

TEXT TO 911

It's always preferred that you call 911, but in Iowa if you can't call, then text!



Currently, all carriers have taken the necessary steps to allow you to text 911 on your mobile phone. Text to 911 has been enabled in 911 centers across the United States.

TEXTING TIPS

- Enter the numbers "911" in the text "To" field
- The first text message to 911 should contain the location and a brief description of the emergency
- Push the "Send" button
- Be prepared to answer questions and follow instructions from the 911 Dispatcher
- Text in simple words – send your message without abbreviations, slang, or emojis
- Photos and video cannot be sent to 911 at this time
- Don't text and drive
- Voice calls to 911 (when possible) are always the best and fastest way to get help



VISIT [READY.IOWA.GOV](https://www.ready.iowa.gov)
FOR MORE
INFORMATION ON
PREPAREDNESS AND 911

CONTACT US

Iowa Department of Homeland
Security & Emergency Management
515.725.3231
[homelandsecurity.iowa.gov](https://www.homelandsecurity.iowa.gov)
911@iowa.gov

A Guide to 911

WHEN YOU NEED EMERGENCY
SERVICES



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
HOMELAND SECURITY
& EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

WHEN TO CALL 911?

911 is for emergencies only. Reasons you may need to call 911 may include;

- To report a crime or a suspicious person
- To assist someone who is injured and needs help
- If you smell smoke or see a fire
- If you or someone else is having a medical emergency
- If you suspect a crime is taking place

You should call 911 anytime you believe there is an actual emergency. If you are unsure, call 911 and the dispatcher will make the final determination.

KNOW WHEN TO NOT CALL 911

Don't call 911 for city or local program information, to play a joke, or because you are late for a meeting and need help finding an address. While those situations may count as emergencies for you, they aren't for public safety.

Inappropriate use of the 911 system wastes resources and ties up the lines at the 911 center.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED WHEN YOU CALL 911?

When you call 911 the dispatcher will ask you questions that help them determine the correct personnel and equipment that needs to be sent.

Questions you may be asked are;

WHAT? You are the dispatchers eyes and ears. You can provide detailed information that helps them dispatch the right services. Try not to panic, the dispatcher is trained to ask you questions to determine what is needed.

WHERE? Knowing where the problem is or where you are is a crucial detail that you can provide when you call 911. Be aware of your surroundings and be as detailed as possible.

WHO? If there is a person or persons involved in the incident dispatchers will need good descriptions of what they look like, what they are wearing, or what they might be carrying.

While you answer these questions dispatchers are providing this information to first responders. Do not hang up until the dispatcher tells you.

TEACH YOUR KIDS ABOUT 911

It is important that children learn that there are specific times when calling 911 is the right thing to do. Let them know that they should only call when someone or something is hurt or in danger or if they need a police officer, a firefighter, or a doctor.



CAN AN INACTIVE PHONE CALL 911?

You may have an old phone laying around at home, maybe your kids use it as a "play phone". Those old phones can still call 911. As long as the phone is charged and turned on a call can be placed to 911. Though an inactive phone does not provide a location or call back number.

If your kids use a real phone as a play phone make sure they know not to dial 911 as a joke or during playtime.

If an accidental call is made, stay on the line and let the dispatcher know what has happened.