



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. – Hearing- and speech-impaired members of the community, or those in a situation where it is too dangerous to dial 9-1-1, as of today, have another option 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.

The San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and State Emergency Communications 9-1-1 officials announced today that effective immediately, local San Bernardino County 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. 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.

“We’ve known for some time that this technology was coming. It is great to now see it come to fruition, giving the public another option to call for help when they need it,” said San Bernardino Sheriff John McMahon.

CHP Inland Division Chief Bill Siegl echoed Sheriff McMahon’s words and said, “Inland CHP dispatchers are trained and ready to assist callers who, for whatever reason, are unable to call 9-1-1. While the technology is evolving, it is another tool to help those who are often the most vulnerable in our communities if they cannot call 9-1-1.

Today’s announcement comes after 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 process, the caller is facing domestic abuse, the caller is injured and cannot speak, or other scenarios.

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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:

- If you can, always contact 9-1-1 by making a voice call, **“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-9-1-1 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.

The following is a list of law enforcement and fire agencies that are currently equipped to receive Text-to-9-1-1 for San Bernardino County:

- Barstow Police Department
- Chino Police Department
- California Highway Patrol – Barstow
- California Highway Patrol – Inland Empire
- Colton Police Department
- Confire Communication Center (San Bernardino County Fire Department, Apple Valley, Big Bear, Colton, Loma Linda, Montclair, Rancho Cucamonga, Rialto, Running Springs, Twenty-nine Palms, and Upland Fire Departments)
- Cal State University San Bernardino Police Department
- Fontana Police Department
- Montclair Police Department
- Ontario Police Department
- Redlands Police Department
- Rialto Police Department
- San Bernardino Police/Fire Department
- San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department Valley Control Center/dispatch
- San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department Desert Control Center/dispatch
- Upland Police Department

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The following is a list of Law Enforcement Agencies who are currently equipped to receive Text-to-9-1-1 for Riverside County:

- Banning Police Department
- Beaumont Police Department
- Cathedral City Police and Fire Department
- Desert Hot Springs Police Department
- Palm Springs Police Department

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

Contact:

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