



# 9-1-1 Consumer Information

Source: [www.fcc.gov/911/consumer.html](http://www.fcc.gov/911/consumer.html)

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## What You Should Know About Calling 911

911 lines are reserved for emergency calls to report a crime in progress, or a fire, or to request an ambulance. Using 911 for non-emergency calls may delay the arrival of help for people caught in real emergencies. In some communities, 311 may be used for non-emergency calls to police and other government services.

[Tips on the Right Way to Make a 911 Call](#)

Information for kids:

- **KidsHealth**  
[How to Use 911](#)

## State 9-1-1 Deployment Plans

- [Point of Contact](#) information for the entities designated by the Governor of each State
- [Events](#) calendar posting conferences, meetings, etc., sponsored by a wide range of 911-related organizations
- [Internet Resources](#)

In addition to designating 911 as the universal emergency dialing code, the Wireless Communications and Safety Act of 1999 (911 Act) charges the FCC with taking a leadership role in the implementation of end-to-end emergency response at the State and local level. The 911 Act also provides a list of stakeholders with an interest in developing a coordinated statewide emergency response plan and whose input is critical to the success of these efforts. As written in Section 3(b) of the 911 Act:

In encouraging and supporting that deployment, the Commission shall consult and cooperate with

- State and local officials responsible for emergency services and public safety,
- the telecommunications industry (specifically including the cellular and other wireless telecommunications service providers),
- the motor vehicle manufacturing industry,
- emergency medical service providers and emergency dispatch providers,
- transportation officials,
- special 9-1-1 districts, public safety, fire service and law enforcement officials,
- consumer groups, and
- hospital emergency and trauma care personnel (including emergency physicians, trauma surgeons, and nurses).

Section 3(b) limits the FCC's role to providing support and does not authorize it to regulate statewide plans.

As mandated by Section 3(b) of the Wireless Telecommunications and Public Safety Act of 1999 (911 Act):

The Federal Communications Commission shall encourage and support efforts by States to deploy comprehensive end-to-end emergency communications infrastructure and programs, based on coordinated statewide plans, including seamless, ubiquitous, reliable wireless telecommunications networks and enhanced wireless 9-1-1 service.

The site is intended to serve as the gateway to a number of resources that the Commission can provide to foster the development of coordinated statewide plans. The list will be updated as more materials become available, but will include:

## Wireless 911 Services

- [Dale N. Hatfield's Report on Technical and Operational Issues Impacting The Provision of Wireless Enhanced 911 Services](#)

The number of 911 calls placed by people using wireless phones has more than doubled since 1995, to over 50 million a year. Public safety personnel estimate that about 30% of the millions of 911 calls they receive daily are placed from wireless phones, and that percentage is growing.

For many Americans, the ability to call 911 for help in an emergency is one of the main reasons they own a wireless phone. Other wireless 911 calls come from “Good Samaritans” reporting traffic accidents, crimes or other emergencies. Prompt delivery of these and other wireless 911 calls to public safety organizations benefits the public by promoting safety of life and property.

## Unique Challenges Posed by Wireless Phones

While wireless phones can be an important public safety tool, they also create unique challenges for public safety and emergency response personnel and for wireless service providers.

A wireless phone is actually a radio with a transmitter and a receiver that uses radio frequencies or channels -- instead of telephone wire -- to connect callers. Because wireless phones are by their very nature mobile, they are not associated with one fixed location or address. A caller using a wireless phone could be calling from anywhere. While the location of the cell tower used to carry a 911 call may provide a very general indication of the location of the caller, that information is not usually specific enough for rescue personnel to deliver assistance to the caller quickly.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has taken a number of steps to increase public safety by encouraging and coordinating development of a nationwide, seamless communications system for emergency services that includes the provision of location information for wireless 911 calls. Because wireless 911 location information will not be available everywhere immediately, it is important for consumers calling 911 from wireless phones to remember the following:

Tell the emergency operator the location of the emergency right away.

Give the emergency operator your wireless phone number so that if the call gets disconnected, the operator can call you back.

If your wireless phone is not “initialized” (i.e., you do not have a contract for service with a wireless service provider), and your emergency call gets disconnected, you must call the emergency operator back because he or she does not have your telephone number and cannot contact you.

To help public safety personnel allocate emergency resources, learn and use the designated number in your state for highway accidents or other non life-threatening incidents. Often, states reserve specific numbers for these types of incidents. For example, “#77” is the number used for highway accidents in Virginia. The number to call for non life-threatening incidents in your state can be found in the front of your phone book.

Refrain from programming your phone to automatically dial 911 when one button, such as the “9” key, is pressed. Unintentional wireless 911 calls, which often occur when auto-dial keys are inadvertently pressed, cause problems for emergency services call centers.

If your wireless phone came preprogrammed with the auto-dial 911 feature already turned on, turn off this feature. Check your user manual to find out how.

Lock your keypad when you’re not using your wireless phone. This action also prevents accidental calls to 911.

### **FCC’s Wireless 911 Initiatives**

In addition to other efforts to promote coordinated emergency services, the FCC has adopted wireless 911 rules. These rules are aimed at improving the reliability of wireless

911 services and identifying the location of wireless 911 callers to enable emergency response personnel to provide assistance to them much more quickly. The FCC's wireless 911 rules apply to all cellular licensees, broadband Personal Communications Service (PCS) licensees, and certain Specialized Mobile Radio (SMR) licensees.

### **Basic 911 Rules**

The FCC's Basic 911 rules:

Require wireless carriers to transmit all 911 calls to a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), regardless of whether the caller subscribes to the carrier's service or not.

### **Phase I Enhanced 911 (E911) Rules**

The FCC's Phase I E911 rules:

Require wireless carriers, within six months of a valid request by a PSAP, to provide the PSAP with the telephone number of the originator of a wireless 911 call and the location of the cell site or base station transmitting the call.

### **Phase II E911 Rules**

The FCC's Phase II E911 rules:

Require wireless carriers, within six months of a valid request by a PSAP, to begin providing more precise location information to PSAPs, specifically, the latitude and longitude of the caller.

This information must meet FCC accuracy standards - generally, it must be accurate to within 50-300 meters (depending on the type of technology used).

The FCC's Wireless 911 rules are being implemented in stages; they are not all immediately effective. The specific conditions and schedules of Phase I, Phase II, and the revised schedules for nationwide carriers are located on the FCC Web site, [www.fcc.gov/911/enhanced](http://www.fcc.gov/911/enhanced).