



NEWS RELEASE

Bruce Gordon, Director of Communications

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 5, 2017

CONTACT:

[Amber Schindeldecker](#), 651-201-7576

TEXT-TO-911 NOW AVAILABLE IN MINNESOTA STATEWIDE

A direct line to help for those with hearing loss; Alternative when the reporting party must remain quiet to stay safe

ST. PAUL — In an emergency, dialing 911 is a call for help. But people with hearing loss or those who must remain quiet in a dangerous situation aren't able to place a call safely or at all. That's why the Department of Public Safety Emergency Communication Networks (DPS-ECN) has worked with stakeholders around Minnesota to develop Text-to-911 on Minnesota's Next Generation 911 (NG911) network. DPS-ECN announced today that Minnesotans are now able to use the service throughout the state.

An Emergency Lifeline

Text-to-911 is an alternative to calling in an emergency when it would be unsafe for an individual to speak.

"Imagine having to hide from an intruder in your bedroom closet or witnessing a domestic violence situation. Text-to-911 is a lifeline for people who would put themselves in harm's way if they called 911," said DPS-ECN Director Jackie Mines. "Speaking with a dispatcher is still the fastest way to receive help, so call if you can, text if you can't."

A New Solution

The addition of Text-to-911 also means individuals who have some form of hearing loss will now be able to use text dispatchers as a first contact option. Until today, deaf Minnesotans have gone without a direct way to communicate with 911 centers.

"Twenty percent of Minnesotans have some form hearing loss. The communication barriers they experience are frightening when seconds matter most in an emergency," said Marie Koehler, Regional Manager, Minnesota Department of Human Services Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services division. "Text-to-911 offers a solution to that overwhelming problem."

In 2014, all 104 Minnesota 911 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) became connected to the next generation network that allows them to accept texts. In 2017, ECN worked with PSAPS to train dispatchers and test the equipment for the Text-to-911 system. The deployment of Text-to-911 in Minnesota is fully funded by 911 fees collected from all devices capable of originating a 911 emergency telephone call.

Alcohol
and Gambling
Enforcement

Bureau of
Criminal
Apprehension

Driver
and Vehicle
Services

Emergency
Communication
Networks

Homeland
Security and
Emergency
Management

Minnesota
State Patrol

Office of
Communications

Office of
Justice Programs

Office of
Pipeline Safety

Office of
Traffic Safety

If there is an emergency and you cannot call 911, take these steps:

1. Enter the numbers 911 in the "To" field.
2. Text your exact address and type of emergency.
3. Send the message.
4. Use simple words, but do not include abbreviations, emoji's, pictures or slang.
5. Promptly answer questions and follow instructions.

“The physical act of texting 911 is not that difficult, but it’s important that people follow these steps and provide us with the most accurate information,” said Darlene Pankonie, Chair of the NG911 Committee. “If there’s a delay in answering a dispatcher’s questions, or if you don’t tell us where you are, we can’t help you. This will lead to valuable time lost in an emergency and take dispatchers away from other calls.”

Best Practices and Challenges

Text-to-911 comes with challenges. For instance, emergency response may be lengthened due to the time it takes for a text to 911 to be typed and sent. Delivery of texts and speed of delivery are also not guaranteed. Here are several reminders to ensure the best service and response from dispatchers.

- Dispatchers prefer calls so they can get cues from background noise and voice inflections. If you text 911, dispatchers will ask if they can call you.
- Location is not as accurate with texting as it is with a call. Be sure to text your exact address.
- A text or data plan is required to use Text-to-911.
- Texts to 911 will get a bounce back message if you are roaming.
- Texts to 911 have a 160 character limit, can get out of order, or may not be received.
- There is no language translation service for texts to 911.
- Do not text and drive!

The new service should only be used in emergencies. Texting 911 with a false report is a crime. If you accidentally send a text to 911, send another text, or call 911 to let the dispatcher know that there is no emergency.

Remember: Call if you can, text if you can't.

Additional Resources

Information about Minnesota’s Text-to-911 service can be found on the [DPS-ECN website](#). Additional public education materials can be found on our [DPS](#) and ECN online, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#) channels in the coming months.

###

About the Minnesota Department Public Safety

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) comprises 11 divisions where 2,100 employees operate programs in the areas of law enforcement, crime victim assistance, traffic safety, alcohol and gambling, emergency communications, fire safety, pipeline safety, driver licensing, vehicle registration and emergency management. DPS activity is anchored by three core principles: education, enforcement and prevention.

About the Emergency Communication Networks

The Emergency Communication Networks Division oversees the Statewide 911 Program, which provides immediate access from all telephones to critical public safety services. ECN also oversees the Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response (ARMER) radio communications network, the Interoperability Program, Integrated Public Alert and Warning Systems (IPAWS), and a statewide Wireless Broadband initiative in coordination with FirstNet.