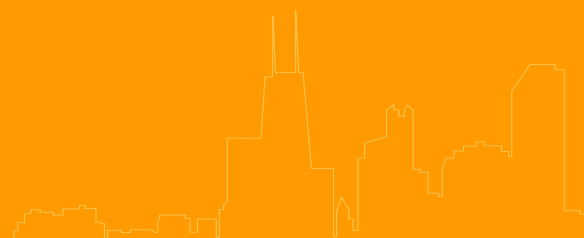




311

CITY SERVICE
REQUEST CSR SYSTEM

MAKING CHICAGO WORK BETTER



CHICAGO'S 311 SYSTEM IS . . .

OPEN FOR BUSINESS:

Chicago's 311 Call Center operates 24x7x365. Its 65 customer service representatives handle nearly 11,000 calls a day. The average wait time for all calls in 2004 was just 19 seconds.

RELIED UPON:

In 2004 the 311 Call Center received 3.97 million calls and the City's Customer Service Request (CSR) System tracked 2.1 million service requests.

RESPONSIVE:

Every operator in the 311 Call Center has been trained to treat callers as valued customers. They have learned key phrases in 25 languages — enough to access a language bank and request the services of a qualified translator — in more than 100 languages.

RECOGNIZED:

The City's 311 system received the Innovations in American Government Award from the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, as well as the 2004 Public Service Excellence Award conferred by the Public Employees Roundtable (PER).

EVOLVING:

Chicagoans can now submit and track 311 requests on the Internet. The system will soon be able to store photos to help document problems. 311 data provides a strategic management tool that continues to transform the way the City functions.

A LETTER FROM RICHARD M. DALEY:



Governing a city is much like managing a corporation. Our primary job is to serve our customers: the people of Chicago.

We have to deliver vital City services to almost three million people. To do this efficiently requires dedicated employees, smart management, and powerful technology. All three come together in the Chicago 311 System — an innovation in which the entire city can take pride.

When Chicago first instituted 311 in 1999, it was viewed as an ideal way for residents to access information and City services. By that measure alone it has proven an unqualified success. Call volume has risen steadily. In 2004 our 311 Call Center received four million calls, and two million service requests were entered and tracked in the 311 system. The system has helped us provide more services to more people than ever before.

A testament to 311's effectiveness is that municipalities from across our nation and around the world have come to Chicago to study our 311 system. They have learned the technology works for large cities and small because it brings government to one constituent at a time.

While Baltimore was the first city to use 311 as a police non-emergency number, Chicago was the first to implement a comprehensive 311 system to provide information and track City services from intake to resolution, in addition to taking non-emergency police calls. Chicago's system is the most innovative and comprehensive in the nation and it's still evolving as we find new ways to use the data.

This booklet contains Chicago 311 success stories confirming that our decision to implement 311 was a good one. 311 has become more than a vehicle for delivering information and City services; it has become a powerful management tool for making city government more effective, more flexible, and more accountable.

Chicago has long been known as the "city that works." Our 311 makes the City work even better.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard M. Daley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard M. Daley
Mayor

THE HISTORY

By 1997, Chicago officials realized that the phone system through which residents requested City services was in need of a major overhaul. Its software, approaching the end of its technological life, was incapable of producing work orders or generating the management information necessary to improve the efficiency and accountability of City departments. Furthermore, Chicagoans were confused by the proliferation of phone numbers used to market various City programs and services — one number for non-emergency calls, another for community policing information, a third for graffiti removal, and so forth. The introduction of a second area code in the city made the process even more confusing.

Meanwhile, Mayor Daley was reassessing City government in terms of customer service and how departments responded to service requests.

“We found that although our system was considered one of the best in the country, it was dependent on an outdated software application,” Mayor Daley said. “And we weren’t using that contact with residents as an opportunity to promote other City services that could make their lives better.”

In short, the mayor wanted a system that would deliver improved customer service, manage resources responsibly and efficiently, and make government more transparent and accountable.

About a year earlier, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) had designated 311 as the national non-emergency number and Baltimore became the first city to have a 311 number limited to police non-emergency calls.

Chicago officials seized on the 311 concept, but took it a step further. Not only would they implement a system that would possibly ease the burden of the police 911 emergency number (which received 3,875,000 calls in 1998) by having 311 as a non-emergency alternative, but they would also establish 311 as the point of entry for callers requesting service from any and all City departments.



311 ON THE FRONT LINES

Fighting crime is an uphill battle. Fortunately, Chicago police don't have to do it alone. Through CAPS — Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy — the City has enlisted more than 100,000 Chicagoans. These are people determined to take back their streets, their schools, and their parks — and they have found a potent weapon in 311.

“The perception that a community is unsafe contributes to the fear that gives crime a chokehold,” said Vance Henry, CAPS' director. “Problems that contribute to this perception — abandoned buildings, overgrown lots, streetlights out, graffiti — are the job not of the police but other City departments. And 311 is one more tool we use to build safe neighborhoods.”

This would have a profound effect not only in making it easier for residents — or customers, in 311 parlance — to request City services (only two numbers to remember, 911 and 311), but also in enabling the department managers and callers to track progress of those requests. In other words, Chicagoans were being offered the same respect, consideration, and opportunity from, say, the Building Department when they placed a 311 call that they would expect when dealing with the police or fire departments.

That accomplished several things. It allowed callers to feel that their voices were being heard, and it motivated City departments to be even more responsive to satisfying service requests. Because if they weren't, the record would be there for all to see. Just as important, it provided an essential tool for City managers to track the type of requests that were coming in and the speed with which their staff responded. Using such measurements, managers could allocate their manpower and resources more efficiently.

The police have access to 311 data, which has led them to realize — and then embrace — the impact other City departments can have on fighting crime and disorder. The police analyze the data, looking for spikes and patterns. For example, a 311 report shows that in 5 days there were 45 calls, reporting that all the streetlights were out on two specific blocks. That can be a predictor of increased criminal activity.

“CAPS people love 311 because it has empowered them to address issues in their communities,” says Beth Ford, deputy director of CAPS. “They report problems, follow up on them, and bring the results to their monthly CAPS beat meetings with the police. Integrating the delivery of City services has made everyone — the police, City departments, and the people themselves — more accountable. And that's the way it should be.”



THE FORCE MULTIPLIER.

Not every call to the police is a crime in process. Often the police must be there just to fill out a report. Now there's a better way: The Chicago Police Department's Alternate Response Section (ARS). Housed at the 311 Call Center, Alternate Response processes more than 20 percent of the Chicago Police Department's case reports. In 2004, it received more than 430,000 calls.

This section also serves a key function as part of the backup to 911.

“The first time we had to go into backup mode, it took us minutes to switch over,” said Lt. Robert Weisskopf, the section's commanding officer. “Now we can move to full 911 capacity in 10 seconds.”

ARS — all sworn, limited-duty police officers — provide bite numbers for every animal bite report, handle auto theft reports, and are now working on ID crimes, setting standards for how it's reported. The important thing is that every call is answered by a sworn police officer. Callers get the same service they would from a beat car.

For example, take the call from Hawaii. While waiting for a subway train, a visitor to the city had been the attempted victim of a pickpocket. Upon returning home, he decided he should have reported it to the police. So he called 311, was connected to a police officer and gave a detailed description of the pickpocket. The report was faxed to the transit police, who began reviewing security tapes from that subway station, looking for someone who matched the description.

“We're a force multiplier,” said Lt. Weisskopf. “One officer here frees up several officers on the street. Instead of sitting in someone's kitchen filling out a report, they're out on the street saving lives.”

HOW IT WORKS

By January 1, 1999, 311 was up and running as an easy-to-remember number to put callers in touch with the vast array of programs and services the City had to offer. Now Chicagoans have just two numbers to remember: 911 and 311. They could call 24 hours a day, seven days a week to report service needs, check the status of previous service requests, obtain information regarding City programs or events, and file police reports.

Fortunately, Chicago's interest in a multifaceted 311 call service coincided with technological developments that made such a system possible. Motorola's Customer Service Request (CSR) System, a powerful enterprise-wide technology platform, drives the system. The 311 technology includes an intake form used to record information from all calls. Responding to each call entails a code for each type of service and a corresponding realistic customer service goal that recognizes organizational demands while meeting customer expectations.

ANATOMY OF A 311 CALL.

A call to 311 triggers a series of events. If the caller needs information, one keystroke gives the 311 representative access to a comprehensive database of City information. If the caller requests a City service, intake screens guide the 311 operator to ask for, and enter, the necessary information.

The CSR system creates a service request, assigns a tracking number, prompts a checklist of steps to resolve the problem, and generates work orders and any necessary correspondence. The system can distribute work orders as printed hard copies, uploads to mobile computers, or wireless transmission to PDAs, pagers, and other portable devices.



WHO USES 311?

Everybody: Chicago residents and businesses. Visitors. The City's service providers and business partners. City management.

311 has become a key access and information portal to city government. Where can I get a flu shot? Are the snow ban parking regulations in effect?

During the August, 2001 heat wave, a man in Sacramento, Calif., was worried because he hadn't been able to reach his relative in Chicago. He wanted to know if she was all right, so he called 311. An operator created a work order. A Chicago Department of Human Services team was dispatched to his relative's apartment, where they learned she was alive and well and out of town. The caller was relieved.

City departments began using 311 to help each other, resulting in unanticipated crossover benefits. Since CSR is connected to more than 300 locations across the city, all departments are able to identify issues and enter service requests to alert their colleagues that a problem exists. Say, a City building inspector happens to spot a pothole. He can enter it on the system and the problem is reported and on its way to resolution.

A diverse set of stakeholders — call center staff, operational departments, local officials and, most importantly, the public, quickly embraced the system. Everyone realized how 311 actually made their jobs easier by providing information and referrals, as well as access to City services and police non-emergency support. And since the 311 system has the same architecture as the City's 911 system, the 311 Call Center functions as an invaluable backup communications center for 911.

“Linking 311 to the City's CSR system took Chicago to another level,” said Ted O'Keefe, director of the 311 Center, who notes that the City has dramatically improved its efficiency and response time. Real-time reports show trends and response times for specific types of service requests and the employees who perform them. It gives supervisors a tool to assign work crews, allocate equipment and monitor performance.



“Every minute counts.”

How important is 311 to the Chicago Department of Housing? Commissioner John Markowski puts it this way:

“We have a program to help Chicagoans with emergency repairs — a leaking roof, a broken furnace and such. On January 1st we received more than 1,700 calls for emergency housing repairs. On New Year's Day! Without 311 to take those calls we would have been swamped. We could not have responded effectively because answering the calls would have been the bottleneck.”

“Take fire hydrants. 311 data told us which ones were consistently being opened. They received locking caps and the police increased surveillance. The problem has been greatly reduced.”

This information allows the creation of reports — on individuals and entire crews — that establish performance benchmarks and specific outcomes. As City agency heads and departmental managers review their 311 requests, they can make informed decisions about necessary changes as well as highlight exceptional performance and accomplishments. This is another way 311 helps Chicago work better.

THE RECEPTION

While the introduction of 311 may, in retrospect, have seemed like a simple matter, it wasn't. Chicago's 2.8 million residents required education about when to call 311 instead of 911. And the City's 40,000 employees had to be convinced that a transparent system, which in effect would maintain a record of their performance, was in everyone's best interest.



The first issue, resident education, was addressed by a comprehensive advertising campaign alerting Chicagoans to the introduction of the new number. In 1999, the first full year of 311 operations, the call center received 2.8 million calls. In 2004, that number was up to nearly 4 million.

City managers came on board just as quickly when they realized that more and better information would assist them in making decisions, would help communicate the work of their departments, and would justify their budgets. Crews were reassured that work orders would be “user-friendly,” and to demonstrate its confidence in the system, the City made the major commitment to train 2,000 employees as 311 operators and administrators in just the first year.

Without highly-trained, professional, courteous operators and administrators, 311 couldn't function. Like their counterparts at 911, these employees in many instances represent the initial point of contact between city government and thousands of residents. Not only must they be familiar with the workings of all City departments, they must also be able to work under conditions of extreme pressure. During heavy snowfalls and record cold temperatures, the 311 Call Center often receives more than 15,000 calls per day. That's a heavy load by any measure.

“They are among city government's most important goodwill ambassadors,” said Mayor Daley. “In many instances, their level of courtesy and compassion sets the standard for what people expect from further contacts with City employees.”

Indeed, customer service is 311's hallmark. The Customer Service Request system, and the people who staff it, don't just listen. The conversation is designed to mine as much information as possible from the caller. When citizens call 311, operators arm themselves with the right questions to pose to the caller, so the service can be delivered appropriately. Then, CSR routes that work order to the department or work crew responsible for fulfilling the request. Additionally, CSR provides vital management data on the timeliness of service delivery.

He then points to another area in which 311 has been instrumental.

“Mortgage foreclosures are at all time high, which is in no one's best interest. People lose their homes. Neighborhoods suffer. The City loses a taxpayer. And the lender loses money. We have a commonality of interest: to keep people in their homes.”

To protect people and their neighborhoods, the department created a program called HOPI (Home Ownership Preservation Initiative). When homeowners face financial problems, they are often embarrassed or afraid to call their lender. So they wait. And the longer they wait, the steeper the slope toward foreclosure becomes.

HOPI works to reverse this trend by helping families get help early in the process, when there are still options available. The program leverages partnerships with banks and lenders to help families work out ways of avoiding foreclosure through repayment plans, loan modifications, or small loans. In addition, counselors can make referrals to local resources, such as the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, the Department of Human Services, Neighborhood Housing Services, and the Chicago Tax Assistance Center.

But the key is for homeowners to call 311 at the first sign of financial problems. That 311 call will immediately connect them to a credit counselor to determine what options are available. That call made a difference to Ruth Gibson, who nearly lost her home of 35 years to foreclosure.

Several years after refinancing her mortgage, both she and her son became ill. The resulting loss in income caused them to fall behind in their mortgage. When her daughter Sheri became aware of her mother's plight, she immediately called 311. By that time Ms. Gibson was a full eight months behind on her mortgage and dangerously close to losing her home. Through HOPI, Ms. Gibson received free credit counseling and, working with the counselor, negotiated a repayment plan with her lender — and she still has a place to call home.

“In 18 months, 2,600 people have called 311 about HOPI — and 800 of them have gone through full counseling and have kept their homes,” said Markowski. “Serving as our gateway puts a tremendous responsibility on 311 operators and they have done a great job. 311 has allowed us to develop a program that's a national model.”

GRAFFITI

It's more than just an eyesore. *"In many neighborhoods it is an attempt by criminals to mark a territory and intimidate the public," states Officer Milton Robles, of Chicago's Police Department's 13th district. "For that reason it is important that the City get rid of it quickly and re-enforce the message that Chicago's neighborhoods belong to our residents and that acts such as graffiti will not be tolerated."*

One of the ways that Chicago stands out is by a scarcity of graffiti in the public way. It's not that Chicago has any less expressive vandals, but for the past 12 years Chicago has had a very aggressive policy of graffiti removal. "Mayor Daley's Graffiti Blasters" have been removing graffiti from neighborhoods, either by painting over it or blasting it away with baking soda and water under high pressure, since 1993.

"What was a good program initially got much better after the introduction of the 311 system," asserts Al Sanchez, Commissioner of the City Department of Streets and Sanitation, the agency that oversees the program. "Through this system we are able to establish benchmarks for crew performance, spot emerging trends as taggers and gang members shift their operations and make informed decisions about how and where we allocate our resources."

Since the Graffiti Blasters Program began, crews have handled more than 1 million calls for service. Had you asked the department in 1998 (the year before CSR was implemented) how long it took to remove graffiti, the answer would have been, *"Oh, about a week or so."* Now, through the use of CSR and the adept management of the program, the answer is 3.7 days, on average. And that's down from 7.7 days in 2001.

When Chicago sees the writing on the wall, we promptly remove it.



CITY LIGHTS

Chicago's 175,000 street lights, 68,000 alley lights, and 2,700 traffic signals are essential, elements of urban life. They showcase the city and deter crime.

Maintaining those strategically placed lights is the responsibility of the Department of Streets and Sanitation's Bureau of Electricity, which last year responded to over 142,000 calls for service, including streetlights and alley lights out.

Managing a workforce that is both responsive to such requests, and efficient in satisfying them, is a major challenge, and one that the CSR system enables the bureau to meet. When public calls for "streetlights out" come into the 311 system, it tracks all requests by electrical grid and address, matching them to a defined area. The first request is tagged as "original" and all subsequent requests are tagged as "duplicates" to the first request entered. In 2004, the City estimates it saved almost \$13 million by eliminating multiple crews being dispatched to repair the same light.

"We realize the importance of public safety and maintaining our streetlights and traffic signals at all times," said Al Sanchez, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation. "Our crews are ready to address all problems. However, we must constantly look for ways to maximize our efficiency and protect the taxpayers."

Commissioner Sanchez has directed that department managers continue to monitor closely the work of their respective bureaus. The Bureau of Electricity closely tracks the output of all employees through weekly 311/CSR production reports that monitor the outcome of all assigned jobs. The 311/CSR system affords all Chicagoans a responsive and accountable local government.



"Our crews are ready to address all problems. However, we must constantly look for ways to maximize our efficiency and protect the taxpayers."

3 VOTES FOR 311

Any governmental program that cuts across traditional boundaries and procedures could have political ramifications. So one question was, how would Chicago's 50 aldermen respond to 311? That reaction has been decidedly positive.

"It has made my job easier," says 12th Ward Alderman George Cardenas. *"It gives my constituents another option for dealing with the City. Every request — from the most basic to the most complex — gets a tracking number. So the constituent can follow up on his own and the City has a better handle on service needs."*

17th Ward Alderman Latasha Thomas: *"It takes the guesswork and problems out of dealing with the City. Before 311 the person had the hassle of calling the City and finding the right department. That's why so many bypassed that route and went right to their aldermen. Some didn't try at all because they were afraid their requests were too minor to bother an alderman with. That's history. Now they just pick up the phone and call 311."*

Picking up that phone just gets easier, according to 39th Ward Alderman Margaret Laurino, who sees 311 as one answer to her drive to bring more efficient services to her ward.

"311 continues to evolve to make it more user-friendly. It provides a management tool we never had before. For example, we can enter a specific address and see all the service requests or complaints related to that address. It allows us to see patterns. Maybe it means there's a person in distress living there and we can provide help. Or it could point to potential gang activity and again we can respond."

Alderman Thomas also likes using 311 as a planning tool: *"The 311 database allows us to create a matrix to tally the areas of the ward where 311 calls are coming from and what services are requested. This gives us better handle on my constituents' needs."*

Alderman Cardenas states: *"Beyond the efficiency of 311, the data it generates is a powerful business tool for planning and execution,"* says Alderman Cardenas. *"311 really restores your faith in the way things should be done."*

Alderman Thomas agrees: *"We're in the 21st century. We should have technology like this."*

THE LEGACY

The success of 311 and its Customer Service Request system has been remarkable. It has won numerous national awards, including the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award from the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. The City used the \$100,000 grant that accompanied that award to prepare materials that explain to other municipalities how the 311 system works. And if imitation is the highest form of flattery, the fact that municipalities across the world have sought to copy the formula is a significant compliment.

In the world of technology, though, the only constant is change. Officials are now working on a number of new enhancements to keep up with the growing demands of citizens and City workers, including making the system available to mobile workers through wireless hand-held computers and developing tools to store different types of media with each service request, such as photos, video, or audio. Also, the City is planning to upgrade the technology to a web-based architecture, allowing more seamless integration with other City systems, such as finance, building permits and inspections, and tax and licensing.



A FINGER ON THE CITY'S PULSE

After 22 people here died of West Nile Virus in 2002, a multi-agency task force looked for a better way to fight this deadly invader. The answer came from an unlikely medical source — 311.

"We found that 311 had logged an astronomical number of calls — almost 4,000 — from people asking the City to pick up dead crows," remembers Dr. Bill Paul, Deputy Commissioner of Public Health.

Since the West Nile infection rate for crows and blue jays is three times the rate for people, it's a good indicator of where the risk is. The 311 database allowed us to plot out locations of dead crows. When the location of the human deaths were overlaid on that grid, the correlation was clear: calls to 311 predicted where West Nile would hit.

"We now had a strategy for fighting the infected mosquitoes that brought the disease to both humans and birds. This geographic risk modeling system helps us determine which areas of the City of Chicago are at elevated risk for outbreaks of the disease. We can then take measures to reduce the threat to the City."

The City encouraged Chicagoans to call 311 to report dead birds. Each such call triggered a pickup by Streets and Sanitation, which coordinated with the City Health Department on whether the bird needed testing for West Nile. Again, the location was plotted. Those areas with the heaviest clusters of dead birds became the strategic target of work crews spraying to kill mosquitoes before they start transmitting the virus.

"Since then, we've had a couple of mild years in terms of West Nile. Tracking made a difference. The 311 data gives us the flexibility to respond on a week-to-week basis."

CONCLUSION

While 311 is of obvious benefit as a method for Chicago residents to request City services and information, it has the added benefit of being an essential management tool. Through 311, the City has developed a formal system for setting objectives, and then tracking and measuring performance against those objectives. That system is based on the following principles:

1. Departments cannot be successful without a core mission, goals, and objectives that are well articulated and well understood by all individuals in the organization.
2. The mission, goals, and objectives of a department will never be reached if they are not measured, monitored, and evaluated.
3. Well-structured systems of measuring and reporting must be in place; data must be timely, accurate, and relevant to the mission and objectives of the organization.
4. The leaders in the department must institutionalize a formal process for reviewing and evaluating performance data with department staff.
5. Upon review of the performance measures, department leaders must take corrective action to make adjustments to the resource distribution, level of effort or focus in the department, or even revision of departmental goals if necessary.

Every City department now receives a performance review to ensure that they are conducting healthy performance management practices internally and are maintaining high level reporting systems. The result is a more efficient, transparent and responsive city government.

MAKING TAXES LESS . . . TAXING.

Say “city services” and most people think of garbage pickup and pothole patching. But taxes?

“Definitely,” says Myer Blank, executive director of the Chicago Tax Assistance Center. “If a Chicago family earns less than \$36,000, we provide free tax preparation assistance and file the returns electronically. Last year, the City helped a total of 17,000 families file their returns and get refunds of nearly \$18 million. The average refund was \$1,700.”

311 is important to Blank's operation — as it is to many City departments. *“It puts callers in the right bucket. It's the link between the people of Chicago and our ability to help them.”* Callers requesting tax assistance are referred to the nearest of 28 tax preparation sites throughout the City.

But the biggest tax beneficiary of 311 has been homeowners. *“Property taxes are very confusing. When homeowners are hit with a reassessment, many want help and don't know where to turn. We needed an entry point that would help us reach these people to explain the assessment and their options. There are things they can do — appeal the assessment, file for a number of homeowner exemptions or senior exemptions.”*

“You have to reapply for exemptions. Some 27,000 people had exemptions last year, but not this year. So we sent them a letter asking them to call 311. So far we've helped 2,000 of these people already. And once we're talking to them, we can do a diagnostic to see what other programs — housing, energy, social services, public health — they qualify for. But we can't help unless they reach out to us — and 311 is the connection.”



BE PREPARED

One of 311's most valuable functions will be most appreciated if it is never employed — as a reliable communications system in a time of national emergency.

“The 311 City Services system is a critical part of the City's 'tool kit' of emergency notification and public information, said Ron Huberman, Mayoral Chief of Staff and former executive director of the City's Office of Emergency Management and Communications. “311 offers an effective path for providing information about the city, state, and federal resources available to the public during and after a disaster.”

While 311 is primarily intended to field calls from citizens for non-emergency issues, it can play a critical emergency and homeland security support role as well. For example, 311 substantially reduces call congestion on 911 by handling the nearly 50 percent of all calls to 911 that concern non-emergency issues, thereby enabling faster emergency response. 311 can be used as backup to 911 in the event of a catastrophic attack on the City's 911 call center. In the event of a terrorist attack using weapons of mass destruction, it's likely that any City's 911 system could be quickly overwhelmed. 311 would be put in place to handle the large volumes of incoming calls from citizens.

Terrorist attacks around the world have demonstrated the importance of communications interoperability — the compatibility of differing systems and the ability for effective information flow to occur — among law enforcement agencies and the constituencies they serve. 311 provides citizens with a trusted source of information and answers to questions during a crisis situation. And it can be used to generate alerts to registered community organizations.

“The information and request tracking system that Chicago has created for 311 City Services can provide the Office of Emergency Management with critical information needed to appropriately deploy and utilize resources,” said Huberman. “It is clear that effective emergency public information can expedite community recovery after a disaster. 311 City Services is an integral part of Chicago's Emergency Public Information Plan.”



CITY OF CHICAGO
RICHARD M. DALEY, MAYOR

DVD

CHICAGO 311

