

Text-to-911: What You Need to Know

Text-to-911 is the ability to send a text message to reach 911 emergency call takers from your mobile phone or device. However, because text-to-911 is currently only available in certain locations, you should always make a voice call to contact 911 during an emergency whenever possible.

The FCC encourages emergency call centers to begin accepting texts as text providers develop text-to-911 capability, but it is up to each call center to decide the particular method in which to implement and deploy text-to-911 technology.

FCC rules require all wireless carriers and other providers of text messaging applications in the United States to deliver emergency texts to call centers that request them. If a call center requests text-to-911 service, text messaging providers must deliver the service in that area within six months.

To check to see if the 911 call center in your area supports text-to-911, download our list of areas supporting available service at www.fcc.gov/file/12285/download (updated monthly). But even in areas where call centers accept text-to-911, existing voice-based 911 service is still the most reliable and preferred method of contact.

How to contact 911

If you use a wireless phone or other type of mobile device, make sure to do the following in an emergency:

- Always contact 911 by making a voice call, if you can.
- If you are deaf, hard of hearing or speech disabled, and text-to-911 is not available, use a TTY or a telecommunications relay service, if possible.
- Remember that in most cases you cannot reach 911 by sending a text message.

Bounce-back messages

If you attempt to send a text to 911 where the service is not yet available, FCC rules require all wireless carriers and other text messaging providers to send an automatic "bounce-back" message that will advise you to contact emergency services by another means, such as making a voice call or using telecommunications relay service (for persons who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech disability). 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.

Which service providers are not required to support text-to-911?

- The FCC's text-to-911 rules do not apply to text messaging applications that do not support texting to and from U.S. phone numbers.
- Text messaging apps that only support texting with other app users or texting via social media are not required to support text-to-911.

For more information

To learn more about FCC programs to promote access to telecommunications services for people with disabilities, visit the FCC's Disability Rights Office website at www.fcc.gov/disability. You have multiple options for contacting the FCC:

- Via the Consumer Help Center: <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322);

Videophone for ASL: 1-844-432-2275

- By mail:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

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