Frequently Asked Questions and Answers about Text-to-9-1-1

➢ **Voice calls are the most reliable and fastest way to contact 9-1-1**

➢ **Text-to-9-1-1 is ONLY recommended when a voice call is NOT possible**

What is text-to-9-1-1?
Text-to-9-1-1 is the ability to send text messages from a mobile phone or handheld device to 9-1-1 call centers during an emergency.

Can I Text-to-9-1-1?
- It is available in Northern Virginia and Washington, DC
- You must subscribe to your wireless carrier's text or data plan in order to make or receive text messages.
- Text-to-9-1-1 is not available everywhere and is not always available when roaming.
- If Text-to-9-1-1 is not available in your area, or is temporarily unavailable, you should receive a message from the carrier indicating that Text-to-9-1-1 is not available and to contact 9-1-1 by other means.

When should I text 9-1-1?
Text-to-9-1-1 is intended primarily for use in three emergency scenarios:
1. For an individual who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, or has a speech disability.
2. For someone who is in a situation where it is not safe to place a voice call to 9-1-1.
3. A medical emergency that renders the person incapable of speech.
ONLY text 9-1-1 in an emergency *and* only when you cannot call 9-1-1.

How do I text to 9-1-1?
- Enter the numbers "911" and nothing else in the "To" or "Recipient" field;
- The first text to 9-1-1 should be short, include the location of the emergency and what the emergency is.
- Push the "Send" button**.**
- Answer questions and follow instructions from the 9-1-1 call taker.
- Text in simple words –no abbreviations or slang.
- Keep text messages short.

What are the challenges with text-to-9-1-1 service?
- As with all text messages, Texts-to-9-1-1 may take longer to receive and respond to than a voice call, does not provide the location of the texter and could be received out of order, or may not be received at all.
- Voice calls are real-time communication and Text-to-9-1-1 is not.
- Pictures or videos cannot be received by 9-1-1 at this time.
- If you include anyone else on your Text-to-9-1-1 it may not be received by 9-1-1.
- At this time translation services for Text-to-9-1-1 are not available; please text in English only.
- A limited amount of caller data is automatically provided to the 9-1-1 call center, such as the caller's latitude/longitude location. Text GPS location information is not equal to current wireless location technology. The location may only be the latitude/longitude of the closest cell tower or may be the latitude/longitude of the wireless phone it is texted from which may only be approximate in a more urban environment or a large, multi-unit building. People can create a

contact for "911" and privacy set to always allow sharing the location. This should improve location information on where the text is coming from, which may or may not be the location of the actual emergency.

How will I know if 9-1-1 received my text?
- A telecomunicator will respond to the text.
- If Text-to-9-1-1 is not available, you should receive a message from the wireless carrier stating that Text-to-9-1-1 is not available and that you must place a voice or relay call to 9-1-1.

Is there a charge to text-to-9-1-1?
- Standard text messaging rates apply.

Can I text to 9-1-1 in languages other than English?
- The language for texting to 9-1-1 is English.
- Text translation services are not available at this time.

How does it work?
Wireless carriers provide text-to-9-1-1 services in the format requested by local 9-1-1 call centers. In Prince William County it is through Internet Protocol (IP) technology.

Why is text-to-9-1-1 needed?
Text messaging is one of the primary ways people communicate today, especially younger people and members of the hearing and speech impaired community. Prince William County is constantly striving to meet the evolving needs of the public, and that includes implementing text-to-9-1-1.

What are the benefits of text-to-9-1-1?
There are many significant benefits to consumers, especially in cases when the caller cannot communicate verbally. For example, text-to-9-1-1 is very useful to those who are hard of hearing, deaf, or speech-impaired. Text-to-9-1-1 also helps in situations when a crime is in progress; the caller is facing domestic abuse; the caller is injured and cannot speak, or other scenarios.

When will text-to-9-1-1 be broadly available?
Text to 9-1-1 is available in Prince William County. Even though text-to-9-1-1 is available in Northern Virginia and Washington, DC, the best way to contact 9-1-1 will continue to be via voice communications to 9-1-1 whenever possible.

Most 9-1-1 call centers in the nation cannot receive text messages; they can only receive voice calls, about 70% of which are from wireless phones.

Where text-to-9-1-1 is not available, texters in those areas will receive an automatic "bounce-back" message indicating that text-to-9-1-1 is not yet available, and advising to use another method to contact emergency authorities.

Who can send texts to 9-1-1?

1. Members of the public (e.g., subscribers to a wireless service) need to check with their text provider directly for Text to 9-1-1 capabilities. The FCC requires All Wireless Carriers and Interconnected Text

Message Providers to Support Text to 9-1-1 to Requesting PSAPs. The four major wireless carriers are providing text to 9-1-1 service to PSAPs (AT&T, Sprint, and T-Mobile and Verizon Wireless).

2. There is not a single point of reference to check which carriers or other service provider is providing Text to 9-1-1 (Comcast for example has a service to provide text to 9-1-1).

3. SMS (Short Message Service), the primary protocol in use today for sending texts to 9-1-1, is a store-and-forward messaging technology that was never designed nor deployed to provide any time-sensitive, mission-critical service.

4. It is being offered as an interim "best-efforts service" to meet the FCC's near term objective of providing a text-based emergency communications until the comprehensive NG9-1-1 system (e.g. ESINet) is developed, deployed and adopted by the wireless industry, public safety community and public.

5. SMS texting to 9-1-1 will not be available to wireless subscribers roaming outside of their home wireless network.

What is Interconnection and Who is covered by the FCC Text to 9-1-1 Rules:

Who is Covered. Interconnected, over-the-top (OTT) text messaging application providers are those that "enable consumers to send text messages to and receive text messages from all or substantially all text-capable U.S. telephone numbers, including through the use of applications downloaded or otherwise installed." These interconnected providers are now "covered app providers", as they interconnect to the wireless network through a ten digit telephone to deliver the text message through the wireless telephone network.

Who is *Not* Covered. The Order excludes app providers that only support communication with a defined set of users who must all download the same application, but do not support general communication with any text-capable wireless phone. The FCC Order also does not require text to 9-1-1 capability if the device is using a Wi-Fi connection, or the wireless device is roaming on another wireless carrier's network. The Order also excludes text messaging services that only use telephone numbers for administrative or identification purposes, but are not "interconnected."