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What You Need to Know About Text-to-911

Hinds County is in the process of upgrading equipment to provide Next Generation 911 Services, including Text-to-911 to all dispatch centers in the county. Hinds County is the first in the State of Mississippi to provide this service. The following is what you need to know about Text-to-911 according to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Text-to-911 is the ability to send a text message to reach 911 emergency call takers from your mobile phone or device.

In the future, text-to-911 will be widely available in the United States. However, text-to-911 is currently only available in certain markets where 911 call centers, also known as Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), have elected to accept emergency text messages from the public. For this reason, unless you have confirmed that the PSAP in your area supports text-to-911, you should not rely on text to reach 911.

The Commission has recently taken steps to make text-to-911 more widely available in the future. On August 8, 2014, the Commission adopted an order that will require all wireless carriers and other text messaging providers that enable consumers to send text messages to and from U.S. phone numbers to deliver emergency texts to PSAPs that request them. Wireless carriers and other text messaging providers that are not already supporting text-to-911 must be capable of doing so by the end of 2014, and must respond to PSAP requests to deliver text-to-911 by June 30, 2015, or six months from the date of the PSAP's request, whichever is later.

Additional information regarding the availability of text-to-911 is provided below, and will be updated periodically.

We advise consumers that even in areas where PSAPs accept text-to-911, it is a complement to, not a substitute for, existing voice-based 911 service, so consumers should make a voice call to contact 911 during an emergency when possible.

How to Contact 911

IMPORTANT! If you use a wireless phone or other type of mobile device, make sure to do the following in an emergency:

- Always contact 911 by making a voice call, if you can.
- If you are deaf, hard of hearing or speech disabled, and text-to-911 is not available, use a TTY or a telecommunications relay service, if possible.
- Remember - in most cases now, you cannot reach 911 by sending a text message.

Bounce-Back Messages

If you attempt to send a text to 911 where the service is not yet available, **FCC rules require all wireless carriers and other text messaging providers to send an automatic "bounce-back" message.**

- Consumers who receive this "bounce-back" message will be advised to contact emergency services by another means, such as by making a voice call or using a telecommunications relay service (the latter for consumers who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech disability).
- The bounce-back requirement is intended to inform consumers and minimize the risk of a consumer mistakenly believing that a text to 911 has been transmitted to the PSAP where the service is not available.

When Will Text-to-911 Become Widely Available?

- As a result of the Commission's August 2014 Order, all U.S. wireless carriers and other text messaging providers that are not already supporting text-to-911 must be capable of doing so by the end of 2014, and must respond to PSAP requests to deliver text-to-911 by June 30, 2015, or six months from the date a PSAP request, whichever is later.
- The Commission has encouraged PSAPs to begin accepting texts as text providers develop text-to-911 capability. It is up to each PSAP to decide whether and when to begin accepting texts. PSAPs currently accepting text messages are listed here. We expect that others will do so and that text-to-911 will become available in more areas over time. Information on best practices from public safety organizations and from PSAPs that have implemented text-to-911 is available here.

Source: <http://www.fcc.gov/text-to-911>