



King County

News Release

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King County Launches 9-1-1 Texting Service

'Call if you can, text if you can't' is the primary message to residents

Starting **today**, 9-1-1 call centers in all King County cities and unincorporated areas can accept texts from those who are unable to call during an emergency. Text-to-9-1-1 is a new service in King County that will help those who are deaf, hard of hearing, speech impaired, and anyone who might be unsafe if they were to be heard by an intruder or abusive partner.

"This is an important day for some of our most vulnerable residents that are not able to make a voice call in an emergency," said Ben Breier, Program Manager for the King County E-911 Program Office. "We've been working diligently to ensure that the necessary technology is in place to allow our 9-1-1 call takers to respond to emergency texts to get people help when they need it the most."

While texting to 9-1-1 is a vital tool that increases accessibility to emergency services, the preferred method for those who can speak is to call. The key message to remember is 'call if you can, text if you can't.'

There are limitations to texting 9-1-1. 9-1-1 texts are treated like any other text messages on the network, meaning delays are possible and it may take additional time for a call taker to respond to texts. 9-1-1 cannot receive photos or videos. The current system can only respond to texts in English.

If you do need to text 9-1-1 in an emergency you can help 9-1-1 help you by:

- Sending the location of the emergency – including city – and the type of emergency help needed – police, fire, or medical – in the first message.
- Keeping text messages brief and concise.
- Typing complete with no abbreviations.
- Staying with your phone and being prepared to answer questions and follow instructions from 9-1-1 call takers.

Text-to-9-1-1 is not yet available statewide. Neighboring Snohomish, Kitsap and Thurston counties do have text-to-9-1-1. Pierce County expects to go live early next year. If a text is sent to a 9-1-1 call center that does not accept texts, wireless carriers will send an alert message warning that the text did not go through and to make a call instead. For more information on texting, visit Kingcounty.gov/911.

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