

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 5, 2020

Hearing- and speech-impaired members of the community, or those in a situation where it is too dangerous to dial 9-1-1, have another option as of today to call for help in an emergency – Text to 9-1-1.

“Call if you can – text if you can’t” is the slogan developed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as the new technology makes its debut in parts of California.

Local law enforcement agencies and fire agencies Public Safety 9-1-1 Centers (dispatch) will be equipped to receive and respond to mobile phone SMS Text-to-9-1-1 messages, effective immediately. This service is available for use by the deaf, hard-of-hearing, or speech impaired, and in situations where it is too dangerous to make a voice call to 9-1-1. All phones or devices must include a text or data plan to send a text to 9-1-1.

The nation’s four largest wireless service providers: AT&T Mobility, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon Wireless, in cooperation with the FCC, National Emergency Number Association, and the Association of Public Safety Officials agreed in 2012 to provide Text-to-9-1-1 as a nationwide interim solution until the Next Generation of 9-1-1 is deployed. Text-to-9-1-1 technology will provide the public with an additional means of requesting emergency services and will provide additional support to the deaf, hard-of-hearing, and the speech-impaired community.

The benefits to consumers are significant, especially in cases when the caller cannot communicate verbally. Examples include not only the hearing-impaired, but also when a crime is in progress, the caller is facing domestic abuse, the caller is injured and cannot speak, or other scenarios.

Below are the FCC guidelines for how to contact 9-1-1. If you use a wireless phone or other type of mobile device, make sure to do the following in an emergency:

- Always contact 9-1-1 by making a voice call, if you can. **“Call if you can – text if you can’t.”**
- If you are deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech disabled, and Text-to-9-1-1 is not available, use a TTY or telecommunications relay service, if available.
- If you text 9-1-1 and text is not available in your area, you will receive a bounce back message advising “text is not available, please make a voice call to 9-1-1.”
- Location accuracy varies by carrier and should not be relied upon. Be prepared to give your location.
- Text-to-911 service will not be available if the wireless carrier cannot ascertain a location of the device sending the message.
- Text-to-9-1-1 is not available if you are roaming.
- A text or data plan is required to place a Text-to-9-1-1.
- Photos and videos cannot be sent to 9-1-1. They cannot be received at the 9-1-1 center at this time.
- Text messages should be sent in plain language and not contain popular abbreviations (SMH, LOL, ICYMI) or emojis, which will not be recognized.
- Text-to-9-1-1 cannot be sent to more than one person. Do not send your emergency text to anyone other than 9-1-1.

- Texts must be in English only. There currently is no language interpretation for text available. This is still in development.

For additional information regarding Text-to-9-1-1, please contact the local law enforcement agency in which you reside.

**Contact:**

Oliver Collins, PIO  
Emeryville Police Department  
(510) 596-3700