9-1-1 call, just like the problem we have had with PBX calls.

In another call the ALI screen appeared as a VOIP call from within New Jersey but in reality came from Nevada. And in reviewing the calls transferred out of state on the 9-1-1 network we see that many are

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*VOIP VPC CALL*
609-265-0002 10:34:36 11-26-10
D.J. INTERNATIONAL
000150          MOUNT HOLLY BY
                   PASS
LUMBERTON          NJ
+039.973591 -074.804170
UNC:              8          VOIP
PILOT # 609-386-8000    ESN 0176
BURLINGTON CO COMM 609
LUMBERTON TWP PD 609 267-8300
LUMBERTON FC 609      267-8300
LUMBERTON EMS 609     267-8300
                   LEC VIXXI
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going to places other than the tri-state area. It appears that this is becoming more frequent.

How does this happen?

When VOIP first became available it was explained how customers who had *nomadic* service and took their phone on vacation had to update their location when they reconnected their phone. If they did not and made a 9-1-1 call it would route using the home address no matter where the phone now was.

And now new IP based phone systems are installed and it seems that settings for “enhanced 9-1-1” are overlooked. The customer is not aware of it and the technician forgets about it. So that when the 9-1-1 call was made in Las Vegas, it traveled over the internet to the office in New Jersey, and was delivered into the phone system looking like it originated in New Jersey. Which in a sense, it did. The solution is to make the call travel over the internet to NJ then enter the phone network looking like it never left Las Vegas. This way the call “stays in Vegas”.

Suggestions for handling misrouted VOIP calls

Once you have the call what do you do with it? Telling the person to hang up and call again won't work you'll just get the call again. Having them use a wireless phone to call 9-1-1 may not be the best solution unless you stay on the phone while they make the call and verify they made contact with the local PSAP.

- Look at the ALI screen for the “class of service”. If it is VOIP then you can be reasonably sure it is a misrouted call. If the “class of service” is BUSN or RESD don't be surprised. It is probably still a VOIP call, and the records were not updated when the phone number was transferred over.
- Verify the location of the caller, address, municipality, county/parish and state along with the call back number and caller's name.
- Find the number of the caller's local police department. Most primary PSAPs in New Jersey have access to NCIC. There is a listing of all of the law enforcement agencies on there. If you don't know how, ask your TAC Officer or supervisor. Or search the internet if you have it in the PSAP.
- Do not simply transfer the call to the number you just found and hang up before the PSAP answers. Stay on to explain the situation and to verify that you have the correct agency. Don't be surprised if they tell you that “you want Stillwater Boro, we're Stillwater Village” or “we don't do EMS, you want the sheriff's department”. If they offer to take over the call or you can convince them to, then complete the transfer. If not you'll have to transfer again.
- You may choose to keep the caller on the line and use another phone to call the PSAP that you have identified as the one the call should have gone to.
- Once you have verified that you have the correct PSAP relay the information you have. After this has been done you can arrange to transfer the call to the PSAP or remain on both lines and continue to relay information.



- While all of this is going on interrogate the caller as if it was your call. Get details, descriptions, direction of travel, injuries, extent of fire, etc. Keep the person safe and try to calm them. Provide first aid, CPR or childbirth instructions if appropriate. The EMD guidecards do work outside of New Jersey.

The VOIP providers have arranged that a 9-1-1 call that enters their network and does not have the information needed to properly route will go to an “Emergency Support Center”. This service will attempt to determine the location of the caller and connect them to the proper PSAP over a 10-digit line. They will also initiate actions to correct the routing error. It is not intended to have “live” 9-1-1 calls that misrouted transferred to them by the local PSAPs. So we cannot recommend transferring a 9-1-1 call to them for proper routing.

None of these solutions are easy. If you work in a single person PSAP this is going to be a serious case of “multi-tasking”. If you have other people in the PSAP the tasks can be shared by others but there is still the need to coordinate them.

Preparation

Planning, as always, is the key. How are you going to deal with this type of 9-1-1 call? Large PSAPs have options not available in smaller, one person PSAPs. Administrative employees who are there on day-shift Monday to Friday won’t be able to help nights and weekends.

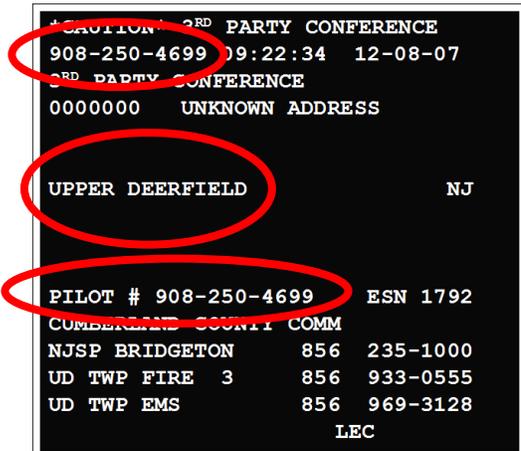
- Consider the tasks that have to be done for this call as well as the normal activity going on in the PSAP. Plan how these tasks can be shared among the staff on duty. If help is limited, or non-existent, consider working with another PSAP to accomplish the tasks.
- Some PSAPs have already developed a practice of screening calls to determine if they are “non emergencies” and referring them to a 10- digit number for reporting purposes. This should require a clear and concise set of guidelines for determining the “non-emergency” nature of the call to function successfully. If, using such a criteria, the incident is not urgent, if the problem is vandalism to property that occurred overnight, barking dog, person feels “sick”, a smoke detector sounding for no apparent reason, etc. it may be acceptable process the call as a “non-emergency”, to advise the caller that they have reached the wrong PSAP and advise them to hang-up and call the “operator” and ask for the local emergency service.
- Your phone system may have restrictions on where you can call. Find out if you can make long distance calls from your PSAP.
- Most PSAPs have a copy of the Law Enforcement telephone numbers booklet for New Jersey and maybe the surrounding states. Putting together a book of all agencies in the county is impractical. Determine how to find these numbers in NCIC or on the internet before you need them. Determine which way works best for your PSAP.
- On top of everything else, you may need translator service to help interrogate the caller.



It's not just a Jersey thing

There is also the possibility of calls in New Jersey going to other states for the same reason. Be prepared when an out of state PSAP calls you with a 9-1-1 call from your jurisdiction. These calls may not come over the 9-1-1 lines but instead over your 7-digit line. If this occurs there will be no ALI information so interrogate the PSAP and the caller thoroughly.

If the VOIP provider's network cannot determine where to send a 9-1-1 call it will default to the "Emergency Support Center". Each VOIP provider is supposed to have one of these established to deal with this type of problem. The ESC will interrogate the caller to determine where the call should go and transfer or relay the call accordingly. This call may come in to you on the 7-digit line as this is the most common practice. Or it may come to you as a "Third Party Conference" over the 9-1-1 lines.

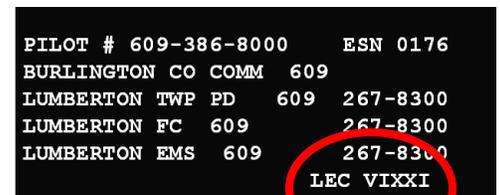


This method of entering the state network was set up to allow an entity outside of New Jersey, (such as Life Alert or OnStar), to send the caller to the proper PSAP based on the municipality. Each municipality has one of these records assigned to its default ESN to that it will route to its primary PSAP. It will "ring" at the 9-1-1 position but because it cannot get the caller's phone number the caller's ALI information will not display. The "PILOT" number is not the callback number. Therefore the only information on the screen that will apply is the municipality. The address, callers phone number name, etc. will not appear. And, the ESC is routing this call based on the municipality that the caller tells them, so don't be surprised if it's wrong.

From the beginning it has been our guide to minimize the number of times a caller has to be transferred between PSAPs and PSDPs. But no one thought that this could happen back in 1990's when E9-1-1 started in New Jersey. The key is going to be the interrogation of the caller. If you ask the right questions and get a good idea of what the situation is, then you can make an intelligent decision on how to best help the caller.

What do I do now?

After the call how do you fix the problem? The VOIP providers have 24/7 contact numbers to resolve these issues. Look at the name of the provider on bottom line of the ALI screen in the "LEC" field. If the name does not look familiar or is not on our list of service providers on the OETS website (http://nj.gov/911/clecs/clec_voip.html) check the NENA website (<http://www.nena.org/nena-company-id>). The site will provide the name and contact information for the providers of wireline, wireless and VOIP services. You can then send the provider all



of the information about the call. Contact the Verizon Customer Care Center (1-800-773-7911) if you cannot identify the provider.

The bottom line is to keep in mind that the safety of life and property is our primary goal. Just because a new technology has complicated our system doesn't mean we can ignore an emergency call for assistance. "Sorry, you've got the wrong number" is never the approach to one of these misrouted 9-1-1 calls. You may not have jurisdiction in the area from which the call originated but you do have a duty to try to assist in any way possible and practical. Just as the technologies are still evolving so are our solutions to the problems associated with them. If you have encountered a problem with a misrouted VOIP 9-1-1 call and found an effective way to assist the caller please share it. E-mail or call OETS, we'll pass the information to others. Together we must all think "outside the box" to best achieve our mission of assisting those requiring emergency assistance.

