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Almost half of Mumbai's 95 police stations unreachable on landline phones

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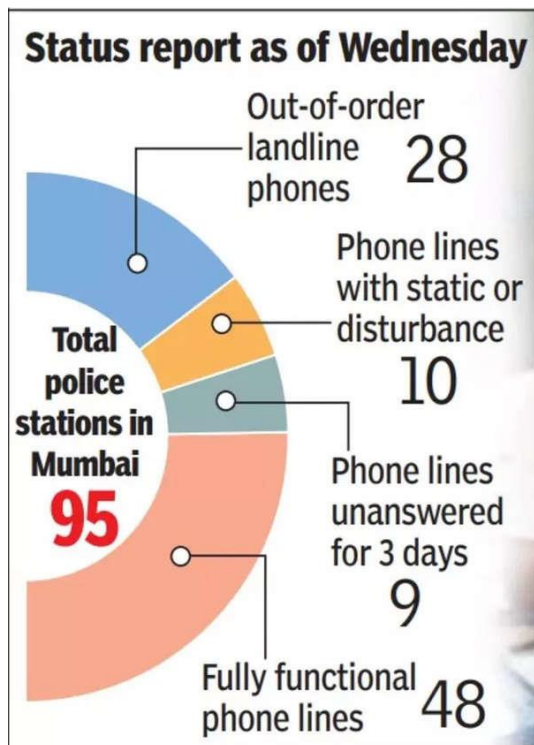


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MUMBAI: Trying to reach your local police station when in distress might not always work out. Out of 95 police stations in the city, almost half were unreachable on their landline phones and in about one-third, the phones were not working at all.

In 28, including prominent police stations like Bandra, Worli and both the coastal police stations, landline phones were 'dead'. Another 10 had lines reporting static or disturbance meaning the cops could not hear the caller at all. TOI reporters called up every police station for three consecutive days and found that phones in nine police station remain unanswered at all times; the reason for which was not clear. Forty-eight police stations in the city had properly functional landlines.

"One cannot dial the emergency helpline '100' for every issue," said RTI activist Jeetendra Ghadge. He had lodged a complaint of cheating but was never able to find out about the progress of the investigation. "One doesn't know if the officer handling the case is on day duty or night duty as the roster changes every week. Whenever I dialled D B Marg police station, the landlines were out of service. It is high time senior IPS officers intervened and got the situation resolved," said Ghadge.



One of the two landlines at D B Marg police station has since been fixed. At some police stations, such as Bandra-Kurla Complex, personnel admitted to TOI that the phone lines were repaired following complaints from citizens and had been non-functional earlier. When asked why some phones went unanswered, cops at Matunga and Mulund police stations said sometimes staff weren't around or there could be overall inadequacy of staff at some places. "No citizen has complained to us (about non-functional phones). Things like these keep happening," said a constable from the Bhandup police station, dismissively.

A majority of landline phones at police stations in the city are MTNL numbers. "I have no knowledge of any largescale issues with Mumbai police's phone lines. Whenever a complaint comes up, we fix it promptly," said Deepak Mukherjee, executive

director, MTNL, Mumbai.

Former IPS officer-turned-lawyer Y P Singh said the concept of landlines has become obsolete and Mumbai police must put up alternative mobile phone numbers on their website for all 95 police stations. "For a basic issue like a tree fall or a minor road accident, it is the local police station that would attend and take action and not emergency number '100'," he said.

Not that getting through to the emergency helpline '100' is easy either. "Operators handling '100' keep you on hold or take time to respond on occasions. Not everyone has access to Twitter to be able to tweet to the police," said green activist Zoru Bathena. Activist Shakeel Ahmad Shaikh, who lives in Mankhurd, said operators handling '100' often ask him to dial '112' instead - Maharashtra police's single point contact for emergencies - as his location is closer to Navi Mumbai. "There's always confusion about which number I should be calling due to my location," said Shaikh.

Joint commissioner of police, law and order, Satyanarayan Chaudhari said the non-functioning phone lines had all been repaired by July 24. But TOI came across out-of-service phone lines even on Wednesday. Milind Mhaske, CEO of non-profit group Praja Foundation, is of the opinion that police station landlines are not required at all. "There has to be a single number for the police, another for civic complaints and a third for the fire department. The police department should publicise '112' which is capable of handling distress calls from across the state," he said. But green activist Harish Pande disagreed. "A local phone number will make work happen more efficiently and use lesser resources," he said.

Link : <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/almost-half-of-citys-95-police-stns-unreachable-on-landline-phones/articleshow/102153179.cms>