



If it all goes wrong..... “Who You Gonna Call?”

The answer will not be found in the 1984 film or the UK number 2 single of the same name.

You only have to look around our club or read Skywings to be faced with the inescapable fact that sometimes things do go wrong. A fellow pilot can end up arriving at ground level faster than desired, doing some serious damage. If you are at the scene, the way that you respond can dramatically speed up the arrival of medical help and improve the outcome for the unfortunate pilot. The “Golden Hour” (the first hour after the incident) has a great bearing on the outcome. The faster the help arrives, the better.

In the UK we have been conditioned for years to call 999. That is still good advice. However, when you are asked whether you need Fire, Police or Ambulance, the answer is possibly not the obvious one.

If the pilot has conveniently crashed within a few metres of a road in a residential area, then “Ambulance” might be the right answer. Otherwise it is better to talk to the Police first. Their dispatch system is more flexible and better able to cope with remote areas. They can bring in assistance from the Coastguard, Mountain Rescue or Air Ambulance, if one of these is a better option.

When asked for the nature of the emergency, use the magic phrases “Remote Location” and “Fall from height”, if appropriate, to get your call assigned to a high priority category. Give your location from a physical hill name as seen on an OS map, or use the GPS on your phone to get coordinates as Latitude, Longitude, an OS grid reference or use the What3Words App.

When using a GPS, make sure that it is reporting your position to within a few metres of error before giving the information. If you have only just turned on your GPS location service, it may take a minute or two for the satellite signals to be acquired. While this is happening the reported coordinates can be a few hundred metres off. That is enough to put the rescue helicopter in a field at the bottom of the hill, which is of little use if your casualty is at the top.

112 is an International Emergency Number, which you can use in the UK. It will connect you to the same operator as if you had called 999. The main benefit comes if you are travelling overseas, when your call will probably be connected to an English speaking operator. This will help with getting your message across.

As preparation for your foreign trip, download the local language pack. (under Settings in the What3Words app). This will display as a secondary language under the English 3 words. You will then be ready to use it to pass a location to a local contact. Do not attempt to translate the 3 English words yourself. Beware that if the local language does not use the Latin Alphabet you may find it impossible to read the local script. Like “можешь прочитать это”!

With huge thanks to Simon Dillworth for this article.