News Release

9-1-1: Call if You Can, Text if You Can’t

Voice Calls to 9-1-1 Are the Most Reliable and Fastest Way to Contact 9-1-1

The Prince William County Office of Public Safety Communications announced July 24, 2017 that it has begun accepting text-to-9-1-1 service for Prince William County and the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park. AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon Wireless customers can now send a text (up to 140 characters) to 9-1-1 in an emergency. Text to 9-1-1 should only be used in an emergency situation when placing a call is not possible: For instance, if the caller is deaf, hard-of-hearing, speech impaired, or when speaking out loud would put the caller in danger.

If there is an emergency and you are unable to make a call, remember these steps:

Do not text and drive

• In the first text message send the location of the emergency and type of emergency.
• Text in simple words - Send a short text message without abbreviations or slang.
• Be prepared to answer questions and follow instructions from the 9-1-1 call taker.

Text-to-9-1-1 service is ONLY for emergencies.

• Non-emergencies should be reported by phone call or TTY/TDD services to 703-792-6500.
• It is a crime to text or call 9-1-1 with a false report.

The Text-to-9-1-1 service will have many challenges.

• A text or data plan is required to place a text-to-9-1-1
• As with all text messages, messages to 9-1-1 may take longer to receive, may get out of order, or may not be received at all.
• If you do not receive a text response from 9-1-1, try to contact 9-1-1 by phone or TDD/TTY.
• Photos and videos cannot be sent to 9-1-1.
• Text-to-9-1-1 cannot include more than one recipient. Do not send your emergency text to anyone other than 9-1-1.

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Text-to-9-1-1 service is available in Northern Virginia and Washington, DC but is not available everywhere in Virginia and the rest of the United States.

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