

## 9-1-1

It is estimated that on the average, every individual in the U.S. or Canada will call for emergency assistance at least twice during their lifetime. Fear and helplessness can be reduced or eliminated by knowing when to call and what to expect when you phone 9-1-1 .

### When to call

- Medical Emergencies
- Fire
- Injury
- Assault
- Crime in progress
- Vehicle Crash with injury
- Suspicious activities

### Do NOT call 911

- For information
- When the power is out
- To pay a fine
- As a prank

## What To Expect When You Call 9-1-1

Typically, a professional emergency dispatcher with specialized training to deal with crises over the phone will answer your call to 9-1-1. Be prepared to briefly explain what your exact situation is. The dispatcher will gather information from you, sometimes while simultaneously dispatching Emergency Medical Service (EMS) professionals to your location. Listen to the dispatcher and follow their instructions.

Most public safety agencies have access to a variety of highly trained personnel, specialized equipment, and vehicles. To ensure that the right people with the right equipment are sent to the correct location, the 9-1-1 dispatcher must ask you specific questions. Sometimes in an emergency, it may seem like these questions are being asked to determine whether or not you need help. In actuality, they are being asked to determine the level of help you need. Remember, trained dispatchers never ask questions that are unnecessary.

### Questions

The dispatcher will always ask you to say the **address of the emergency** and your callback number for verification. Having you say it to them (or say it twice if they don't have a computerized 9-1-1 screen) must always be done to be sure it is heard and copied down correctly by the dispatcher. They know how important it is to do it "right" and not just "fast".

There are four universal questions the dispatcher needs in order to put their knowledge and experience to work for you quickly and effectively after the address and callback telephone number of the emergency have been verified as correct (for medical emergencies):

- Person's problem or the type of incident ("Tell me exactly what happened?").
- Approximate age.
- Is he or she conscious?
- Is he or she breathing?

Getting this critical information from the caller typically takes less than 30 seconds. After that, you may be asked to do nothing, get out of an unsafe environment, or stay on the line and provide any updates.

For other types of emergency responder services such as Law Enforcement or Fire Services, consider the following;

#### **"The 5 W's" Telecommunicators Need to Obtain:**

**Where?** – The location should be the first thing you disclose to the telecommunicator. If for any reason contact with communications is lost, the location is known.

*Tips: Make sure to include apartment number, lot number, or any other information such as the name of the apartment or business when giving your location. If you do not know where you are, look for a mailbox, street sign, or any type of landmark that can give the telecommunicator an indication of where you may be.*

**What?** – The telecommunicator needs to know the nature of the incident, so the appropriate agency can respond. The Telecommunicator may ask for your telephone number, description of person or vehicle involved, if any.

*Tips: Be specific to the telecommunicator of what exactly is going on. Let them know if you need police, fire, or an ambulance. Description of vehicle; color, year, make, model, body style, any other descriptors, and the license tag (CYMBAL). Description of person; race, sex, hair/eye color, height, clothing description (head to toe, inside/out).*

**When?** – The telecommunicator needs to know if the incident is occurring at the present time or if it has already taken place. This is very important to the agencies responding.

*Tips: Give the telecommunicator an approximate time frame of when the incident occurred.*

**Who?** – Law enforcement needs to know who they need to speak with when arriving on scene and names of people involved in the incident.

*Tips: Callers can remain anonymous if requested. If you know the parties involved, please give their first and last name if known.*

**Weapons?** – If weapons are involved, the telecommunicator needs to know immediately. This information is vitally important for the safety of the officer and/or emergency personnel responding to the scene.

*Tips: Let the telecommunicator know what type of weapon is being used. If there is not a weapon involved, still let the telecommunicator know.*

Fire Services questions;

- Where?
- What is on fire?
- Are there Flames?
- Is there smoke?
- What color is the smoke or flame?
- Is the building occupied?
- Are there any hazardous materials involved?

Remember

In all cases, remember the most important thing you can do when calling 9-1-1 is to **LISTEN CAREFULLY**. Always do whatever the dispatcher asks you to do. Don't tell them to "hurry". They already know that. Every question they ask has an important reason. That's why it's in their protocol.

Dialing 9-1-1 On A Cell Phone

The use of cellular phones to activate Law Enforcement, Fire Services or EMS is growing very quickly. 9-1-1 operators will utilize their call processing equipment to help determine the caller's location. It's important to be familiar with your surroundings in order to assist the call taker in getting help to your exact location.

In summary

Simply knowing when to call and what to expect when you phone 9-1-1 can help reduce fear and helplessness in an emergency. When calling 9-1-1, keep in mind that the most important thing you can do is to **LISTEN CAREFULLY** and **DO EXACTLY** what the dispatcher asks you to do. Emergency service professionals are available to assist you through times of crisis, confusion, and distress. Let them be your lifeline.