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Effective February 1, 2016, Jefferson County 9-1-1 and Clallam County 9-1-1 will be ready to receive Text-to-911 from the public.

Text-to-9-1-1 allows members of the community to send text messages to reach 9-1-1 emergency call takers from their mobile phones or other devices.

“We see the main benefit of this technology as helping the Deaf/hard of hearing and those with speech difficulties in gaining equal access to 9-1-1 during an emergency. This technology will also allow the general population to access 9-1-1 when they are not able to freely talk on their device,” said Jeffcom Director Karl Hatton.

It is important to remember a few critical details about text-to-9-1-1.

1. In some areas, Text-to-9-1-1 is not available. Washington State 9-1-1 centers are working diligently on getting this technology into their centers. If you text in an area without coverage, you will get a “bounce-back” message asking you to call 9-1-1 for help.
2. Text-to-9-1-1 does not provide location accuracy and it is of critical importance that you know your location and are able to provide that location to the 9-1-1 call taker if you send a text.
3. Text in plain English and avoid the use of common texting abbreviations. Don’t use emoticons or attempt to send attachments such as video or pictures. The 9-1-1 center has no ability to open attachments.
4. Only Text-to-9-1-1 if you are unable to call 9-1-1. We want to remind the public: “Call if you can, text only if you can’t.”

Before using Text-to-9-1-1, check with your wireless phone company. In general, you must have a text-capable wireless phone and a wireless service subscription or contract with a wireless phone company. You also need a “wireless data plan.” Remember, you can make a voice call to 9-1-1 using a wireless phone that does not have a service plan, but you cannot send a text message to 9-1-1 without a service contract that includes texting.

Each phone or other text message-capable device is different. Familiarize yourself with your phone’s text message capabilities before you have a need to text 9-1-1.

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