

Speaker 1:

240 million calls are made to 911 every year, according to the FCC. Around 80% of those calls are coming from cell phone users, which can be harder to locate, and directly impact emergency response times. This morning, I take a closer look at this potentially deadly flaw.

Speaker 2:

Hello, this is 911.

Speaker 1:

In an emergency, every second counts.

Amber Clifford:

What's the address?

Speaker 1:

And calling 911 can save your life, if they can find you.

Amber Clifford:

When somebody calls 911 from a cell phone, they think that we have every single piece of information.

Speaker 1:

Kilgore PD technology specialist Amber Clifford says that's not always the case.

Amber Clifford:

We should know your name, your phone number, exactly where you are, and a lot of times we don't.

Speaker 1:

At least 80% of emergency are made from cell phones, according to the FCC. But when you dial 911 from your cell phone, operators can't get a fixed location, which means finding callers in an emergency can be difficult.

Jodie Fleischer:

In the 911 world, we often hear about human mistakes, where a call taker hears an address incorrectly or sends help to the wrong place. But we found tens of thousands of calls each year with technology mistakes, before a call even gets to the dispatcher, and could cost valuable time in an emergency.

Pam Gordomer:

I feel like people's lives are at stake.

Jodie Fleischer:

Along the water's edge of Roosevelt Island last fall, Pam Gordomer felt her life was in danger.

Pam Gordomer:

It shook me to my core.

Jodie Fleischer:

She was focused on capturing the beauty of the Potomac River.

Pam Gordomer:

It's a very scenic spot and yeah, it's pretty quiet.

Jodie Fleischer:

Which is why she jumped to her feet when her dog Rosie started growling.

Pam Gordomer:

I turn around and the man was about six, seven feet behind me, coming towards me with a sharp stick in his hand and a crazy look on his face.

Jodie Fleischer:

Rosie's barking scared him away. Pam grabbed her cell phone and dialed 911.

Pam Gordomer:

It was a quick conversation with Arlington, and she said, "That's not our jurisdiction transferring you to DC."

Jodie Fleischer:

The News 4 Eye team found those transfers happen roughly 100,000 times a year in our area. Sometimes hundreds of times a day.

Speaker 6:

The problem with call transfers is that they waste time.

Jodie Fleischer:

The National 911 Association says transfers happen across the country, often because of outdated technology cell phone carriers still use to route 911 calls. The closer you are to the edge of a neighboring jurisdiction, the more likely it is your call will go to the wrong 911 center, and have to be transferred.

Speaker 6:

If someone's heart isn't beating, or if they're bleeding, those seconds may mean the difference between life and death. And they sometimes do.

Pam Gordomer:

I would like to know that if I call 911 if I have a problem, that I'm going to be connected to the right person and that I'm going to be safe.