

EDUCATIONAL: UTILIZE EMERGENCY CARE

***March State Council
March 19, 2011***

What is an Emergency?

A true emergency is any fire, injury or illness which endangers a person's safety, or a crime in progress. It is life threatening and requires immediate fire, medical or police response. An emergency is something that is occurring right now.

Examples of an emergency are: any suspected or actual fire (get out and call), smoke detector sounding, domestic violence, child abuse, heart attack, suicide, poison, suspected or actual carbon monoxide poisoning, small child locked in car, CO detector sounding (get out and call), burglary in progress, weapon use or gunshots, illegal fireworks being shot into open fields, vegetation or at people, asthma attacks, explosions.

****IN CASE OF FIRE GET OUT OF THE HOUSE AND CALL FROM A NEARBY PHONE!**

What is not an emergency?

If you are not calling to save a life, put out a fire, or stop a crime, your call would be considered a non emergency.

Examples of non-emergency situations include: general police request, minor injuries like a cut finger, calling for the time/temperature or weather/road report, cats in trees, a tooth ache, accident without injury, stolen cars, noise complaints, traffic conditions, pilot light is out, keys locked in car, child pranks, pilot light out, sound of fireworks.

In non-emergency situations you would call the non-emergent dispatch phone number. Please locate this number and keep it by your phone for future use. You would call this number to report an event that is no longer in progress, or where no life threatening situation is occurring, such as a stolen bike or noise complaint. Generally speaking, people are aware that they should call 911 in an emergency, but they are less aware of the circumstances in which they should not call 911. The result is that many

calls to 911 do not involve true emergencies, which creates a burden on the system.

Using 911 Appropriately

Since 911 was introduced in 1968 as a universal number for reaching emergency assistance, efforts to raise public awareness about 911 have been effective. Because most people face emergency situations only rarely, they lack firsthand experience with 911. As a result, they may have unreasonable expectations about what will happen when they contact 911 for emergency assistance. Thus, many public safety answering points (PSAPs) follow protocols that reassure callers and guide them through a sequence of questions and instructions that help call-takers take charge of the situation and to quickly obtain information that is needed to dispatch the right responders to the right location.

When you call **911 DO NOT HANG UP** (even if you accidentally misdialed). Stay on the line and wait for assistance. If you call from a landline, emergency services are sent to your house to check on you. If you hang up and don't need assistance, this can result in delays to true emergencies.

****If you call 911 from a landline and are unable to speak due to the situation, if possible, LEAVE THE LINE OPEN. This can be helpful in other situations, like being in the presence of a suspect and you are unable to speak into the phone. ****

When you call 911 they will ask you several questions. It is important to stay calm. You should know:

- The address of the emergency
- The phone number from where you are calling
- The description of the emergency
- Your name
- Your phone number for future calls to obtain more information
- To answer the call taker's questions precisely and quickly
- You may be asked to stay on the phone to help provide information

Please keep your address by the phone and ask your neighbors to do the same. During a true emergency, some of us would be surprised how quickly we can forget important information, like our address and phone number.

Where are you? Landlines vs. Cell phones

When you call 911, emergency personnel know where you are...right? Or do they? Well, not exactly. Depending on what phone you call 911 from, home phone or a cell phone, will the responders know where you are? Calling 911 from your home phone, which is considered a 'landline' (a telephone connected to the lines on the poles) connects with a computer that then sends the information to our Communications/911 Center that tells us the person's name (that has the phone service), the address and the phone number; however, when calling from a cell phone, all this information is NOT always provided. The information provided by a cell phone when dialing 911 is the phone number and a general location (such as where the tower the cell phone pinged off of), so please keep this in mind when you use your cell phone!

Jurisdictional boundaries also play a part, you could be in Oklahoma City and when you use your cell phone to call 911 your call may be sent to Norman or vice versa. Many agencies are required to ask a caller a particular set of questions to verify information, so please be patient. These questions include your location and phone number and depending on the nature of the call many, many more questions will be asked. Listen carefully to those questions and answer as concisely as possible. The quicker we get the information, the faster help will get to you! Bear with the 911 call takers... you are their eyes and ears on scene!

There are also several phases to wireless 911 mapping that are still being implemented. The goal is to have all cell carriers to meet a minimum requirement of 10 meter accuracy. So when you call we can get to you. However, different providers are at different levels of implementation; just remember, this IS still a work in progress!

Newspapers, TV news and websites have publicized a growing number of cases in which people called 911 to complain about such non-emergency situations as inquiring about parking tickets, asking for advice on cooking a turkey or being dissatisfied with their order at a fast-food drive-through. Inappropriate use of 911 can be expected to continue, or possibly even grow, as 911 services become available through enhanced technologies and via new communications methods such as text messaging.

In addition, public expectations for 911 technology may exceed the actual capabilities of the 911 system, and there may be instances where, for example, people send a text message to 911 requesting emergency

assistance, instead of calling. In such a case, the caller might not be aware that the text message did not go through.

Our centers also receive numerous calls from deactivated cell phones that are handed to children for their entertainment. Cell phones that have no service but have a powered battery, will still call 911. Do not allow your child to play with your cell phone whether it's new or old. If you desire to let your child play with the phone, remove the battery. A large amount of time and manpower is spent on these call types. When a call is received in the center, we must determine a location and a call nature (what type of call it is). When we receive these types of calls we have to hold the line to determine if the call is legitimate or simply a child playing on the phone. Some times this takes minutes to determine and those minutes take an operator away from the possibility of a true 911 emergency. All of these factors suggest a growing need for targeted and well-coordinated public-education efforts.

Every day, dozens of 911 calls are received from the public for various reasons. ****If you are unsure if your situation is an emergency it is okay to call 911. It is better to be safe than sorry. ****

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Resources:

Colorado Springs Communications

Norman Communications Officers: Carolyn Glover, Christian Eisenbeis
911.gov