

911 - Texting

You can send a text to your friend or family member if they have that option on their service and their phone is capable of receiving text messages, so why can't you text to 911? You may have heard that Black Hawk County can do text messages to 911. How does that work? It uses [SMS] short message service [much the same way that you can text a 4 digit number to cast your vote on American Idol] to establish a text conversation between the caller and the 911 operator. It is contingent on the phone service providers capability and the 911 equipment in the [PSAP] Public Safety Answering Point. One other way is to send the text directly to the phone number for the PSAP, provided the PSAP has the capability of receiving SMS on their equipment. However, neither of these is enhanced 911. They do not deliver the call back number or a location of the caller, and you must wait for the caller to respond with a text, they are not a two-way voice communication in real-time, they are not what we refer to as 911. While SMS was not developed for use in public safety, it has become the standard form of communication of the younger generation and has gained widespread acceptance by the speech and hearing impaired community as well. Because of this, [NG911] next generation 911 is looking at ways to implement it in a more real-time environment. In the mean time, while there are a couple of different ways to implement texting to 911 in *today's* environment, none of them are as reliable as the current 911 network with nearly instantaneous call delivery and a reliable two-way voice communications dialog. If texting to 911 is to be implemented in the current environment, the call may or may not be delivered in a timely manner. SMS can experience significant delivery delays in the wireless network. Neither the existing Short-Messaging Service (SMS) nor the existing Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) are suitable replacements for real-time voice emergency communications on the 911 network that delivers location, call routing to the appropriate PSAP, and callback capabilities and allows for two-way voice communication.