



WAYNE COUNTY 911
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**News
Release**

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WAYNE COUNTY 911 CENTER ANNOUNCES TEXT-TO-911 SERVICE

9-1-1: Call if You Can, Text if You Can't

Voice Calls to 9-1-1 Are Still the Best and Fastest Way to Contact 9-1-1

LYONS, NY (4/23/2019) – The Wayne County 911 Center announced that it is now accepting text-to-9-1-1 service for the County of Wayne. The four major wireless carriers, AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, and Verizon, are delivering text messages to 911. Customers of these wireless providers can now send a text (up to 140 characters) to 9-1-1 in an emergency.

“This new service will allow our community to contact emergency responders via text messaging during situations when it may not be possible or safe to place a voice call,” said Jon Verkey, Chairman of Public Safety for Wayne County. *“I am proud of our public safety team, and our ability to offer this vital service.”*

Text to 9-1-1 should only be used in an emergency situation, when placing a voice call is not possible: For instance, if the caller is deaf, hard-of-hearing, speech impaired, or when speaking out loud would put the caller in danger.

“This new ability for our hearing and speech impaired, our vulnerable populations, those who have limited English proficiency, and our domestic violence victims is a welcome relief,” said Wayne County Sheriff Barry Virts.

If there is an emergency and you are unable to make a voice call, remember these steps:

- Don't text and drive
- In the first text message send the location and type of emergency.
- Text in simple words - Send a short text message without abbreviations or slang.
- Be prepared to answer questions and follow instructions from the 9-1-1 call taker.
- Don't Abuse 9-1-1. Text-to-9-1-1 service is ONLY for emergencies.
- It is a crime to text or call 9-1-1 with a false report. Prank-texters can be located.

“This was an important project for us. Many other counties in New York State had already implemented text-to-911,” said George Bastedo, Director of Disaster Preparedness. *“We are thankful that we were able to utilize grant funding so that we could offer a stable, reliable, and integrated text-to-911 solution.”*

The Text-to-9-1-1 service does have challenges:

- A text or data plan is required to place a Text-to-9-1-1
- As with all text messages, messages to 9-1-1 may take longer to receive, may get out of order, or may not be received at all.
- If you do not receive a text response from 9-1-1, attempt a voice call to 9-1-1. Even if you cannot speak, the dispatcher may still be able to send help, provided the dispatcher can obtain a valid address.
- Photos and videos cannot be sent to 9-1-1.
- Text-to-9-1-1 cannot include more than one person; do not include other contacts on your emergency text.
- Voice Calls to 9-1-1 are still the best and fastest way to contact 9-1-1.

“Dispatchers are making a difference and saving lives every day. Now, they can have a way to help and serve more of our community, and at times when it is too dangerous for callers to speak on the phone,” said Greg DeWolf, 911 Operations Manager.

How do I text to 9-1-1?

- Enter the numbers “911” in the “To” or “Recipient” field;
- The first text to 9-1-1 should be short, include the location of the emergency, and ask for police, fire or ambulance.
- Push the “Send” button.
- Answer questions and follow instructions from the 9-1-1 call taker.
- Text in simple words – no abbreviations or slang.
- Keep text messages short.
- If necessary, when silence is important, make sure your phone is on vibrate so that the return text sound, or other phone alerts, are not heard.

“I urge the community to use the text-to-9-1-1 service only when a voice call is not possible. Voice is faster, more accurate, and more reliable than a text conversation,” added DeWolf. *“But if text is the only safe method to contact an emergency dispatcher, then please do not hesitate. Our team is ready.”*

Remember, Text-to-9-1-1 service is not available everywhere in New York State and the U.S.
