

Emergency Preparedness Pointers

How, Why and When to 9-1-1

April is National 9-1-1 Education month. Every member of a household should know how, why and when to dial 9-1-1. It starts with this simple question, "Is this really something that requires police, firefighters or an ambulance?"

How do I make a 9-1-1 call?

In an emergency, dial 9-1-1 on your phone. It's a free call. You can use any kind of phone: push button, rotary, cellular/wireless, cordless, or pay phone. Some pay phones may require coins to get a dial tone. Your cell phone will reach the correct 9-1-1 dispatch for the area you are currently in regardless of the area code that the phone is designated to.



The Do's and Don'ts of Dialing 9-1-1

Nationwide, there are roughly 270,000 calls to 9-1-1 daily. Non-emergency calls can clog the lines and slow the dispatch of units to actual emergencies.



Do :

- Dial 9-1-1 immediately for an emergency. An emergency is any serious medical problem (chest pain, seizure, bleeding), any type of fire (building, car, wild-fire), or any life-threatening situation (fights, person with weapons, etc.). Also use 9-1-1 to report crimes in progress, whether or not a life is threatened.
- Describe the type of incident you are reporting in a concise manner. Examples would be, "I'm reporting an auto accident with injuries," or "I'm reporting a shop-lifter," or "I'm reporting a house on fire."
- Stay on the line with the dispatcher until you are told to hang up. Sometimes a dispatcher will keep you on the line while the emergency units are responding to ask additional questions or to obtain on-going information.
- Let the call-taker ask you questions. The questions will help prioritize the incident, locate it and get the appropriate response the fastest way possible. Keep your answers brief and responsive. It is important to remain calm and speak clearly. If you are not able to give full answers (suspect is nearby), stay on the phone and the dispatcher will ask you questions that can be answered "yes" or "no."
- Dial the seven digit non-emergency number for incidents that require a response, but not an immediate one. In Ada County that number is: **377-6790**

Don't :

- Dial 9-1-1 for a non-emergency. Examples of non-emergency incidents are: a vehicle break-in, theft of property or vandalism when the suspect is gone, cars blocking streets or alleys, intoxicated persons who are not disorderly, or for your pet.
- Hang up if you get a recording once you have dialed 9-1-1. Stay on the line and your call will be answered in the order it was received. Hanging up to redial will put your call at the end of the line.
- Put 9-1-1 on auto-dial. This increases the chances of the number being accidentally dialed.
- Hang up if you dialed 9-1-1 in error. Stay on the line and explain to the dispatcher that you made a mistake. If you hang up, the dispatcher will call you back to confirm that there is no emergency. If you do not answer the return call, law enforcement will be dispatched to your location to check on the situation. This can take valuable resources away from actual incidents.
- Call 9-1-1 as a joke or prank. These calls not only waste time and money but can be dangerous. If 9-1-1 lines are busy with prank calls, someone with a real emergency may not be able to get the help they need. In Ada County, it is a crime to make prank 9-1-1 calls.