



Text-to-9-1-1 Now Available in DeSoto County



“9-1-1”: Call if You Can, Text if You Can’t!

DeSoto County residents who have trouble with hearing or are in situations that don’t allow them to speak with a 911 Telecommunicator will now have the ability to send a text message to 911 for help.

Text-to-9-1-1 is a service that allows citizens to send a text message directly to 9-1-1 for assistance in the event they are unable to make a voice call. Simply send a text as you would normally. In the recipient field enter 911, compose the message and push send. Once your text is sent, the 9-1-1 system will send an automated message asking the individual texting “Where is your emergency”. This starts the text session between a 911 Telecommunicator and the individual needing emergency help.

Text-to-9-1-1 should only be used in the event that someone is unable to hear or speak. This could be a hearing-impaired individual that does not have access to a TTY/TDD (Teletypewriter for the hearing-impaired) or a person reporting a crime that is in a situation where they might be put in danger by being heard when making a voice call, such as an intruder in your home.

Text-to-9-1-1 has some limitations and therefore making a voice call when possible is always the best option. Listed below are several tips to remember when texting 9-1-1:

- Providing the address of the emergency is the most important information you can provide in an emergency. Text-to-911 service may not pinpoint the location of text messages.
- You should use simple language, no abbreviations, shortcuts or slang. Using abbreviations can hinder the meaning of the message. You must not use emoticons (emoji’s) !
- When texting 9-1-1, do not add other individuals to the text. Do not include videos or photos in your texts.
- When sending a Text-to-9-1-1 message, response times may take longer than a voice call. Responses may be delayed and can take anywhere between 4-6 seconds longer than a voice call.
- You must have a cell phone with service to text 9-1-1.
- Misuse of the 9-1-1 system by either voice or text is strictly prohibited per FSS 365.172.
- Stay safe, DO NOT text and drive. If you need to reach 9-1-1 via text, pull off to the side of the road or in a safe place to initiate the text session.

Remember to always call if you can, and text if you can’t. Calling provides a faster response, allowing information to be relayed to responding public safety personnel as quickly as possible. It also allows 911 Telecommunicator’s to hear background noises or conversations to gather additional information. Note that not all counties throughout the State of Florida have text to 9-1-1 services. If you enter a county that does not have text service and attempt to make a Text-to-9-1-1 call, you will receive a bounce back message stating “This text did not go through” and will prompt you to call 911.

