

9-1-1 Dos and Don'ts

Dial 9-1-1 only for an EMERGENCY

An emergency is any serious medical problem (chest pain, seizure, bleeding), any type of fire (business, car, building), or any life-threatening situation (fights, person with weapons, etc.). You are also urged to use 9-1-1 to report crimes in progress, whether or not a life is threatened.

Do not dial 9-1-1 for a non-emergency

Instead, dial the department at (520) 363-5566. A non-emergency incident is a property damage accident, break-in to a vehicle (when suspect is gone), theft of property (when suspect is gone), vandalism (when suspect is gone), panhandlers, intoxicated persons who are not disorderly, or cars blocking the street or alleys and animal calls that are non-life threatening.

Do not program 9-1-1 into your auto-dial telephone

You won't forget the number, and programming the number invites accidental dialing of the number. Also, please do not dial 9-1-1 to "test" your phone or the system. This needlessly burdens the dispatchers and system with non-emergency calls.

If you dialed 9-1-1 in error, do not hang up the telephone

Instead, stay on the line and explain to the dispatcher that you dialed by mistake and that you do not have an emergency. If you hang up, a dispatcher will call back to confirm that there is no emergency. If you don't answer, a police officer or deputy (County residents) must be dispatched to confirm that you are OK. This will needlessly take resources away from genuine emergencies.

Briefly describe the type of incident you are reporting

For example, "I'm reporting an auto fire," or "I'm reporting an unconscious person," or "I'm reporting a shoplifter." Then stay on the line with the dispatcher---do not hang up until the dispatcher tells you to. In some cases, the dispatcher will keep you on the line while the emergency units are responding to ask additional questions or to obtain on-going information.

Let the call-taker ask you questions

They have been trained to ask questions that will help prioritize the incident, locate it and speed an appropriate response. Your answers should be brief and responsive. Remain calm and speak clearly. If you are not in a position to give full answers to the call-taker (the suspect is nearby), stay on the phone and the dispatcher will ask you questions that can be answered "yes" or "no."

Be prepared to describe your location and the location of the emergency

Although an Enhanced 9-1-1 system will display your telephone number and location, the dispatcher must confirm the displayed address or may ask you for more specific location information about the victim or suspects.

If you are a cellular caller, your telephone number and location may not be displayed for the dispatcher's reference

You must be able to describe your location so emergency units can respond. Be aware of your current city or town, address, highway and direction, nearby cross-streets or interchanges, or other geographic points of reference. Cellular 9-1-1 calls are frequently routed to a central PSAP that could be many miles from your location. Be prepared to give the dispatcher your complete location---city or town, address or location, inside or outside, what floor or room, etc.

Be prepared to describe the persons involved in any incident

This includes their race, sex, age, height and weight, color of hair, description of clothing, and presence of a hat, glasses or facial hair. Be prepared to describe any vehicles involved in the incident. This includes the color, year, make, model and type of vehicle (sedan, pick-up, sport utility, van, tanker truck, flatbed, etc.). If the vehicle is parked the dispatcher will need to know the direction it's facing. If the vehicle is moving or has left, the dispatcher will need to know the last direction.

Be patient as the dispatcher asks you questions.

While you are answering the dispatcher's questions, he/she is entering or writing down the information. If you are reporting an emergency, most likely a response is being made while you are still on the line with the dispatcher.

Listen to the dispatcher's instructions for assistance if you are in danger yourself

The dispatcher may tell you to leave the building, secure yourself in a room or take other action to protect yourself.

Don't hang up until the dispatcher tells you to

Follow any instructions the dispatcher gives you, such as meeting the officers at the door, or flagging down the firefighters at the curb. Give the victim reassurance that help is on the way. Secure any dogs or other pets that may interfere with the emergency response. Gather any medications the patient is taking and which the medical crew will need to take with the patient.