

Emergencies need immediate assistance to save a life, stop a crime or report a fire. These situations require a response from emergency medical services, law enforcement, or the fire department.

It is better and faster to reach out for help by calling 911. There are other times when it's not possible to call to get help. If you are in a situation where you are unable to call 911, you can now Text to 911.

Note: If the situation does not require immediate attention, contact the agencies' non-emergency numbers.

Text-to-911

911 processes text messages with the same priority as voice calls, but if you can make a voice call 911 and it is safe to do so, always call instead of sending a text message. Voice calls are the fastest, most efficient way to reach emergency help.

When to Use Text-to-911

Use Text-to-911 if you are:

- Deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability.
- Unable to speak due to a medical issue or injury
- In a dangerous situation where it is unsafe to speak.
- In a situation where speaking may cause harm.
- In an encounter with a suicidal or agitated person.
- Being pressured by peers not to report a crime or emergency.
- Unable to reach 911 by calling.

How to Use Text-to-911

- Never text and drive.
- Type 9-1-1 in the “To” field.
- Include your exact location and a brief description of emergency.
- Be aware of auto corrections, especially when providing a location.
- Stay with your phone and be prepared to answer questions and follow instructions from 911.
- Text in simple words – no abbreviations, emojis, pictures or slang.
- Keep text messages short and concise.

- Silence your phone and disable vibrate and strobe light notifications if staying quiet or hidden is important to your safety.
- Do not assume your text message has been received until you receive a response from 911.
- If you have video, photos or a live stream to share, let the call taker know.
- Wait for the call taker to send you a link; once you receive the link you will be able to share.

Bounce-Back Messages

If you attempt to send a text to 911 and the service is not available, you will receive an automatic "bounce-back" message advising you to contact emergency services by another means. Bounce-back messages are intended to minimize your risk of mistakenly believing that a text to 911 has been transmitted to an emergency call center when it has not.

Limitations and Other Considerations of Text-to-911

Here is some information to be mindful of when texting 911:

- It is a crime to text 911 with a false report. If you accidentally send a text message to 911, send another text message or place a call to let 911 know there is no emergency.
- There is no guarantee of the speed of delivery of text messages, so response times to an emergency may be extended.
- Location is less accurate with text than with a call.
- Texts to 911 may not be received if you are outside Pettis County or along its borders.
- Texts to 911 will get a bounce back message if you are roaming.
- Wireless customers must have mobile phones that can send text messages.
- Usual charges will apply to texts made to 911.
- Texts to 911 have the same 160-character limit as other text messages.
- Texts to 911 can get out of order or may not be received at all.
- Texts to 911 cannot be included as a group chat, and the text will not be received.