



9/11: Attack on the Wires

Call Gapping

Commentary:

In emergencies, dial tone becomes a precious commodity - and there is only so much of it to go around.

Ray Linqvist

When the first tower collapsed, we felt that this required a code blue alert here

Commentary

Code Blue alerts have happened before. Hurricanes, floods, and other natural disasters can trigger them

Ray Linqvist

You stop doing the day to day kinds of activities within the switching machines. We don't want what they call translation changes, routing changes—it uses up the real time on the system, it makes it busy trying to process some kind of other order when it could be processing dialtone.

Dave Johnson AT&T:

If we just allowed all the call attempts going across the network to hit New York City, they'll be no circuits available for people trying to call out of the area and perhaps even more critically there would be not be circuits available for people to dial 911.

Ray Linqvist :

I've never seen calling volumes in the network like this. Probably five or ten times greater than the worse thing than I have ever seen.

Dave Johnson

One of the tools we use in an emergency is call 'gapping'...

Commentary:

With 'Call gapping' a percentage of calls can be electronically blocked at their source - to reduce traffic crossing the network..

Dave Johnson:

We might determine that 'call gapping' 50 is what we want to do. The shift manager will indicate what level he or she wants the call gapping set at and in a few quick key strokes and the call gapping takes effect. 50% of the call attempts would be stopped at the originating switch.

Recorded phone message:

Due to an emergency in the area that you are calling you're call cannot be completed at this time.

Commentary

Millions of callers may end up frustrated or confused by what they hear—it might be a busy signal or a pre recorded message.

Denise Staker:

On Sept 11th I was very concerned because I had family members that were in the World Trade Centre complex and I too could not reach them and I was in the position that was no different than the customer sitting at their home. The call gapping that was implemented would have controlled my calls when I made them from here also. I tried 3 phone calls from here and that was all.