

Emergency calls over the internet spelt out

ACIF advises on helping VoIP callers access emergency services

Callers using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) or internet telephony will have a better chance in an emergency if their service providers follow a set of procedures spelt out in a new fact sheet released today by the Australian Communications Industry Forum (ACIF).

The procedures are designed to counteract the fact that calls made over the Internet can be difficult to match to a physical location. This may cause callers using the 000 or 106 emergency numbers to be misdirected or delayed.

However, if VoIP service providers take the actions recommended by ACIF, calls on their networks will automatically trigger special responses at the emergency call centres.

Being able to use the phone to get help in an emergency is one of the most important benefits of modern communications, explained ACIF chief executive officer, Anne Hurley. Because peoples lives may be at stake, its absolutely critical that VoIP and Internet telephony service providers follow the steps laid out in the fact sheet. In doing so, they will make emergency calls over the Internet a much safer option for their customers.

Emergency call centres in Australia normally refer to the incoming calling number and the registered address of the phone service when transferring callers to the appropriate emergency service. However the service address of a VoIP caller may not accurately reflect the location of the caller.

Therefore call centres need a trigger to alert them that a call is coming in over the Internet and that they must verbally confirm the physical source of the call.

This trigger can be in the form of certain codes and call identifiers that alert the operator a caller is using a VoIP or Internet telephony service. It is the obligation of service providers to ensure that calls on their network carry those special codes and identifiers.

Service providers also need to advise the Integrated Public Number Database of certain information about their services that can further assist the 000/106 call centres in connecting calls correctly.

The fact sheet, entitled Access to emergency services for users of VoIP and Internet Telephony, can be viewed and downloaded from the ACIF website (www.acif.org.au)

Also on the ACIF website from today is a new Technology and Services Notice Board, designed to update VoIP providers on the latest happenings in their sector worldwide.

The Notice Board will not only contain the latest news on ACIFs VoIP activities, but also developments in Australian and international standards as well as issues relating to VoIP quality of service and interconnection arrangements.

About ACIF

ACIF is a member-funded organisation established in 1997 to facilitate communications self-regulation in the interests of both industry and consumers. ACIF provides a neutral forum in which all participants and end-users in the Australian communications industry can work together to foster an efficient, competitive environment through self-regulatory processes, technical codes and standards.