



Public Information Office

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Sept. 13 2018

Residents Can Text 911 for Emergency Help

(Richland PIO) – Richland County residents and visitors can text 911 for help during an emergency.

As Hurricane Florence moves toward the Carolinas, emergency officials want to ensure people are aware of this service. Calling 911 is still the fastest and preferred option, but in some situations – such as when talking would endanger the caller – texting is a better choice.

“Text to 911” is a new capability of the Richland County 911 System that residents can use as an alternative to communicate with an emergency telecommunicator. The service is available Countywide.

The initial text message a user sends to 911 should:

- Be brief
- Include the location of the emergency
- Explain the type of assistance needed
- Avoid use of abbreviations, symbols or emoticons

When using the text to 911 option, the person sending the text should be prepared to respond to questions and follow instructions in reply text messages from the telecommunicator. It is important to include the location of the emergency because texting to 911 will not provide the call center with automated information about a person’s location. Therefore, it is vitally important to provide an accurate address when possible.

In addition to providing an alternative for residents to seek emergency assistance, Text to 911 also makes it easier for those who are hearing or speech impaired to request help.

The Columbia-Richland 911 Call Center staff have been trained in using and responding to the new text message capabilities. Residents are urged to keep a few tips in mind about Text to 911:

- Call if you can, text if you can’t. Calling 911 is preferred for requesting emergency assistance.
- Ensure your wireless provider has Text to 911 capabilities.

- Standard text message rates may apply.
- Videos and photographs cannot be sent to 911 at this time.
- Text to 911 may not be available outside of Richland County.

The Federal Communications Commission is encouraging agencies across the country to make their call centers Text to 911 capable. A list of areas supporting the service is available online at [fcc.gov](https://www.fcc.gov).

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