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911 Cellular
Phone Info
2 Pages

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911 Cellular Phone Info

Across the nation the use of wireless phones is steadily increasing. So is the impact of wireless calls on our 9-1-1 system. One major challenge for 9-1-1 systems is to establish a location mechanism for the mobile wireless environment. While landline phones deliver a specific address and phone number to the 9-1-1 call-taker, a wireless phone is not "hard-wired" to a certain location. Since the caller can be using the phone practically anywhere, there is no one address associated with the phone to send to the 9-1-1 answering point.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Sometimes when I call 9-1-1 with my mobile phone, I reach a 9-1-1 center in another city. Why is this?

Wireless phones are programmed to reach the closest available wireless tower. Ideally your call would reach the tower in the city you are calling from, however, due to the way wireless towers are configured, this does not always happen. If the 9-1-1 call-taker does not automatically tell you what city you have reached, ask them which 9-1-1 center you are speaking with before you report your emergency. If you need a different city, the 9-1-1 call-taker should be able to transfer your call to that city.

Remember, cellular phone calls are different from calls made from a home or business phone. 9-1-1 operators cannot automatically identify your location. Please take a few moments to learn the proper procedure.

1. **Where are you?**

Know your location, address, or landmark. If you're in a vehicle, and it is safe to do so, pull over and stop. Dial 9-1-1 and give as much location information as possible, such as address, intersection, city, and county.

2. **Who is calling?**

Give your name and cellular phone number.

3. **What are you reporting?**

Give the nature of the emergency. Give a description of the emergency, vehicle, or individual involved (but don't put yourself at risk to obtain this information).

What if I don't know where I am?

Retrace your steps. Give the 9-1-1 call-taker a street name, major cross streets, highway name, or exit ramp number, last known direction of travel or even landmarks. In rural areas, you may need to give the 9-1-1 caller detailed directions on how to find you.

What is an un-initialized phone?

Un-initialized phones are wireless phones that are not activated for normal calling service, but do have the capability of dialing 9-1-1. Even though the caller can reach a 9-1-1 answering point, their location and phone number will not be displayed on the call-taker's screen. Only a notation of "Wireless Caller" will appear. This means that the caller must be able to verbally describe their location in order to get help.

If the caller is unable to speak, the 9-1-1 call-taker will not know where they are or what the problem is. And without a call-back number, the call-taker will not be able to contact the wireless service provider for customer records such as a home address or telephone number.

Who has an un-initialized phone?

Various organizations are sponsoring donate-a-phone projects in which wireless phones are collected and distributed to elderly citizens, victims of domestic violence and other groups who may need to call 9-1-1 in an emergency. These phones are not activated for normal service which means they cannot receive incoming calls or make outgoing calls, except to 9-1-1. However, any wireless phone that has not been activated on a calling plan can still be used to dial 9-1-1. These would be considered un-initialized phones as well, because no address or phone number will be delivered to the 9-1-1 call-taker's screen. These phones only provide the caller with the ability to have a voice conversation with the 9-1-1 operator.

What should you remember if you have an un-initialized wireless phone?

- ✓ If possible, use a landline phone instead of an un-initialized wireless phone to call 9-1-1.
- ✓ A landline phone should automatically provide the 9-1-1 call-taker with the exact location and phone number you are calling from.
- ✓ Become familiar with your wireless phone and know how to use it.
- ✓ Always be aware of your location and surroundings so you can verbally advise the call-taker where you are.
- ✓ Give the call-taker your location first.
- ✓ Should your call somehow be disconnected, the call-taker will at least have a location to send emergency responders.
- ✓ If disconnected, call 9-1-1 again and advise you were disconnected.
- ✓ Give a detailed description of the vehicle or individual involved.
- ✓ Keep your phone battery charged.
- ✓ If your battery runs out and you get disconnected from 9-1-1, the call-taker will have no way of knowing your location or callback number.
- ✓ Be prepared to act upon any instructions the 9-1-1 call-taker gives you.
- ✓ Do not hang up until instructed to do so.