

911 FAQ's

WHAT TYPES OF INCIDENTS SHOULD BE REPORTED TO 911? - Any incident that threatens health, life, or property should be reported to 911. Crimes that are in progress as well as fires or medical problems requiring emergency assistance are some examples.

WHAT TYPES OF THINGS SHOULD NOT BE REPORTED TO 911? - We encourage citizens to find alternative solutions to problems such as a cat in the tree, keys locked in a car, or power outages. The 911 center dispatches public safety personnel to emergency situations. In most cases, those personnel can not assist with the problems mentioned above. The 911 center is also not prepared to give directions, weather reports or answer questions about school closings. Remember, 911 is for emergencies. If the lines are tied up with non-emergency calls, you may not be able to get help as quickly as you need it in your own emergency.

WHAT IF I'M NOT SURE WHETHER MY SITUATION IS AN EMERGENCY OR NOT? - We realize that most citizens do not have public safety training. Any time you think you need emergency assistance, or if you're not sure, call us. We are trained to determine the severity of situations and send appropriate help

WHY DOES THE 911 OPERATOR ASK SO MANY QUESTIONS? IF I CALL WITH AN EMERGENCY, TIME IS CRUCIAL. ISN'T THE OPERATOR WASTING TIME BY ASKING FOR SO MUCH INFORMATION? - 911 operators are trained to ask specific questions to determine the most appropriate response by public safety officers. Normally your call is taken by a call-taker who enters the information you give them into a computer system. Your call information is then automatically routed to the appropriate dispatcher who often times dispatches help to you before you ever hang-up with the call-taker.

HOW LONG DO MOST 911 CALLS LAST? - We handle approximately of 9,000 calls per month. On average 911 calls to Dawson County 911 last for 97 seconds.

WHAT IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO ME AND I CAN'T SPEAK? HOW CAN 911 HELP ME? - When you dial 911 from a traditional telephone, one that is wired into a house or other building, the location from which you are calling is displayed on a computer screen in front of the 911 operator. If you can not speak, either because of a communications impairment, illness, or crime in progress, a police officer is sent to the location to check for any trouble. If you are ill or are being kept from talking by an intruder, leave the telephone off the hook. Any noise that we can hear will help us determine the most appropriate response. Often, in cases of domestic violence, the victim leaves the telephone off the hook and the call-taker was able to determine the nature of the situation more quickly and send the most appropriate law enforcement response.

I HAVE A HEARING IMPAIRMENT AND CAN NOT COMMUNICATE OVER A REGULAR TELEPHONE LINE. WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I NEED HELP IN AN EMERGENCY? - Every Officer at Dawson County 911 has been trained on the proper use of a TDD. There is never any need to dial a separate number for TTD calls or to place these calls through a relay service. If you need help, just dial 911. Our system is setup to automatically detect TDD calls.

CAN I CALL 911 FROM MY CELLULAR OR PCS PHONE? - Yes, although wireless calls present special problems for 911 centers and callers. Calls from wireless (cellular and PCS) calls are sent to the 911 center closest to the cell site that your call is routed through. For example, you may be in Dawson County, place a 911 call on your cell phone and get Forsyth County instead because the cell tower handling your call is actually in the Forsyth County. Be aware of this possibility when placing cellular 911 calls. Your call may take a few extra minutes because of the misroute.

Another thing to remember about wireless 911 calls is that your location is not automatically displayed like it is on traditional phones; the address of the tower that is handling your call is displayed. If you are not familiar with your exact location, it is crucial that you give as much information about your surroundings as possible

The rule of thumb is that if you have access to a traditional telephone in an emergency, use it. Although wireless telephone providers, the FCC, and 9-1-1 organizations are working together we are still a few years away from making cellular 911 as effective as traditional 911 service.

WHY ARE CALLERS SOMETIMES PROVIDED ANOTHER NUMBER TO CALL WHEN 911 IS DIALED? – 911 is for emergency calls only. This means that all calls do not deem calling 911. You should call the emergency number only if life or property is in immediate danger.

WHY AM I CHARGED A 911 SUBSCRIBER FEE ON MY TELEPHONE BILL? - 911 subscriber fees support the entire operation of your 911 system, from salaries to training and equipment. Without the 911 subscriber fee, we could not continue to provide 911 service.

HOW DO I BECOME A 911 DISPATCHER? - You must be prepared for this exciting, challenging, and stress-filled career. The minimum qualifications are the ability to pass a criminal background check, physical examination and drug screening. Have a high school diploma or its equivalent, the ability to type on a computer keyboard and the ability to speak clearly. All employees are required to be available to work any shift which includes weekends and holidays.

WHAT KIND OF TRAINING DO 911 OPERATORS RECEIVE? - 911 operators must receive a state mandated minimum of forty hours of training to become certified communications officers. However, at Dawson County, our operators receive well beyond the mandated minimum. Employees receive training in call receiving; CPR; computer aided dispatching; crime information computers; fire equipment and apparatus usage; and general law enforcement information. Employees are given the opportunity to practice their skills during simulated incident training before being assigned to the dispatch center. During the on-the-job training phase, operators learn hands-on application of skills and knowledge gained in the classroom under the close supervision of an experienced Communications Training Officer.

Basic Communications Officer training, provided by the state, consists of instruction on Communications Officer ethics and responsibilities; liability; crisis intervention; communications impaired callers; call-taking, law enforcement, fire, and medical dispatching; radio operations, and emergency management.

Veteran 911 dispatchers receive in-service training including CPR and Emergency Medical Dispatching which allows them to provide pre-arrival instructions during medical emergencies.