

VareseNews

Five provinces, one switchboard: every day, 6000 calls to the emergency services

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Five provinces, with a total of almost 4 million inhabitants, all served by a **single emergency switchboard**. For about a month, the 112 emergency operating centre in Varese has served an area that includes the provinces of **Monza and Brianza** (since 1 October), **Como and Lecco** (since 23 October) and **Bergamo, since 6 November**.

Every day, **operators respond to 6000 calls**. The trend is the same as what it was in Varese Province over the two years of testing; **the calls are primarily for the Carabinieri and the Police, followed by the ambulance service and fire brigade**. “The requests for help from the fire brigade are unusual,” explained the **head of the 112 single number service, Guido Garzena**, “because, usually, they occur over a limited period of time, in the case of a flood, for example, when the calls all come at the same time. In these cases, when the 112 lines are all engaged, the call is directed to the number dialled by the user, 115.”

The liveliest province, in terms of requests, seems to be that of Monza where, in this first month, the highest number of requests for intervention were made. **Varese and Bergamo are almost equal**, but there are fewer calls from Como and Lecco.

The service, which allows precise geographical location of the call, and which has interpreters for 10 different languages (from English, to German, to Chinese and Albanian), is guaranteed **by teams of 12 operators during the day, and 4 at night**, recruited from among detached hospital employees. “It’s not an easy job,” Garzena explained. “You need to have a lot of patience and psychological stamina. We’re also working to reduce the average response time to 30 seconds. We have skilled employees, who are also trained to withstand the tension. Over these months of work, we’ve had a very low resignation rate.”

What is the biggest difficulty in managing such a large territory? **“We were afraid of the strong accents, particularly the Bergamo accent. But everything has gone off smoothly.”**

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