

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT USING 9-1-1 SERVICES

9-1-1 is the number to call anywhere in the nation for emergency police, fire or medical response. It was designed to reduce confusion in phone numbers, put you in direct contact with a dispatcher, and reduce response time for true emergencies.

If you call 9-1-1 from a fixed location (home, business, payphone), the dispatcher receives the phone number and address you are calling from. That information will always be verified to make sure it is accurate. The dispatcher will also verify where you need help sent. For example, if you are calling from home to report an accident on the corner, you want help sent to the accident, not your home.

If you call 9-1-1 from a cellular telephone, your call will go to a local agency or California Highway Patrol based on the location of the tower that picks up your call. If it is determined you need to speak to a different agency, you will be transferred. Do not hang up! When you call on a cellular telephone, dispatchers do not get your phone number and location like they do from a residence or business. **If you hang up, we cannot call you back.**

Why Do Dispatchers Ask So Many Questions?

The answer is simple. The Dispatcher cannot see what is going on and relies on the caller to be their eyes and ears, to verbally paint a picture of what is happening so it can be relayed to an officer. This requires the dispatcher to ask very specific questions. Depending on the nature of the call, they may ask:

- * What are you reporting?
- * Where did this occur?
- * When did this occur?
- * What is the phone number you are calling from?
- * Where are you now?
- * Are any weapons involved?
- * How many people are involved? Additional questions will be asked to get the description.
- * Has this happened before?
- * Is alcohol or drugs involved?
- * (If the call is in progress) What is happening now?

We've always been taught never to interrupt someone when they are speaking, but a Dispatcher has to get this information and get it fast. Sometimes it is necessary to interrupt. It doesn't mean we aren't sending help. In fact, Dispatchers frequently coordinate their efforts to start a response while continuing to ask questions.

I Didn't Mean To Call 9-1-1

It is not unusual for people to dial 9-1-1 when they meant to dial another number or to find your children have dialed 9-1-1 while playing on the telephone. When this happens, just stay on the line and when the Dispatcher answers, just tell them you misdialed. If you hang up, a Dispatcher will call you back to make sure there is not an emergency at your location. If this Dispatcher is unable to make contact with anyone by telephone to verify there is not an emergency at the location, they will dispatch an officer. For 9-1-1 Centers, this is standard procedure. They want to be sure everyone is safe.

Please do not let children play with any telephone, including cellular telephones. Even though the service to the phone may be turned off, access to 9-1-1 is still available.

THE 4-1-1 ON 9-1-1

What is 9-1-1?

9-1-1 is the national number to call when you need a police, fire or ambulance response. Your call is automatically routed to the dispatch center where you live. However, 9-1-1 calls placed on a cellphone go to the California Highway Patrol.

When should I call 9-1-1 and when should I dial the regular number?

When you need police, fire or ambulance to respond, we recommend you pick up the phone and dial 9-1-1. Do not hesitate!

Why do 9-1-1 cellphone calls go to the Highway Patrol?

Cell phones were made for mobility. If you dial 9-1-1 on your cell phone, you will likely go to a CHP Dispatch Center. However, you may go to a local agency, depending on the location of the cell tower. Residents in Santa Cruz County may wish to program their cell phones with 471-1170 to avoid any problems. This number is the 7-digit emergency number to the 9-1-1 Center.

What should I expect when I call 9-1-1?

When you call 9-1-1, your address and telephone number automatically displays on our screen. This information will be confirmed for accuracy. You will then be questioned about your need for assistance. The situation will dictate the number of questions we ask and we may want you to stay on the phone with us. Staying on the phone does not delay the dispatch of your call. We have the ability to dispatch the call while we continue to ask questions or provide help.

If you call 9-1-1 from your cellphone, the CHP dispatcher will question you and if necessary, transfer you to the appropriate agency. Please keep in mind, the second dispatcher will not know what you told the CHP dispatcher and have to ask questions again.

Why does the 9-1-1 dispatcher ask so many questions?

Dispatchers cannot see or hear what is happening and rely on you to be their eyes and ears. Specific questions help determine the nature and priority of your call. Answers to questions are relayed to responding officers, firefighters and/or paramedics.

Why does it take so long for help to arrive?

Dispatchers wish they could have help at your doorstep the minute you call. Unfortunately, that just is not possible. Help must drive to your location and depending on traffic conditions that may take some time.

For additional information, check our website at www.scecc.org. For presentations to your group, contact Rosanna McKinney, Training Supervisor at 471-1006.