



Thurston 9-1-1 Communications

Texting 9-1-1

CALL IF YOU CAN - TEXT IF YOU CAN'T

Text to 9-1-1 is not a replacement to a voice call to 9-1-1 in an emergency situation, but rather as an enhancement to reach 9-1-1 services in specific situations such as:

- The caller is hearing/voice impaired.
- A medical emergency that renders the person incapable of speech.
- When speaking out loud would put the caller in danger, such as a home invasion, domestic violence situation or an active shooter scenario.
- Any other emergency that makes it impossible to speak out loud.



Here are some key points you should know:

- Callers should only use texting when calling 9-1-1 is not an option.
- Using your phone to call 9-1-1 is still the most efficient way to reach emergency personnel. Texting is not always instantaneous, so if it is a life-threatening emergency, it may take longer to receive and dispatch emergency services because of the time involved. When texting, someone must enter the text, the message must go over the network and the 9-1-1 dispatcher must read the text, ask questions via text and text back.
- Text abbreviations, emoticons or slang should never be used so that the intent of the message can be as clear as possible.
- Texts to 9-1-1 have the same 160-character limit as other text messages.
- Providing the location information and nature in the first text message is critical so that help can be sent as quickly as possible, otherwise the only location we would have would be the closest cell tower to you.
- If you are not within range of the towers in Thurston County, your message may not reach 9-1-1.
- If you have Usage Controls, you should have this feature removed to ensure full text to 9-1-1 capabilities.
- Your cell phone must have the capability of sending text messages.
- Text to 9-1-1 should only be used to communicate between emergency help and the texter. No pictures, video, attachment or other recipients can be received by 9-1-1.

Frequently Asked Questions:

If I am able to text 9-1-1, will the 9-1-1 center automatically know my location?

No. When you make a voice call to 9-1-1 from your cell phone, the dispatcher taking your call will typically receive your phone number and your approximate location provided by your phone as the Phase II capabilities which show the closest cell phone tower to your location. However when you text 9-1-1 from a cell phone, the dispatcher does not receive this information. This is why it is important to know your location when texting 9-1-1.

How do I find out if the area I am in has Text to 9-1-1 capability?

You can call your local 9-1-1 center to see if they are prepared to accept text to 9-1-1 messages.

If Text to 9-1-1 is available in my area, what type of wireless phone or service do I need to send an emergency text?

Check with your wireless phone company. In general, you must have a text-capable wireless phone, and a wireless service subscription or contract with a wireless phone company. You may also need a "wireless data plan." Remember you can make a voice call to 9-1-1 using a wireless phone that does not have a service plan but you cannot text to 9-1-1 without a service contract that includes texting.