

So I'm sitting in traffic in Manhattan. Not moving. In the distance I can hear a firetruck siren and its getting closer. As those around us start to realize that we were in its path, I could see the frustration and even sense of fear in the driver's face as he physically turned in all directions looking for an opening. I'm sure the same scene was played out in every car around us. Fortunately we got out of the way, and the firetruck, was able to pass, although certainly not without a lot of stop and starts and incremental risk to those waiting on its arrival.

So what does this have to do with the internet ?

As our dependence on the net continues to increase, our habits of how we deal with emergencies and critical situations will change as well. Will the habits of our kids push them to think to text a message to 911 rather than try to make a call ? In a widespread emergency, a Text may have a better chance of getting through than a landline or cell phone call. But in our net neutrality universe, how can we differentiate between a call for help in a life or death situation vs some kid texting about what happened in class today ?

As medical care applications that use the net as transport to and from hospitals expand, how can we make sure that the transport of an XRay, a surgical video, or a video conference that could save a life is given priority over some bittorrent porn download ?

The internet has become a utility. We have come to depend on it with out really taking into account the situations where that dependence can be the difference between life and death. While the discussion for the National Broadband Policy is occuring in the fight for stimulus money, its time we take the steps to make sure that we define how to identify packets of bits that can save a life