



South Orange Police Department

Community Relations Bureau

Sgt. Adrian Acevedo
973-763-3000 ext 7802



Tips for dialing 9-1-1

Most of us probably assume we know how to make a 911 call. In a high-stress situation, calling 911 should be the least stressful part of dealing with an emergency. But the act of effectively reporting a crisis is not as simple as just dialing 9-1-1. So what should you do (and say) if you ever need to call 911? Consider these tips:

- **Try to remain calm.** Take a deep breath when you're asked "Where is your emergency?" This will help both you and the dispatcher to interact efficiently.
- **Know your location.** This is the absolute most important detail to provide to the 911 dispatcher. This is why their first question will always be, "WHERE is your emergency?" If a call is dropped or all else fails, a dispatcher having the location is all that is needed to get help on the way. The more accurate and detailed your location report is, the quicker dispatchers can get emergency crews to answer your call. This is most important if you call 911 from a cell phone. Describing major cross streets and landmarks can help.
- **Cell phone, VOIP or land line?** We are in the age of the smartphone, but 911 calls from cell phones may not tell the 911 dispatcher where you are. Just about every cell phone today is Phase 2 or E911 compliant. This means we can usually triangulate the caller's location down to 100 meters or so. Older phones however may still only provide the location of the closest cell tower. Remember that cell phone towers send calls to the closest PSAP (public-safety answering point), a call placed in South Orange may end up in Newark or Maplewood, this is why the first thing you must give them is your location. With land lines, the address associated with that number will show up on a dispatcher's screen. VOIP lines such as **Vonage, Xfinity Voice & Verizon FIOS** now provide E911 data to local PSAPs but you may have to advise them of your physical location ahead of time. This is only needed once, unless you change locations, check with your provider. Landlines (and now VOIP lines) are the best method for dialing 911, you should be able to just call and drop the phone if you must. (While [911 texting services](#) have made headlines, they're not yet available in our area.)
- **Be aware of your surroundings.** This is not only helpful in determining your location, but it's crucial in helping you to describe other victims, suspects, or other details about the scene or emergency.
- **Don't hang up.** You may hear clicking, static, or pauses as the call progresses, but this doesn't mean your call has been dropped.
- **Let the 911 dispatcher guide the conversation.** They are trained in this process and know about pertinent details that are usually required in the given situation.
- **Be patient.** The call may seem to take forever or seem like it's being dragged out, but the dispatcher is most likely typing information into the system while simultaneously alerting services to your whereabouts.
- **Follow all directions.** Be sure to ask for clarification if you don't understand, especially if the 911 dispatcher directs you to provide emergency aid.
- **Teach your children to dial 911.** Be sure they know what 911 is, how to dial from your home and cell phone, and to trust the 911 call taker. Make sure your child is physically able to reach at least one phone in your home. When calling 911 your child needs to know their name, parent's name, telephone number, and most importantly their address. Tell them to answer all the call takers questions and to stay on the phone until instructed to hang up. You can schedule testing a call to 911 with South Orange Police Department's Community Relations Bureau at 973-763-3000 ext 7802
- **Post your address clearly and prominently at your entrance & on your home.** Posting your address at the driveway entrance and on your home will alleviate any confusion as to whether emergency responders have the correct location. Use something reflective or illuminated so that it can be seen in the evening as well as during the day.
- **ICE contacts. (In Case of Emergency)** In addition to keeping these current with numbers of relatives or close friends, put the SOPD non-emergency number in your contacts. 973-763-3000 ext 0
- **As always, call the SOPD Community Relations Office for more help or with any police related questions.**