

Date sent:

Wednesday, December 19, 2012

Subject:

What You Need to Know About Text-to-911

You may have seen reports about a recent action taken by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regarding "text-to-911" and wondered if it is possible in an emergency to reach 911 by text message. Text-to-911 is the ability to send a text message to 911 from your mobile phone or handheld device.

On December 12, 2012, the FCC proposed to require all wireless carriers, including certain providers of text messaging applications, such as iMessage, to make it possible for customers to send text messages to 911. The four largest wireless carriers have already voluntarily committed to make texting to 911 possible by May 15, 2014.

However, because most 911 centers are not ready to accept text messages now, the FCC also proposed to require, by June 30, 2013, automated "bounce-back" error messages to consumers who send text messages to such 911 centers that are not ready to receive these messages. In other words, if you send a text message to a 911 center that does not have the ability to accept text calls, after June 30, 2013, that center will have to send you back a text message that informs you that you need to reach 911 in another way. These messages will continue until that center is able to receive emergency calls in text.

The public is asked to comment on such proposed requirements by this Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 12-149). The link to this FNPRM is: <http://www.fcc.gov/document/text-911-further-notice-proposed-rulemaking>.

For now, here are three facts you need to know:

1. In an emergency, always make a voice, relay, or TTY call to 911 if possible.
2. In most cases now, you cannot reach 911 by sending a text message.
3. In the future, you may be able to send text messages to 911 – but you should still make a voice or TTY call if you can.

Although text-to-911 is generally not available yet, it will become increasingly available during 2013. AccessInfo will help to keep you informed about the progress of this very important service.

For more information about text-to-911, please visit the FCC webpage at: <http://www.fcc.gov/text-to-911>