



Do's and Don'ts of 9-1-1 and Cell Phones

According to the FCC, of the roughly 240 million 9-1-1 calls placed each year, almost 70% come from wireless phones. As wireless phone use continues to grow, it becomes even more important to know how your cell phone works when calling 9-1-1.

Know how your cell phone works

Did you know that you may be dialing 9-1-1 without even knowing it? These calls can be caused by:

- A phone in your pocket or purse may call 9-1-1 when it is bumped or sat on.
- A phone with no service which can still call 9-1-1.
- A phone locked in emergency mode.

You can help reduce these accidental 9-1-1 calls by knowing how your cell phone works and following a few simple rules:

- Lock your cell phone keypad when it is not in use.
- Do not give old phones to children to play with as toys.
- Know if your cell phone has an emergency mode and how it works.
- Do not program 9-1-1 into your cell phone, and if your cell has a 9-1-1 auto-dialing feature, turn it off.

Accidental calls to 9-1-1

Many of the wireless 9-1-1 calls are hung up before the 9-1-1 center can answer the call. If you accidentally call 9-1-1, stay on the line and tell the call receiver that you do not have an emergency. If you hang up, the 9-1-1 center will attempt to call you back to determine if there is an emergency. This process takes valuable time away from answering real emergency calls.

Texting to 9-1-1 will not work

While today's wireless phones are capable of so much including texting, taking and sending pictures, playing music, surfing the internet, and getting emails; it is only the basic talk function of the phone that can get you much needed help in an emergency.

The current 9-1-1 system is designed for voice communications only. Other types of data such as text or pictures messages cannot be accurately interpreted by this system and therefore cannot be directly received by a 9-1-1 call center.

Know your location when calling 9-1-1

Calls made to 9-1-1 using your cellphone are routed based on the cell site that received the call, not the caller's exact location, and only your general location may display at the 9-1-1 center. Because of this, it is very important that you know your location and can relay the address, street names, or landmark to the call receiver that answers your 9-1-1 call. Precious minutes may be lost as the 9-1-1 call receiver attempts to obtain a valid location to be able to send police, fire or medical aid.

As with all 9-1-1 calls, it is important that you stay on the line, unless there is a threat to your safety, and that you answer all of the call receiver's questions as calmly as possible. Your call may need to be transferred to another agency, depending on your exact location and the nature of your emergency. If your phone loses service during the call or you are disconnected, call 9-1-1 as soon as you are able to re-establish a connection. If the 9-1-1 center has received your phone number, they will also attempt to call you back.

A wireless phone with no active service can still call 9-1-1

Wireless phones with no active service can still call 9-1-1, as long as they have battery power. However, be aware that limited information will be available to the 9-1-1 center and if you are disconnected, the 9-1-1 center will not be able to call you back.

There are serious problems with 9-1-1 centers receiving repeated calls from children playing with deactivated wireless phones. These calls tie up 9-1-1 lines so real emergency calls cannot get through. To help solve this problem, please do not give your old wireless phones to children to play with.

Responsible use and helpful phone numbers

Please use 9-1-1 responsibly. Call only if you need an emergency response from police, fire or medics. For non-emergency situations, please call your local police or fire department or other appropriate agency.

Orange County Sheriff's Department Non-Emergency Dispatch (949) 770-6011

California Highway Patrol's Non-Emergency Dispatch (949) 559-7888

Orange County Fire Authority's Non-Emergency Dispatch (714) 573-6000