



Calling 9-1-1: What You Need to Know



March 2017

9-1-1 Regulations

- 9-1-1 is common across North America, but not Europe where 9-9-9 is often used
- In Canada, there is no specific legislation that governs 9-1-1 service
- There are some technical specification requirements and billing practices identified by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)
- Public safety communications agencies voluntarily comply with standards recommended by the National Emergency Number Association (Canada and U.S.)

9-1-1 in Ontario

- Bell Canada is the lead agency for all technical issues related to 9-1-1 in Ontario
- An elaborate dedicated telephone network supplies both voice connectivity and phone subscriber/location information for every 9-1-1 call made from a landline location
 - More on location later!

When to Call 9-1-1

- 9-1-1 calls are for life-threatening emergencies or to report a crime in progress
- For 9-1-1 purposes, an emergency is defined:
 - An event or situation that involves an immediate threat to the life, health or security of an individual or his/her property and one that requires the immediate assistance of a community's emergency services

Do NOT call 9-1-1 to...

- Do NOT call 9-1-1 to:
 - Obtain accurate time, weather or roads information
 - Report downed power lines
 - Determine when hydro or gas services may be restored
 - Report motor vehicle collisions that do not involve personal injury or suspected impairment
- Pocket Dialling – we recommend that you do not program 9-1-1 into your cell phone

What to Do if You Call 9-1-1 in Error?

- If you call 9-1-1 in error, do NOT disconnect
- Explain the error to the call-taker
- Expect that you may receive a visit from your local police agency
 - They are required to follow up on every disconnected 9-1-1 call and you may receive a stern warning
 - In some jurisdictions, you may receive a fine if call is determined to be vexacious

9-1-1 Calls Disconnected While in Progress

- If a 9-1-1 call has been answered by the Primary Public Safety Answering Point and becomes disconnected, the call will be traced through the Bell 9-1-1 Surveillance and Maintenance Centre
 - Did caller disconnect under duress?
 - Did caller disconnect due to illness or stress?
 - Was caller a child?
- Call-taker will first try to re-establish the call and if unsuccessful, police will be dispatched to location
 - If disconnected call was made via a cell phone, subscriber information may be used to try to locate caller

9-1-1 Calls in Simcoe County

- 9-1-1 calls made within Simcoe County are initially answered by one of two Primary Public Safety Answering Points:
 - City of Orillia, Oro-Medonte, Severn, Ramara and Rama First Nation 9-1-1 calls are answered by the Orillia Fire Department
 - All other Simcoe County 9-1-1 calls, including City of Barrie, are answered by the OPP Provincial Communications Centre in North Bay

Peak Call Times

- Standard for 9-1-1 calls to be answered: 12 seconds
- When major community emergencies or major motor vehicle collisions occur our 9-1-1 call centres are very busy
 - It is possible that you may hear a recorded announcement indicating that the lines are busy
 - Please do not disconnect! Even during peak events, calls are normally answered within 24 - 30 seconds
- Staffing complements in our call centres reflect regular peak times such as Saturday nights

What to Expect When Calling 9-1-1

- Conversation with the person who answers your 9-1-1 call will be very brief, usually not more than 24 seconds
- Call-taker will say: “9-1-1, do you require police, fire or ambulance?”
 - They will not discuss your emergency with you
 - If you do not know which emergency response agency you need, the call-taker will default to “police”

When Do I Describe My Emergency?

- Once you have requested either police, fire or ambulance, the initial call-taker will transfer your call accordingly
- Call-taker at requested agency (secondary public safety answering point) will ask you about the details of your emergency
 - Will simultaneously forward call details to the emergency service dispatcher
- If requesting ambulance, there is a series of medical questions that must be answered

Recall After a Crisis

- It may be helpful to you to record what time you called 9-1-1 and what time emergency responders arrived
- Our experience:
 - Under stress, we seldom accurately recall details such as time of call and time of response
 - Following a crisis, most people want to put all of the details together to help them make sense of the event
 - Generally, people in crisis perceive that help took much longer to arrive than it actually did

Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP) Telephone Service

- If your landline telephone is provided by a Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (telephone calls routed through your Internet Service Provider/Internet connection):
 - Please ensure that your VoIP carrier provides direct 9-1-1 service (Rogers does, but Vonage does not)
 - <http://www.vonage.ca/inclusive-call-features/911-dialing/>
- Mobile or nomadic VoIP service permits customer to travel with VoIP phone and receive calls almost anywhere
 - With this type of service ALWAYS know your location when calling 9-1-1

Calling 9-1-1 from a Cellular Telephone

- In 2010, the CRTC required that all wireless carriers enable cellular telephones to provide basic geographical positioning system (GPS) location information for 9-1-1 calls
- 9-1-1 calls from cell phones use cell towers to triangulate caller location
 - The more towers a cell carrier has in the location from which a 9-1-1 call is made, the more accurately the caller's location can be determined

Location Limitations for 9-1-1 Cell Phone Calls

- In NO instance can emergency responders know caller's exact location when 9-1-1 call is made from a cell phone
- Coordinates are solely longitude and latitude – no elevation data is provided
- The farther away caller is from major urban centres, the less accurate location information will be
- In Simcoe County, location is generally accurate to within up to 1000 metres
- ALWAYS know be prepared to describe your location

More Cell Phone Limitations

- Current subscriber and location information for 9-1-1 calls made by cell phones do NOT address the following:
 - Subscriber has loaned cell phone to someone else and that person is in an area with limited cell phone coverage (e.g. Northern Ontario)
 - Cell phone calls made close to the border between Ontario and Quebec
 - The cell phone carrier of the caller does not offer service in Ontario (i.e. roamers)
 - Callers who are moving during or after the call – location triangulation is based on the location of the caller when the call was made

What About the GPS Feature in my Cell Phone?

- If you have not called 9-1-1, we cannot use the GPS feature in your cell phone to locate you
- Privacy legislation prohibits inconsistent use of your GPS data
 - Can be used by police agencies but they must provide written evidence to Bell Canada that there is a humanitarian emergency (e.g. missing child)
- Generally, your phone must be turned on and the GPS feature activated, although some carriers can force your cell phone to turn on and can activate the GPS feature remotely

Calling 9-1-1 from Work?

- When calling 9-1-1 from a work location that includes multiple telephone extensions, please be prepared to identify your calling location
- Some corporate systems offer a Private Branch Exchange (PBX) or Private Switch service that will provide the exact location of the caller within a complex office building
 - Most 9-1-1 calls from business locations will show only the main address of the caller with no phone extension location information

9-1-1 Calls During an Emergency

- Please consider having a POT
 - Plain Old Telephone – landline connection
 - Connects directly to phone jack with no requirement for electrical connection
 - Many people now only have wireless/portable telephones and these do not work during a power outage
- In a major community emergency, we will prioritize response based on life safety needs
 - Please continue to call 9-1-1 if you have a life threatening emergency

Texting With 9-1-1

- Texting with 9-1-1 is a specialized cellular subscription service across Canada solely for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Speech Impaired community
- Texts with 9-1-1 for those subscribed to this service are initiated by a silent voice call made by cell phone
- Outside of this specialized service, there is currently NO capacity for texting to 9-1-1

**EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT**



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