

# Do's and Don'ts of Texting to 9-1-1

**When** the 9-1-1 number was inaugurated in Haleyville (Ala.) in 1968, it was intended as an easily-remembered, no-coin method of reaching the correct law enforcement, fire and EMS agencies. Today, officials estimate that over 291,000 calls are made to 9-1-1 each day in the United States. Locally, our 9-1-1 Center responds to an average of 250 9-1-1 calls each day.

**Our** 9-1-1 is an Enhanced system. In addition to providing three-digit dialing, no-coin needed from pay telephones and intelligent routing to the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), an Enhanced 9-1-1 system adds the ability to display the caller's address and telephone number from landline telephones at the PSAP for the dispatcher's reference. Any cellular phone can call 9-1-1 for free, but not all cell phones provide the number and location to the dispatcher.

Wayne County began text messaging as part of a pilot program that started in January 2013. Over the past year, many improvements have been made, training has taken place and public safety has worked to meet the May 15, 2014 deadline set out by the FCC. Our agency is available to answer questions or help those with individual needs.

**Do Call 911 in an Emergency.** In general, 9-1-1 is an emergency number to obtain assistance for any police, fire or medical emergency incident.

**Do TEXT** 9-1-1 only for an emergency when calling 911 is not possible, such as if the caller is deaf, hearing-or speech-impaired. If the caller is otherwise unable to speak because of a medical condition (such as stroke), or if speaking would be unsafe, as in the case of abduction or home invasion.

**Do Not text** 9-1-1 for non-emergency situations. Instead, dial the agency's listed 7-digit non-emergency telephone number. A non-emergency incident is one where life and property is not in danger such as theft of property or vandalism. You should also use the non-emergency telephone number for intoxicated persons who are not disorderly, or cars blocking the street or alley. Do not call 9-1-1 to report a power outage – call your electrical utility instead. 9-1-1 dispatchers cannot call a taxi for you - call the cab company directly.

**Customers** must be in range of cell towers in the area. If customers are outside or near the edge of the county, the message may not reach the Emergency Communications Center.

## If You Need to TEXT 9-1-1....

Text to 9-1-1 calls are instantaneously answered by an available dispatcher. However, if all dispatchers are busy on other calls, you may have to wait for the next dispatcher. It may take slightly longer to dispatch emergency services in a

text to 911 situation because of the time involved: someone must enter the text, the message must go over the network and the 911 telecommunicator must read the text then text back.

**Providing location** information and nature of the emergency in the first text message is imperative, since the Indiana communications centers will receive only an approximate location of the cell phone, and will not be able to speak with the person sending the text. Text abbreviations or slang should never be used so that the intent of the dialogue can be as clear as possible.

**Text** sent to 911 have the same 160-character limit as other text messages. Verizon Wireless customers who use usage controls should remove this feature to ensure full text to 911 capability. Wireless customers must have mobile phones that are capable of sending text messages. It is not available for third-party text messaging applications that can be downloaded to the phone or for applications that do not use SMS technology.

**SMS911** should only be to communicate between emergency help and the texter with no pictures, video, other attachments or other recipients appended to the message.

\* **If** the cell phone carrier is not supported by Text-to-911, you will receive a text message stating to call 911.

# EMERGENCY TEXT 911

Communicating with 911  
dispatchers by voice is  
more  
effective than

## TEXT-TO-9-1-1

Using text should be  
limited to:

- When calling is not possible, such as caller is deaf, hearing or speech impaired.
- Unable to speak due to a medical condition. (stroke)
- If speaking is unsafe. (home invasion or abduction).



For more information  
about our communications  
center, 9-1-1 or any of the  
services that we provide,  
feel free to contact us at:

(765) 973-9268

Or send an email to:

[mcain@co.wayne.in.us](mailto:mcain@co.wayne.in.us)

[www.co.wayne.in.us/911/index.html](http://www.co.wayne.in.us/911/index.html)

Wayne County Emergency  
Communications Center  
Non-Emergency Number:

(765) 973-9355



Non-Emergency Numbers for  
Our Partner Agencies:

Sheriff: (765) 973-9393

Jail: (765) 973-9397

Richmond Police: (765) 983-7247

Richmond Fire: (765) 983-7266

Wayne Co. EMA: (765) 973-9399

Need Information and Referral  
for local community human  
services or health services?

*Call 2-1-1*

## Wayne County Emergency Communications

TEXT TO 9-1-1



What You Need  
to Know about  
Texting 9-1-1