

- News piece: <https://www.wbrz.com/news/investigative-unit-in-son-s-fatal-wreck-mother-questions-why-it-took-30-minutes-for-help-to-arrive/>

Process and Examination Steps

I began by opening Audio File: Original First 911 Call 01-26-2024_01.35.52.4_-_36_-_HD_E_911_TRUNK_7_(Voice)_67331_TS.mp3 and listening carefully while viewing the wave forms on the spectrogram generated by iZotope RX 11. I observed that this file was 00:51 seconds in length. The first 30 seconds was the Sync 911 Assist recording informing that there had been a crash in a Ford vehicle with options to get location data and speak to the driver. When the 911 operator connected the Sync 911 Assist message ended and she did not hear it. At 00:30.829 the 911 operator asks, "where is your emergency". At 00:33.733 a ghostly voice says, "Help" followed immediately with a distinct "Me". I have attached electronically a 4 second clip of that exchange named "1st Call Help Me.wav.

I then repeated the process using RX11 on Audio File: Original 2nd 911 Call 01-26-2024_01.36.47.5_-_30_-_HD_E_911_TRUNK_1_(Voice)_9045318_TS.mp3. I observed that this file was 00:36 in length. In this case the Sync 911 Assist recording continued after the call was connected. The male 911 operator asked for the location of the emergency while the Sync 911 Assist is offering the options for crash location or to speak with the driver. At 00:22.478 a different male voice says, "Help". A tone is heard likely indicating that the 911 operator selected one of the Sync 911 Assist options. This call came in at 01:36 AM. I have electronically attached an audio file: 2nd Call Help.wav of that exchange.

Discussion

I reviewed the news piece listed above and two parts caught my attention relative to this case. The first was: **1:41 a.m.:** *Dispatch sent a deputy to investigate the 911 hang-up on Nicholson.* I could possibly understand the first 911 operator not realizing the gravity of the situation and recording it as a hang-up. But this call

did not generate the dispatch of the deputy. That could only have occurred from the second call when location data was made available. That call with the Sync 911 Assist recording clearly audible to the operator should have generated an immediate response including EMS services being dispatched.

The second part that concerned me was this:

The Sheriff's Office said they were responding to this incident as a 911 hang-up, which according to their policies, "is not classified as an emergency call due to the frequency of unfounded cases." They say in the past year, they received nearly 15,000 hang-ups and only 26 of those calls were actual emergencies.

While that may be their policy, the second call should never have been classified as a hang-up. It was an automatic response to an accident serious enough to deploy airbags. The operator obviously was aware of that and heard a male voice respond to him yet did not send an ambulance.

The Sync 911 Assist device has been around since 2009. Many other auto manufacturers offer similar emergency response systems when the driver cannot initiate the emergency request themselves. This is not new to the market and understanding how they work should be an essential element of 911 training.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the dispatching of a deputy for a hang-up when the urgency was very clear was the wrong response and inadequate given the knowledge conveyed in the second 911 call. There is no way to know if a proper response would have saved Mr. Whitley but it would have increased that possibility. I am also left with the question in my mind as to how many other similar mistakes have occurred and whether those mistakes cost lives.

