



Call if You Can, Text if You Can't: Text to 911 Available in Loudoun County March 1

Beginning this **Tuesday, March 1, 2016**, the Loudoun County Emergency Communications Center will have the capability to receive text messages to 911.

Text to 911 allows people in Loudoun County and all of its incorporated towns to send a text message from a mobile device to 911 instead of placing a phone call.

Public safety officials encourage anyone who has an emergency to place a voice call to 911 whenever possible. "A phone call is preferred during an emergency because the caller can relay important information more efficiently to the dispatcher," says Loudoun County Combined Fire-Rescue System Chief W. Keith Brower, Jr. "The best guidance is to **call if you can, text if you can't**."

During a fire, medical or police emergency, you should send a text to 911:

- 1) If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech disability;
- 2) If you cannot speak due to an injury or medical condition;
- 3) If you are in a threatening situation and a voice call could increase the threat; or
- 4) If you cannot make a call because your mobile phone reception is poor.

In the event of an emergency, the first text to 911 should be brief and include the specific location and type of emergency. When sending a text to 911, the sender should not copy anyone on the text to 911 and not include photos or videos. Currently, translation services are not available within the text to 911 system; therefore, any text to 911 placed in Loudoun County should be in English.

Loudoun County is one of the few jurisdictions in the region that now offers text to 911. If text to 911 service is not available where you are located, you will receive a message from the wireless carrier stating that text to 911 is not available. Instead, place a voice call to 911, or if you are hearing impaired, text Virginia Relay (711) to connect to 911.

Although the county's ECC will have the capability to accept text to 911 calls beginning March 1, wireless carriers have up to 180 days to activate the service. A text or data plan is required to place a text to 911 and standard text messaging charges apply.

You can find more information, including resources for the public to support the county's awareness campaign, online at www.loudoun.gov/text911.

All my best,

Tony

Blue Ridge District Supervisor

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