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23 December 2010

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The General Manager
Surf Life Saving Australia
Locked Bag 1010
Rosebery NSW 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

I write as the Chair of the national Triple Zero Awareness Work Group seeking your assistance and support. There seems to be some confusion these days around how to access emergency services and we've become aware that a variety of messages may be being delivered to your members and students, some of which are inaccurate.

The primary number to call for emergency assistance from any phone in Australia is Triple Zero (000) – unless you are hearing or speech impaired, in which case the number is 106.

What about other numbers you may have heard about?

- 112** This number will only work from certain mobile phones, and is not available from fixed lines or payphones. Regardless, the number is routed through to the Triple Zero (000) call centre. There is no advantage to dialling 112 over Triple Zero (000), and publicising the number only serves to confuse the Triple Zero (000) message. Rumours that 112 "goes to the head of the queue", "is the only number that will work on a mobile phone" and "works even when there is no mobile phone coverage because it uses satellites" are completely untrue.
- 106** This number connects to the text-based relay service for people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment. It will not work on fixed line phones.
- 911** This number is often heard on television, as many American shows broadcast in Australia. People often believe that 911 is the right number to call in order to access emergency services. It is extremely important that they realise that this number does not routinely re-route emergency calls to Triple Zero (000).

Why do we call it Triple Zero now, rather than Triple Oh?

Put simply, 'Oh' is a letter and 'Zero' is a number. In today's SMS-savvy world, you will note that the letter 'O' sits on the 6 key on most alpha-numeric keypads. For our younger generation, dialling Triple Oh will result in them actually dialling 666, and they will not access emergency services through that number. 666 does not direct to Triple Zero (000) and there are no plans for this to happen in the future.

What can you do?

As a major educator in our community, we ask that you change any material, both written and verbal, that pertains to the access to emergency services, to align with the above information. We encourage you to visit us at www.triplezero.gov.au and apply to download the Triple Zero (000) logo for use on your website and written material.

If you would like any further information, or would like to help us promote the Triple Zero (000) message, please contact us on TripleZero@fire.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Assistant Commissioner Mark Whybro AFSM
Chair of the National Triple Zero Awareness Work Group
Director Specialised Operations, NSW Fire Brigades



An initiative of the Australian Government, State and Territory Emergency Services