

HOW DOES 9-1-1 WORK?

In most areas citizens have basic or enhanced 9-1-1 service from their landline, or wireline phones in their homes or workplaces. Access to 9-1-1 from cell phones is very different from landline phones and also varies greatly around the country.

Basic 9-1-1

Means that when the three-digit number 9-1-1 is dialed, the call is delivered across dedicated circuits to a call taker/dispatcher in a local public safety answering point (PSAP), or 9-1-1 center, who answers the call. The emergency and its location are communicated by voice between the caller and the call taker.

Enhanced 9-1-1 or E9-1-1

In areas serviced by E9-1-1, the call is selectively routed and the local 9-1-1 center has equipment, GIS data, and database information that allow the call taker to see the caller's phone number and address on a map display. This lets them quickly dispatch emergency help, even if the caller is unable to communicate where they are or what is the emergency provided you are using the correct address. If not they will respond to the address that comes up on the screen. Using your correct E9-1-1 address is essential to dispatch and first responders. Streets and roads all have a range of addresses and have an odd address side and an even address side. If you do not know your E9-1-1 address you need to call the county Rural Addressing Office. If you need an address for a new structure you need to call the Rural Addressing Office. If you need a letter to verify your address for DMV, County Clerk, Treasurer, Assessor, utility companies, or any other entities the Rural Addressing Office will provide you one. If you are using an address assigned by anyone else you should check with the Rural Addressing Office to ensure correctness. This is the only office in Union County authorized to assign addresses for the county and municipalities. You can also check your address by doing a 9-1-1 test call to the PSAP. When doing this first call the Dispatch Center/PSAP on the non-emergency line. For Union County and municipalities in Union County that number is 575-374-2504. Make sure the dispatcher is not busy and tell them you would like to make a test 9-1-1 call. Tell them your address then hang up and dial 9-1-1. They can then tell you what address is showing on their screen and compare that to what you gave them. This is for landline phones only.

However, when 9-1-1 calls are made from wireless phones, the call may not be routed to the most appropriate 9-1-1 center, and the call taker doesn't always receive the callback phone number or the location of the caller. This presents life threatening problems due to lost response time, if callers are unable to speak or don't know where they are, or if they don't know their wireless phone callback number or the call is dropped.

There are 3 stages that are referred to in implementing Wireless 9-1-1. The most basic of these, sometimes unofficially called Wireless Phase 0, simply means that when you dial 9-1-1 from your cell phone a call taker at a public safety answering point (PSAP) answers. The call taker may be at a city or county PSAP many miles away, or at the local PSAP, depending on how the wireless 9-1-1 call is routed.

Wireless E9-1-1 Phase I

Phase I is the first step in providing better emergency response service to wireless 9-1-1 callers. When Phase I has been implemented, a wireless 9-1-1 call will come into the PSAP with the wireless phone call back number. This is important in the event the cell phone call is dropped. However Phase I still doesn't help call takers locate emergency victims or callers.

Wireless E9-1-1 Phase II

To locate wireless 9-1-1 callers Phase II must have been implemented in the area by local 9-1-1 systems and wireless carriers. Phase II allows call takers to receive both the caller's wireless phone number and their estimated location information provided the call is triangulated with more than one cell tower. Phase II has been implemented in Union County but rarely do the calls come in as Phase II due to the lack of cell towers within the county so most wireless calls show up as Phase I at the PSAP. Knowing your address and being able to give that information to the call taker helps for a quicker response. Having a general idea of where you are also helps and using your phone's GPS can get you a latitude and longitude to give dispatch. If able YOU must help the call taker find your location.