

**Response from:** Tony A.H. Carroll  
**Responding on behalf of:** Self

Dear Sir,

Please excuse this informal approach. I am not resident in the U.K., but have many relatives and friends there, and the subject is of great concern to me.

Firstly, allow me to congratulate OFCOM on the clarity and ease of access that the Web-based document displays.

My comments are confined to the question of access to the '999' emergency response service. I think it should be made a compulsory provision, with full technical specifications, for all commercial suppliers.

Otherwise, the provision of '999' services could be used as a marketing tool, and this would be undesirable. Consumers should not be lured into a situation where they sacrifice safety for a cheaper service.

The inevitable result of permitting the provision of a limited or non-existent '999' service in order to save costs would be a reduction of access to the emergency services, with obvious results.

The new VoIP systems will introduce anonymity, and an inability to trace the source of calls. Traditional services, including the mobile telephone system, allow providers and the authorities to trace the source of calls - often essential to the saving of lives, apart from the policing aspect. The rescue services will therefore be hindered in their work, and the incidence of nuisance calls affecting the '999' system adversely, will increase, unless measures are devised to overcome this problem.

The probable answer will almost certainly be a technological one. I am not qualified to offer solutions in this area, but it should be possible to develop a means of producing a traceable signal, upon activation of a '999' call, so that the caller can be traced. This might be achieved by a signal like that produced by a marker buoy, or life-jacket, which rescue services can trace. The signal should be locked, until released by the service provider, or rescue services, and a service fee imposed if the call was found to be malicious.

The probable outcome of the availability of widespread access to VoIP, in the short to mid-term might be that consumers opt for a combination of VoIP and mobile telephone services, with rapid reduction of subscription to the traditional land-line connections for access to voice services. The long-term probability is that VoIP will evolve until it is so reliable and accessible that the majority will opt for PDA/Phone devices to maintain access to these services.

Thank you for your time. I hope my thoughts on this fascinating subject are useful.

Yours sincerely, Tony A.H. Carroll.

