

We've got your number...

311

Service Request System

Improving delivery of City services to the people of Chicago





OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

RICHARD M. DALEY
MAYOR



A Letter from Richard M. Daley:

Meeting the demand. That's what a good percentage of our jobs consist of these days. There is always so much to be done, and limited resources with which to do it all. That is why I am pleased to present you with an idea that is working well for the City of Chicago.

This story begins a few years ago, when we took a long, hard look at how Chicago residents requested City services and, more importantly, how we responded to those requests. We found that our system was considered one of the best in the country. However, we also learned that our system was dependent upon an outdated software application. It was unable to produce the work orders we needed and unable to generate the management information necessary for us to enhance our efficiency in delivering public services.

We also learned that we weren't doing enough to use our contact with Chicago residents to promote other City services that could make their lives better. That had to change – and it did.

The solution? Chicago's 3-1-1 system, which gives our residents one easy-to-remember phone number for all their non-emergency public service needs. That number is linked to a new computer system that automatically channels each request to the correct department. This has resulted in two significant benefits:

- The City has dramatically improved its efficiency and response time; and
- We have a highly trained staff that is knowledgeable about all City services and can do a better job of helping our callers.

Chicago residents are not the only ones taking advantage of 3-1-1. Our aldermen and their staffs also use 3-1-1 to relay service requests to the proper City departments. Also, 42 City departments use the system to capture work orders throughout the city.

For the people of Chicago, our 3-1-1 system means one-stop shopping for all City services. That is why this program has become a model for other cities. It is a great tool, and I am certain you will find its story both interesting and helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard M. Daley".
Mayor

Department of Sewers Reduces Response Time by 83 %

Managers in the City's Department of Sewers, using the system as a management tool to monitor the work of their crews, have reduced the average response time of the overall request from 17.2 days in 1999, to 8 days for 2000 and even lower for the first quarter of 2001 to an impressive 3 days. This is just one more example of how the system allows for more efficient service to our customers—the citizens of Chicago.



What is 311?

The gateway to all programs and services that the City of Chicago provides its residents.

For users, the mechanics of 311 are simple: one three-digit phone number to request any non-emergency city service—or to get any information they need from the City.

When callers request a service, each request triggers a series of tasks:

- A service request is created and automatically routed to the proper department.
- The caller receives a service request number to simplify follow-up.
- A checklist of steps to resolve the problem is generated.
- The checklist is translated into work orders.
- City crews respond to the work order.
- Each crew's work order is monitored and any additional activities are assigned, when needed.

That's it. The tasks get completed. The City's management *knows* the tasks have been completed. And most important, the people calling 311 get their request completed quickly and efficiently.

Not all calls to the 311 number are requests for services. Over 2 million calls are requests for information. To accommodate these inquiries, the system provides an information directory. Now, when citizens call to find out information such as parade routes, how to file for a license or city permit or the time of a public meeting, the information is only a keystroke away for the 311 operator.

The Critical Elements

The people of Chicago see only the results of using the City's 311 number. What they don't see are the people and system that make those results happen. Here's the inside story...

1 The call center

The 311 center is open for business 24x7. Its 61 operators are the heart of the system. Before the launch of the 311 system, these operators underwent extensive training to ensure each caller gets a prompt, courteous and professional response.

In an area as ethnically diverse as Chicago, the sheer number of languages used by callers is a challenge. That's why the City's 311 operators have studied key phrases in 25 languages—enough knowledge to access a language bank and request the services of a qualified translator.



2 The technology

If the operators are the heart and brain of Chicago's 311 system, Community Connection™* Customer Service Request (CSR) System—is its nervous system. It allows 311 operators to record each caller's request and computer-route it to the appropriate City department.

When does 311 work best?

WHEN IT'S REALLY NEEDED. FOR CHICAGO, DECEMBER, 2000, WAS MARKED BY RECORD SNOW AND BITTER COLD. DURING THAT MONTH, 311 RECEIVED AS MANY AS 18,500 CALLS PER DAY.

Success
Story

Bureau of Electricity Saves Hundreds of Worker Hours

The system is used to track requests for street light issues by grids. Individual addresses for street light issues are taken and matched to a defined area and become duplicates to the first request in the grid taken. One crew goes out to resolve all the issues within the grid, because the lights are all connected. This has saved us hundreds of worker hours by eliminating multiple crews being assigned the same area because different addresses were given and there was not an automated way to track duplications within a grid.

*formally known as SunTRACK

Auto Pound Inventory Reduced by 40%

Due to the ability to more efficiently and effectively process the information related to towed vehicles, the City has reduced its auto pound inventory from 120% to 80% of capacity. All activities related to abandoned and towed vehicles—from the time a request is made for an abandoned vehicle to be removed or a car that has been towed for illegal reasons through the time it is removed from the pound—are captured. This includes the generation of notices, keeping within legal time periods, pound processing, scheduling of administrative reviews through final disposition of the review and salvation of the car.



3 Streamlining the process

CSR uses a computerized intake form to perform three critical functions:

- Part 1 standardizes information on who's calling, when they're calling and what they need. This establishes a permanent, traceable record of the request.
- Part 2 records answers to specific questions the operator must ask about the specific problem. If the call is about an abandoned vehicle, for example, the operator will be prompted to ask whether it's a hazard, its condition, make, model, color, year and body style.
- Part 3 includes the name, address and phone number of the caller.

The intake form is only the beginning of what CSR does to process the citizen's request. From the moment the request is saved in the CSR system, other processes are automatically initiated. These processes include:

- Routing the request to the right city department or agency
- Creating appropriate work orders
- Assigning and dispatching work crews
- Creating follow-on work orders
- Dispatching follow-on crews
- Coordinating work processes between departments at the appropriate time in the process.

4 Monitoring delivery

The 311 system means that for the first time City departments are receiving steady, consistent requests in a format that's detailed and specific. 311 and the CSR system make it easy to trace the progress of those requests—information useful to the person calling in the request as well as departmental supervisors responsible for satisfying those requests.

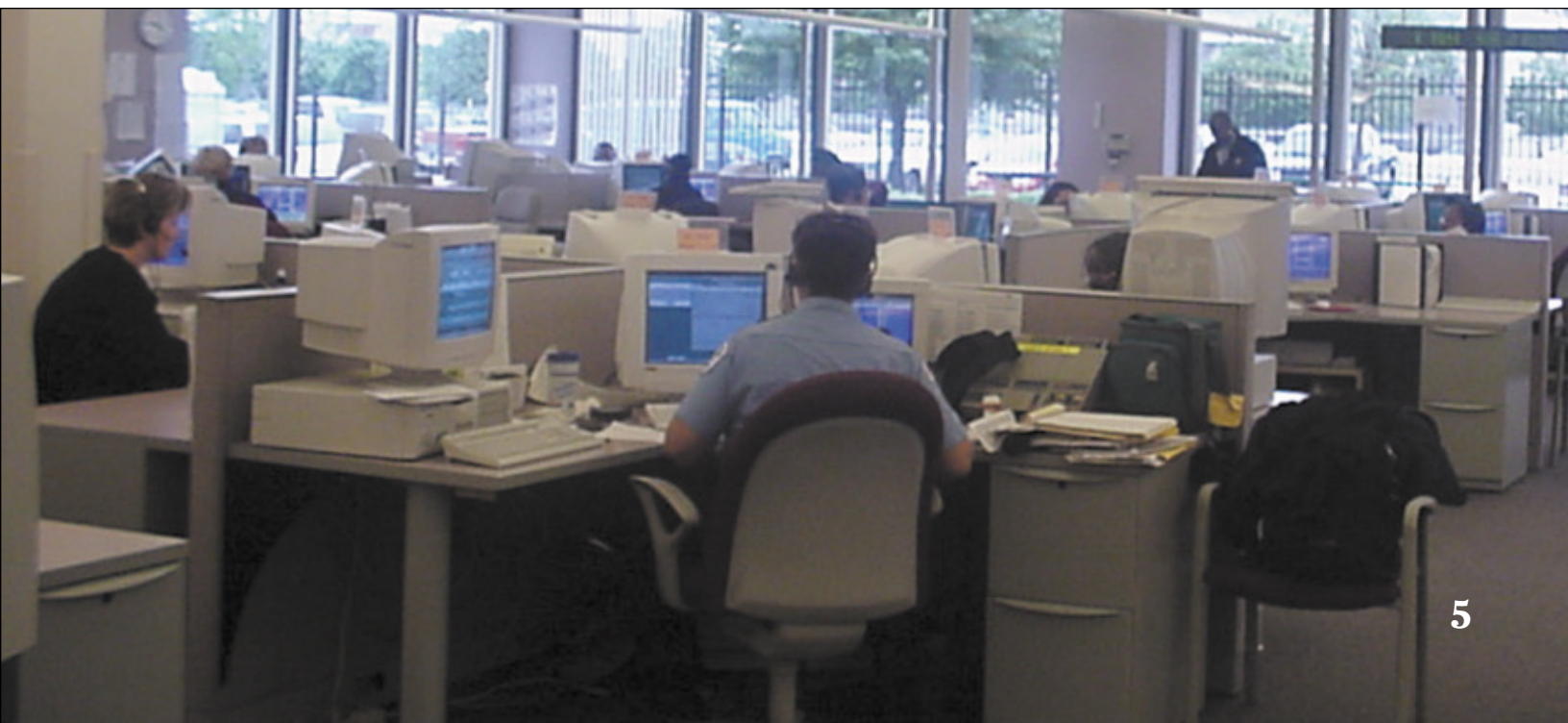
And what about those citizens who don't call the 311 number, but instead call the department directly? Their request doesn't fall through the cracks either. Whoever answers the phone in that department simply enters the request in the CSR system, and the system does the rest in the same way it does if the citizen calls the 311 number.

Utilizing the CSR system to get things done within City departments allows an efficient workflow management between departments to happen. The results have been more efficient use of City manpower.



Is 311 being used?

IN THE YEAR 2000, CHICAGO'S 311 NUMBER RECEIVED MORE THAN 2.9 MILLION CALLS. AND IN 2001 THE NUMBER OF CALLS IS EXPECTED TO TOP 3 MILLION.



Why the 311 System is Important

Managing any city is a huge, daunting job. For the city to get that job done with finite resources, you need maximum efficiency and productivity. That's where a 311 system comes in to deliver a range of benefits.

— Easy access to city government

Residents have high expectations for major city functions. They expect the City to pick up garbage, fill pot holes or remove a fallen tree and do it quickly. And just as important, they expect an easy way to call such problems to your attention. 311 has shredded the stereotype of governmental red tape. A problem is called in – and it's taken care of. Period. Chicagoans can also go directly to their local alderman to access City services. Staff in local aldermanic offices use the same 311 system to record service requests and forward them to the proper department.

In addition, 311 also serves as a source for information. For example, residents who are new to Chicago can call 311 to find out the date, time and location of their next CAPS–community policing–meeting or find out which ward they live in to meet their local alderman.

— Greater efficiency

Chicago's 311 system has worked to make city government more efficient in four ways:

- **Simplified communication** shortens the time between a resident calling about a problem and its resolution. The appropriate city crew gets faster notification of the problem and specific orders on what has to be done.
- The system itself has become an **effective management tool**. It generates call statistics–number of calls, abandons, time to answer, call handling–that help the City manage the 311 call center.
- **Real-time reports** showing trends and response times for specific types of requests help departmental management highlight outstanding performance and target efficiency needs.
- The 311 system has helped make the City's **911 Emergency System more efficient** by eliminating non-emergency calls that could impede the City's emergency response.

— Increased interdepartmental communication

Departments can coordinate work more efficiently. A department can query a location or a range and find out if other work is happening in the vicinity. Crews within and from different departments can work together more efficiently by generating follow-on requests when one crew's work is completed and another crew's work needs to begin.

Statistics

–CALL CENTER

- OPERATES 24 HOURS PER DAY, 7 DAYS PER WEEK
- 8,000 CALLS PER DAY
- AVERAGE WAIT TIME FOR PHONE TO BE ANSWERED IS TEN SECONDS
- 60 TOTAL CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES TO WORK 24/7 SCHEDULE, PLUS SUPERVISORS
- 25-30 CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES DURING BUSINESS HOURS
- 6-12 CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES DURING NIGHTS AND WEEKENDS

Next...an even better 311 system

Public acceptance of Chicago's 311 system has prompted the City to explore ways to broaden its use. Some enhancements include:

- *Web access.* To tap into a population increasingly wired to the Web, the City is now accepting service requests through the city's website: www.cityofchicago.org/
- *Phone directory access.* The City of Chicago is taking advantage of the software functionality within the system to implement a citywide phone directory. Individual departments update the directory, which is part of the CSR system. Each time someone is transferred, hired or retired, the employee's department can update the system's directory to reflect the change. Phone numbers can be marked private for specific users only, giving the City an emergency directory of private numbers. By using the CSR system to keep the City directory current, and by providing update capability at the source, the City has been able to eliminate the need to print a City directory while enhancing inter-departmental communication.

Reasons to be proud

The City of Chicago's 311/Customer Service Request System is one of the first and largest of its kind. Its implementation has made Chicago a technology leader in providing a centralized system that brings efficient City service delivery to its people. Today Chicago is still "The City That Works." The city of big, computerized shoulders—and the 311/Customer Service Request System that helps make it work.

Statistics

—Customer SERVICE REQUEST SYSTEM

- TRACK APPROXIMATELY 500 DIFFERENT TYPES OF SERVICE REQUESTS
- APPROXIMATELY 8,900 SERVICE REQUESTS ARE RECEIVED EACH DAY ON WEEKDAYS (APPROXIMATELY 2,000,000 SERVICE REQUESTS PER YEAR)

—TOP 10 SERVICE REQUESTS FOR 2000

• ABANDONED VEHICLE	57,097
• STREET LIGHT OUT	43,261
• LOCATION INQUIRY (E.G., WHAT WARD DO I LIVE IN?)	42,463
• CART DAMAGE/STOLEN	32,672
• GRAFFITI	30,064
• STRAY OR VICIOUS ANIMAL	25,526
• SHELTER REQUEST	24,811
• HOUSING VIOLATION	20,956
• ICE AND SNOW	18,726
• NO HEAT/INSUFFICIENT HEAT	17,707



Chicago's Keys to Success

• An easy to remember number

Chicagoans can call 311 and within seconds, a highly trained call taker is providing them with answers, or listening to their issues.

"Chicago is a city that works. But we are always looking for new ways to make it work even better. Now, one easy-to-remember telephone number can put you in touch with the vast array of services and programs the City has to offer."

Mayor Richard M. Daley

• Citizens treated like customers

- Single point for reference of information on government services
- No call referrals and limited call transfers
- No need for citizens to understand the government organization
- Complete citizen request tractability; thereby, departmental accountability

• Call takers have immediate access to the CSR system

As soon as a call is received, the call taker begins the process of inputting citizens' requests into the CSR system. The system guides the call taker through the process of inputting the caller's information. At the conclusion of the call, the system automatically processes the request in the manner that has been predefined as the next step, and the intake professional is ready to take the next call.

• Improved management

- Real time reports
- Quicker identification of "bottlenecks"
- Ability to spot trends

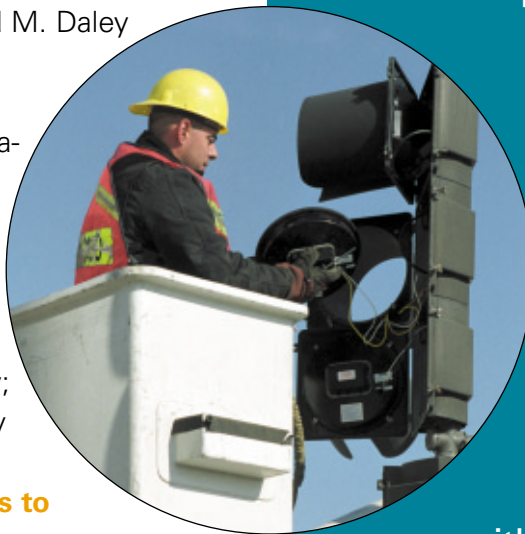
• Making the right call

Call 911 for

- Police emergencies
- Fire emergencies
- Medical emergencies

Call 311 for

- City Service requests
- Police non-emergencies
- Information on City programs, services and events



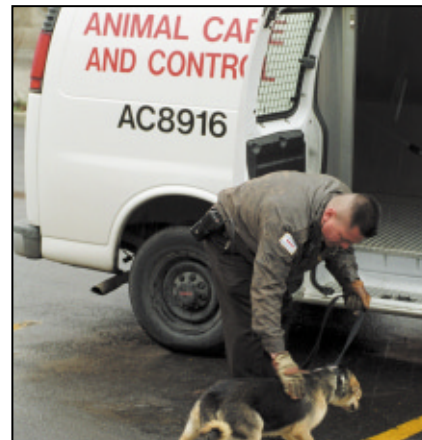
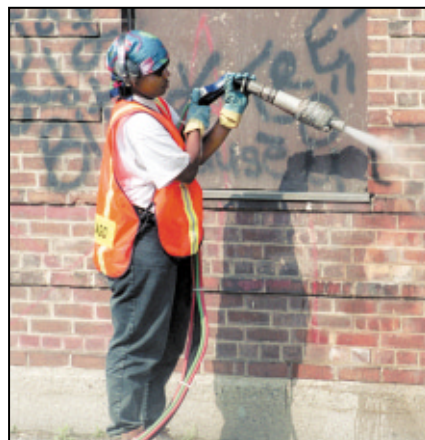
“Not only does the 311 system enable us to quickly record what the caller's problem is, it also elicits additional information that will allow the appropriate department to remedy the problem.

In addition to responding quickly to residents' needs, the 311 system has become a source of information with which the City can help all Chicagoans enjoy a better quality of life.”

–Ted O'Keefe
Director of 311
City Services

311/Customer Service Request System

Improving delivery of City services to the people of Chicago



City of Chicago

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