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CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

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IN AN EMERGENCY - CALL IF YOU CAN ... TEXT IF YOU CANNOT

Text-to-911 service from six mobile carriers now available throughout Muscatine County

MUSCATINE, Iowa – It is always preferred that individuals call 911 to report an emergency, but, in most of Iowa and now in Muscatine County, individuals now also have the ability to text 911 on their mobile phone.

The Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD) has been working with six mobile phone service providers (AT&T, i-Wireless, Sprint, T-Mobile, U.S. Cellular, and Verizon) to enable customers to use the Text 911 feature. The Muscatine County Joint Communications Center (MUSCOM) is now among the 97 counties in Iowa who are able to receive and respond to texts.

“It is important to remember, however, that if you can, you should call the 911 center,” Christopher Jasper, manager at the MUSCOM Emergency Communications Center, said. “We are able to receive and relay information faster through a phone call. But, if you cannot call, we now have the ability to respond to text messages.”

Jasper said that MUSCOM has just finished testing their compatibility with all six carriers and the feature is now available through the Muscatine County 911 call center.

The Muscatine County Joint Communication Commission announced Friday (June 7) that Jasper had accepted the position of manager at the MUSCOM Emergency Communications Center. Jasper has been employed as a MUSCOM dispatcher since 2010 and has served as an interim co-manager since April.

The Text-To-911 process is slower but is a useful tool if you are speech or hearing impaired, or if speaking could cause you harm.

HSEMD points out that using Text-to-911 in an emergency might be helpful if you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, or if making a voice call to 911 might be dangerous or not possible. However, if you are able to make a voice call to 911 and it is safe to do so, you should call instead of sending a text. Voice calls are usually the fastest, most efficient way to reach emergency help.

“Even though we have the capability to receive and respond to text messages, it is still better to call if you can,” Jasper said.

How to Text-to-911 in an emergency:

- Enter the numbers 9-1-1 in the “TO” field.
- The first message to 9-1-1 should be brief with the location of the emergency and type of help needed.
- Push the “SEND” button.
- Be prepared to answer questions and follow instructions from the 9-1-1 call center.

Helpful Tips:

- Do Not Text and Drive!
- Use simple words – NO abbreviations.
- Keep messages brief and concise.
- Provide a correct address or location as quickly as possible. Text location information is not equal to current location technology.
- Text-To-911 messages, as with all text messages, can take longer to receive, can be received out of order, or may not be received.



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- A text or data plan is required to send a Text-To-911 message.
- Text-To-911 is not available if you are roaming.
- If Text-To-911 is not available in your area, or is temporarily unavailable, you will receive a bounce-back message that the service is not available. Contact 911 by other means.
- Photos and videos cannot be sent to the 911 call center at this time. You should also not try to send emojis to 911.
- Text-To-911 cannot include more than one person. Do not send your emergency text to anyone other than 911.
- Do not “test” Text-To-911 to see if it works. It is against the law to dial 911 if there is no emergency and the same applies to texting 911.

[TEXT-TO-911 FLYER AND FAQ](#)