

ITEM	12
MANAGER'S REPORT NO.	87
COUNCIL MEETING 1978 12	11

RE: 911 EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBER

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT this report be received for information purposes.

REPORT

A. Introduction

During the inquiry portion of the meeting of Council on 1978 December 04, mention was made of the fact that the 911 Emergency telephone number was the subject of a presentation at a recent meeting of the Lower Mainland Officers' Association, and that Burnaby is one of several municipalities which is now studying this concept. Following is the report that Council requested on this occasion.

B. Background

The 911 telephone number has been designated in many cities in North America as the emergency number to dial for contact with a central emergency answering service. This provides any person having access to a telephone to simply dial three digits to obtain help rapidly when it is needed.

The B. C. Telephone Company has prepared an excellent handbook which is enclosed in the envelopes containing Council's Agendas. This handbook is normally distributed to municipal officials and others who are interested in obtaining a basic knowledge and understanding of the 911 emergency number system.

C. 911 In The Lower Mainland

The 911 number was implemented in Vancouver in March, 1976. The results have been most favourable, and in the opinion of those who operate the equipment, it is clearly superior to other methods of answering calls for police, fire and ambulance services.

Richmond has made a commitment to have 911 implemented within its jurisdiction during the summer of 1979. This municipality was able to adopt 911 without major difficulty because its telephone exchanges are fairly well contained within its own political boundaries, i.e., its exchanges, for the most part, are not shared with adjacent municipalities.

Virtually all of the other municipalities in the Lower Mainland have expressed some interest in 911. In fact, many are now actively involved with studies that are intended to determine if 911 is economically and operationally feasible from their respective points of view.

Although the Provincial Government has not been involved with 911 in any significant way to date, the G.V.R.D. within the past few weeks provided very strong support for 911 in the form of an endorsement from its Chairman, Mr. Jack Campbell. Although the role of the G.V.R.D. is not yet clearly defined with respect to 911, there are clear signs that it is willing to serve as a coordinating agency for its members, and in other ways as well.

It will be recalled that a resolution promoting establishment of the 911 number on a provincial basis was adopted by delegates to the U.B.C.M. convention in September 1978.

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D. 911 In Burnaby

A Staff Task Force has been formed to thoroughly evaluate all aspects of the 911 number, and to ascertain when and how it should be implemented in Burnaby (the question as to whether it is to be implemented is somewhat academic because 911 is rapidly gaining in popularity, and is expected to become, over a period of time, the conventional means of answering emergency calls in most if not all communities in Canada and the United States).

168

It became immediately apparent to the Task Force, when it first met on 1978 September 15, that telephone exchanges in Burnaby do not conform with political boundaries. Our municipality, for example, shares two exchanges with Vancouver and one each with Coquitlam and New Westminster. As a result, two meetings have been held in recent weeks with representatives from surrounding municipalities to determine if overall objectives cannot be best obtained by means of participation with one another on a mutually benefitting basis.

Although some results have been achieved, more work must be done by the Task Force before specific recommendations can be referred to Council for consideration.

It should be pointed out that Burnaby considered 911 over two years ago, but chose to forego any further involvement of a major nature due to a number of factors, not the least of which was a desire to wait until Vancouver's system, which was just then becoming operational, was working well and to everyone's complete satisfaction. This assessment can now be properly made, and we anticipate that we will be able to conclude our newly initiated study of 911 without further delay.

E. Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with general information on the 911 emergency answering number, and more specifically, to advise on progress to date with respect to staff's study of this matter for application in Burnaby. The study is advancing, and Council will be kept fully informed as future developments take place.