

Text-to-9-1-1 Is Available in the Commonwealth

On December 14, 2018, Text-to-9-1-1 was deployed across the Commonwealth. This is one of the most exciting changes for accessibility to emergency services in more than 20 years. When a citizen sends a text message to 9-1-1, it will be routed to an emergency call center based on the location information provided by the carrier. For this reason, when a citizen sends a Text-to-9-1-1, they should make every effort to text the town name, address or location that they are located in.

What is Text-to-9-1-1?

Text-to-9-1-1 is the ability to send a text message to reach 9-1-1 emergency call takers from your mobile device.

How Do I Reach Text-to-9-1-1?

When using a texting app on a device, type the numbers "911" into the "To" or "Recipient" field.

What Information Should I Give Text-to-9-1-1?

You should make every effort to text the following:

- **what is happening (nature of the incident);**
- **location including the address/location and town name;**
- **any additional details about the location you can provide** such as landmarks, cross streets, nearby business names, apartment number, floor, room or suite numbers, or any details that may be helpful in locating you.

When Should I Use Text-to-9-1-1?

Texting should only be used during an emergency when you are unable to make a voice call to 9-1-1. **Making a voice call is the most efficient way to get access to emergency services.**

Text-to-9-1-1 will be useful for citizens who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired. Text-to-9-1-1 eliminates the need to use ancillary Teletypewriter (TTY) equipment, or third party services to access 9-1-1.

What Happens Next?

The 9-1-1 professional in the emergency call center will ask you many questions, will assist in sending first responders to the location you identify, and may provide instructions on things for you to do.

Why Didn't My Text Go Through?

Messages sent to Text-to-9-1-1 may not be received. If you attempt to send a Text-to-9-1-1 where the service is not available, wireless carriers provide an automatic "bounce-back" message. Bounce-back messages are intended to minimize the risk that you mistakenly believe that your text was sent and received by an emergency call center. As part of the bounce-back message, you will be advised to contact emergency services by another means.

Text-to-9-1-1 is currently available throughout the Commonwealth. However, across the country, Text-to-9-1-1 may only be in certain locations. **Whenever possible, you should always make a voice call to 9-1-1 during an emergency.**

Are There Any Text-to-9-1-1 Limitations I Should Know About?

Text-to-9-1-1 uses native texting technology called Short Message Service (SMS). Therefore, you must have a text or data plan on your mobile device to Text-to-9-1-1 and you should avoid sending:

- **multi-media such as pictures, videos and emoticons;**
- **a message to more than one person as a recipient;**
- **messages exceeding the 160 character limit, as the messages will be broken and may be delivered out of order.**

Text-to-9-1-1 rules do not apply to the following: third party texting applications (apps) on mobile devices that do not support texting to and from U.S. phone numbers, apps that only support texting with other app users, or texting through social media. This can include message services over WiFi networks, where a text or data plan is not required.

