

## Text-to-911 FAQs

### When to use text to 911

- **Call if you can, text if you can't!** Calling 911 is still the best way to report an emergency. Call takers can get vital information more quickly through a voice call. It can also take more time for call takers to respond to a text.
- Text to 911 is designed for situations where you cannot speak safely, such as a home invasion, active shooter or domestic violence incident.
- It is also an ideal option for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have difficulty speaking.
- Just like 911 calls, texts to 911 should only be sent during actual emergencies.

### Who can use text to 911

- The public safety answering points for Novato Police Department, San Rafael Police Department, Fairfax Police Department, and the California Highway Patrol are the only agencies in Marin that provide text-to-911 service.
- Five major phone carriers — AT&T, Comcast, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon — offer text to 911 service to their wireless customers in Marin County. Depending on the technology and the device used, customers of other carriers may be able to send a text to 911.
- A text or data plan with a participating carrier is necessary to text to 911. The type of cell phone you have may also impact your ability to text to 911.
- Text to 911 is not available when roaming.
- The service may not yet be available in other parts of Marin County.

### What to expect when you send a text to 911

- A dispatcher will reply to you by text. Be sure to silence your ringtone if staying quiet is important to your safety.
- If your text to 911 fails to go through, you will receive a bounce-back message saying the service is not available and instructing you to make a voice call to 911.
- 9-1-1 call centers cannot identify your exact location when you send a text to 911.
- Carriers treat texts to 9-1-1 like any other text message. Until the Federal Communications Commission sets specific guidelines, texts to 911 will not receive priority on wireless networks. Emergency texts will also experience the same service speeds and delays as other text messages.

### How to send texts to 911

- Give an accurate address or location as quickly as possible.
- Identify the type of help you need — police, fire or ambulance.
- Be brief, but don't use abbreviations or slang.
- Text in English. Translation services are not yet available for texts to 911.
- Do not copy other people on texts to 911. Group messages will not go through.
- Do not use emoticons or attach photos or videos. Texts with any images or multimedia will not go through.

Texts sent to 911 have the same 160-character limit as other text messages.