

HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

News Release



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When should you call 911?

September is National Preparedness Month: Review 911 safety tips

September 28, 2010 (MINNEAPOLIS) - The Hennepin County Sheriff's Office is urging families and schools to teach children how and when to call 911. In addition, it's helpful for all citizens to review safety information concerning 911 calls.

"No matter what type of an emergency is taking place, Sheriff's Office dispatchers are standing by, ready to take your 911 call and send you the help you need immediately," said Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek, "I urge everyone to review tips for calling 911 because we all know that the best time to prepare for an emergency is before it happens in your home, workplace, or school."

When you call 911 from many cities in Hennepin County, you will speak with a dispatcher at the Sheriff's Office Emergency 911 Dispatch Center. The center receives emergency calls for 36 communities, 23 police agencies, and 19 fire departments throughout Hennepin County. In 2009, the Sheriff's Office handled more than 600,000 calls which includes 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 a dial tone.
- Write down your address & display it in your home. Your children, babysitters, and visitors need to know your home 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 and 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

There is no precise rule to determine when you should call 911 call --- versus calling a non-emergency number to police or health providers. 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. These are among the situations when you should call 911. This should not be considered 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
- Threats of harm
- When you see suspicious activity and that may be a concern for homeland security
- When there is the need for an ambulance
- Vehicle accidents
- When your home burglar or fire alarms are sounding
- When an injury or illness results in someone being unconscious

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