MAKING 9-1-1 WORK FOR YOU!

THINGS **EVERYONE** NEEDS TO KNOW

An informed caller is 9-1-1's best caller. It's important that you know how to help 9-1-1 help you. In an emergency, seconds matter, so being knowledgeable and prepared can make all the difference. Here's what you can do:

Know WHEN to call 9-1-1. 9-1-1 is for emergencies only. You should only be dialing 9-1-1 if someone is hurt or in danger, or if you are in immediate need of police, fire, or medical assistance. If you aren't sure if your situation is an emergency, you should err on the side of safety and call 9-1-1 and let the expert who answers your call make the decision whether to send help or not.

Know WHEN NOT to call 9-1-1. Don't call 9-1-1 just because you burned dinner and your guests are arriving any minute, or because you are late for a meeting and need help finding an address. While those situations may count as emergencies for you, they aren't for public safety. Inappropriate use of the 9-1-1 system wastes resources and ties up the lines at the 9-1-1 center, and nobody wants to be on hold when they are in the middle of a real crisis. Not to mention that in most states harassing or making prank calls to 9-1-1 is a crime, and you don't want law enforcement showing up at your door.

Know the capabilities of the device you are using. 9-1-1 can be contacted from pretty much every device that can make phone calls (traditional landline, cell, VoIP), but the callback and location information that accompanies your call to the 9-1-1 center can vary drastically amongst technologies and between geographic regions. 9-1-1 and telecommunications professionals are hard at work to make sure 9-1-1 works the same on all devices in the future, but until then it is your job to be knowledgeable about benefits and limitations associated with various technologies. Contact your service provider(s) for more information.

Know where you are. This is probably the most important information you can provide as a 9-1-1 caller, so try to be aware of your surroundings. Make a real effort to be as detailed as possible. If you are outside and don't know the street address, take a look around and try to find landmarks or cross streets. If you are inside a large building or one with multiple levels, you can help emergency services by letting them know which floor you are on, which apartment you are in, etc.

Stay calm. When you are on the phone with 9-1-1, you are their eyes and ears. Even though you may want to, try not to panic. If you are crying or yelling, it can be hard for the 9-1-1 operator to understand you. If you are able to stay strong, pull yourself together, and answer all of the 9-1-1 operator's questions, the faster they can get the right services to your location.

Never hang up. You may have called 9-1-1 by accident, or your situation may have resolved itself, but it is important to let the 9-1-1 operator know this. If you end the call abruptly, the folks at the 9-1-1 center are going to assume that something has gone very wrong and will either call you back or send help anyway. This will take away from the 9-1-1 center's ability to take calls and dispatch services to on-going emergencies, so make sure the 9-1-1 call taker tells you it is ok to disconnect before you hang up. And keep in mind that the call taker can dispatch responders to your location without disconnecting from the call, so, until you are instructed to do otherwise, make sure to hold the line so that you can provide any necessary information or assistance to the 9-1-1 operator.

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THINGS **PARENTS** NEED TO KNOW

There are many things a parent can do to ensure their family's safety. Adequately preparing your home and teaching children how to use 9-1-1 properly from an early age may one day save a life. If you are unsure where to begin, here are a few of the key things you can do and messages you can relay to youngsters to ensure that your household is prepared should a call for help ever have to be made:

Post your address clearly and prominently in multiple locations. Having your address easily visible at the end of your driveway AND on your home itself will ensure that first responders aren't left wondering if they are at the right location. Make sure that you use numbering and lettering that can be seen during the day or night, and are visible no matter which direction you are coming from. Many cities and counties have ordinances that will give you direction on how to post your address properly, so be sure to check with local authorities for more information.

Report missing street signs in your neighborhood immediately. Making sure that your neighborhood has all the proper signage not only helps friends and family find your home, but it can be crucial during an emergency situation and time is of the essence.

Don't let your kids play with old cell phones. Many people don't know this, but the law mandates that even old, deactivated cell phones with no associated service plan must still be able to call 9-1-1. An old cell phone may seem to be the perfect free toy, but giving your seemingly useless device to a youngster may lead to problems. So, if you want to turn that old phone you have laying around into a plaything, be sure to remove the battery before turning it over to your inquisitive youngster. Better yet, consider donating any unwanted retired wireless devices to a charitable program that can safely recycle them.

Know the capabilities of the devices your family uses. 9-1-1 can be contacted from pretty much every device that can make phone calls (traditional landline, cell, VoIP), but the callback and location information that accompanies your call to the 9-1-1 center can vary drastically amongst technologies and between regions. It is your job to be knowledgeable about the devices your family could use to call 9-1-1, as well as the potential limitations that may be associated with them. Contact your service provider(s) for more information.

Teach your kids what 9-1-1 is. Let them know that 9-1-1 is the number to call when they need help or they see someone who needs help right away.

Teach your kids when to call 9-1-1. It is important that children learn that there are specific times when calling 9-1-1 is the right thing to do. Let them know that they should only call when someone or something is hurt or in danger or if they need a police officer, a firefighter, or a doctor.

Practice makes perfect. Help your kids memorize information that will be useful to 9-1-1 call takers, such as their name, their parents' names, their address, and their phone number. The more comfortable they are, the more quickly they can provide vital information to the 9-1-1 call taker who can then dispatch the appropriate responders to the location.

Engage in ongoing, age appropriate training. Once is never enough, as they say, and your job isn't done after your kids understand the basics. As the years pass, technology will change and so will your child's capacity for providing crucial details to the 9-1-1 call taker. It is up to you to make sure that they are knowledgeable about the features and capabilities of the 9-1-1 system and that they are ready to provide the most detailed and useful information possible when they call 9-1-1.

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MAKING 9-1-1 WORK FOR YOU!

THINGS **TEENS** NEED TO KNOW

An informed caller is 9-1-1's best caller. It's important that you know how to help 9-1-1 help you. In an emergency, seconds matter, so being knowledgeable and prepared can make all the difference. Here's what you can do:

Know WHEN to call 9-1-1. 9-1-1 is for emergencies only. You should only be dialing 9-1-1 if someone is hurt or in danger, or if you are in immediate need of police, fire, or medical assistance. If you aren't sure if your situation is an emergency, you should err on the side of safety and call 9-1-1 and let the expert who answers your call make the decision whether to send help or not.

Know WHEN NOT to call 9-1-1. Don't call 9-1-1 just because you are late for a date and need help finding the restaurant or because tickets to the movie you want to see are sold out. While these may be emergencies for you, they aren't for public safety. Inappropriate use of the 9-1-1 system wastes resources and ties up the lines at the 9-1-1 center, and nobody wants to be on hold when they are in the middle of a real crisis.

Making prank calls to 9-1-1 is a very bad idea. It may seem like fun to dial a free, easy to remember number like 9-1-1 to tell a joke or have the police sent to someone's house just to "see what happens," but take our word for it: this is not something you should do. First, the 9-1-1 center will know your callback number and your location. Second, you will be using up resources that are needed to help real people in real trouble. And, finally, if you think your parents will be mad when they find out what you have done, just wait until the annoyed 6'4" police officer shows up at your house to inform you that you have committed a crime.

9-1-1 is not as cool as you are. Yet. We know that you do most of your communicating by text message and instant message, but you can NOT text or IM "9-1-1" to reach emergency services. 9-1-1 and telecommunications professionals are busy in the lab trying to make that possible, but for now you will have to make an old fashioned phone call if you want to talk to 9-1-1.

Know where you are. This is probably the most important information you can provide as a 9-1-1 caller, so try to be aware of your surroundings. Make a real effort to be as detailed as possible. If you are outside and don't know the street address, take a look around and try to find landmarks or cross streets. If you are inside a large building or one with multiple levels, you can help emergency services by letting them know which floor you are on, which apartment you are in, etc.

Stay calm. When you are on the phone with 9-1-1, you are their eyes and ears. Even though you may want to, try not to panic. If you are crying or yelling, it can be hard for the 9-1-1 operator to understand you. If you are able to stay strong, pull yourself together, and answer all of the 9-1-1 operator's questions, the faster they can get the right services to your location.

Never hang up. You may have called 9-1-1 by accident, or your situation may have resolved itself, but it is important to let the 9-1-1 operator know this. If you end the call abruptly, the folks at the 9-1-1 center are going to assume that something has gone very wrong and will either call you back or send help anyway. This will take away from the 9-1-1 center's ability to take calls and dispatch services to on-ging emergencies, so make sure the 9-1-1 call taker tells you it is ok to disconnect before you hang up. And keep in mind that the call taker can dispatch responders to your location without disconnecting from the call, so, until you are instructed to do otherwise, make sure to hold the line so that you can provide any necessary information or assistance to the 9-1-1 operator.

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