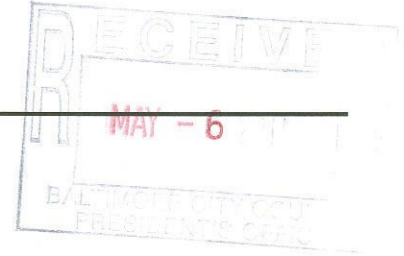


Memorandum

To: The Honorable Bernard "Jack" Young
From: Lisa N Allen – Mayors Office of Information Technology
Date: April 29, 2011
Subject: 11-0272R Response



11-0272R

Investigation Hearing – Cell Phones – Access to 311

A 311 call is originated from a Verizon subscriber within the calling serving area. The dialed 311 number is translated to the designated ten digit number 443-262-2220 which is then routed through the Verizon network to the designated call center. Verizon translates the number based on the location of the caller and the nearest cell phone tower through the central switching office. One of the challenges of accessing 311 for all cities when callers are using cell phones are the location of the caller in reference to the location of the cell phone tower accessed, as well as the provider's ability to ensure the ten digit number is translated through the cell phone provider's process when the customer attempts a call. Although Verizon translates the number in its central office, it is the responsibility of the cell phone providers to translate the number within their switch before it is transported to Verizon's central office. When this process is not updated by the cell phone providers, the customer may receive a fast busy signal or at some points depending on their location the customer may actually reach another jurisdiction's 311 center.

The Mayor's Office of Information Technology communicates with several cell phone companies known to do business within the city limits. These companies include but are not limited to the most popular cell phone providers such as Verizon, Nextel and Sprint, just to name a few, however there are also a few "off brand" companies that act as discount providers such as Boost phones and Pay As You Go that are very difficult to identify since they are in essence renting space on various towers through larger providers. MOIT has also ask customers to contact their providers to ensure they have taken the necessary procedures that will allow them to access 311 via their cell phone, however at this time no formal agreement to provide cell phone access has been documented between the providers and the city to ensure that cell phone providers allow cell phone access consistently within the city limits.

In an effort to ensure customers and visitors can access 311, MOIT publishes and advertises the ten digit number as much as possible. Also given the City of Baltimore provides water service to Baltimore County, a separate ten digit number (410- 3966-5352) that has been printed on the water bills for years is actually forwarded to 311, however customers in Baltimore County cannot access 311 by simply dialing 311 via their cell phone or land line.

Comments

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In addition to working with cell phone providers, MOIT is instituting new technology that will allow customers to use smart phone devices to take a picture of the issue, identify the exact location of the user by GEO coding which would then record a service request in the 311 CRM (Customer Relation Management) system to be distributed to the appropriate agency for action. 311 is also employing social networking sites as additional avenues for customers to contact 311.

Baltimore City's 311 call center remains the flagship of 311 centers across the county and continues to be recognized and practices referenced when other government organizations are developing best practices and innovative ideas with regards to performance tracking and accountability.

Regards,



Lisa N Allen
311 Call Center Director