

Telecommunications Numbering Advisory Committee

Adoption of “112” as an Additional Emergency Code in Hong Kong (III)

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to report the status of implementation of “112” in mobile networks and discuss the Police’s requirement of programming “112” in fixed networks as hidden emergency code.

Introduction

2. At the 24th Telecommunications Numbering Advisory Committee (NAC) meeting held on 6 November 1997, Members supported to adopt and implement Option 2 i.e. “112” will be the additional emergency code together with the existing “999” for use in all Public Mobile Radiotelephone Services and Personal Communications Services networks in Hong Kong from 1 January 1998 while “999” will remain to be the only emergency code used in the fixed networks.

Police’s Considerations

3. Consequent to the above NAC’s consideration, the Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) had consulted the Police again on the adoption and implementation of Option 2 and the way in publicizing the event. The Police fully supported the implementation of Option 2 but considered that instead of having a wide publicity, individual mobile operator could inform its customers directly about the benefits and usage of “112”. In addition, the Police considered it a bonus if the fixed network operators would also program the “112” in their networks in a hidden manner so that any mis-dialled “112” calls from fixed networks would also be routed to the Police’s emergency centres.

Implementation of “112” in Mobile Networks

4. After OFTA discussed the implementation and the publicity issues with all fixed and mobile operators and the Police on 27 November 1997, all mobile operators has already implemented the “112” code as the additional emergency code in their mobile networks with effect from 1 January 1998. They would have informed their customers directly about the benefits and usage of “112” through their bill insert, pamphlets and publicity materials.

Programming of “112” in Fixed Networks

5. As regards the Police's consideration to program "112" in fixed networks as hidden emergency code, OFTA has solicited views and comments from the four fixed network operators. Their views and comments are summarized as follows.

Hong Kong Telephone Co. Ltd. (HKTC) :

- It will take at least one month for HKTC to implement "112" into the network.
- Many customer premises equipment (CPE) cannot support "112" and needs to be re-programmed. Lead time and cost are involved.
- People may be curious to test out "112" on fixed network and will affect the normal operation of the Police's emergency centres.
- It will be necessary to re-program 11,000 public or private payphone systems so that "112" and "999" are both treated as free access code.
- HKTC strongly objects to implement "112" as a virtual emergency code in fixed networks as it will not only confuse the public, but also involve significant costs in both fixed networks and CPE re-arrangement. At present, many CPE such as PABX, Keyline systems and public payphones do not support the "112" code and these equipment cannot route the "112" call to the Police emergency centres. The crucial question is who should bear the necessary costs for modification.

New World Telephone (NWT) :

- NWT does not support to program "112" as a hidden code in fixed networks. It would confuse most of the fixed network customers if a "112" code suddenly becomes the emergency code while the customers are not properly informed. It would also be difficult for fixed network operators to explain to their customers when they find a mis-dialled 112 call is routed to the 999 centres. Although Police may not take any action on any mis-dialled call, customer may think it is the operator's fault for not disclosing the programming of routing "112" call to the 999 centres to them beforehand.
- NWT is technically feasible to program "112" as an

additional code for emergency call in the network.

New T&T

- “112” is adopted in mobile network because it can provide extra benefits for GSM mobile networks. However, there is no strong evidence that “112” should be adopted as an additional emergency service access code in Hong Kong. Excessive emergency access codes will cause confusion to the public.
- Programming “112” as hidden code in fixed networks without proper publicity will create confusion to users and difficulties to network operators.

Hutchison
Communications :

It is not advisable to use “112” in a hidden manner. When a customer dials “112” and gets a NU tone, it would seem acceptable for fixed network operators to explain to their customers that “112” is exclusively for mobile. If “112” is working in a hidden manner, it is definitely more confusing for fixed network operator to explain to their customers that dialling “112” is not a proper way to access emergency service.

TA’s Considerations

6. In light of the comments and views of fixed network operators, the TA has the following considerations -

- Although it would be feasible for fixed network operators to program “112” as additional emergency code in their networks, it will be timely for CPE and payphone systems to be re-programmed with this code;
- The TA shares the concern with fixed network operators about the confusions that may be created to fixed network customers as a result of programming “112” as hidden emergency code in fixed networks. It may not be the appropriate implementation approach.
- Since “112” has just been implemented in mobile networks, there is a need for OFTA to keep track and review the issue to see whether there is any need for further improvement such as the need for wider publicity because of public confusion or need for programming of “112” in fixed network etc. It is suggested that OFTA will conduct a progress review and collect the feedback from operators and the Police in April 1998.
- OFTA will then report the findings to the NAC for further considerations. The issue of whether “112” should be programmed as emergency code in

fixed networks either in a formal or hidden manner will then be discussed and consulted in NAC later on.

Advice Sought

7. Members are invited to discuss the need and implications of programming “112” as hidden emergency code in fixed networks.

Office of the Telecommunications Authority
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