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Finding out what's happened: Two procedures for opening emergency calls

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Running head: Two procedures for opening emergency calls

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ABSTRACT: This article examines two corpora of telephone calls to the Swedish emergency services SOS-Alarm. The focus of analysis is on the procedural consequentiality of the routine opening by the operator. In the first corpus, the summons are answered by identification of the service via the emergency number. In the second corpus, the protocol has been altered, such that the opening entails the emergency number combined with a standard query concerning the nature of the incident. Through sequential and categorial analysis of the two collections, we highlight the distinct trajectories of action ensuing from the two opening protocols. The standalone emergency number opening typically results in callers asking for a specific service. In contrast, opening turns which end with a direct query about the incident tend to solicit brief descriptions of the trouble. We discuss the benefits of the latter procedure in terms of topical progression and institutional relevance, proposing that the work of emergency assistance agencies worldwide might consider implementing opening routines with a similar design.

Key words: Conversation analysis; Emergency calls; Ethnomethodology; Helplines; Institutional interaction; Service calls; Studies of work; Talk-in-interaction.

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Finding out what's happened:

Two procedures for opening emergency calls

Background

In 1996, the number to the emergency rescue services in Sweden was officially changed from 90000 to 112. This was a step towards the implementation of a European Union standard number for contacting local emergency rescue agencies (91/396/EEC). As part of the transition, the Swedish emergency rescue services *SOS Alarm* also modified the operator protocol for interrogating callers about the nature of their emergency and organising response activities. One immediately observable change concerned the standardised opening phrase through which emergency operators respond to the summons:

opening line prior to 1996:

“Nittio Tusen” alternatively *“SOS Nittio Tusen”*

“Ninety Thousand” alternatively *“SOS Ninety Thousand”*

after 1996:

”SOS Ett Ett Två, vad har inträffat?”

”SOS One One Two, what has occurred?”

The dedicated emergency number is stated in both versions of the opening phrase. The explicit identification of the emergency rescue services via the abbreviation “SOS”, optional in the earlier routine, became a mandatory first-position element in the post 1996 opening

phrase. But perhaps the most striking difference between the two routines is the concluding query of the latter, concerning what has “occurred”ⁱⁱ. In this article, we examine two collections of emergency call openings in which each of the two phrases is used by operators to respond to the summons. The focus is on the procedural consequentiality (Sacks, et al., 1974) of the two types of opening turns, particularly on their bearing on the callers’ formulation of their reason for calling the emergency services. Our overall concern then, is with the ways through which conversational practice is organised to allow for the work of emergency call-taking and response management to take place (cf. Watson & Sharrock, 1990). This approach turns on the assumption that public institutions can be analysed as ways of talking (e.g., Bittner, 1974; Garfinkel, 1969; Watson, 1986). Through such verbal conduct, participants can be seen to act on, and display for one another, any personal and organisational concerns relevant for the business at hand.

Emergency call openings

Previous work in conversation analysis has shown that openings in telephone calls are organised to allow the parties to establish an early sense of what type of call they are dealing with (e.g., Hopper, 1992; Schegloff, 1968; 1979a; 2002). Although such intersubjectivity arrangements are crucial to all social interaction, they are, perhaps, particularly explicit in service-related telecommunications. Here, the call taker’s answer to the summons typically exhibits some distinctive features of the institution, including identification of the business, more or less explicit information concerning the professional services offered and other organisational relevances (e.g., Baker, et al., 2005; Danby, et al., 2005; Whalen & Zimmerman, 1987; Watson, 1986). Such opening arrangements render the exchange its recognisably institutional characterⁱⁱⁱ.

A subset of service-related telephone calls which has received a fair deal of scholarly attention comprise citizens’ calls for emergency assistance (see Cromdal, in press, for a review), and several studies have examined the opening exchanges between caller and call taker. Characteristic of such openings is the *reduction* (Whalen & Zimmerman, 1987) achieved through methodic omission of such mundane routines as greeting exchanges and other common courtesies, and *specialisation* (Wakin & Zimmerman, 1999), achieved via a standardised identification of the service, typically located to the second slot in the summons-

answer (SA) sequence (Schegloff, 1968) thereby constituting the first spoken turn of the call. This design of the opening procedures is organisationally motivated. As Zimmerman (1992a) points out:

The trajectory of the call is thus anticipated in its opening, which projects a framework – the shell of a particular kind of activity – within which structurally and substantively relevant understandings of subsequent utterances can be achieved. The opening turns of the call, and in particular the components of the first turns of answerer and caller, regularly establish an identity set implicative for the nature of the business to follow. (p. 49-50)

Hence, a specialised context is produced in the opening of the call; a context that provides for the callers' recognition of certain commonsense understandings of the business that is routinely pursued within such settings. While the identification is invariably positioned in immediate response to the summons, there is some variation to how such turns are constructed. For instance, call takers may answer the summons by stating the dedicated emergency number, e.g., "*Nine One One*" (cf. Garcia & Parmer, 1999), "*1-1-8*" (Paoletti, 2007), "*Ninety Thousand*" (Nordberg, 1999), thus establishing a "socially sanctioned inferential framework" (Wakin & Zimmerman, 1999, p. 433) within which callers' ability to infer the correct identity and business of the service is presumed. Alternatively, identification may be achieved by explicit naming of the emergency service, e.g., "*Emergency Centre*" (Arminen, et al., 2008; Eglin, 1986), "*Feuerwehr?*" / "*Fire Brigade?*" (Bergmann, 1992), or "*Police Desk*" (Schegloff, 1968), occasionally including regional specification, such as "*Mid-City Emergency*", (cf. Whalen & Zimmerman, 1987) and "*Newton Police*" (Sharrock & Watson, 1987). The two procedures may be combined, such that both the number and the identification of the service are given in the operator's answer to the summons, as in "*Nine One One Emergency*" (cf. Whalen & Zimmerman, 1987), "*SOS Ninety Thousand*" (Nordberg, 1999). In addition, we find more complex opening phrases in the literature, such as "*City West Nine One One, Agent Geltner*" (Tracy & Anderson, 1999), which combine regional information with the dedicated number as well as with personal and occupational identification of the call taker.

Such categorial identifications do not merely provide for the caller's recognition of the service. Rather, operators' responses to the summons partition the interlocutors into two

mutually constitutive categories, or “standardised relational pairs” (Sacks, 1972), which we may call *help-seeker* and *help-provider*, where the mention (or other means of invokation) of one pair part is sufficient for the other to become relevant for the ongoing conduct^{iv}. Hence, the relevant “identity set” (Zimmerman 1992a) is established through ordinary practices of membership categorization: if the call taker answers the summons by categorising herself as a provider of emergency assistance, then that ascribes to the caller the corresponding identity as a seeker of such assistance. The local relevance of such a categorial identification is readily observable in instances when one of the parties treats their identity as problematic:

EXAMPLE 1. cl-caller; op-emergency operator [B2].

```

008 op      <essoess ettetttvå?>
009         (1.3)
→ 010 cl    >↑OJ<
→ 011 op    >hardu ringt fel?<
012         (.85)
→ 013 cl    a: >tyvärr.<=
014 op      =>ada d'ingen fara.<
015         (.45)
016 op      >HEJD↑Å:<
---
008 op      <essoess oneonetwo?>
009         (1.3)
→ 010 cl    >↑WHOOPS<
→ 011 op    >didja misdial?<
012         (.85)
→ 013 cl    ya: >unfortunately.<=
014 op      =>'ts alright dun worry.<
015         (.45)
016 op      >BYE↑:<

```

In response to the operator’s identification, the caller produces a prosodically marked token of surprise “OJ” (“WHOOPS”). The operator then provisionally treats this as an indication of misdialling, which the caller confirms initiating an apology – acceptance sequence, before the operator moves on to terminate the call.

Clearly then, calling the emergency services is an accountable action. It is not to be done without good reason, and consequently the interaction in the very beginning of such calls is geared towards finding out that reason with as little delay as possible. In contrast to mundane telephone calls, where there may be little need to account for the call – or indeed, where there may be good grounds for minimising or countering the recognisability of the caller’s reason for calling (cf. Sacks, 1992, Vol. 2, p. 165-171) – the organisation of openings in emergency calls locates an expectation on the caller to use the “first topic slot” (Whalen & Zimmerman, 1987) to state or otherwise make inferrable a valid reason for the call. Again, the normative features of this organisation become observable when the expectation is not satisfied:

EXAMPLE 2. Op: operatör 1 (kv); Upp: uppringare (m) [PF34:01]

1. Op: Nittitusen?
2. Upp: *He:j (nittitusen) nu hej hur har du't på nittitusen nu .hh eh
3. (ja: va ute å drack lättöl å gå: ute på) stan*
4. ((sluddrigt))

→5. Op: .hh Du (0.4) {va vill du för nånting} hh

1. Op: Ninedithousand?
2. Cl: *hi: (ninedithousand) hi what's up at ninedithousand .hh eh
3. (I: ws out havin a light beer an walkin: around) town*
4. ((slurring))

→5. Op: .hh Listen (0.4) {what ya want} hh

The operator's receipt in line 5 clearly suggests that the caller's first turn fails to supply a relevant reason for calling the emergency number – nor does it treat the caller's engagement in the talk as indication of an urgent need for help. Indeed, the caller's greetings and “what's up”-inquiries in line 2 form an opening which may be “canonical” (Schegloff, 1986) to mundane telephone calls, but one which is typically omitted – for the sake of brevity and focus – in calls for emergency assistance (e.g., Whalen & Zimmerman, 1987).

Previous literature, along with the above observations, suggests that in dealings with the emergency services, the onus is on the caller to immediately supply a relevant reason for initiating the contact. This can be achieved in different ways and it is the interactional procedures through which the participants arrive at the caller's reason for the encounter that form the topic of our inquiry. Overall, the analysis extends earlier findings on telephone openings in emergency calls, and points more broadly to some concrete real-world outcomes of communication design work (cf. Aakhus, 2007) in professional settings.

Two corpora of emergency calls

This article examines two corpora of calls to the Swedish emergency services, SOS-Alarm. The corpora were collected over 20 years apart, roughly ten years before and after the change of the emergency number and the operator protocol.

90000-corpus

The first corpus was collected in 1986 by Bengt Nordberg and associates. It was recorded in one of the smaller emergency centres (hosting 2-4 operators on duty) located in central Sweden. It comprises over 170 calls in total, and entails incoming calls as well as outgoing communications (via phone or radio) from the centre (see also Nordberg, 1999, for more details on setting and corpus). Our interest in this article is with the 86 calls coming in through the emergency number 90000. Roughly 60 of these calls (70%) concern medical conditions of varying degrees of emergency, to which the response activities would span from ambulance dispatch to telephone contact with doctor on duty, while the remaining calls deal with fire incidents, suspected crime and various technical malfunctions. As we have already noted, the emergency number 90000 served as the operators' opening move, occasionally in combination with the phrase SOS.

112-corpus

The second corpus was collected over a period of three years beginning in 2006. It was recorded in different, but similarly sized emergency centre (typically hosting 2-4 operators on duty, but allowing another two to engage in dispatch work when called for), located in a south-central Swedish region, serving a population of just over half a million residents. The corpus comprises over 150 calls incoming through the emergency number 112 from lay members of the public. Like the first corpus, a majority of calls concern medical conditions (53%) followed by reports of suspected crime, and other police-relevant incidents (28%) and fires or other rescue operations (13%). The remaining 6% of the corpus comprise matters of no relevance to the emergency services, including such topics as lost pets, God and a variety of more or less straightforward pranks (for a study of prank calls to a child helpline, see Emmison & Danby, 2007).

Selection, transcription and analysis

In all, the two corpora hold over 230 audio-recorded calls to the emergency services placed by ordinary members of society. To maintain a degree of homogeneity across the two corpora, our selection of calls prior to analysis of the interaction was guided by the following five criteria: callers were (i) adults, and (ii) lay members of the public (rather than nurses, doctors, ambulance drivers, etc.); (iii) calls came in through the emergency number (90000 or 112), rather than other available service numbers; (iv) operators responded to the summons using the prescribed standard phrase ("*ninety thousand*" or "*SOS one-one-two, what has*

occurred?”) and finally, (v) calls were conducted in Swedish. This selection procedure generated 22 calls from the 90000-corpus and 52 calls from the 112-corpus.

Both corpora were transcribed in detail following conversation analytic notations (Jefferson, 2004), slightly adapted to include a range of nonvocal activities such as operator typing sounds and a wide spectrum of background noise, including sounds from pets, radio and television, sirens, etc (see Appendix for transcript key). The 90000-corpus has been transcribed previously by Nordberg and other colleagues. For the purposes of the current analysis, the authors have closely checked the transcripts against the audio recordings to ensure the accuracy and degree of detail to allow for fine-grained analysis of the interaction. Personal, locational and other sensitive information has been altered to protect callers’ anonymity.

The data were analysed to reveal the sequential and categorial organisation of the parties’ verbal actions in the opening of the call and during the initial phases of the interrogation. Sequential analysis rests on the assumption that social interaction exhibits – as its most elementary property – systematic and orderly features, and that members’ actions can be analysed to demonstrate this order with precision. In highlighting features of turn design and their sequential ordering, we aim to explicate the innate organisation of the opening exchanges between caller and operator across the two corpora of citizens’ calls for emergency assistance.

Analysis

90000

We begin the analysis by showing how callers organise their first turns at talk, focusing on the variation that we find in the 90000-corpus. As a next analytic step, we examine how the parties continue to further unpack the reason for the call, which typically occurs in the immediately next sequential position.

Reason for calling – first turn requests

Whalen & Zimmerman (1987) pointed out that callers to the emergency services typically supply their reason for the call by requesting some form of assistance or by producing a report of a troublesome event. We see this in the following extracts:

EXAMPLE 3. Op: operatör 3 (kv), Upp: uppringare (m) [PF31:01]
1. Op: Nittitusen?
→2. Upp: .hh *Aa:* polisen ((harkling)) (0.6) de gäller ett inbrott
3. Op: Eh som pågår eller

1. Op: Ninedithousand?
→2. Cl: .hh *Ya:* police ((clears throat)) (0.6) 'ts concerning a burglary
3. Op: Eh it's ongoing is it

EXAMPLE 4. Op: operatör 3 (kv); Upp: uppringare (m) [PF27:01]
1. Op: Nittitusen?
→2. Upp: Jaao kan ↑ni: ge mej <poli:sen> de gäller nåra ungdomar småbarn
→3. som springer på motorvägen här vi: signal- (0.7) ja vi ess nie
4. Op: (Eh) vi ess ni e

1. Op: Ninedithousand?
→2. Cl: Yeaoch could ↑ya: get me <the poli:ce> 'ts concerning some
→3. youngsters kids running on the motorway here a:t signal- (0.7) well at ess nine
4. Op: (Eh) at ess nin e

In the examples above, the callers describe in their first turns the troublesome events leading up to the call. In both examples, however, the reports comprise callers' second actions, following upon a prior request for a particular service (police assistance). We may further note that the causal-topical link between the reports and its preceding request ("its concerning") makes the report hearable as an account for the request – it provides the reason for the call generally, and a rationale for that particular type of request specifically. That is to say, the descriptions of the events leading up to the call are not produced as standalone reasons for calling the emergency services – what they do is render a particular meaning to the requests.

Initial caller turns containing event descriptions are not very frequent in the 90000-corpus, accounting for less than 20% of the calls. When they do occur, they tend to be produced as accounts for an immediately prior request. In this corpus, the most common type of response to the operator's opening phrase comprises a request for a specific service, often combined with a destination for the requested assistance:

EXAMPLE 5. Op: operatör 7 (kv); Upp: uppringare (kv) [PO09:01]

1. Op: Nittitusen
 - 2. Upp: Ja ↑↑kunde ja få en ambulans ti Bondevägen sextisju be:?
 3. Op: ↑Mmhm e de bråskande?
-

1. Op: Ninedithousand
- 2. Cl: Yes ↑↑could i have an ambulance for Bondevägen sistiseven be:?
3. Op: ↑Mmhm 'sit urgent?

EXAMPLE 6. Op: operatör 7 (kv); Upp: uppringare (m) [PO06:01]

1. Op: Nittitusen
 2. (0.6)
 - 3. Upp: Ja skulle vilja ha en ambulans till Norr- (0.2) Göte Gustavsson
 - 4. Norrlinge Norrstad
 5. Op: Mm:hm e de ↑bråskande:
-

1. Op: Ninedithousand
2. (0.6)
- 3. Cl: I'd like an ambulance for Norr- (0.2)Göte Gustavsson
- 4. Norrlinge Norrstad
5. Op: Mm:hm 'sit ↑urgent:

In example 5, the caller sets off by acknowledging the operator's identification (Whalen & Zimmerman, 1987, see also Garcia & Parmer, 1999, for a discussion of the local relevance of such acknowledgments). This acknowledgement is absent in example 6, in which the caller notably produces his first turn after a slight delay. Both examples show the callers requesting paramedic assistance, then proceeding to specify a destination for the ambulance. In contrast to examples 1 and 2, the operators' acknowledging receipts of the callers' turns show that actions formatted as request for assistance + location satisfy, for all current intents and purposes, the expectation on the caller to supply a reason for calling the emergency services.

There is some variation to this procedure. For instance, the caller's request for a service and formulation of location may take the reverse order:

EXAMPLE 7. Op: operatör 7 (kv); U1: uppringare (kv); U2: man som talar i bakgrunden [PO15:01]

1. Op: Nittitusen
 - 2. U1: Ja::*eh* de e utifrån Bredinge kan vi få en ambulans ut
 - 3. till Stora Norrby
 4. Op: Jaa↓ e de brås↑kande=
-

1. Op: Ninedithousand
- 2. Cl: Ye::*eh* 'ts out at Bredinge could we have an ambulance out
- 3. to Stora Norrby
4. Op: Yee↓ 'sit ur↑gent=

Here, the caller starts out by acknowledging the identification of the emergency services, then moving on to first specify the location and then produce a request for an ambulance.

Occasionally, the caller will just request a particular service, without producing a locational formulation:

EXAMPLE 8. Op-operatör 7 (kv); Upp-uppringare (m) [PO04:01]

1. Op: Nittitusen
→2. Upp: *Eh polisen?*3. Op: Jaa↓ gäller de ↑bråskande larm

1. Op: Ninedithousand
→2. Cl: *Eh police?*3. Op: Ye:s↓ `sit concern an ↑urgent alarm

Common to extracts 5-8 is that the operator accepts the first turn of the caller as satisfactorily displaying her/his business with the emergency services. The caller's offering of a reason for the call is thus treated as adequate for the interrogation to continue, and is typically accomplished as part of the operator's second turn in the call. There are some exceptions to this as seen in the two extracts below:

EXAMPLE 9. Op-operatör 7(kv); Upp-uppringare (m); Pat-patienten (m) [PO03:01]

1. Op: Nittitusen
2. Upp: .hh Ja hej (ja) >skulle ja kunna få< en ambulans ut till eh
3. (0.45)pt Bre:bo heter de här.
4. (0.55)
5. Op: Bre:bo:
6. Upp: Ja: en sopkille här som har skuri sej ganska ordentlit i (.) ja
7. i: (1.2) va heter de (.) ja hal- pulsådern i armen va

1. Op: Ninedithousand
2. Cl: .hh Yes hi (I) >could I have< an ambulance out to eh
3. (0.45)pt Bre:bo place is called.
4. (0.55)
5. Op: Bre:bo:
6. Cl: Yes: a garbage guy here cut himself pretty bad in the (.) well
7. i:n (1.2) whatsitname (.) well carot- the arm artery y'know

EXAMPLE 10. Op-operatör 6(m); Upp-uppringare (kv), pat's dotter [PS06:01]

1. Op: ESSO↑ESS nittitusen?
2. Upp: .hh Ja hej ja skulle vilja ha en ambulans till Typografvägen
3. nie Västerby
4. (1.0)
5. Op: I Västerby
6. Upp: Jaa
7. (1.8)
8. Op: Mmhm Typografvägen nie=
9. Upp: =Jaa
10. Op: >Va e (de) som har< hänt då

1. Op: ESSO↑ESS ninedithousand
2. Cl: .hh Yes hello I'd like an ambulance for Typografvägen
3. nine Västerby
4. (1.0)
5. Op: In Västerby
6. Cl: Ye:s
7. (1.8)
8. Op: Mmhm Typografvägen nine=
9. Cl: =ye:s
10. Op: So >what's< happened

Both examples show the operator initiating a clarification of (parts of) the location offered by the caller. Note that by attending to the specifics of the callers' location formulations, operators are acknowledging the request + location format as an institutionally relevant way of presenting the caller's business. We conclude this section by showing a slightly deviant example, in which the caller gives his address but fails to ask for assistance:

- EXAMPLE 11. Op: operatör 3 (kv); Upp: uppringare (m) [PF17:01]
1. Op: Nittitusen
 2. Upp: Ja ifrån: Rödbby
 3. Op: Jaa
 4. Upp: Kypargatan sju be:
 - 5. Op: Jaa vill du ha ambulans eller=
 6. Upp: =Jaa (.) de e väl bäst de (som de ser ut) (0.2) Karlsson (1.0)
 7. sju be: högst opph
 8. (0.8)
-

1. Op: Ninedithousand
2. Cl: Yes from: Rödbby
3. Op: Ye:s
4. Cl: Kypargatan seven be:
- 5. Op: Ye:s do you want an ambulance or what=
6. Cl: =Ye:s (.) guess we'd better (by th'look of it) (0.2) Karlsson (1.0)
7. seven be: at the toph
8. (0.8)

In line 2, the caller starts off with a general locational formulation, identifying the village of Rödbby. This is acknowledged by the operator and the caller proceeds to narrow down the location to a street address (line 4). The operator's following turn "ye::s do you want an ambulance or what" identifies the previous exchange as problematic. More specifically, it points to the absence of a proper reason for calling and proffers a candidate request for an ambulance, which the caller readily confirms in line 6. This candidate request not merely shows the operator's orientation towards the inadequacy, or incompleteness, of caller's "first topic"; it also reveals his expectation as to the specific format for the packaging of the caller's

reason for the call. In a nutshell, it shows that operators expect callers to request certain types of assistance as part of their first turn in the opening of the call.

Probing the reason for calling

We have established that following upon the operators' opening line "ninetythousand?", callers typically request a specific form of assistance. Such reports may be combined with other actions, such as locational formulations or, more infrequently, reports of trouble that serve as accounts for the request. The operators' responses to these turns show that such requests comprise an orderly, and locally normative, way of presenting the caller's business.

We now proceed to examine the continuation of the interrogations. Unless a clarification sequence is inserted to deal with parts of the caller's first turn (as in examples 9-10), a typical continuation at this point in the call is for the operator to inquire about the urgency of the matter, as we can see in extracts 5-8 above^v. Let us consider this questioning practice and the type of caller actions that they engender:

EXAMPLE 5b. Op: operatör 7 (kv); Upp: uppringare (kv) [P009:01]

1. Op: Nittitusen
2. Upp: Ja kunde ja få en ambulans ti Bondevägen sextisju be:
3. Op: Mhm e de bråskande
- 4. Upp: Ja de e nånting me hjärta han har kärkramp å å e så andfådd å
- 5. väldit eh (.) dåli
6. Op: [Mhm]
7. Op: Bondevägen sextisju be:=
-

1. Op: Ninedithousand
2. Cl: Yes could i have an ambulance for Bondevägen sistyseven be:
3. Op: Mhm 'sit urgent
- 4. Cl: Ye tis sumphin with the heart hes got vascular spasms an an 'es
so short for breath an
- 5. really eh (.) poorly
6. Op: [Mhm]
7. Op: Bondevägen sixtyseven be:=

EXAMPLE 6b. Op: operatör 7 (kv); Upp: uppringare (m) [P006:01]

1. Op: Nittitusen
2. (0.6)
3. Upp: Ja skulle vilja ha en ambulans till Norr- (0.2) Göte Gustavsson
4. Norrlinge Norrstad
5. Op: Mhm e de bråskande
6. (0.6)
- 7. Upp: Ja:a de e en äldre dam som ligger på backen
8. (0.2)
9. Op: Ut- ute eller

1. Op: Ninedithousand
2. (0.6)
3. Cl: I'd like an ambulance for Norr- (0.2)Göte Gustavsson
4. Norrlinge Norrstad
5. Op: Mmhm 'sit urgent
6. (0.6)
- 7. Cl: Ye::s th's an eldery lady lying on the ground
8. (0.2)
9. Op: Out- outside is she

EXAMPLE 7b. Op: operatör 7 (kv); U 1: uppringare (kv); U 2: man som talar i bakgrunden [PO15:01]

1. Op: Nittitusen
2. U 1: Ja:a: de e utifrån Bredinge kan vi få en ambulans ut till Stora
3. Norrby
4. Op: Jaa e de bråskande=
- 5. U 1: =Ja de e en kille som har tuppa av han va här å å skulle höll på
- 6. å greja me en (.) höfräs (.) (ova-o) (0.2) han har skuri sej
- 7. säger dom på handen ()
8. ((En hund skäller i bakgrunden rad 6-13))
9. Op: Jaha har han skuri sej mycke då eller

1. Op: Ninedithousand
2. Cl: Ye:eh: 'ts out at Bredinge could we have an ambulance out
3. to Stora Norrby
4. Op: Yee↓ 'sit ur↑gent=
- 5. Cl: =Yes there's a guy's passed out he was here to to e was
- 6. fiddlin with a (.) hay mill (.) (an-a) (0.2) hes cut imself
- 7. on the hand they tell me ()
8. ((dog barking in lines 6-13))
9. Op: I see cut imself bad has he

EXAMPLE 8b. Op-operatör 7(kv); Upp-uppringare (m); Pol-polisman[PO04:01]

1. Op: Nittitusen
2. Upp: *Eh polisen*
3. Op: Jaa gäller de bråskande larm
- 4. Upp: Eh: de ni får skicka ut en bil alltså som tar reda på en ute på
- 5. torget en gammal äldre man som ligger
6. Op: [M m h m] ett ögonblick här då

1. Op: Ninedithousand
2. Cl: *Eh police*
3. Op: Ye: dz'it concern an urgent alarm
- 4. Cl: Eh: its you'll have to send a car to take care of someone out in
- 5. the square an eldery gent lying
6. Op: [M m h m] just a moment here

In extracts 5b – 8b, the operator responds by acknowledging (through “mhm”-tokens in example 5b-6b and in lexicalised form, “yes”, in 7b-8b) the caller's first turn, then immediately proceeding to ask about the urgency of the incident. One interesting feature of these questions is that they invariably elicit from the callers' reports of the trouble, rather than

simple acknowledgments of urgency. Hence, in response to the operator querying the urgency of caller's business, the callers offer descriptions of the troublesome event; descriptions that account for the call *as an emergency call*. That is to say, the operator's question is routinely treated by the callers as probing the *relevance* of their business for the emergency services.

One slightly deviant case clearly illustrates this point:

EXAMPLE 12. Op: operatör 3 (kv); Upp: uppringare (kv) [PO36:01]

1. Op: Nittitusen
 2. Upp: Ja vi ska be om en ambulans (här)
 3. Op: [E de] bråskande=
 - 4. Upp: =(Ja) de ska va syrgas me
 5. Op: Jaa joodå de har vi .hh
-
1. Op: Ninedithousand
 2. Cl: Yes we need to ask for an ambulange (here)
 3. Op: ['S it] urgent=
 - 4. Cl: =(Yes) we'll need oxygen too
 5. Op: Ye:s cou:rse we got that .hh

In response to the operator's question about urgency (line 3), the caller confirms and adds that the patient will need oxygen. By stressing the need for oxygen, the caller categorically rules out any other means of transportation that the one she had requested. Hence, she is accountably hearing the operator's question in line 3 as probing the institutional relevance of the event that led the caller to ask for emergency assistance.

In the analysis of call openings in our first corpus, we have shown that upon the operators' identification of the emergency services in the opening announcement of the emergency number 90000, callers typically use their first turn to request a specific type of emergency assistance. In fact, inspection of a deviant case revealed that requests for help, whether solitary or combined with other actions, such as acknowledgements of the identification, location formulations or accounts for the request, form part of the operators' expectations concerning what the callers ought to be doing in their very first turn at talk. In the typical case, these formulations of callers' business are then elaborated through descriptions of the troublesome event elicited by the operators' routine question about the urgency of the matter. We now move on to consider our second corpus, targeting the same sequential positions in the opening interactions of the post 1996 calls to the emergency services.

SOS 112 what has occurred?

If requesting assistance formed the normative and single most common way for callers to present their business in the 90000 corpus, then the 112 corpus is characterised by their general infrequency as well as dispreference. We begin this part of the analysis by discussing the operators' standard opening phrase, then examine in brief the responses that it routinely engenders. We conclude the analysis with a call in which the pattern is broken, revealing a very different, yet equally normative, order underlying the organisation of call openings in this corpus. Both the normative cases and the deviant example demonstrate the parties' monitoring of and orientation to the sequential properties of action, as well as their institutional relevance in the context of calls for emergency assistance.

Reason for calling – first turn reports

In our discussion of the previous corpus we pointed out that the operators' opening line "ninety thousand" works as an institutional identification for the emergency services. We further pointed out that this opening partitions the interlocutors along two mutually constitutive categories: the operator's self-identification as "help provider" automatically invokes an identity for the caller as "help seeker".

Turning now to our second corpus, we note that the standard phrase by which the operators answer the summons also contains an identification combining the term SOS with the emergency number, "SOS One One Two". In addition, the opening line contains a second part; a direct inquiry about the event that has led the caller to dial the emergency number (cf. Cromdal, et al., 2008, for a more thorough discussion of this opening phrase). Consider the opening turns in examples 13 and 14 below:

```
EXAMPLE 13. cl-caller; op-emergency operator [v30].
  000          ((line open))
  001          ((audible thud at other end))
  002 op       essoessetetvå:↑ va↑inträffat?
  003          (.5)
→ 004 cl      ja::↑ de ä: en:::↑h >min syster<
→ 005          kuh- kille har så lågt blodsocker
→ 006          att vi får inte ordning pån
→ 007          (.) .hhh flyttade ↑in ida men han
→ 008          e precis toki.
  009          (.45)
---
  000          ((line open))
  001          ((audible thud at other end))
```

```

002 op      essoessoneonetwo:↑ whs↑occurred?
003         (.5)
→ 004 cl    ye::↑s 'tis: e::↑h >my sister<
→ 005       buh- boyfriend's bloodsugar got so low
→ 006       that we can't handle im
→ 007       (.) .hhh moved ↑in tday but 'es
→ 008       downright bonkers.
009         (.45)

```

EXAMPLE 14. cl-caller; op-emergency operator [v14]

```

000         ((line open))
001 op      .hhh >esoessettet↓två:vainträff↑at?<
002         (.55)
003 cl      >hejdu< ja:h står på en par↓ke°ring°
004         (.35)
→ 005 cl    i gottköping ↓här och de står
→ 006       en bi::l som de ryker (.) ur
→ 007       motorhuven av=å ja befarar att
→ 008       de börjar ↑brinna snart riktit
→ 009       orden[tlitt här a]sså.
---
000         ((line open))
001 op      .hhh >esoessoneone↓two:whsoccurr↑ed?<
002         (.55)
003 cl      >heya< I:mh in a par↓k°ing lot°
004         (.35)
→ 005 cl    here in gottköping an there's
→ 006       a ca::r that's got smoke comin out from
→ 007       under the hood=an I fear that
→ 008       it'll catch on ↑fire here soon
→ 009       I mea[n like real ]good.

```

The two examples above show the callers first responding to operators' opening by acknowledging the identification of the emergency line. They then describe, in the same turn, the event that they feel requires emergency assistance. In example 13, the caller builds up, with some effort, a narration about her sister's (presumably) diabetic boyfriend going "downright bonkers" due to low blood sugar. In example 14, the caller's acknowledgement takes the lexical form of a greeting. It is swiftly produced, and does not leave a slot for the operator to return the greeting. Such design allows the caller to acknowledge the identification without initiating a greeting sequence. The next action of the caller in example 14 is a locational formulation, followed by a description of a car catching on fire – though it could be argued, of course, that locating the fire to a parking lot is also part of the description of the imminent danger (other cars in the parking lot may be a worry), rather than a "pure" locational formulation.

Whereas in example 13, the caller's report contains clues that she (and her sister) may be in personal danger, in example 14 the caller's report entails his declaration of a personal worry

about other people’s property, thus taking on the format of a “good citizen’s call” (Cromdal, et al., 2008; Eglin & Widemann, 1979; Turner, 1969). These and other differences aside, the point we want to raise here is that the reason for the call in the first turns takes the shape of a report of some specific instance of trouble. In other words, both callers show sensitivity to the operators’ routine opening, delivering actions that are conditionally relevant to the query concerning what had “occurred”.

Our next example adds some variation to this pattern:

EXAMPLE 15. cl-caller; op-emergency operator [v13].

```

000          ((line open))
001 cl       .hhh ((deep breath))
002 op       <eso:es:>ettett>två vabar
003          intr;äffat?<
004          (.65)
→ 005 cl     ä:: <ja ha:r väldia (.)
→ 006        bröstmärto:r> >ja vet inte<
→ 007        om ja behöver ha ambulans
→ 008        >>eller om de (räcker me)
→ 009        sån här<< <sjuk-vårds-transport>
010 op       hm
---
000          ((line open))
001 cl       .hhh ((deep breath))
002 op       <eso:es:>oneone>two whas
003          occurred?<
004          (.65)
→ 005 cl     e::h <I go:t a really bad (.)
→ 006        chest pai:n> >I don't know<
→ 007        if I need an ambulance
→ 008        >>or if one of those<<
→ 009        <medical-care-transports> (will do)
010 op       hm

```

Following upon the operator’s opening, there is a brief pause, then the caller starts off with a hesitation token “e::h” (line 5). Compared to the previous examples (13 and 14), this is a rather different way of starting out, indicating thus far in the exchange that the caller is not entirely certain that she has called the right place. She then describes her symptom “a really bad chest pain”, and explains that she does not know what type of medical transportation to ask for.

Clearly, this caller is unsure whether she should be calling the emergency services, and she uses her first turn to explicitly present her uncertainty about her own need for assistance. While this example clearly differs from the two above with regard to the caller’s displayed epistemic stance (cf. Drew, 1991; Heritage & Raymond, 2005), her actions are designed –

through the initial offering of a symptom – to satisfy the operator’s opening query (“>whas occ↑urred?<”) in lines 2-3. With this initial account of the opening actions of operators and callers, we now move on to consider the exchanges immediately following in these calls.

Reason for calling – working out the details

In our first corpus, we noted that, following the callers’ request for emergency assistance, the operators routinely inquired about the urgency of the matter; a questioning practice that typically elicited a report of the troublesome event, rather than a plain confirmation of urgency. In the second corpus – in which callers observably attend to the sequential implicature of the operators’ opening phrase, producing a report of “what has occurred” in their first turns – we find a different trajectory of action, as illustrated by examples 13b through 15b below:

EXAMPLE 13b. cl-caller; op-emergency operator [v30].

```

000          ((line open))
001          ((audible thud at other end))
002 op       essoessetetvå:↑ va↑inträffat?
003          (.5)
004 cl       ja::↑ de ä: en:::↑h >min syster<
005          kuh- kille har så lågt blodsocker
006          att vi får inte ordning påna
007          (.) .hhh flyttade ↑in ida men han
008          e precis toki.
009          (.45)
→ 010 op     ↑m::=lever han om nu alltså↓
→ 011        [eller]
012 cl       [ja:: ] de- han ä precis galen.=
013 op       *↓A:*::↓ (.) va har du för
014          telefonnummer du ringer ifrån?
015 cl       >öh< ↑noll sjunoll↓=

---
000          ((line open))
001          ((audible thud at other end))
002 op       essoessoneonetwo:↑ whs↑occurred?
003          (.5)
004 cl       ye::↑s 'tis: e:::↑h >my sister<
005          buh- boyfriend's bloodsugar got so low
006          that we can't handle im
007          (.) .hhh moved ↑in tday but 'es
008          downright bonkers.
009          (.45)
→ 010 op     ↑m::=he goin ravin is he↓
→ 011        [ or ]
012 cl       [ye::s] it- 'es dwonright mad.=
013 op       *↓Ye:*::↓ (.) whats your
014          telephone number your calling from?
015 cl       >eh< ↑zero sevenzero↓=

```

EXAMPLE 14b. cl-caller; op-emergency operator [v14].

```
000 ((line open))
001 op .hhh >esoessettett↓två:vainträff↑at?<
002 (.55)
003 cl >hejdu< ja:h står på en par↓ke°ring°
004 (.35)
005 cl i gottköping ↓här och de står
006 en bi::l som de ryker (.) ur
007 motorhuven av=å ja befarar att
008 de börjar ↑brinna snart riktit
009 orden[tlitt här a]sså.
→ 010 op [a:::h:. ]
011 (.55)
→ 012 op >va de< (.) parkerings↑plats
→ 013 vicken sa du?=  
---
```

```
000 ((line open))
001 op .hhh >esoessoneone↓two:whsoccurred?<
002 (.55)
003 cl >heya< I:mh in a par↓k°ing lot°
004 (.35)
005 cl here in gottköping an there's
006 a ca::r that's got smoke comin out from
007 under the hood=an I fear that
008 it'll catch on ↑fire here soon
009 I mea[n like real ]good.
→ 010 op [ye:::h:. ]
011 (.55)
→ 012 op >wz it< (.) a parking↑ lot
→ 013 which one dja say?=  
---
```

EXAMPLE 15b. cl-caller; op-emergency operator [v13].

```
000 ((line open))
001 cl .hhh ((deep breath))
002 op <esoes:>ettett>två vahar
003 intr↑äffat?<
004 (.65)
005 cl ä:: <ja ha:r väldia (.)
006 bröstmärto:r> >ja vet inte<
007 om ja behöver ha ambulans
008 >>eller om de (räcker me)
009 sån här<< <sjuk-vårds-transport>
010 op hm
011 (.8)
012 cl .HH: ((deep breath))
→ 013 op höä: h. <har du ha:ft problem>
→ 014 me hjärtat >°förut°<  
---
```

```
000 ((line open))
001 cl .hhh ((deep breath))
002 op <esoes:>oneone>two whas
003 occ↑ured?<
004 (.65)
005 cl e::h <I go:t a really bad (.)
006 chest pai:n> >I don't know<  
---
```

```

007         if I need an ambulance
008         >>or if one of those<<
009         <medical-care-transport> (will do)
010 op      hm
011         (.8)
012 cl      .HH: ((deep breath))
→ 013 op    höä: h. <have you ha:d any trouble>
→ 014         with the heart>°before°<

```

In example 13b, the operator begins to unpack (lines 10-11) the caller's glossing of her sister's boyfriend as "downright bonkers"; example 14b shows the operator trying to solicit a more accurate location from the caller (lines 12-13) and, finally, in example 15b the operator commences a diagnostic interview (lines 13-14) concerning the caller's medical history.

In contrast to the routine question concerning the urgency of the caller's business (cf. Excerpts 5b through 8b), the operators in the present corpus attend to the details of the callers' initial reports, using their second turn slots to tease out further information relevant for deciding what (if any) services should be dispatched. In sequential terms, the operators treat the callers' organisation of "first topic" as relevant to their opening phrase – as an institutionally "workable" first move towards an incipient series of professional decisions.

A deviant case

We have noted that the operators' opening phrase in the second corpus has a more narrow sequential implicature. This is the case in slightly over 80% of the calls, which means that there is some variation that needs to be taken into analytic account. In our final example, the caller responds to the opening query with a request for paramedic assistance followed by a destination – a format that we found characteristic of the 90000-corpus:

```

EXAMPLE 16. cl-caller; op-emergency operator [v12].
001         (.75)
002 op      tch.hhhessoessettettvå:>harinträffat<?
003         (.55)
004 cl      .hh >>>ja behöver<<<ambulans
005         tillhö:::h hhhh. >gårdsgatan<:::eö:::h
006         (.95)
007 cl      >>>salongen<< på< gårds↓ga:tan
008         ledmans↑ga↓tan.
→ 009 op    h↑a:↑::: >>va e de som har<<
→ 010         ↑↑hänt ↑då?
011         (.55)
012 cl      >de ett< ↓↓ö:verfall (.) hh.ja
013         vet inte:hh.ö:::h. (.) hur
014         ↓all↓varlit elle:r .h men han

```

015 e medve- eh- >vid med<ve:tande.

 001 (.75)
 002 op tch.hhhessoessoneonetwo:>'soccurred<?
 003 (.55)
 004 cl .hh >>>I need<<<an ambulance
 005 forhe:::h hhhh. >gårdsgatan<:::e:::h
 006 (.95)
 007 cl >>>the hairdresser's<< on< gårdsga:tan
 008 ledmansga:tan.
 → 009 op r↑i:↑:::ght >>wha' has<<
 → 010 ↑↑happened ↑then?
 011 (.55)
 012 cl >'ts< ↓↓a:ssault (.) hh. I
 013 don't know:hh. ö:::h. (.) how
 014 ↓seri↓ous or: .h but e's
 015 cons- eh- >cons<cio:us.

Upon the caller's request for an ambulance and locational formulation in lines 4-5 follows a pause, possibly resulting from the stretched vowel sounds "eö::h" placed at the end of the caller's turn indicating that the caller is planning for a continuation of the turn ("doing thinking"). As it turns out, the continuation entails a more accurate destination for the requested ambulance (lines 7-8). The operator responds in lines 9-10 with a heavily prosodically marked receipt of the caller's turn, and then asks the caller what has happened. Let us stop to consider the interactional workings of this action.

Our first observation is that the prosodic stretch of the operator's initial receipt token contrasts with the pace of the caller's turn, which contains several fast-paced elements. A possible interpretation is that, insofar as the caller is displaying urgency by temporal-prosodic means, the operator is, at this point, not aligning with the caller. Second, and arguably, the operator's question "what has happened" (lines 9-10) is hearably a paraphrase of her initial query "what has occurred". This hearability is provided for by the terminal tag "då" ("then"), which, together with the prosodic marking of the word "happened", displays the operator's orientation that something has gone amiss in the caller's turn *and* locates the notably absent information to the part dealing with what has "happened". Hence, the operator's turn is designed to manifest the receipt of the caller's actions, and to indicate at the same time that its institutional relevance remains to be established. Centrally, it locates the incident – the "occurrence-happening" – as the procedurally crucial, yet unavailable, information in the caller's first turn.

In light of this, the caller's response can be heard as oriented to the previous omission: he starts off with a gloss ("överfall"; eng: "assault") – a strictly legal term in Swedish – that

provides a very efficient description of the situation. He then follows up with some crucial information regarding the medical status of the victim. The caller's second turn at talk displays his understanding of just what type of information the operator has been pursuing from the outset. More generally, this excerpt shows how operators routinely monitor callers' first turns for descriptions of events, rather than requests for assistance, and how they orient to the absence of such reports as an accountable act, an omission in need of a prompt remedy.

Conclusions and discussion

Calls for emergency assistance provide concrete instances of citizens' dependence and claims on society's official services and resources. In analysing such calls to highlight the internal organisation of the parties' actions, we shed light on the "practical oral production" of one of society's institutions (Watson & Sharrock, 1990, p. 25). The meeting between professional operators – who are responsible for dispatching and otherwise managing the services available in productive and logistically efficient ways (e.g., Artman & Waern, 1999; Ikeya, 2003; Normark, 2002) – with lay members of the public, who unlike the operators often have first-hand information of the incident, has drawn some previous research attention. In particular, the opening moves of such conversations have been identified as crucial points in the interaction, bearing in consequential ways on the continuation of the call (e.g., Garcia & Parmer, 1999; Wakin & Zimmerman, 1999) and, therefore, on the potential success of rescue operations.

In this article, we have been concerned to examine the organisation of opening interactions across two sets of calls to the Swedish emergency services. Our access to the two collections allowed for a historical-comparative analysis of persons engaging in similar forms of institutional business across distinct interactional settings. In this sense, we were able to locate some concrete outcomes of communication design work aimed at enhancing the professional practice of *SOS Alarm* emergency operators (cf. Aakhus, 1997; see also Pettersson, 2001, 2004, for discussions of other design aspects of emergency operators' work). More specifically, the analysis yielded two distinct, institutionalised procedures for responding to the summons as well as their equally distinct consequences for the ensuing actions of the callers.

The presentation of the caller's business upon the standalone identification of the emergency services "*Ninety Thousand*" and "*SOS Ninety Thousand*" typically entailed a request component, often combined with a locational formulation. We noted that both parties oriented to the normative status of a request for a specific form of assistance or service – any omissions of this element were noted, highlighted and rectified in the immediately ensuing talk. We also noted that, at this point in the call, formulations or reports of trouble were neither commonly produced by callers, nor expected by operators. When such reports did occur as part of the callers' first topics, they served as accounts for the request for help. Instead, in the 90000-corpus callers' reports of trouble were solicited through operators' inquiries about the urgency of the matter, which thereby initiated the interrogation series in the call.

As a matter of contrast, in the operators' routine opening phrase "*SOS One One Two, What has occurred?*", the retrospective orientation to the summons is interlocked with a prospective orientation (see Schegloff, 1986, 2007 on sequence interlocking) to the next turn. The conditionally relevant next action (Sacks, et al., 1974), and caller's first turn at talk, is a formulation of the incident causing the caller to seek emergency assistance. Wakin & Zimmerman (1999) observe similar instances^{vi} of opening lines, interlocking the identification of the service with a progression-oriented request for a specification of a caller's trouble. Such a procedure, they suggest, enables a "short-circuiting" (p. 425) of callers' requests for a specific type of assistance, which turns on the assumption that the very act of calling the emergency number may be treated as a request for help.

In view of the two corpora, the openings in the 112-corpus entail another truncation, where the need for the caller's explicit request for service is normatively deleted through the operator's routine response to the summons. The result, in the normative case, is that the opening of the call is shortened by one sequence and that the interrogative series begins with the very first turn at talk.

However, there seems to be more to this than mere shortening of the introductory exchange by a single conversational sequence. What is being truncated, specifically, is a conversational slot which, as we saw in the 90000-corpus, callers typically use to request specific forms of assistance, such as ambulance, police or fire brigade. Organisationally then, by removing this opportunity and replacing it with a direct question about the nature of the incident, the choice

of (type and amount of) response units is shifted to the emergency operator^{vii}, and Extract 16 shows how such caller requests are immediately sanctioned. While there may be several organisational reasons why callers' requests for a specific response activity are of limited interest to the work of emergency dispatchers, the main one perhaps concerns most callers' lack of professional knowledge of response work^{viii}. It could be argued that the caller's request for a specific service may inform the operator about the type of emergency at hand. However, our analysis of the callers' first turns across the two corpora suggests that such information is more accurate and rich in detail when delivered in response to an actual query about the incident.

The second action being deleted through the opening procedure of the 112-corpus is the operators' question about the urgency of the need for help. Strictly from the perspective of the institution, it seems plausible to argue, again, that lay callers are no longer offered the opportunity (or burdened with the task and responsibility) to comment on response speed and dispatch-related priorities. Whether or not this was indeed an organisational concern when the call-taking protocol was modified, our analysis suggests that the matter of urgency *per se* was very swiftly attended to by the callers, who instead used the operator's query to produce preliminary descriptions of the incidents.

In conclusion, through the interlocked design of *identification + incident query* in the opening, such descriptions of emergencies are normatively merged with the caller's first topic. As we have seen, this format seems to promote the progression of the interrogation, and partitions more clearly the responsibilities of the parties, explicitly assigning certain critical decisions to the professional party. Against the backdrop of considerable variation in call openings across emergency rescue agencies within as well as outside Europe, these findings allow us to argue for the potential benefits of designing the call-taking protocol as to allow for the integration of such preliminary institutional concerns within the native organisation of call openings. Such implementation strikes us as empirically well-founded, as well as relevant in relation to the institutional aims, policies, and practical work of emergency centres worldwide.

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Appendix

Transcription notations:

(2.65)	numbers in single parentheses represent pauses in seconds
(.)	micropause (shorter than .3s)
(())	analyst’s comments
[indicates start of simultaneous talk
]	indicates end of simultaneous talk
=	latched utterances
(x)	inaudible word
(xxx)	inaudible words
(drop dead)	best guess
→	highlights a particular feature discussed in the text
:	prolongation of preceding sound
<u>hi</u> there	sounds marked by emphatic stress are underlined
HELLO	markedly increased amplitude

◦ ◦	markedly lower amplitude
* *	hoarse voice
~ ~	wobbly voice
£ £	smiling voice
↑ ↓	rising/falling intonation in succeeding syllable(s)
?	questioning intonation
.	conclusion intonation
-	abrupt halt
> <	embeds talk that is faster than surrounding speech
< >	embeds talk that is slower than surrounding speech
.hh	inbreath
hh.	outbreath
hi; ha; he; hö; hh	varieties of laughter
---01.30---	call progression in minutes and seconds
{~~~~~}	keyboard sound, timed with simultaneous talk

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ⁱⁱ A comment on the translation is in place. Readers who lack linguistic access to the Swedish transcripts may be struck by the selection of the term “occurred”, rather than its more mundane, and altogether more commonplace, equivalent “happened”. The same, however, can be said about the Swedish term “inträffat”, which readers familiar with spoken Swedish will identify as a very formal term, typically associated with language used in bureaucratic settings, written reports, and the like. According to our discussions with SOS Alarm officials, this question was indeed designed to highlight the formal, or official, status of the emergency dispatch agency – to provide a means for “doing authority” at the very outset of the call, so as to direct its future course in specific ways. Whether or not this goal is achieved in actual practice is, of course, part of the subject matter of the analysis on hand.

ⁱⁱⁱ For instance, in the case of the Australian Kids’ HelpLine (KHL), Danby et al, (2005) show how call takers design their opening turn to allow for the caller to enter into the conversation in any way s/he may find suitable. Such a procedure constitutes one of many ways through which the overall policy of the help line – “We care, we listen” – is interactionally produced, that is, oriented to and acted on, in the course of the call.

^{iv} This is provided for by the consistency rule – if one is mentioned (by the opening line) then the other is made relevant.

v Examples 3 and 4 need to be accounted for as well. The operator’s question whether the burglary reported in example 3 is ongoing during the time for the call is clearly also about urgency (among other things). In example 4, the matter of urgency is already inferrable from the caller’s report “kids running on the motorway”.

vi See the Lane County 9-1-1 transcripts.

vii This should in no way imply that prior to 1996, callers were free to chose whatever emergency resources they saw fit. Clearly, all the dispatch-relevant decisions (including the type and scope of response actions) have always resided with the operator. This, of course, only points to the redundancy of callers requesting the dispatch of a particular type of response unit. Having said this, in some countries this choice is explicitly posed upon the caller. For instance, Ikeya (2003) reports from a corpus of 119-calls to a control-and-command centre of a metropolitan fire department in Japan, showing emergency controllers responding to the summons with the following phrase: “Fire Department, fire or medical emrgency?”.

viii Very briefly, such competence involves being familiar with relevant legal regulations (e.g., the requirement to notify police authorities, every time the fire brigade is alarmed), medical issues (e.g., pertaining to dispatcher’s deciding on response priority) or general emergency logistics (e.g., current location of the nearest ambulance which, among other things, has implications for whether or not a more proximate fire brigade unit should be alerted to assist the victims in the meanwhile). It goes without saying that there are many more concerns involved in emergency call taking and dispatch work. Nonetheless, these are actual samples of the type of decisions which operators face in virtually every emergency situation.