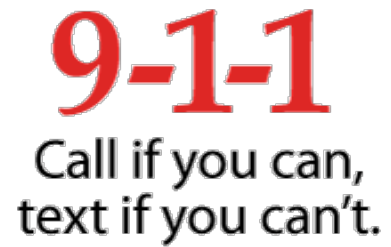


# Text-to-9-1-1 Frequently Asked Questions



**9-1-1**  
Call if you can,  
text if you can't.

## 1) What is Text-to-911?

Text-to-911 is the ability to send a text message from your mobile phone to get emergency help. It may be useful in situations where it's dangerous or impossible to place a voice call (e.g., after a medical emergency renders an individual unable to speak, during a home invasion or abduction, during domestic violence situations, etc.) and also for those individuals who are hearing or speech impaired.

However, using your phone to make a dialed call to 911 is the most efficient (and preferred) way to reach emergency help. If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech disability, use a TTY or telecommunications relay service, if possible.

For Text-to-911 to work, you must be within range of a cell tower serving Carteret County, you must have a text plan, and your wireless carrier must provide Text-to-911 service in this area.

## 2) Is it better to send a text message or make a voice call?

Reporting an emergency by text may actually take longer than a voice call because of all the typing that's involved. This is why we only recommend sending a text message when voice calls are absolutely not an option.

## 3) How do I send a text message to 911?

Here's the process to send a text message to 911:

1. Try to remain calm.
2. Open the message section of your cell phone. (Do NOT use a third-party messaging app like WhatsApp or Snapchat)
3. Type the numbers 911 in the "To" field. (No dashes are necessary)
4. Compose your message with the following pieces of important information:
  - The address of your emergency, as exact as possible
  - The township or borough where your emergency is happening
  - The type of emergency help that's needed
5. Push the "Send" button.
6. Try to remain calm.

After receiving your text message, a telecommunicator will respond to verify your location and type of help you need. They may also ask questions to gather additional information that may be helpful for responders. Please try to answer those questions if you are able.

## 4) Is there a cost?

Your phone company should treat a text message to 911 like any other text message you send. Therefore, normal text messages rates should apply. Check with your carrier if you need more information.

## 5) Who is going to answer my text message?

Our staff of telecommunicators can connect you to police, ambulance, and fire responders 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Your text message comes into our system just like a regular phone call, and our trained telecommunicators will ask you specific questions to get you the appropriate help you need as quickly as possible.

### **6) How will you know where to send me help?**

Most newer cell phones have GPS (Global Positioning System) technology that shows where the phone – and person using it – are located. However, not everyone turns on their GPS because it runs down the battery. Current telecommunications technology only gives us an approximate location of your phone; therefore, it is important to verify details. When you send us a text message, we are going to ask for the exact location of your emergency – things like a house number, the nearest intersection, what township you're in. It may seem time consuming, but it's the most accurate way for us to get you help.

### **7) Will a text message to 911 get me help faster?**

Our telecommunicators answer text messages and voice calls in the order they are received. Text messages do not receive priority.

### **8) What phone carriers have systems where texting to 911 works?**

Currently, Carteret County 911 can only receive text messages from the following phone service providers: AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, and Verizon. As technology advances, the number of participating phone companies will likely increase. Please check with your carrier regarding their capabilities – especially if they share a network with another company. For example, Boost Mobile uses Sprint's network, so Boost Mobile may be able to support text messages to 911.

### **9) How long will it take for my text message to go through?**

Text messages to 911 do not have special priority. Phone carriers treat text messages to 911 like any other text message, so your texts may be delayed depending on the strength of the network in your area and overall text volume being handled on your provider's network.

### **10) What happens if my text message doesn't go through?**

If your wireless carrier doesn't provide Text-to-911 service, you should receive a "bounce back" message informing you that your message was unable to go through. That should happen within seconds of you hitting the "Send" button. There may also be times when a large number of people are trying to make cell phone calls and send text messages all at once. This temporary overload of the system may cause carriers to experience delays in distributing text messages. We will respond to your text message as soon as we receive it. However, if you haven't heard back from us, try texting us again or make a voice call if possible.

### **11) Can I text you a picture or video of what's happening around me?**

As of now, we cannot accept pictures, video, or other attachments in your text messages. To determine what is happening, we will ask you a series of questions. We will depend on you to provide your exact location, the type of emergency, and other important information about the situation.

### **12) Will you be able to respond to text messages in languages other than English?**

While our primary language is English, we have access to translation services, but they are currently only available for voice calls. Right now, users of other languages should attempt to make a voice call instead of a text message.

### **13) Can I send a group text message, like to both 911 and to my friends, so they'll know that I need help too?**

No. Do not send your emergency text to anyone other than 911.

### **14) Will my text go through if I don't have 3G or 4G service? Do I need WiFi?**

3G and 4G are data platforms that allow mobile devices to send and receive data. Typically, text messages (sent by using the phone keypad) work on a carrier's voice plan and do not require a data plan like 3G or 4G. However, some providers may use an app for texting on their phones. These apps may rely on a data plan, and therefore may not work if you don't have a 3G or 4G signal or access to WiFi. If you have more questions, check with your wireless service provider about your device's text messaging capabilities.

### **15) What happens if I'm texting from my car and we travel outside of Carteret County?**

Text messages and mobile voice calls are picked up by the nearest cell phone tower and relayed to the 911 center where that tower is located. If your call or text message originates within range of a tower located in Carteret County, we will be the ones who answer. However, each county has a different 911 center – and that makes a difference on how we'll treat your request for your help.

Voice calls can easily be transferred to other 911 centers. We do it all the time. However, the capability to transfer text messages to other 911 centers does not currently exist. In those cases, we will keep the text conversation going with you, but contact the other 911 center on your behalf and let them know about your situation.

The important thing to remember: As long as you can maintain signal reception, we will be able to maintain our text connection – no matter how far away you travel.

### **16) Why can I send a text to 911 in some places and not in others?**

Carteret County launched Text-to-911 service in September 2015. Most other counties in Eastern North Carolina are working toward developing (or have established) Text-to-911 service, but they are operating on different time frames. It's all part of something called Next Generation 911 (NG911) that's intended to ensure that 911 centers nationwide can respond to requests for help from any device.

### **17) I sent you a text message five minutes ago. Why haven't I heard back from 911 yet?**

There may be instances when a large number of people are trying to make cell phone calls and send text messages at the same time. During these times, your carrier may experience delays in distributing text messages to their intended recipients. We will respond to your text message as soon as we receive it. Because of this possibility, we encourage you to try to make a voice call to 911 first.

### **18) Ugh! Why isn't my text message going through?**

Be sure that you have a text plan through your phone carrier. And also be sure that you're texting us directly through your phone, and not by using a third-party texting app like WhatsApp or Snapchat. If you aren't using one of those apps on your phone, then it's possible that your carrier doesn't currently support Text-to-911 service. You should then receive a "bounce back" text message letting you know that your message was unable to be sent, and that you should contact 9-1-1 by other means. Contact your wireless service provider if you have additional questions.