

-HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

News Release



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When should you call 911?

April 10-16 is National Public Safety Telecommunicators Appreciation Week

April 15, 2011 (MINNEAPOLIS) - In recognition of National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office is advising citizens to review safety information concerning 911 calls.

"Every second counts when there's an emergency," said Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek, "I urge everyone to review 911 calling instructions in order to be prepared before you are faced with an urgent situation."

When you call 911 from many cities in Hennepin County, you will speak with a dispatcher at the Sheriff's Office 911 Communications Center, located in Golden Valley. The Sheriff's Office 911 center is one of the largest consolidated dispatch centers in the Upper Midwest. It handles emergency calls for 36 communities, 23 police agencies, and 19 fire departments throughout Hennepin County. In 2010, the Sheriff's Office handled more than 600,000 calls which include calls to 911.

Parents/Caregivers/Children: Tips for calling 911

- Familiarize your child with how your telephones operate. Different telephones and cell phones require different steps in order to reach 911 or even a dial tone.
- Write down your address & display it in your home. Your children, babysitters, and other visitors need to know your street address for a 911 call.
- Designate an emergency telephone in your home. Many households have eliminated traditional "landline" phones. Don't waste precious minutes searching for a cell phone or dealing with a dead battery. Cordless, landline phone are often misplaced. If children or people with health issues live in your home, consider designating a phone for emergency calls or consider keeping a landline telephone and ensure it is ready for use.

- Speak clearly and calmly. This simple advice is extremely difficult to do for both children and adults during an emergency. Ask your child to practice repeating location information in a clear, calm voice.

General: Tips for Calling 911

- Program your address for VoIP. If you use Voice over Internet Protocol, please program your phones with your address and make location updates if you take your phone with you during travel. Contact your service provider for information. Otherwise, be aware that your address may not be apparent to dispatchers when you call 911 and be ready to provide accurate location information.
- Calling from a cellular phone may require more location information. There may be times when your exact location may be more difficult for dispatchers to determine if you call 911 from a cell phone. Dispatchers will ask additional questions about your location.
- Provide an exact location. If you are driving a vehicle and witness an emergency, please pull over to a safe location prior to calling 911. If you don't have an address, provide the dispatcher with a description of landmarks such as a water tower or a mile marker.
- Do not hang up until told to do so. Answer all questions that you are asked.
- Call back if your situation changes. Dispatchers will assist in assessing the situation and will send more help if needed.

When to call 911

When should you call 911? Are there situations when should call a non-emergency number for police instead? The best advice is to use your good judgment. If you believe that a situation exists that needs an urgent response, please call 911 and dispatchers will ask questions and assist you. When in doubt, call 911 and dispatchers will assist you with assessing your situation.

Below are a few examples of emergencies that require a 911 call. This is not a comprehensive list. Remember to use your best judgment.

- When you see a fire or smoke
- When you see a crime being committed or you become a victim of a crime
- Life-threatening situations or threats of harm
- When you see suspicious activity and that may be connected to a crime or homeland security concern
- When there is the need for an ambulance
- Vehicle accidents
- When your home burglar alarms or fire alarms are sounding – and you believe the alarm did not sound accidentally
- When an injury or illness results in someone being unconscious

For more information, please contact PIO Lisa Kiava at 612-919-5918 or lisa.kiava@co.hennepin.mn.us

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