

Text-to-911: Frequently Asked Questions

What is text-to-911?

Text-to-911 is the ability to send a text message to reach 911 emergency call takers from your mobile phone or device.

How does it work?

Text-to-911 works just like you're sending a traditional text message:

1. Enter 911 in the "to" field.
2. Describe your emergency in the "message" field.
3. Include your location information—in most cases, this information is not automatically transmitted!
4. After hitting send, look for a confirmation text message from the 911 call center.

If you attempt to send a text-to-911 where the service is not yet available, you will receive a bounce-back message advising you to contact 911 by another means.

Can I use text-to-911 now?

It is still recommended that you call 911 (via voice, TTY or Relay) in an emergency. That is because text-to-911 is currently only available in select areas. Even in areas where text-to-911 is available, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recommends using it only in situations where calling is not possible. Text-to-911 should be viewed as a complement to—not a substitute for—call-based 911 service.

Do any Virginia 911 centers offer the service?

Yes, currently a handful of centers in Virginia offer text-to-911. There are plans to bring the service to more than 40 additional centers around the state by the end of 2015.

How can I find out if text-to-911 is in my area?

Visit www.fcc.gov/text-to-911 to see a list of areas that currently support the service. New centers are added frequently, so check back often.

Are there plans to make text-to-911 available everywhere?

Yes. In an effort to make text-to-911 universally available, the FCC mandates that all wireless carriers and text message providers must now support text-to-911, and must deliver text-to-911 to any call centers that request it by June 30, 2015. However, it is up to each individual 911 call center to determine if it will implement text-to-911 technology. This is a huge undertaking that may not be a priority for some centers.

How can I help bring text-to-911 to my area?

To encourage more 911 call centers to implement text-to-911, please visit your local 911 call center. Explain to the staff that text-to-911 should be a priority because it will make 911 more accessible to people who have difficulty hearing and/or speaking over the phone.

You can also provide feedback to the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) Wireless E-911 Board, which depends on input from citizens like you. Please consider attending a meeting and offering your comments. Visit www.vita.virginia.gov/isp and click on "E-911 Board" to see a schedule of upcoming meetings.



In an emergency, CALL 911 first!
Voice | TTY | Relay

Text-to-911 is not available in all areas and, when available, should only be used as a last resort.



To speak to a Virginia Relay specialist and learn more:
1-800-552-7917 (voice/TTY) | frontdesk@vddhh.virginia.gov | www.VARelay.org