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New Orleans will use AI to answer 911 calls instead of a human



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If you call 911 in New Orleans, you may hear the sound of an [artificial intelligence \(AI\)](#) agent answering your call instead of a human voice.

The Orleans Parish Communication District (OPCD) is changing the way dispatch calls are handled in New Orleans with the implementation of [new technology](#).

The OPCD is currently testing out the [new tool](#) designed to reduce the volume of calls human dispatchers must handle, which is over a thousand emergency calls a day.

Why is New Orleans using AI to answer 911 dispatch calls? Here's how it works

New Orleans implemented AI in April to answer 311 calls for non-emergencies. The AI was trained and programmed to provide information to callers, as the OPCD says 50% of 311 calls are for information, according to [GovTech](#).

AI is now answering 911 emergency calls in Louisiana's largest city and one of the cities with the highest call rates in the U.S.

The OPCD is using Carbyne's AI Emergency Call Triage, with triage being the process of analyzing and prioritizing emergency calls. The AI system assesses incoming calls and can provide immediate feedback to callers.

This is intended to handle the increase of calls that are related to one incident, so callers get automatically routed to an AI agent who asks if they are calling regarding the incident. If the answer is yes, then callers can receive information or updates, and if it's no, then the callers are transferred to a human.

This combats multitudes of calls piling up and taking longer time to potentially answer an emergency call. The OPCD said the AI will not be used to handle emergency calls, only to direct such calls to a human dispatcher.

Potential negative impacts of using AI to answer 911 calls instead of a human

While AI can help with 911 response times and dispatch efficiency, there are risks in relying on an AI bot to successfully handle all emergency calls.

AI-powered 911 triage is programmed to divert non-urgent calls during surges in the number of calls. By dispatchers identifying repeated patterns, like influxes of calls during rush hour traffic reporting accidents, the data is used to train AI to predict such patterns and handle calls related to the same incident.

With human oversight, thorough training data, strong cybersecurity and algorithm regulation, AI 911 triage can work effectively, but AI can be unreliable if not properly monitored and outcomes sometimes aren't guaranteed.

For instance, it's possible AI could develop hidden biases. If AI is used for predictive policing algorithms, generating an analysis for when and where crime are most likely to occur, it's possible for results to be skewed by historical crime data from over-policed neighborhoods and marginalized communities. Based on this, the AI would essentially reinforce systemic racism and socioeconomic bias, according to [Police1](#).

It's also possible that AI agents handling 911 triage could fail to understand individuals with stronger accents and dialects, as well as differences in pitch and articulation. This is because AI is programmed with automatic speech recognition

systems and, therefore, could potentially be unreliable when presented with a speech unlike the ones used the AI is trained to recognize.

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