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## Abuse of emergency phone number 'can cost lives'

Using the emergency number 112 improperly could cost lives, Police Commissioner John Rizzo and Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici stressed this morning.

Dr Mifsud Bonnici emphasised the importance that 112 was not abused and that it was used solely for emergencies

The service, which has been up and running for 11 years, exists for the reporting of serious traffic accidents, fire and break-ins as well as other emergencies which need an immediate response.

The minister pointed out that as many as 300 calls were sometimes received for one accident.

The number of calls to 112 which went unanswered had gone down from 45 per cent in July – December 2007 to 22 per cent in the same period last year.

He cautioned that if one abused the service, there could be genuine calls that would not get through. People who wanted to report a crime, he said, could call 119, which was also a freephone.

Mr Rizzo said that the number of lines on 112 were recently increased to six and there were six policemen answering calls.

But if a call was not answered it was diverted to the civil protection and eventually to hospital.

He said he understood it was frustrating when someone needed help and could not reach anyone. That was why everyone needed to understand the importance of 112.

Mr Rizzo pointed out that although the system was equipped to know where calls were coming from, prank calls were still received and these could lead to other missed calls. Sometimes, he said, young people in Paceville trailed the telephone boxes calling the number from each. This could cost someone's life, he warned and making prank calls was a crime that could be punished by jail.

The police commissioner said there were plans to introduce 116 for lost children and when people were in a situation where they could not phone, as in cases of domestic violence, they could send an sms to 7977 7119. He said that he also wanted to eventually introduce an online service.



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### Comments

**Eric Gahn (11 minutes ago)**

@Dennis Zammit

I have called 112 a number of times and have never experienced an unreasonable delay. What I find lacking is that at times I do not feel their manners are a bit lacking. They are not rude but still can be improved on to appear more professional.

My other question is, why is the number manned by police officers not trained staff. What happens if someone calls with a medical emergency? Are these people trained to guide the caller through basic first aid until an ambulance arrives?

**Dennis Zammit (23 minutes ago)**

The minister is mentioning statistics regarding missed calls on 112. How about also keeping and publishing statistics on how long it takes a call on 112 to be answered?

Many times, the general public might not call at all when seeing a crime or an accident just because the local 112 system is not that efficient.

This is a fact which no statistics can deny as anyone can prove it.

It is about time that the Police GHQ Control Room and the 112 system are upgraded to a basic EU standard.

**John Falzon (32 minutes ago)**

When discipline is removed from the "equation of life", moral behaviour is unfortunately the first thing to go with it.

Discipline should be given its due importance in society, should start from an early age and should be taught in parallel with any lessons on personal rights.

At the end of the day we reap what we sow. Unfortunately in this life its more true to say that we often reap what others sow !

**t farrugia (46 minutes ago)**

people using 112 for prank calls either do not realise how much harm they are doing or selfish!!!!