

911 Standards, Protocols, Procedures

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1. Purpose or Objective

The purpose of this operational standard is to standardize the method of receiving and processing Short Message Service (SMS) text-to-911 calls throughout the State of Minnesota. Use of this operational standard will promote the standardization of text-to-911 call handling among jurisdictions across the state. The purpose of text-to-911 is to provide a means of communication between the caller and the PSAP when it is not feasible for callers to make a traditional voice call.

Commented [LD1]: I took out numbering and most bullets for now so copying and pasting is easier during our meetings.

Commented [LD2]: Rick: Make sure to spell out acronyms whenever they are used for a first time.

2. Background

▪ Capabilities

PSAPs that have a CPE capable of handling text-to-911 calls and is directly connected to the statewide ESInet will be allowed to take text-to-911 calls after they submit a 911 Plan Change letter to ECN. Each position in the PSAP should have the ability to process all calls that require the use of SMS text-to-911 calls.

Commented [LD3]: Pete: Does it need to be a requirement for everyone even if they are two-stage?

It was discussed that all consoles with the CPE installed should be text-to-911 capable

▪ Constraints

Constraints of text-to-911 include caller location accuracy. Text-to-911 provides the geographical coordinates of the cell sector centroid to the PSAP. This provides a comparable accuracy factor to that of phase one wireless data.

Emergency Medical Dispatching (EMD) is at a disadvantage because PSAPs may not have the capability to complete Pre-Arrival Instructions (PAI).

Commented [LD4]: Heidi: More research has to be done on whether or not ambulance services will provide PAI over text

Text messaging is a best effort service. PSAPs cannot guarantee how quick help will be delivered. The speed of service will be lower than that of a traditional voice call.

Commented [LD5]: More language in text-to-911 FAQs

The call taker should consider keeping the session open until responders have made contact with the caller/victim. This will allow for gathering additional information if necessary.

~~Once a call is released~~ Before the call is released, a message should be sent to the caller indicating that the session has ended. A text-to-911 session cannot be restored or initiated unless the caller messages 911 again in a new session.

3. Operational Context

Callers who find themselves in a situation where they are only able to text, or individuals who are hard of hearing may opt to use text-to-911. Voice communications is still the preferred medium to reach 911 and will be promoted as such throughout the state.

Commented [LD6]: Judy: Leave this in and we will come back to it to see if there's anything else we need to add

4. Recommended Protocol/ Standard

Text-to-911 Call Processing Considerations

Calls received via SMS messaging will come into the PSAP on a designated queue.

The text message screen will show the latitude/longitude of the centroid of the cell sector (similar to wireless phase 1), not the location of the caller. The call taker can rebid the location information if necessary. Location information may or may not improve with a rebid.

Due to limitations with SMS messaging, messages shall be limited to 160 characters before sending the message. If the caller goes over 160 characters, the call will be broken up into multiple messages. It is possible for the messages to arrive out of order.

Commented [LD7]: What happens if a call taker goes over 160 characters? Will the message be broken up into 2 parts?

Call takers will process all text-to-911 messages with the same priority as they do with all other 911 calls.

The PSAP should have a generic opening message that does not identify the PSAP in order to avoid confusion since regional PSAPs are being used to take texts for other agencies.

Text-to-911 Call Processing

The address or location must be verified on all text-to-911 calls as well as the phone number the text is coming from. A mistyped or autocorrected street name by the caller may provide the call taker with a wrong address.

The call taker should ask the caller if they can call in by voice (if it is safe to do so), unless it is made clear from the onset of the call that the caller is only able to communicate via text.

It is recommended that the PSAP have an alternative option for initiating outbound texts in situations where additional information may be needed and the text session has already been terminated, such as a PSAP cellular phone. If an alternative option is utilized, have the caller text back to 911 and include a disclaimer that the caller cannot text back the cell phone in case of emergency. They must only text back to 911. Call takers will not use their personal cell phone at any time.

Commented [LD8]: Meeting #1 ended here

Relaying a Text to Another PSAP (without texting capabilities)

If a text message is received and it is determined that the emergency is occurring in another jurisdiction, all pertinent information will be gathered and relayed by phone, radio, or whatever means the PSAP has- to the appropriate PSAP for dispatch if that agency does not have text-to-911 capabilities.

The appropriate agency will be notified of the incident as soon as the receiving PSAP is able in a timely manner given taking into consideration factors such as the nature of the situation, priority, and when the call taker has adequate information.

The text session should be kept open until ~~the responding agency deems it~~ is appropriate to release the call in case additional information is needed.

~~A call will be created in the agency's CAD for documentation purposes and closed out after contacting the appropriate agency. The PSAP should document the text-to-911 call according to their agency SOPs.~~

At no point should the caller be advised that they have reached the wrong agency and need to dial a different number to reach the correct agency.

~~All text to 911 records will be considered property of the agency that responds to the call for service. The PSAP taking the original text to 911 call will merely serve as a storage facility of the text message for the agency. The originating PSAP will provide records of the SMS message to the agency upon the any request for information. Requests for the content of the SMS messages from any agency other than the responding will be referred to the responding agency.~~

Commented [LD9]: Jeff Lessard: have legal look at. Does this need to be in here?

Commented [LD10]: Rick Juth: Should it be treated exactly as a 911 call?

All text-to-911 calls will be recorded and archived the same way as a voice 911 call.

Transfer of Text-to-911 Calls

If the incident needs to be transferred to another agency that is capable of receiving SMS messages, the call taker will transfer the text-to-911 call. ~~If reasonable, the call taker will attempt to have the caller conduct a voice call to the appropriate agency.~~

Commented [LD11]: Second call ended here.

5. General

Pre-set messages are available and configurable according to agency protocol. The use of pre-set messages is recommended.

Call takers should avoid the use of texting lingo. Some of these are not universally understood and may have multiple meanings. The call taker should only use plain language. The caller should be encouraged not to use texting lingo in order to help eliminate any confusion on the part of both parties. However, callers are not required to oblige. If it becomes too difficult for a call taker to understand a caller's need due to texting lingo, the call taker should ask the caller to explain the shortcut.

If appropriate, the Class or Service source field should be changed to "TEXT" as a text-to-911 call may not automatically populate correctly with the appropriate class of service. This will make searching for past text-to-911 calls easier.

If a SMS message is received and it has no communication thereafter, or if the message is unreadable, or the caller is unable to provide an address of the emergency, an attempt will be made to contact the caller via text. If there is still no answer, a call back may be made in the same manner as a voice 911 hang up according to agency protocol. If the initial message indicated an emergency, the call taker should use other methods in an attempt to locate the caller according to their agency specific SOPs.

Text-to-911 calls are expected to be processed using the same standards for processing emergency and non-emergency voice calls for service, with the exception of Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD). Individual PSAP policy and capabilities will determine whether EMD will be provided via text. If the PSAP will not provide EMD via text, the caller will be advised to place a voice call in order to receive pre-arrival instructions.

When appropriate, non-English text-to-911 messages should be handled in the same manner as voice calls according to PSAP specific SOPs. If the call taker is unable to explain to the caller that they need to call 911, the call taker will initiate a voice call to the originating number to attempt contact.

A caller should not be called back in cases where their safety, or the safety of others, is in question. However, if a responder requests that a callback be made on a request for service that was initially received via SMS messaging, the telecommunicator will inform the officer of such. If the officer still requests a callback, the callback request will be honored.

The content of all SMS Messages to/from the PSAP are public record and are available upon request of any citizen or media. All communication from the PSAP shall be of a professional nature and work related.

Multiple text sessions will be prioritized in the same manner as 911 calls. The highest priority call will be determined by the nature of the emergency.

The passing on of text sessions at shift change between operators must include information related to the open sessions. All queues are to be checked at shift change.

Failure to comply with any of these provisions set forth may result in disciplinary action. The 911 Director reserves the right to alter this policy at any time. Employees will be notified of any updates to this policy including the effective date of any changes.

6. Management