

911-NOT JUST FOR EMERGENCIES ANYMORE

When the 911 response number was created in 1968, it was designed to be used to contact police, fire, or medical services in the event of emergencies such as robberies, house fires, and heart attacks. Local police stations were contacted directly to report kids out after curfew; hospitals switchboards were called to summon an ambulance for a broken nose, and residents walked to the fire house down the block to report a faulty alarm.

Forty years later, this is no longer the case. 911 can be used as a general number in all cases to contact public safety responders. The personnel at Minneapolis 911 are highly-skilled professionals who are trained to triage incoming calls. During busy times you may be greeted with, “Minneapolis 911-Is this an emergency or can you hold?” An operator will get back to you as soon as high priority calls have been handled. Please don’t hang up. Hanging up creates more work for the 911 operator as they have to call back every hang up call.

Here are some helpful hints to keep in mind when calling 911:

- When the 911 call is answered, be prepared to answer several questions.
- Try to give an exact address or location where the incident is occurring.
- **Be patient with the 911 operator.** All the questions are important to the safety of the responders and the public. Help can be sent while you are speaking with the operator.
- Stay on the line if necessary.
- Call back if you have any further information or the situation changes.
- **Be patient.** Calls for service are dispatched on a priority basis. Crimes in-progress, life-threatening situations, or calls which require medical assistance are considered high priority and will be dispatched before lower priority calls which include loud music, disturbances, and verbal altercations.
- Call back if the police are no longer needed or if the situation changes. One example is an argument on the street where all parties have left the scene or an argument that has turned into a physical fight.
- If you are unable to speak during a 911 call, try to give some indication that help is needed. In almost every case, the address you are calling from will appear on the 911 operator’s screen if the call is placed from a land line.
- If you are calling from a cell phone, it is very important to give the operator a location since the operator only receives an approximate location or intersection. Help can still be started but the chances of being located are drastically reduced without specific location information.
- The Minneapolis 911 Center is equipped to handle calls received from TTY/TDD devices. Translation service is also available for non-English speaking callers.

- If the call is medical in nature, you may be transferred to HCMC or North Memorial dispatch to receive pre-arrival assistance. While you are on the phone with pre-arrival, an ambulance can be started.
- **If you're not sure whether to call 911 or not, CALL 911!**