



Kern County Sheriff's Office – Communications Section
Policies and Procedures

TITLE: TEXT-TO-911		NO: E-800	
APPROVED: Commander John Carpenter			
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POLICY

It is the policy of the Kern County Sheriff's Office Communications Center to follow the procedures set forth in this policy for the processing of calls received via Short Message Service (SMS) to 911.

PROCEDURE A - TEXT-TO-911

- In lieu of voice communications, callers may opt to contact 9-1-1 via text messaging. Text-to-911 provides equal access to emergency services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community as well as an alternate method of reporting emergencies when other traditional avenues are unavailable.
- The Short Message Service (SMS) also known as text messaging provides support for wireless subscribers to send 911 SMS text messages to Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) by using the single code 911 as the destination address of the SMS message.
- Calls received via text messaging will be delivered to the Communications Center on the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) Workstation via the solution provided by the California Office of Emergency Services 911 Branch.

PROCEDURE B - LOGGING ON & OFF OF THE TEXT-TO-911 SOLUTION

- At the beginning of shift, Call Takers assigned to receive Text-to-911 (SMS) messaging will log into the Text-to-911 solution. Call Takers can log on as they are relieving their partner.
- At the end of shift, or a change in assignment, the Call Taker will log off the system after confirming their partner is available. During periods of shift change it is incumbent upon the Call Taker to provide and receive briefing or call information that is relevant to any active SMS calls for service.
- Volume control shall **not** be turned down or silenced. The volume control is one of the indicators that a new 9-1-1 text message has been received.

PROCEDURE C - RECEIVING A TEXT-TO-911 CALL

- All 9-1-1 calls are processed equally without regard to hierarchy and therefore Text-to-911 (SMS) lines will be accepted and answered immediately without delay and all calls shall be prioritized based on the nature of the call whether voice or text.
- Each Call Taker assigned to Text-to-911 will process no more than **2** text sessions at once. The highest priority Text-to-911 will be determined by the nature of the emergency.
- The call location accuracy displayed for the caller may only have the accuracy of a Wireless Phase 1 (WPH1) depending on the carrier. The call taker must always confirm the location and not depend on the accuracy of the location provided.

PROCEDURE D - HOW TO PROCESS A TEXT-TO-911 CALL

- Text messages are expected to be processed using the same standards for processing emergency and non-emergency voice calls for service.
- As emphasized in basic call-taking, the most important piece of information to obtain is the location of the emergency followed by the type of emergency. This procedure will be followed on Text-to-911 calls.
- Call Takers shall make all attempts to confirm that the caller can be reached at the same number the text is originating from.
- Canned messages should be used whenever possible to both expedite the call taking process and for consistency between calls. The flow of the text conversation should emulate those of voice 9-1-1 calls in that the 5 W's; Where, What, Who, When, Weapons, and How should be answered. Dispatchers will not use jargon, abbreviations, or acronyms but rather spell out questions to avoid misunderstanding with the callers.
- The caller shall be greeted with the following canned message. "Kern County Sheriff's Office what is the location / address of the emergency you are reporting?"
- If a text message is received without or with vague information; the call taker will send a message stating "Kern County Sheriff's Office, we received a 911 text from this number. Do you have an emergency? If there is no response after **2** minutes the call taker will end the session.
- All other pertinent information will be asked for by the call taker to help ensure bystander and responder safety. All pertinent and proper information shall be added to the call for service in CAD and relayed to the responding unit(s) as appropriate. The call taker shall note that the call was received by text when creating the call in CAD. When the call is dispatched over the radio, the responders will be advised that the call is being received by text message.

PROCEDURE E - TRANSFERRING CALLS TO ANOTHER PSAP

- The dispatcher will use the transfer function in the Text-to-911 solution when the caller needs to be transferred to another agency.

PROCEDURE F - HANDLING CALLS FOR INCIDENTS IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS (WITHOUT TEXT CAPABILITIES)

- If a text message is received and it is determined that the emergency is occurring in another jurisdiction, and that agency does not have text capability, all pertinent information will be gathered and relayed by phone to the appropriate PSAP. A call will be created in CAD using event type “TEXT”, include caller’s phone number for documentation purposes. Close the CAD call with the disposition code NFA (No Further Action).

PROCEDURE G - WHEN TO END A TEXT MESSAGING SESSION

- A text session does not end until the call taker selects the “End Session” button. If there is a law enforcement need to make contact after the session has ended, make a voice call to the phone number or use the texting functionality in the Text-to-911 solution.
- Under no circumstances shall the call taker text the caller from their personal cell phone.

PROCEDURE H - UTILIZING INTERPRETATION SERVICE

- If it is determined that interpreter services are needed, a voice call will be placed to the caller and then transferred to the interpretation service. If the call taker is certified to read and write in the language received, the call taker may engage in a text conversation. The call taker may use google online translation service as a resource to attempt to identify the language.
- If the call taker is unable to reach the caller by making a voice call using the interpretation service, the on-duty dispatch supervisor should be notified to contact the phone provider and request subscriber information and address, so that an officer can be dispatched to check the welfare at the subscriber’s listed address. If the address is with another jurisdiction, the appropriate jurisdiction should be notified to check the welfare at the subscriber’s address. The call taker may also use an online translation service as a resource to see if they can further assist the caller.

PROCEDURE I - ALTERNATE ANSWER

- Kern County PSAPS have collectively agreed to have Text-to-911 default to the bounce back message in the event where a PSAP has to divert 911 lines. Landlines and Wireless alternate answer procedure will strictly adhere to Communications Policy C-100.

PROCEDURE J - DENY LIST

- The Kern County Sheriff’s Office will not be utilizing the Deny List.

PROCEDURE K - ECATS REPORTS

- As with standard practice in the Communications Center, Text-to-911, is for official business and will fall under the same standards of recording and retention. Text-to-911 Reports will be retained by the California Office of Emergency Services 9-1-1 Branch. The 9-1-1 Coordinator will access the Emergency Call Tracking System (ECaTS) to obtain any Text-to 911 transcripts at the request of the Custodian of Records.

PROCEDURE L - TECHNICAL PROBLEMS WITH TEXTING PROGRAM

- Notify the on-duty Dispatch Supervisor, 9-1-1 Coordinator and the Communications Manager.