

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Text to 9-1-1 Now Available in North Dakota**

#### ***9-1-1: Call if You Can, Text if You Can't***

Bismarck and Fargo, N.D. – The North Dakota 9-1-1 Association and local governments throughout the state announced that as of October 6, 2016, Texting to 9-1-1 is now available statewide.

Customers of any of the six cellular carriers operating in the State (AT&T, Sagebrush, Sprint, SRT, T-Mobile and Verizon) can now send a text to 9-1-1 in an emergency, and that message will be routed to a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for response.

Text to 9-1-1 should only be used in an emergency situation, when placing a call is not possible, for example: if the person needing emergency help is deaf, hard of hearing, or when speaking out loud would put the individual in danger.

“There are real situations where speaking out loud to a dispatcher could put an individual in more danger like if an intruder is in your home or if an individual is in a domestic violence situation. However, calling 9-1-1 is still the best and fastest way to get emergency help. We are reminding North Dakotans to “Call if you can, Text if you can’t”, said Brent Nelson, President of ND 911 Association.

“For the deaf and hard of hearing communities, this is a welcomed service. The ease of text to 9-1-1 allows us to text emergency messages and communicate with 9-1-1 dispatchers,” indicated Tammy Derrick, Deaf Interpreter and ASL Outreach Specialist for Deaf Children and Adults.

If there is an emergency and you are unable to make a call, remember these steps:

- Enter “911” in the To Text to 9-1-1: Type 911 in the “To field”.
- It is essential for users to include in the message their location including house number, street address and city.
- It should also include a description of the type of emergency and help needed.
- Text in simple words - Send a short text message without abbreviations or slang.

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- Some examples are:
  - *Send Police. 123 Best Avenue. Jamestown. Intruder in home.*
  - *Send Ambulance. 555 88<sup>th</sup> Street. 2 vehicle crash.*
- Be prepared to answer questions and follow instructions from the 9-1-1 call taker.

“This service is the culmination of work by North Dakota’s 9-1-1 authorities, local and national phone carriers, network providers and equipment vendors. We are extremely thankful for everyone’s contribution to this life-saving technology,” said Russ Lindblom, 9-1-1 Project Manager. “This has been a complex project that we initiated a couple years ago to change out a decades-old system and replace it with a statewide digital system. North Dakota is one of a handful of states in the nation with Text to 9-1-1 capabilities. It truly enables us to answer the call of the past, present and future.”

There are challenges that come with Text to 9-1-1, so a voice call is always preferred if possible and safe.

- You need a text or data plan is required to place a text to 9-1-1 message.
- Text to 9-1-1 is unable to accept photos and videos at this time.
- As with all text messages, it may take longer to receive a text, it may arrive out of order, and it may not be received at all.
- In some situations, if you are roaming on another carrier’s network, text-to-911 may not work.
- Text to 9-1-1 is not available in every state, and if your text message happens to go through a cell tower in another state (calls near the border), you may receive a message that the service is unavailable.
- Text to 9-1-1 cannot include more than one person. Do not send your emergency text to anyone other than 9-1-1
- Don’t Abuse 9-1-1—Text-to-9-1-1 service is ONLY for emergencies.
- It is a crime to text or call 9-1-1 with a false report.
- While the Text to 9-1-1 service is unable to accept photos or videos at this time, it is an area that will be developed in the future.

As part of the Text to 9-1-1 launch, the North Dakota 911 Association has produced Television, Radio and Print Public Service Announcements which have been made available to statewide media. We encourage media to assist us in getting the word out about this exciting new program in providing emergency services. These ads can be viewed and heard along with additional information about 9-1-1 services in North Dakota at the North Dakota 911 Association website <https://911.nd.gov/>

Remember - Call if you can. Text if you can’t.