



Text to 911 Fact Sheet



What is Text to 911?

Text to 911 allows a person to send a text message (SMS) from a mobile device to 911 instead of placing a phone call. To text to 911, simply enter the numbers "911" in the "To" or "Recipient" field, type a brief but detailed message that includes location and type of the emergency, and press "Send." (Be sure to type only the numbers "911" in the "To" field; do not include any punctuation.)

Service in Loudoun County Begin March 1, 2016

Effective March 1, 2016, Loudoun County's new Emergency Communications Center will have capability to receive text to 911 messages. People in Loudoun County and all of Loudoun's incorporated towns may begin sending text messages to 911 when appropriate. Please note, however, that wireless carriers have up to 180 days to activate the service. Individuals with questions regarding their carrier's text to 911 capabilities should contact their service providers directly for information.

Call If You Can, Text If You Can't

Contact 911 only in a fire, medical or police emergency. Public safety officials encourage you to think of text to 911 as a last resort, not the normal process for contacting 911 during an emergency. In other words: "Call if you can. Text if you can't." Calls to 911 are preferred because they are typically more efficient during an emergency.

Know When to Text to 911:

1. If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech disability.
2. If you cannot speak due to an injury or medical condition.
3. If you are in a threatening situation and a voice call could increase the threat.
4. If you cannot make a call because your mobile phone reception is poor.

Text to 911 Capability Outside Loudoun County

- As of March 2016, other jurisdictions currently using text to 911 in Virginia include Fairfax County and York County.
- Most other jurisdictions in the National Capital Region have indicated implementation is likely in 2016.
- If text to 911 service is not available where you are located, you should receive a message from the wireless carrier stating that text to 911 is not available. Instead, place a voice call to 911; or if you are hearing impaired text Virginia Relay (711) to connect to 911.



911 Dispatch in Loudoun County

Loudoun County's Emergency Communications Center dispatches for all calls within the county and within the incorporated towns except for police incidents in the Town of Leesburg. Dispatch for the Town of Leesburg will be equipped to handle text to 911 in the event that Loudoun County must transfer a text to 911 to the Town of Leesburg for response. All dispatchers have been trained recently to handle text to 911.

Dispatching to Neighboring Jurisdictions Without Text to 911

From time to time, Loudoun County dispatchers may have to transfer a connection to a neighboring jurisdiction that does not have text to 911 capability. In this instance, the Loudoun County dispatcher will have to stay on the line as the intermediary between the neighboring dispatch and the person who sent the emergency text. This situation may result in a delay of communication between the dispatcher and the caller needing assistance.

Do Not Text and Drive

Texting while driving is not safe. If you need to text 911 while in a vehicle, be sure you have securely parked your vehicle off the roadway.

Text to 911 in Languages Other Than English

Translation services are not available at this time; therefore, any text to 911 call placed in Loudoun County should be in English.

Facts About Text to 911

- The location information accompanying a text to 911 is not equal to wireless voice call location technology. Remember: call if you can, text if you can't.
- As with all text messages, 911 text messages can take longer to receive, may be delivered out of order, or may not be received at all.
- Text to 911 is not available if you are in a "roaming" situation.
- A text or data plan is required to place a text to 911. Standard text messaging charges apply.
- Photos and videos cannot be sent to 911 at this time.
- Text to 911 cannot include more than one person. Do not copy anyone on your emergency text to 911. Wait until you are safe to notify others of your situation.
- Once received, a person who sends a text to 911 will receive a response from the 911 call center.
- Only text 911 in a fire, medical or police emergency. People who send prank texts can be identified and possibly prosecuted according to local laws/regulations.

Text to 911 Public Information Campaign

- The Loudoun County Public Affairs and Communications Division will coordinate text to 911 public information campaign activities. Subject matter experts include representatives from the Department of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Management's Emergency Communications Center; the Sheriff's Office, and the Department of Information Technology.
- The public awareness and educational campaign will include a news release, media coordination, social media, Alert Loudoun text alerts, the Loudoun County Website, print materials, and internal communication efforts for staff awareness. The county also recommends that elected officials and other partner stakeholders amplify the message through their communication channels, including newsletters and social media.
- For information about the text to 911 public information campaign, or to request print resources, call 703-777-0113 or email publicaffairs@loudoun.gov. Visit www.loudoun.gov/text911 for details and to download and print informational flyers.

How to Help Spread the Word About Text to 911

- Elected officials, Loudoun's towns, nonprofit organizations and other partner stakeholders can help to raise awareness about this new emergency service by amplifying the county's text to 911 messages in a number of ways, including:
 - Sharing or retweeting the county's social media content
 - Publishing articles in newsletters
 - Linking to the county's text to 911 webpage from your website
 - Displaying posters in a public spaces
 - Distributing informational brochures and flyers to your audiences
- Resources to support your participation in the text to 911 public information campaign, which are posted on the county's website at www.loudoun.gov/text911, include:
 - Electronic version of the logo
 - Newsletter article template
 - Printable flyer
- Additional background information regarding national text to 911 efforts are also online:
 - National Emergency Number Association, Text to 911 Resources: <http://www.nena.org/?page=textresources>
 - Federal Communications Commission (FCC) What you need to know about Text to 911: <https://www.fcc.gov/text-to-911>
 - FCC Text to 911 FAQs: <https://www.fcc.gov/guides/text-911-quick-facts-faqs>

