



## INTRODUCTION

Knowing the difference between calling 911 from a landline phone and calling 911 from a cell phone can make a difference in how long help will arrive. If you choose to call 911, you need to know what to expect and how to react.

## WHEN TO CALL 911

There are specific conditions that warrant a 911 call – waiting too long could have serious consequences, even death. When someone is experiencing one of the following conditions, call 911 immediately:

- Anaphylaxis
- Chest pains
- Unconsciousness
- Confusion
- Drug overdose
- Heart attack
- Heat stroke
- Shortness of breath
- Sudden slurred speech
- Stroke
- Serious burns
- Bleeding that will not stop
- Broken bones
- Head trauma

There may be other conditions that warrant a 911 call. It's important to understand that emergencies are defined by the victim; if you feel you or someone else is having a medical emergency, call 911 immediately.

## HOW TO CALL 911 EFFECTIVELY

Calling 911 can be very stressful and it's easy to feel overwhelmed. 911 call-takers are trained to guide callers through the experience, but knowing what to expect can help make the 911 call go smoothly and get emergency help where and when it's needed.

- **Stay calm.** Take a deep breath and do not get excited. The dispatcher or call-taker knows that you have an emergency and he/she will try to move things along quickly, but under control.
- **Know the location of the emergency and the number you are calling from.** This may be asked and answered a couple of times, but don't get frustrated. Even though many 911 centers have enhanced capabilities – meaning they are able to see your location on the computer screen – they are still required to confirm the information. If for some reason you are disconnected, at least emergency crews will know where to go and how to call you back.
- **Wait for the call-taker to ask questions and then answer clearly and calmly.** If you are in danger of assault, the dispatcher or call-taker will still need you to answer quietly, mostly "yes" and "no" questions.



# CALLING 911

- **If you reach a recording, listen to what it says.** If the recording says your call cannot be completed, hang up and try again. If the recording says all call-takers are busy, wait! When the next call-taker or dispatcher is available to take the call, it will transfer you.
- **Let the call-taker guide the conversation.** He or she is typing the information into a computer and may seem to be taking forever. There is a good chance that emergency services are already being sent while you are still on the line.
- **Follow all directions.** In some cases, the call-taker will give you directions. Listen carefully, follow each step exactly and ask for clarification if you don't understand.
- **Keep your eyes open.** You may be asked to describe victims, suspects, vehicles or other parts of the scene.
- **Do not hang up the call until directed to do so by the call-taker.**

## BEFORE YOU CALL 911 ON A CELL PHONE

When you call 911 on a cell phone, you are sending signals through the air. The tower that picks up your phone's signal may be near, but it isn't enough to tell the dispatcher where to find you. Your call often lands in a regional center and a call-taker in a far-away city or county may answer your call. To get help to you, there are two pieces of information the call-taker needs to know immediately:

- Tell the call-taker which city you're calling from.
- Tell the call-taker what type of emergency you have.



With the right information, the call-taker will transfer you to the right center.

## CONCLUSION

The Federal Communications Commission has required that all wireless carriers be able to pinpoint your location for the 911 dispatchers, but the rule is coming in phases and there are plenty of exceptions. Wireless carriers are also required to complete 911 calls, even when the phone is not activated. Any phone that turns on and can receive a signal is capable of making 911 calls. If you're disconnected from the dispatch center, you must call 911 back.

