A close-up photograph of a professional microphone and headset, with a yellow diagonal overlay on the left side.

# Emergency Silent, Hang-Up and Abandoned 112 Calls



Best practices on how to effectively handle silent, hang-up and abandoned 112 calls.

# Emergency Silent, Hang-Up and Abandoned 112 Calls

Version 2.0



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Dealing with silent, hang-up, and abandoned 112 calls can be a real challenge for emergency services. In many cases, such calls may be genuine emergency calls made by people with hearing or speaking impairments, by people who lost consciousness after they initiated the call, or by people who cannot speak because they are involved in dangerous situations like robberies, kidnappings etc.**

Furthermore, hang-up calls may occur in cases of network unavailability or in case of failure or damage of the device initiating. In most of the above situations, calling back is not an option for the emergency services, because the caller may not be able or willing to respond or because calling back is impossible.

Facing the problem of silent, hang-up, and abandoned 112 calls requires the extensive deployment of technological solutions such as caller location, storing phone/IMEI numbers of callers, the possibility to communicate with the emergency services via SMS or total conversation solutions and/or other means of communication (e.g. instant messaging, email, video).

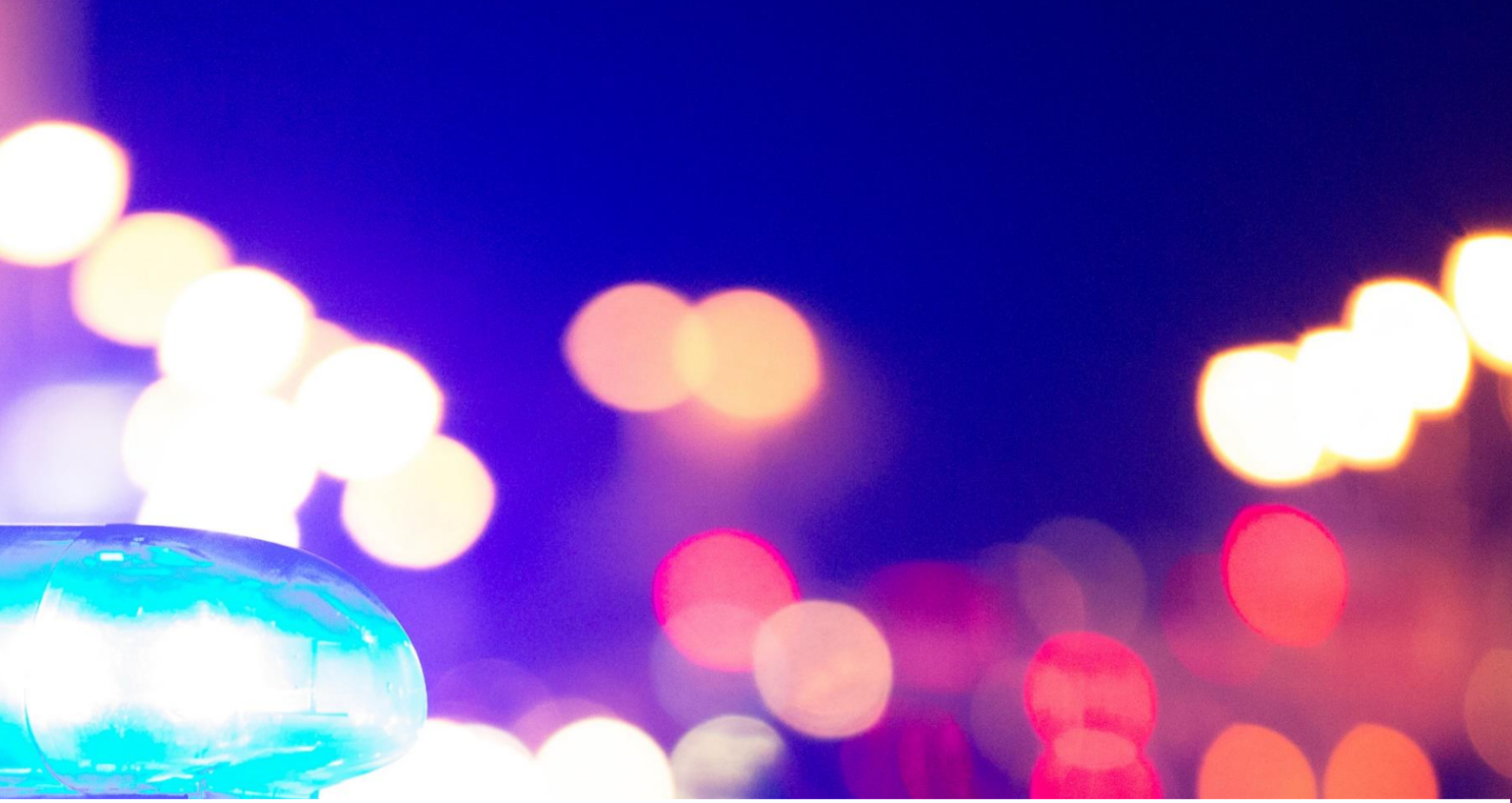


**This document focuses on the problems posed by silent, hang-up and abandoned 112 calls by offering a set of recommendations for handling these challenging calls.**



**Are these real emergencies?**

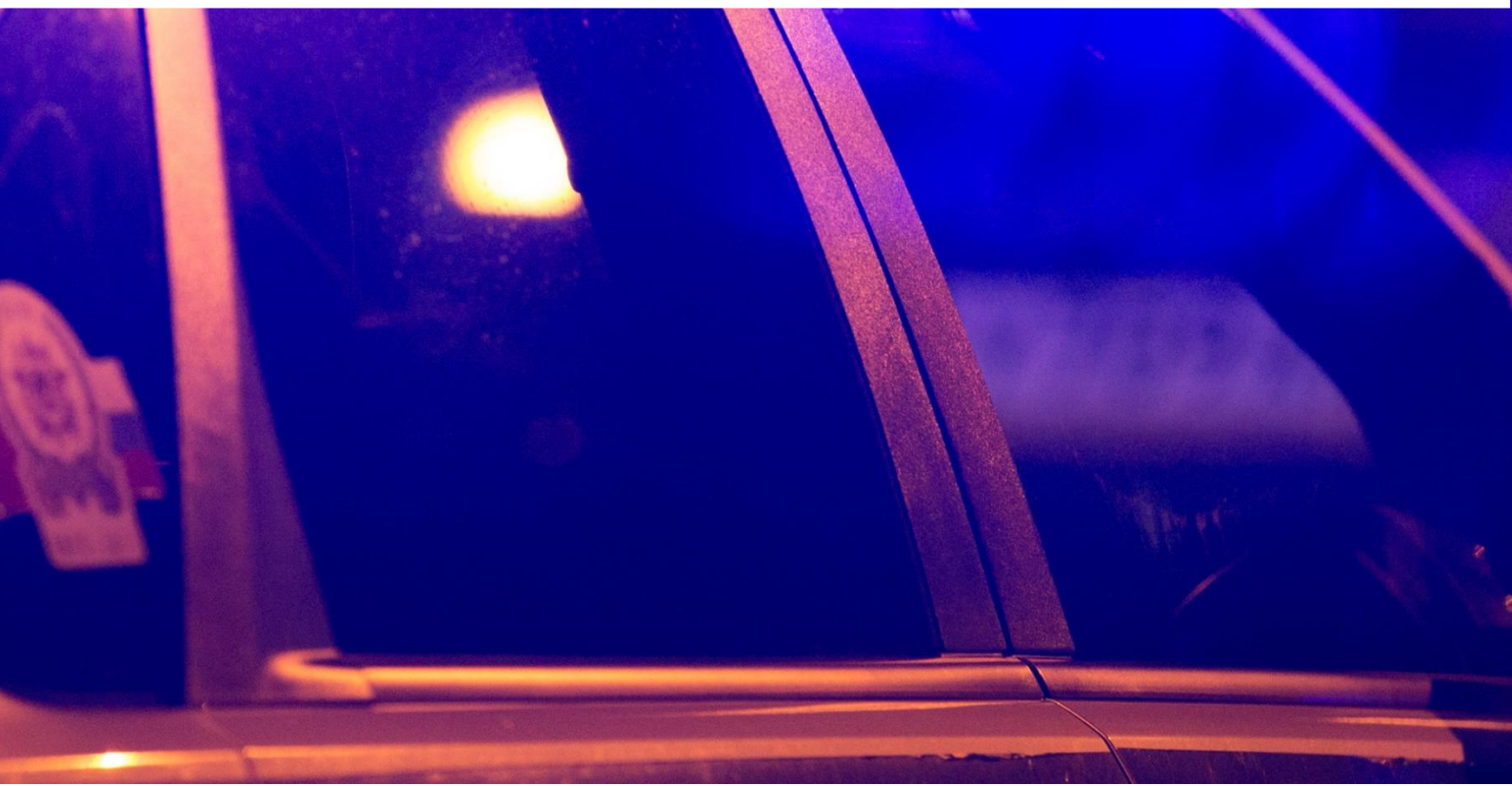
**Call-takers are well trained to handle 112 emergency calls. However, if calls to 112 are silent, or if the caller hangs up or abandons the call, how can these professionals know if the call is an emergency?**



## 1 | INTRODUCTION

**All emergency services are affected by silent, hang-up and abandoned 112 calls. It is very difficult for call-takers to decide whether these types of calls are real emergency calls or not. The number of these calls is enormous, and the vast majority are not genuine emergency calls.**

The objective of this document is to describe possible cases where silent, hang-up and abandoned 112 calls correspond to real emergencies, assemble all information about this issue and outline some of the best practices from the authorities' perspective. This document is linked to the "*False Emergency Calls*" EENA document, where cases of abuse and misuse of 112 are detailed.



## 2 | DEFINITIONS

### 2.1 CLASSIFICATION OF THE CALLS

For a common understanding of the problem, calls can be categorised as follows:

#### 2.1.1 SILENT 112 CALLS

Someone has dialled 112 and the call has successfully been answered by a 112 operator. No voice communication is heard. In some cases, background sounds can be heard. In most cases, a silent call is not linked with a real emergency, but there are some situations in which the caller might be in an emergency situation. The intention of this section of the document is to establish all the possible situations that may occur:

| Silent Emergency Calls                   |  |
|--|--|
| Type of call                             | Comments / examples  |
| Hearing/speaking-impaired person         | The person can be in a real emergency situation but is not able to speak and/or hear that the call has been answered.                                    |
| Situation does not allow caller to speak | The caller is in an emergency situation and is able to establish a 112 call, but the situation does not allow the person to speak (e.g. kidnapping).     |
| Person unconscious or unable to speak    | The caller has been able to dial 112 but after establishing the call, the person is no longer able to communicate (e.g. the caller loses consciousness). |

## 2.1.2 HANG-UP 112 CALLS

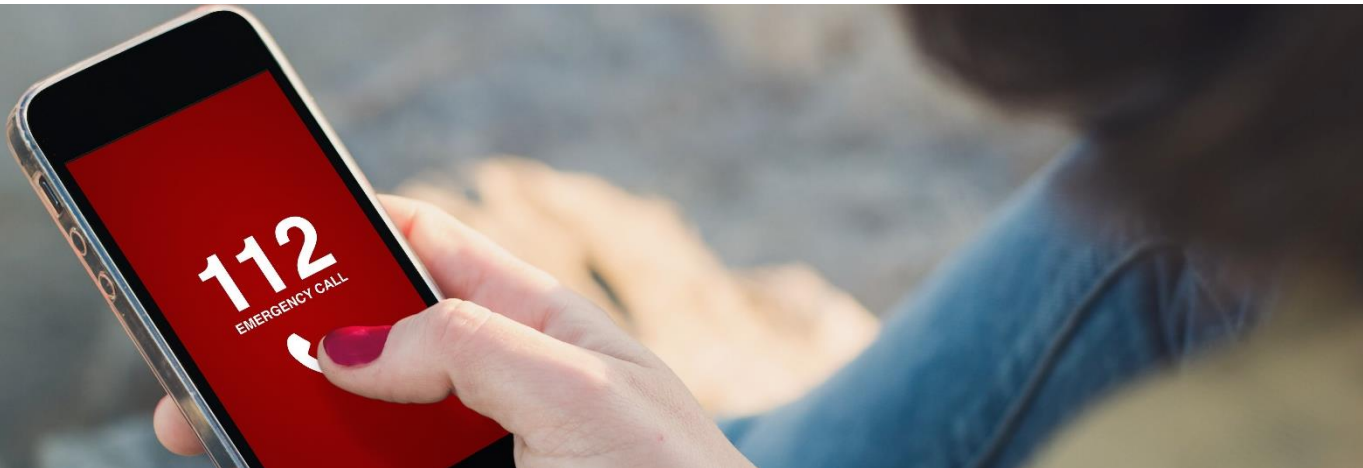
Someone has dialled 112 and the call has successfully been answered by a 112 operator. The caller did not talk and hung up after the operator spoke.

| Hang-up Emergency Calls                  |   |
|--|---|
| Type of call                             | Comments / examples   |
| Situation does not allow caller to speak | The caller is in an emergency situation where (s)he has been able to establish a 112 call, but (s)he is obliged to hang-up before being able to describe the situation (e.g. witness of a robbery). |
| Problems with signal                     | The caller is able to establish a 112 call, but unexpectedly, due to signal problems the call is interrupted (e.g. no network coverage).  |
| Problems with the device                 | The caller is able to make a 112 call, but the call is interrupted due to problems with the device (e.g. battery problem).  |

## 2.1.3 ABANDONED 112 CALLS

Someone has dialled 112. The caller has hung up prior to the call being answered by an operator.

| Abandoned Emergency Calls                |   |
|--|---|
| Type of call                             | Comments / examples   |
| Situation does not allow caller to speak | The caller is in an emergency situation where (s)he has been able to establish a 112 call, but (s)he is obliged to hang-up before being able to describe the situation (e.g. kidnapping). |
| Problems with signal                     | The caller is able to establish a 112 call, but unexpectedly, due to signal problems the call is interrupted (e.g. mobile network coverage lost).   |
| Problems with the device                 | The caller is able to set up a 112 call but the call is interrupted due to problems with the device (e.g. battery problems.)  |



### 3 | PROCEDURE

In this section, the possibility of establishing a common procedure to handle these types of calls has been analysed. The phone number of the caller is the only link to the person who has tried to contact the emergency services. It can be used to call back the person in an emergency situation, but, as is explained in the following tables, calling back may not be useful.

| Silent emergency calls                     |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Type of call                               | Comments / examples   | Procedure   |
| Hearing/<br>speaking<br>impaired<br>person | The person may be in a real emergency situation but is not able to speak and/or to hear that the call has been answered.                                | In this case, calling back could be only useful if the person with the hearing/speaking impairment could establish some type of communication. Hearing and speaking impaired persons need to have alternative means to contact emergency services.                              |
| Situation does not allow caller to speak   | The caller is in an emergency situation, (s)he is able to establish a 112 call, but the situation does not allow the person to speak (e.g. kidnapping). | Emergency services should try to contact this person, but if they call-back, the situation may become worse. In this case, the caller could be helped only if (s)he has the possibility to communicate with other means (e.g. SMS, text messaging) with the emergency services. |
| Person unconscious or unable to speak      | The caller has been able to dial 112 but after establishing the call (s)he is no longer able to communicate (e.g. the caller loses conscience).         | In this case, calling back is not useful. Availability of additional data about the call (e.g. medical data) could help emergency services.   |



Hang-up emergency calls  
Abandoned emergency calls

| Type of call                             | Comments / examples   | Procedure   |
|--|---|---|
| Situation does not allow caller to speak | The caller is in an emergency situation where (s)he has been able to establish a 112 call, but (s)he is obliged to hang-up before being able to describe the situation (e.g. witness of a robbery). | Emergency services should try to contact this person, but if they call-back, the situation may become worse. In this case, the caller could be helped only if (s)he has the possibility to communicate with other means (e.g. SMS, text messaging) with the emergency services. |
| Problems with signal                     | The caller is able to establish a 112 call, but unexpectedly, due to signal problems the call is interrupted (e.g. no network coverage).  | If national roaming is available, the caller can call 112 again. However, emergency services will not be able to communicate with the caller even if they try to call the person back.  |
| Problems with the device                 | The caller is able to set up a 112 call but the call is interrupted due to problems with the device (e.g. battery problem).   | Emergency services will not be able to communicate with the caller even if they try to call the person back. In case of abandoned calls, information about the location of the caller may not be available.   |



## 4 | TECHNOLOGY

Technology can also help emergency services to assist people in distress in case of silent, abandoned and hang-up calls, through the following:

- Location of the caller<sup>1</sup>: the operator can find out the address of the location where the call was initiated.
- Possibility to check if more calls have been received from the same caller: storing the phone / IMEI number of a caller who has made silent, abandoned, or hang-up calls can be very useful in order to decide whether these calls correspond to real emergency situations.
- SMS: some emergency services use SMS as a mean to communicate with callers<sup>2</sup>.
- Total conversation: Total Conversation is a combination of three media in a conversational call: video, real-time text and audio. Total conversation services through the Internet and terminals are deployed in a number of countries in Europe, and adopted by people with disabilities who, for example, may use video for sign language or real-time text for text-based conversations, or as complement to voice conversations<sup>3</sup>.
- Other means of communication with emergency services include technologies like instant messaging, email and video, among others.
- Statistics: the storage and classification of data can be very helpful.

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<sup>1</sup>See EENA document Caller Location in Support of Emergency Services: <https://eena.org/document/caller-location-in-support-of-emergency-services-updated/>

<sup>2</sup>See EENA document SMS Access to 112: <https://eena.org/document/sms-access-to-112/>

<sup>3</sup> See EENA document 112 Accessibility for People with Disabilities - <https://eena.org/document/112-accessibility-for-people-with-disabilities/>



## 5 | RECOMMENDATIONS

In this document, some situations linked with silent, hang-up and abandoned calls can be regarding real emergencies. Calling-back is not always useful, and in some cases, it can even make the situation worse. The only way to solve this kind of situation is by allowing access to 112 through means of communication other than voice call, without additional overload of PSAPs with false emergency calls.

| Statistics  | Requirements  | Available |
|---|---|-----------|
| Means of communication for people with disabilities | The PSAP is accessible for people with disabilities.                                  |           |
| Means of communication with emergency services      | The PSAP is accessible by at least some other means of communication by all citizens. |           |

