

emergency number

ČTK | 12 FEBRUARY 2010

Prague, Feb 11 (CTK) - Almost 3.5 million Czechs dialled the free European universal emergency phone number 112 last year, but up to 70 percent of the calls were not caused by real emergency, Ivana Svitakova, spokeswoman for Czech firefighters, told journalists Thursday.

According to a survey conducted by the European Commission last year, Czechs have the biggest awareness of the help line from all 27 EU members.

People from all 27 EU members can call the rescue, police and fire services through the 112 emergency number.

In the Czech Republic, 58 percent of people know this, but in Italy it is mere 3 percent. Nevertheless, in most cases Czechs still use the emergency number wrongly. "It is due to malice, error, ignorance or simply mistake," Svitakova said.

However, the use of the emergency number has been falling since 2005. In 2005, operators answered 4.8 million calls and in 2006 over 5 million, but in 2007 the number fell to just under 4 million and in 2008 to roughly 3.8 million.

Along with the European number, the Czech Republic has three national emergency numbers 150, 155 and 158 to call the fire brigade, medical help and police.

The Prague health emergency service said previously people should prefer 155 in the event of serious health problems as the help is provided faster.

The emergency number 112 was introduced throughout the EU in December 2008.

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