



## Capital Area Council of Governments

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## CAPCOG Texting 9-1-1 FAQ

### What is Text to 9-1-1?

Text to 9-1-1 is the ability to send text messages from a U.S. phone number to local 9-1-1 call centers. Only use Text to 9-1-1 if making a voice call to 9-1-1 is unsafe or not possible. This service is especially beneficial to those who are hard of hearing, deaf, or speech-impaired. Some other examples of when Text to 9-1-1 would be beneficial:

- The caller cannot speak due to a threat, illness or medical condition.
- The caller has poor reception and can only send out a text message.
- Phone lines and cell phone towers are overwhelmed and only texts can get through.

### Is Text to 9-1-1 available to me?

Text to 9-1-1 is available for Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Llano, Travis and Williamson counties. Remember to “Call if You Can, Text if You Can’t.”

Verizon Wireless, AT&T Mobility, Sprint, and T-Mobile have agreed to offer the Text to 9-1-1 service within the 10-county CAPCOG region.

### What are Text to 9-1-1 limits?

Text messaging is a “best effort service” provided by cell phone service providers; meaning cell phone service providers do not guarantee a message will be or ever was delivered. Since the Federal Communications Commission hasn’t required them to guarantee the service, there is a chance that a 9-1-1 call center will not receive a text from a person having an emergency.

Text messages also can take longer to receive, can be delivered out of order or may not be received. Additionally, Text to 9-1-1 does not work if the sender texts using a group message, emojis, sends pictures or videos. Apps that text other app users (such as WhatsApp) or texting via social media (such as Facebook Messenger) do not support Text to 9-1-1.



**What languages can be used?**

Text to 9-1-1 is only available in English. However, voice calls to 9-1-1 can be processed in multiple languages because all CAPCOG 9-1-1 call centers provide emergency interpretive services.

**How do I know a 9-1-1 call center received my text?**

Since texting is a “best effort service” by all cell phone service providers, the only way to know a text reached a 9-1-1 call center is when the center texts back. If you believe a text has not been received by a 9-1-1 call center, call 9-1-1.

**Why is it better to make a voice call to 9-1-1?**

Voice calls to 9-1-1 are the most efficient way to reach emergency help. That’s why the slogan for the service is “Call if You Can, Text if You Can’t.” Voice calls allow the 9-1-1 operator to quickly obtain information. Anyone can make a voice call to 9-1-1 using any wireless phone, regardless of the contract or plan.

The disadvantages of texting to 9-1-1 include:

- Texting takes more time and is limited to the text messages.
- Texting is a best effort service. In some instances cell phone service providers may not relay the message from sender to the 9-1-1 center.
- A person cannot text to 9-1-1 without a service contract that includes texting.
- Texting to 9-1-1 does not automatically provide the location of the phone texting.

**How do I Text to 9-1-1?**

1. Remember: “Call if You Can, Text if You Can’t.”
2. Enter the numbers “911” in the “To” field.
3. The first text message to 9-1-1 should be brief and contain the location of the emergency and type of help needed.
4. Push the send button.
5. Be prepared to answer questions and follow instructions from the 9-1-1 call taker.
6. Text in simple words – do not use abbreviations.
7. Keep text messages brief and concise.
8. Once you have initiated a Text to 9-1-1 conversation, do not turn off your phone until the dispatcher tells you it is ok to do so.