

# Important Tips

for calling **911**



**Kansas City  
Regional 911 System**

[marc.org/publicsafety](https://marc.org/publicsafety)

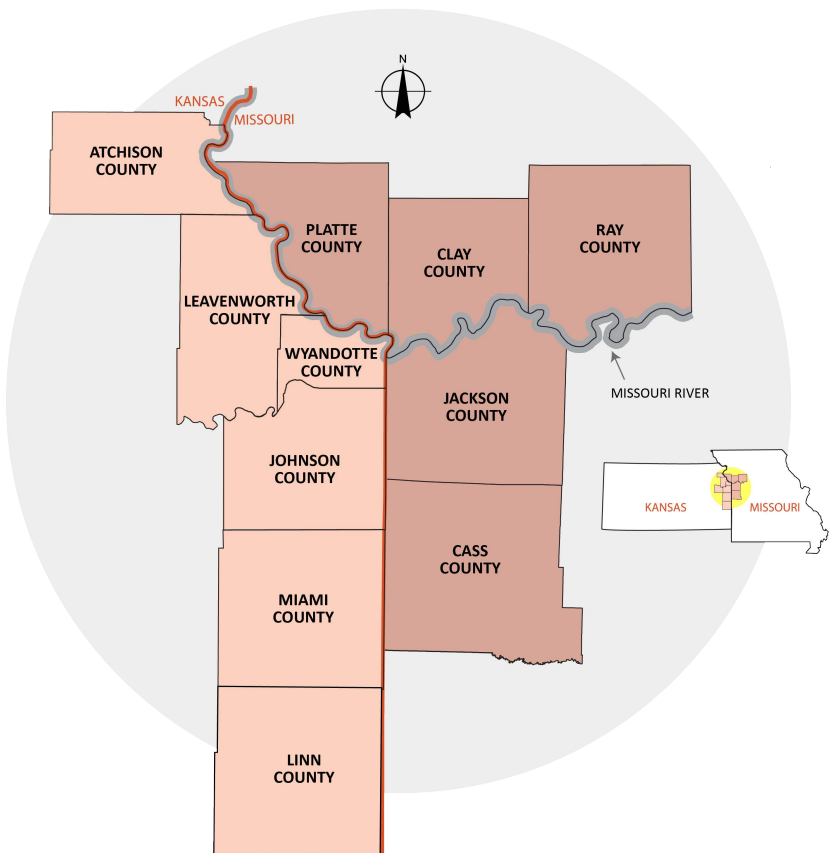
# About the Regional 911 System

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) serves as the coordinating agency for the Kansas City Regional 911 System, which handles more than 1.6 million emergency calls each year.

The regional system is coordinated through a number of committees and task forces comprised of representatives of local governments. The system is served by 40 public safety answering points (PSAPs) operated by government agencies across the 11-county bistate region.

The major benefit of 911 to citizens and public safety agencies is the amount of time saved by the use of a common emergency phone number. In most cases, 911 personnel receive the phone number and location from which a call is made, saving valuable time that is crucial to successful emergency response.

## Regional 911 System Service Area



## Public Safety Answering Points

AMR Ambulance Service  
Atchison County Communications Center  
Belton Police Department  
Blue Springs Police Department  
Cass County Sheriff's Office  
Clay County Sheriff's Office  
Excelsior Springs Police Department  
Ft. Leavenworth Provost Marshal  
Gladstone Dept. of Public Safety  
Grandview Police Department  
Harrisonville Police Department  
Independence Police Department  
Jackson County Sheriff's Office  
Johnson County Emergency  
Communications Center  
Johnson County Sheriff's Office  
Kansas City, Kansas, Fire Department  
Kansas City, Kansas, Police Department  
Kansas City, Missouri, Fire Department  
Kansas City, Missouri, Police Department  
Leavenworth County Sheriff's Office  
Leavenworth Police Department  
Leawood Police Department  
Lee's Summit Fire Department  
Lee's Summit Police Department  
Lenexa Police Department  
Liberty Police Department  
Linn County Sheriff's Office  
Miami County Sheriff's Office  
North Kansas City Police Department  
Overland Park Police Department  
Platte County Sheriff's Office  
Pleasant Hill Police Department  
Pleasant Valley Police Department  
Prairie Village Police Department  
Ray County 911  
Raymore Police Department  
Raytown Police Department  
Riverside Police Department  
Shawnee Police Department  
Sugar Creek Police Department



# When should I call 911?

- To report a crime in progress.
- To report a fire.
- To save a life.
- Anytime an emergency response is required by law enforcement, fire or emergency personnel.

You should call 911 anytime you believe there is an actual emergency. If you are unsure, call 911 and the dispatcher will make the final determination.

## Situations that are NOT 911 emergencies:

Please do not call 911 to report that electricity or other utilities are off; to notify authorities of traffic jams; to inquire about government services or to learn general information. Consult your local phone directory for the appropriate numbers.

### REMEMBER:

If the 911 system receives multiple calls at the same time, these calls will be answered in the order they are received and handled on a priority basis. Please be patient if your call is not answered right away. **DO NOT HANG UP!**

### REMEMBER:

Some older phone systems require users to dial 9 or some other prefix to get an outside line. In 2018, Congress passed Kari's Law (H.R. 582) which requires all businesses and public buildings with multi-line telephone systems to allow callers to directly dial 911, without the need for any additional digits or prefix. Some phone systems already allow this, and all are expected to comply by February 2020.

# How will my call be handled by the 911 dispatcher?

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When you call 911 to report an emergency, the dispatcher will ask you five basic questions:

- **Where is this happening?**
- **When did this happen?**
- **What is happening now? Why?**
- **Is anyone injured?**
- **Who is involved? Descriptions?**

## Other information you may need:

Include the exact location or address of the emergency. Provide nearby intersections, landmarks, building name, floor, room or apartment number, as well as directions to the address, if possible. As soon as the dispatcher has determined the location and type of emergency, he or she will send help immediately. However, the dispatcher may keep asking you questions to gather more information about the situation to pass along to the emergency personnel who are on the way to the scene. Don't hang up until the dispatcher instructs you to do so.

## I accidentally dialed 911. Now what should I do?

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If you dialed 911 by mistake, stay on the line and tell the dispatcher that you have misdialed. If you hang up before talking to a dispatcher, the call will still be delivered to the 911 center. Valuable time may be lost for other callers while the dispatcher is trying to verify that there is no emergency at your location.

**\*NOTE:** The title “dispatcher” refers to any public safety communications professional who answers 911 calls. Some agencies use calltaker or telecommunicator instead. The titles are synonymous.

# What do I need to know to give a good description?



In many 911 emergencies, the dispatcher will ask you to describe either the people or the vehicles involved.

## When describing a person, start at the top of the head and work your way down.

- What was the race and gender of the person?
- How tall was the person?
- What was the hair color?
- What was he or she wearing? (Start from the top of the head and go down.)
- Did the person have a mustache, beard, accent, limp, glasses or anything unusual that might make him or her stand out?

## When describing a vehicle, give dispatcher the following information:

- Color.
- Year of vehicle.
- Make of vehicle.
- Body style.
- Additional description.
- License plate (number and state) of the vehicle.

If you don't know any of the above information, a general description of the vehicle will help. **Example: A large, dark, older vehicle.**

# What should I teach my child about calling 911?

While many children are familiar with dialing 911 in an emergency situation, they often do not know other important information, such as their address or how to reach a parent at work. Experts recommend that you begin teaching your children this important information at about age three:

- Their full names, parents' full names, home address and phone number with area code.
- Your cell phone number.
- The name and phone number of your employer.
- What an emergency is and when to call 911.
- How to hold the phone properly so that they can speak clearly into the phone.
- That it is against the law to call 911 as a joke or prank.
- Not to be afraid to call 911.

Teaching your children to call you at work before calling 911 wastes valuable time. Give them permission to call 911 if they think there is an emergency.



## REMEMBER:

Attempt to stay calm when you are talking to a 911 dispatcher. Take a deep breath. Listen to and answer each question. Do not hang up after dialing 911 until the dispatcher tells you to do so (even if you did not mean to dial 911).



# Can I text 911 instead?

Text to 911 service is available in the Greater Kansas City metro, which includes Cass, Clay, Jackson, Platte and Ray counties in Missouri, and Johnson, Leavenworth, Miami and Wyandotte counties in Kansas. Atchison and Douglas counties should have text to 911 service in late 2019. All four major cell phone companies, including AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon, offer this service to their wireless customers.

**Text to 911 should ONLY be used in an emergency and in circumstances when you cannot safely call 911.**

## Scenarios when it would be best to call 911:

- To report a crime in progress.
- To report a fire.
- To save a life.
- Anytime an emergency response is required by law enforcement, fire or emergency medical personnel.



## When texting 911 might be better than calling:

- If you are deaf or hard of hearing.
- If you are unable, for medical reasons, to speak into the phone.
- If your safety would be compromised if you spoke out loud — for example, during a home invasion or abduction.
- If your cell signal isn't strong enough for a voice call to go through.





## Things to remember when sending a text to 911:

- Include your exact location and the nature of your emergency.
- Use clear, simple language. Abbreviations and slang may create more confusion and delay response time.
- Silence the ringtone on your phone if noise may compromise your safety. If you stop responding to text messages from the 911 center, the dispatcher may need to call to check on your safety.
- Do not text and drive. Not only is this dangerous, but it is illegal in most states. Please pull over to a safe location and stop your car prior to sending a text to 911.
- Do not copy other people on a text sent to 911.
- Send texts to 911. No dashes needed.
- Don't attach pictures or videos to a text message to 911.
- If you are in an area where text to 911 service is not available, you will get a "bounce back" message telling you to make a voice call instead.
- Texts sent to 911 have a 160-character limit.

**Most importantly, remember to call if you can and text only when you can't call. Providing essential information to a 911 dispatcher is much faster by voice than text. Texting is not always instantaneous.**



**Call if you can...text if you can't.**

# Does it make a difference if I call 911 on a wireless phone?

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**Yes!** It is very important that you provide as much information as possible to the dispatcher. This includes:

- Your wireless phone number.
- Location of the emergency.
- The name of the road you are traveling on, direction you are headed and any physical landmarks.
- How many miles from or to the nearest town or cross street.

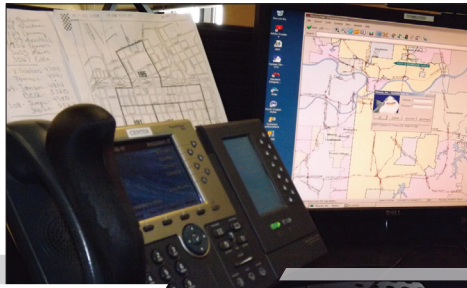
Technology in use in the Kansas City region allows dispatchers to receive the phone number and approximate location from where the wireless 911 call originated. But it is still important to know your exact location in the event of an emergency. Make it a habit to note mile markers and other road signs that would help you identify where you are should you need to call 911.

## How does the 911 center know my location?

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911 calls in the Kansas City region go through a special router that uses x,y coordinates to provide the caller's location on a map. This allows the 911 dispatcher to relay accurate location information to the appropriate emergency responders.

Complete location information may not always be available to the 911 dispatcher, so be prepared to provide this information when your call is answered.



# How do internet phone services work with 911?

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Several companies offer phone services that allow people to use ordinary telephones to make calls through the internet. This type of service is called Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP).

Internet phone companies are required to offer Enhanced 911 — the technology that provides dispatchers with your phone number and location — to their customers.

## Self-Registration

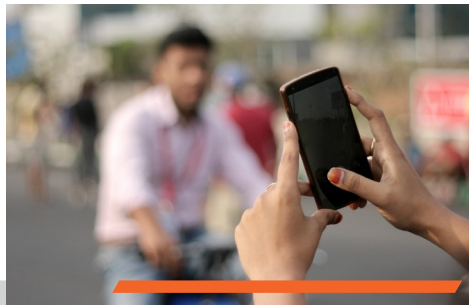
If you use a VoIP service, be sure to call your provider to verify whether they update your location in the 911 database or if it is your responsibility. Some providers require the customer to self register through an online system. This will ensure that your call is routed to the correct 911 center and location information is provided.

# What is Next Generation 911?

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As communications technology evolves, 911 service is evolving, too. Once implemented, Next Generation 911 (NG911) will allow you to transmit text, images, video and other data to the 911 call center.

With NG911, dispatchers will be able to transfer calls, messages and data to other 911 call centers anywhere in the country, and be able to transfer calls much more quickly.



# What should I do in case of a fire?

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## Get Out Safely

Test doors with the back of your hand before opening them. If they are warm, use an alternate escape route. Crawl on your hands and knees low under smoke. Keep your head one to two feet above the ground. If your clothing catches on fire, remember STOP, DROP and ROLL.

## Get Out and Stay Out

Never go back inside a burning building. Do not try to rescue pets or possessions.

## Get Help

Call 911 from a different location after you have escaped.

## Remember Your Escape Plan

Go to a designated safe meeting place and wait for the fire department. Count heads and be prepared to advise firefighters if anyone is trapped inside.

### REMEMBER:

Fire survival begins long before a fire ever starts. Be sure you have a working smoke alarm with fresh batteries installed. You and your family should create and practice an escape plan so you will be ready to react immediately at the first sign of a fire.

# What should I do in case of a natural gas leak?

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## Get Out

Do not turn off lights, or turn on a flashlight or any other electric device until you are away from the leak.

## Get Help

Call 911 or your local fire department from a neighbor's home, a pay phone or cell phone if you suspect that you have a natural gas leak in or near your home. Do not call from inside your home.

## Stay Out

Do not re-enter the premises until you are told that it is safe to do so.

# What about carbon monoxide?

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Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, deadly gas created by home appliances, furnaces, ranges, dryers, heaters and other items that burn fuel. Symptoms of CO poisoning include headache, fatigue, nausea, dizzy spells, confusion and irritability. In case of a CO alarm or suspicion of CO poisoning:

## Get Out

Do not open windows or doors. Leave them closed so that an accurate reading can be obtained.

## Get Help

Call 911 or your local fire department.

## Stay Out

Do not re-enter the premises until you are told that it is safe to do so.

## Can I call 911 if I use a TTY?

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**Yes.** All Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in the Kansas City Regional 911 System are equipped with TTY (text telephone) equipment. 911 dispatchers receive extensive training in handling emergency situations using this equipment.

## Can someone who does not speak English call 911?

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**Yes.** All PSAPs in the Kansas City Regional 911 System subscribe to a translation service that provides access to interpreters who speak more than 240 languages. The Language Line maintains a 24-hour communications center. Even when a 911 call comes from a non-English speaking individual, help is only minutes away.

## Will I receive medical information when I call 911?

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The information that you will receive when dialing 911 varies depending on your location and the type of emergency. In all cases, dial 911 for medical emergencies that require an ambulance.

Be prepared for an emergency by learning CPR and other life-saving techniques. Contact your local fire department, emergency medical service department, American Red Cross or the American Heart Association for more information.

## Should I call 911 when my utilities stop working?

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**No.** You need to contact your individual utility companies, who provide phone, gas, water and electric services to your home. The 911 dispatcher CANNOT help you when these utilities stop working.

# Vital Information

Keep your address, phone number and other emergency information in a place that everyone knows. Fill in the blanks on the following pages and keep a copy by each phone. Enter emergency numbers and contacts in your mobile phone, too.

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of all Household Occupants: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Utilities

Electric Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Water Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Gas Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

These numbers can be found on your utility bills.



# Personal Emergency Contacts

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

# Personal Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Health Insurance: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Physician Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Physician Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Blood Type: \_\_\_\_\_

# Special Instructions

Allergies, Medications or Other Medical Problems or History:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Non-Emergency Contacts

## Police Department

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## Fire Department

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## City Hall

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## Other

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## American Red Cross

Phone: 816-931-8400

## American Heart Association

Phone: 800-242-8721

## Poison Control

Phone: 800-222-1222

## Notes

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## **Kansas City Regional 911 System**

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