

## NSI 911 Calls (“Non-Service Initialized”)

NSI phones are favorite tools of terrorists, pranksters, telephone hackers and decoy callers. They assume they cannot be located or identified – but in fact, neither is totally true. However, the vast majority of NSI 911 calls are “real” calls. Always assume a 911 call from an NSI phone is a bona fide request for emergency service until determined otherwise.

NSI calls are frequently confused with ANI failure calls. NSI calls ANI looks like: (911) ###-####. ANI Failure may look like: (###) 911-####. I use “Nine Shows Initially” to remember. On my wish list – an NSI “call flag” message from the Telco’s.

The last 7 digits of an NSI 911 call ANI match the last 7 digits of the phone’s electronic serial number (“ESN”). So, if you are dealing with a “false” caller, the ANI record of the call has evidentiary value once the caller is apprehended. Be sure it’s retained in some format, somewhere. I’m told that in some situations it’s possible only the last 4 digits may match.

NSI phones frequently have no carrier. They access the network via the nearest available tower face. Note that this is not always the closest tower in all situations – the closest tower could already be at full capacity or the signal path to it may be obstructed.

NSI phones often ARE locatable as Phase Two calls – and they frequently are received as Phase Two calls, with valid Lat/Longs for the location of the phone when the 911 call was completed. If the caller remains on the line they can often be ALI re-bid for updated locations, assuming the call does not switch towers. If you aren’t a Phase Two PSAP, (and yes - by now you should be Phase Two, shame on you) you might try transferring the NSI 911 caller (assuming they stay on the line) to a PSAP that IS Phase Two and have them attempt to perform an ALI re-bid on the call. That MIGHT generate a valid set of Lats and Longs for the caller.

Calls from NSI phones do not display or have a working call back number. No, we can’t call them back.

Calls from NSI phones cannot usually be back traced through the carrier – there often is no carrier.

Keep in mind – there are currently millions of deactivated / no-account (or carrier) cellular telephones being retained by the public specifically for calling 911 in an emergency. These calls will ALL be received as NSI calls, and the vast majority will likely be bona fide, in-progress emergencies. Because the batteries are now very old talk time will likely be minimal. They may not even fully complete the call before dying out, so be especially careful of “hang up” NSI 911 calls.

NSI calls can come from many different types of calling situations and phones:

- Old phones with no account or carrier.
- Brand new phones when the registration process has not yet been completed.
- GSM Phones running without their SIM cards installed.
- Any phone where the 911 call was initiated while the phone was just turned on and hasn’t finished booting up – “cold start” calls.
- Donated, charity, battered women’s shelter phones, etc
- Some older emergency call box phones
- An improperly registered phone which is now roaming
- Pre-paid phones now out of minutes
- In general, almost any cellular or PCS phone without a current wireless carrier

The pre-paid phones now out of minutes are the favorite tool of the decoy caller or prankster harassing the 911 center. Stolen phones may also be employed.

We need more public education to discourage parents from giving their toddlers old cell phones to play with. Shock, swallow, pinch and hazmat issues make them very poor toys. Put a message up on your village or department web page or cable access channel.

Not sure on this one...With analog access to the wireless networks probably ending in 2008 in many regions I'm wondering if we are not looking at a major public relations issue regarding old, analog cell phones no longer being able to be used for making 911 calls (???)

The FCC has a new watch center desk (364/24-7) established for help with NSI 911 calls being received by PSAP's. Just how much help they can provide in near real time, I'm not sure – but at least you can give them a ring at: (202) 418-1122.

The best way to start handling the NSI call challenge is to get your PSAP up and running at Phase Two with all the carriers. That's really step one.

I strongly encourage incorporating into your wireless 911 policy that when we get hangup or disconnected NSI 911 calls and we have Phase Two Lat/Long for the caller that we promptly send two cars to the spot indicated for at least a look around. Two reasons: 1. It probably IS a valid call requesting some sort of service. And 2 – if it is a prankster you just might scare the pimican out of them and they'll think twice before trying this again. We also need to get "patrol" on board and up to date with NSI call issues so it doesn't come as a surprise the first time they/we encounter it.

Start a discussion with patrol supervisors and/or local prosecutors about the process of arresting and charging someone caught intentionally harassing a PSAP by making NSI 911 calls. Personally, I wish we could make this a federal crime and/or felony. That alone might discourage some of this foolish monkey business. When caught, the prankster or hacker will claim a technical malfunction in the phone caused it to dial 911 repeatedly in the hopes of discouraging arrest or prosecution.

In a decoy situation you may get only a single NSI 911 call from a caller advising you of some dramatic situation such as a major 10-50 PI, a shooting, a person with a gun, a bombing or something similar. Their Phase two lat/long may not match the location of where they are telling you they are at right now. But – it may match the location of the real incident, possibly a bank robbery or high profile smash and grab type burglary. On the other hand – the lat/long may match where they are actually are, but they won't want to tell you. The caller may want to remain anonymous. Treat it as a 'real call", but when you only get one, single NSI 911 call on a high profile incident that isn't being found right away – that should start raising some warning flags in your mind. Consider freeing up a couple of cars to perhaps start checking banks, etc - or send them to the Phase two lat/long for a look around the area.

I hope this helps and I hope this is accurate info, I'm fairly sure it is. In closing, I'll just repeat – treat all NSI 911 calls as real calls until determined otherwise. Good luck!

-Ted Moran, Communications Officer, Winnetka IL PD.