GIVING A GOOD DESCRIPTION TO A 9-1-1 CALL TAKER

In many situations, you may be asked to describe a person or vehicle involved in an emergency. When describing a person, you should take note of the following:

- What is the race and gender of the person?
- How tall is the person?
- What is the person's hair color?
- What is the person wearing?
- Does the person have any facial hair or anything that stands out?

When describing a vehicle, the call taker will ask the following information:

- Color
- Make/model (e.g. Ford Fusion, Chevy Equinox)
- Year of vehicle (or best guess)
- Body style (pickup truck, SUV, sedan, station wagon)
- Additional description (tinted windows, number of doors, decals/stickers, damage)
- License plate number and details (color, state, specialized plate)

READYIOWA

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KNOW YOUR 9-1-1

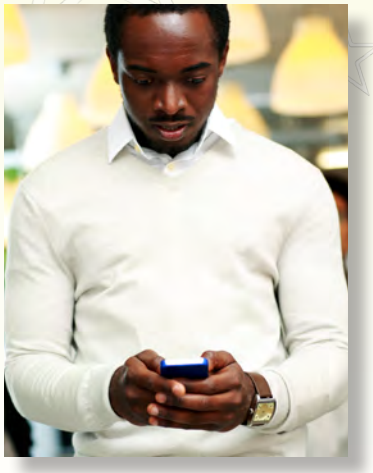
A Guide for Your Safety

Iowa Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Management

WHEN AN EMERGENCY HAPPENS, 9-1-1 CAN BE A LIFESAVER. BUT IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND HOW IT WORKS.

ONLY CALL IN AN EMERGENCY

If you need police, fire, or emergency medical services, that's the time to call 9-1-1. You shouldn't dial 9-1-1 if you've lost your pet, need help cooking a Thanksgiving turkey, or are lost and need directions. Calling 9-1-1 in a non-emergency situation wastes time and resources. And, prank calling 9-1-1 is a crime.

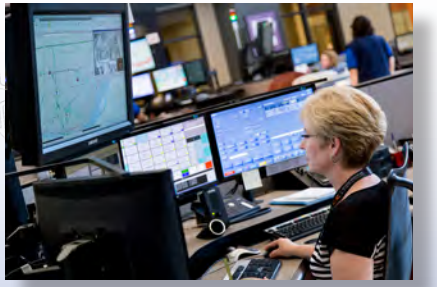


WHEN CALLING 9-1-1, REMAIN CALM

Speak clearly, follow any instructions the call taker may give. The call taker will confirm your name, address, and the phone number from which you are calling. Do not hang up until the call taker tells you it's OK to do so.

KNOW YOUR LOCATION

When calling 9-1-1, the call taker will ask you about the type of emergency for which you are calling and the location of the emergency. It is always good to be aware of your surroundings and if possible, an address or street name, especially if you are calling from a mobile phone.



NEVER HANG UP

If you dial 9-1-1 by mistake, don't hang up! Remain on the line and explain to the call taker that the call was made by accident.

It's a good idea NOT to let children play with cell phones. Even old, deactivated cell phones are able by law to dial 9-1-1. If you do let your kids play with old cell phones, remove the battery first.

TEACH YOUR KIDS ABOUT 9-1-1. Your kids should learn at an early age how to call 9-1-1 if someone is hurt, or needs help from a firefighter, police officer, or doctor. Make sure your children know their address, phone number, and family members' names (including their own). Children who are practiced and comfortable doing so will be able to convey vital details to 9-1-1 call takers more quickly, and therefore allow the appropriate emergency responders to be sent to the proper location in a timely manner.

THE PHONE YOU USE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Traditional, wire-line (a.k.a. "land line") phones give 9-1-1 call takers an automatic display of the address and telephone number of the person calling 9-1-1, although they will still verify your name, address, and phone number no matter what phone you use. Because the 9-1-1 call center has the information almost instantly when you call from a wire-line phone, resources can be sent quickly and delays that could endanger life or property can be avoided.

It is free to call 9-1-1 from any pay phone, if you can find one.

Mobile phones are usually able to give a general location of the caller, however, the information is not immediately available to the 9-1-1 call taker, nor is it precise.

VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) telephone service may appear to work like a traditional wire-line phone, except it connects via the Internet to a phone line. If you use a VoIP phone in your home or business, check with your VoIP phone provider to see if your name, address, and call back number will be displayed to the 9-1-1 call taker, and also if the 9-1-1 call you make will be sent to the 9-1-1 call center that responds to the city or area where you are located.