

Minnesota 9-1-1 911 Standards, Protocols, Procedures

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Standard Title	Text-to-9-1-1 Statewide Operational Standard	
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1. Purpose or Objective

The purpose of this operational standard is to standardize the method of receiving and processing Short Message Service (SMS) text-to-9-1-1 calls throughout the State of Minnesota. Use of this operational standard will promote the standardization of text-to-9-1-1 call handling among jurisdictions across the state. The purpose of text-to-9-1-1 is to provide a means of communication between the caller and the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) when it is not feasible for callers to make a traditional voice call.

2. Background

▪ Capabilities

PSAPs that have Customer Premise Equipment (CPE) capable of handling text-to-9-1-1 calls and is directly connected to the statewide Emergency Services IP Network (ESInet) will be allowed to take text-to-9-1-1 calls after they submit a 9-1-1 Plan Change letter to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS), Emergency Communication Networks (ECN) Division. Each position in the PSAP should have the ability to process all calls that require the use of SMS text-to-9-1-1 calls.

▪ Constraints

Constraints of text-to-9-1-1 include caller location accuracy. Text-to-9-1-1 provides the geographical coordinates of the cell sector centroid to the PSAP. This provides a comparable accuracy factor to that of phase one wireless data.

Text messaging to 9-1-1 is a best-effort service that utilizes the public SMS text network. As with any SMS texts, there is no guarantee on the speed of delivery, or if the SMS message will be delivered at all. SMS messages may also appear out of order. Accordingly, it may take longer for a call taker to process an SMS text to 9-1-1 request than a traditional 9-1-1 voice request, which, in turn, may lengthen the public safety response time.

When the caller's phone is in roaming mode, the text will not go through to the PSAP. They will receive a bounce-back message telling them to dial 9-1-1.

The call taker should consider keeping the session open until responders have made contact with the caller. This will allow for gathering additional information if necessary.

Before the call is released, a message should be sent to the caller indicating that the session will be ending. A text-to-9-1-1 session cannot be restored or initiated unless the caller messages 9-1-1 again in a new session.

3. Operational Context

Callers who find themselves in a situation where they are only able to text, or individuals who are hearing or speech impaired, may opt to use text-to-9-1-1. Voice communication is still the preferred medium to reach 9-1-1 and will be promoted as such throughout the state.

4. Recommended Protocol/ Standard

A) Text-to-9-1-1 Call Processing Considerations

1. Calls received via SMS messaging will come into the PSAP on a designated queue.
2. The text message screen will show the latitude/longitude of the centroid of the cell sector (similar to wireless phase 1), not the location of the caller. The call taker can rebid the location information if necessary. Location information may or may not improve with a rebid. To rebid, the call taker must enter the command #L into the text box and send it.
3. Due to limitations with SMS messaging, messages shall be limited to 160 characters before sending the message. If the caller goes over 160 characters, the call will be broken up into multiple messages. It is possible for the messages to arrive out of order.
4. Call takers will process all text-to-9-1-1 messages with the same priority as they do with all other 9-1-1 calls.
5. The PSAP should have a generic opening message that does not identify the PSAP in order to avoid confusion since regional PSAPs are being used to take texts for other agencies.

B) Text-to-9-1-1 Call Processing

1. The address or location must be verified on all text-to-9-1-1 calls as well as the phone number the text is coming from. A mistyped or autocorrected street name by the caller may provide the call taker with a wrong address.
2. The call taker should ask the caller if they can call in by voice (if it is safe to do so), unless it is made clear from the onset of the call that the caller is only able to communicate via text.

3. It is recommended that PSAPs have an alternative option for initiating outbound texts, such as a PSAP cellular telephone, for situations where additional information may be needed and the text session was terminated.
 - If an alternative option is utilized, a general “do not reply” disclaimer should be used. (i.e. CAUTION- DO NOT REPLY TO THIS NUMBER – Please call 9-1-1 if assistance is needed. This telephone is not monitored or used to reach 9-1-1.)
4. The caller will receive a “Dialog has been closed by 9-1-1” message when the call taker releases the call.
5. If the PSAP does not answer the call within 30 seconds, the Text Control Center (TCC) may terminate the call and send the caller a message asking them to call and advise that 9-1-1 was unreachable. This varies according to the CPE that the PSAP uses.
6. After 30 minutes of no activity in the session, the TCC will close the 9-1-1 text session and send the caller a message advising that the 9-1-1 dialog has been closed.

C) Relaying a Text to Another PSAP Without Texting Capabilities

1. If a text message is received and it is determined that the emergency is occurring in another jurisdiction, all pertinent information will be gathered and relayed by phone, radio, or whatever means the PSAP has to the appropriate PSAP for dispatch if that PSAP does not have text-to-9-1-1 capabilities.
2. The appropriate PSAP will be notified of the incident as soon as the receiving PSAP is able taking into consideration factors such as the nature of the situation, priority, and when the call taker has adequate information.
3. The text session should be kept open until it is appropriate to release the call in case additional information is needed.
4. The PSAP should document the text-to-9-1-1 call according to their PSAP Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
5. At no point should the caller be advised that they have reached the wrong PSAP and need to dial a different number to reach the correct PSAP.
6. All text-to-9-1-1 calls will be recorded and archived the same way as a voice 9-1-1 call.

D) Transfer of Text-to-9-1-1 Calls

- 1) If the incident needs to be transferred to another PSAP that is capable of receiving SMS messages, the call taker will transfer the text-to-9-1-1 call through the TCC to the receiving PSAP.

- 2) When the originating PSAP drops off during a transfer conference, the caller may receive a disconnect message. It is recommended that the transferring PSAP maintain the three-way conversation and not drop off or send the caller a message saying there will be a disconnect message. When transferring a text call, the transferring PSAP will advise the caller which PSAP they are being transferred to and relay pertinent details in order to ensure a successful transfer.
- 3) The TCC transfers using the #T command along with a PSAP transfer code. The receiving PSAP will receive the caller's location and telephone number information.
- 4) The PSAP can use the private chat feature (#P) PSAP-to-PSAP in order to communicate sensitive information without the caller's knowledge.
- 5) If the PSAP is not able to transfer the text, the call taker will take pertinent information and relay to the appropriate PSAP. Once the initial response information has been exchanged, the agencies involved may choose to designate a talkgroup for continued incident communication or use telephone to relay incident updates.

5. General

1. Pre-set messages are available and configurable according to agency protocol. The use of pre-set messages is recommended.
2. When pre-set messages are being used, the following order of questioning should be used at the beginning of a text session:
 - What is your location?
 - Can you place a voice call?
3. If there is no response from the caller, the call taker will attempt to contact the caller by sending a text message back. If there is still no response, the call taker will leave the text session open and allow it to expire.
 - If there is an indicated emergency in the initial message with an unknown location, the call taker must use other methods in an attempt to locate the caller including: rebidding the location, contacting the carrier for pinging the phone for better location information, or retrieving subscriber information. The call taker may also place a voice call to the caller in order to obtain critical information. However, if the initial message indicated an emergency where a callback could compromise the safety of the caller, the call taker will exhaust other methods in order to locate the caller first.
4. If subscriber information is needed, the call taker should contact the appropriate carrier for that information similar to the process for a wireless caller. If the carrier is unknown, contact one of carriers to find out which provider the caller used.
5. Call takers should avoid the use of texting lingo. The call taker should only use plain language. The call taker should not use emojis when messaging a caller.

6. If the call taker experiences a language barrier with the caller, the call taker should first determine if the communication barrier is due to texting lingo by asking the caller “can you use plain English?” If it is determined that Language Line services are needed, a conference call will be established according to the agency’s protocol.
7. If the PSAP is unequipped to get their own transcripts for text calls, the call taker or supervisor should create a request to the West TCC to get that information.

6. Management

The Statewide Emergency Communications Board (SECB) Next Generation 9-1-1 Committee (NG9-1-1) is responsible for the oversight of the standard. It is required that PSAP managers implement this standard and train their personnel accordingly.