

MEDIA ADVISORY

Jefferson County 911 Launches Text-To-911

Most citizens in Jefferson County can now send a short message service (SMS) text message to 911 for emergency help when unable to make a 911 voice call. This new public safety service has been brought to Jefferson County by Sheriff Steve Anderson and 911 Coordinator Mike Miller and is available to wireless customers of AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, and Verizon Wireless cell phones. Bonneville, Madison, Clark, and Fremont Counties also offer this service.

Text-to-911 was not developed as a replacement to a voice call to 911 in an emergency situation, but rather as an enhancement to reach 911 services in certain situations: The caller is hearing/voice impaired; a medical emergency renders the person incapable of speech; when speaking out loud would put the caller in danger, such as a home invasion, a domestic violence incident, or an active shooter scenario; and/or when on the edge of the cellular network where there might not be voice coverage, but text can get through. When in an emergency situation, all wireless callers should remember to **“Call 911 if you can; Text 911 if you can’t.”**

Jefferson County citizens should keep the following important information in mind if they send a text-to-911:

- Customers should use the texting option only when calling 911 is not an option.
- Using a phone to call 911 is still the most efficient way to reach emergency help. Texting is not always instantaneous, which is critical during a life-threatening emergency. It may take slightly longer to dispatch emergency services in a text-to-911 situation because of the time involved: Someone must enter the text; the message must go over the network and the 911 Dispatcher must read the text and then text back.
- Providing detailed and exact location information and nature of the emergency in the first text message is imperative, since Jefferson County 911 will initially only receive the location of the cell phone tower closest to the call’s origin.
- Text abbreviations, emoticons or slang should never be used so that the intent of the dialogue can be as clear as possible.
- Customers must be in range of cell towers in Jefferson County. If customers are outside or near the edge of the county, the message may not reach Jefferson County 911.
- Texts to 911 from areas where the service is not available will receive a “bounce back” message explaining that Text-to-911 is not available in that area, and to make a voice 911 call.
- Texts sent to 911 have the same 160-character limit as other text messages.
- Wireless customers who use Usage Controls should remove this feature to ensure full text-to-911 capabilities.
- Wireless customers must have mobile phones that are capable of sending text messages. The solution is available for customers who use the native SMS provided by wireless carriers. Customers should consult

their over- the-top (OTT) messaging provider to determine if and how text-to-911 is provided by the OTT application.

- The texting function should only be used for emergency situations that require an immediate response from police, fire or emergency medical services. For non-emergency situations, customers should contact their local public safety agency via a 10-digit non-emergency number:
- Out-of-Service cellphones will not be able to Text-to-911; there must be an active data plan for Text-to-911 to work.
- Do not joke around. If you text to 911, responders will be dispatched.
- Text-to-911 should only be used to communicate between emergency help and the texter. No pictures, video, other attachments, or other recipients can be appended to the message.

Jefferson County 911 Media Contact:

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