

Alameda County Sheriff's Office

Emergency Services Dispatch
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P R E S S R E L E A S E

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T E X T T O 9 1 1 D E P L O Y M E N T

Hearing and speech impaired members of the community, or those in a situation where it is too dangerous to dial 9-1-1, have another option as of today to call for help in an emergency – Text to 9-1-1.

“**Call if you can – text if you can’t**” is the slogan developed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as the new technology makes its debut in parts of California.

The Alameda County Sheriff's Office announced today that Emergency Services Dispatch will be equipped to receive and respond to mobile telephone SMS Text-to-9-1-1 messages, effective immediately. This service is available for use by the deaf, hard-of-hearing, or speech-impaired, and in situations where it is too dangerous to make a voice call to 9-1-1. All cellular telephones or devices must include a text or data plan to send a text to 9-1-1.

Today's announcement comes after the nation's four largest wireless service providers, AT&T Mobility, Sprint, T-Mobile, and Verizon Wireless, in cooperation with the FCC, National Emergency Number Association, and the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials agreed in 2012 to provide Text-to-9-1-1 as a nationwide interim solution until the Next Generation of 9-1-1 is deployed. Text to 9-1-1 technology will provide the public with an additional means of requesting emergency services and will provide additional support to the deaf, hard of hearing, and the speech impaired community.

The benefits to consumers are significant, especially in cases when the caller cannot communicate verbally. Examples include not only the hearing impaired, but also when a crime is in progress, the caller is facing domestic abuse, the caller is injured and cannot speak or other scenarios.

Below are the FCC guidelines for how to contact 9-1-1. If you use a wireless phone or other type of mobile device, make sure to do the following in an emergency:

- Always contact 9-1-1 by making a voice call, if you can. **“Call if you can, text if you can’t.”**
- If you are deaf, hard of hearing or speech disabled, and Text to 9-1-1 is not available, use a TTY or telecommunications relay service, if available.

- If you text 9-1-1 and text is not available in your area, you will receive a bounce back message advising, ‘text is not available please make a voice call to 9-1-1.’
- Location accuracy varies by carrier and should not be relied upon. Be prepared to give your location.
- Text to 9-1-1 service will not be available if the wireless carrier cannot ascertain a location of the device sending the message.
- Text to 9-1-1 is not available if you are roaming.
- A text or data plan is required to place a text to 9-1-1.
- Photos and videos cannot be sent to 9-1-1. They cannot be received at the 9-1-1 center at this time.
- Text messages should be sent in plain language and not contain “text lingo” (SMH, LOL, ICYMI) or emojis, which will not be recognized.
- Text to 9-1-1 cannot be sent to more than one person. Do not send your emergency text to anyone other than 9-1-1.
- Texts must be in English only. There currently is no language interpretation for text available. This is still in development.

For additional information regarding Text to 9-1-1, please contact the local law enforcement agency in which you reside.

Press Fact Sheet

What the public should know about Text to 9-1-1

- Only use Text to 9-1-1 as last resort. ***“Call if you can; Text if you can’t”***
- Text to 9-1-1 is a “Best Effort” solution. SMS technology does not provide the guaranteed service as does traditional voice 9-1-1 calls.
- Location accuracy varies by carrier and should not be relied upon.
- No language interpretation currently.
- Calling is Faster. Text messages can take longer to send/receive and may be received out of order.
- Text to 9-1-1 service will not be available if the wireless carrier cannot ascertain a location of the device sending the message.
- PSAP’s in California are not receiving pictures (multi media) at this time.
- If Text to 9-1-1 service is not available or the message cannot be delivered the texting party will receive a bounce back message advising them to dial 9-1-1.
- Text to 9-1-1 is not available if you are roaming.
- Do not send acronyms, short code messages and no Emoji’s.
- In order to Text to 9-1-1 you have to have a current data plan.
- Text to 9-1-1 cannot be sent as a group message.
- If you are deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech disabled, and Text-to 9-1-1 is not available, use TTY or telecommunications relay service, if available.

***It is very important for our communities to know that it is always better to call.
Calling is faster however,
we are pleased that we now have an alternative if a voice call is not possible.***