

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Greater Harris County  
9-1-1 Emergency Network

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## Largest 9-1-1 System in Texas Phases in Text-to-9-1-1 Service

### 9-1-1: Call if You Can, Text if You Can't Voice Calls to 9-1-1 Are Still the Best and Fastest Way To Contact 9-1-1

Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network (GHC 9-1-1) announced today that it has begun phasing in text-to-9-1-1 service for its territory—49 cities and two counties (Harris and Fort Bend ). Verizon Wireless and T-Mobile customers can now send a short message to 9-1-1 in an emergency. Text to 9-1-1 should only be used in an emergency situation, when someone is unable to speak: For instance, if the caller is deaf, hard-of-hearing, speech impaired, or when speaking out loud would put the caller in danger.

In the interest of public safety, GHC 9-1-1 officials want to ensure that its large community of wireless customers understand how to text to 9-1-1 in an emergency. GHC 9-1-1 is committed to providing the most technologically advanced 9-1-1 service available. “As far as we know, this is the largest major metropolitan area in the country to provide this service,” said Lavergne Schwender, executive director of GHC 9-1-1 “We are pleased to offer this for those who are deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech impaired so they can communicate with emergency services in their main form of communication as well to those in an emergency situation who cannot speak.”

#### 1. If there is an emergency and you are unable to make a voice call, remember these steps:

- Know your location - Text your exact location
- Text what you need – Text what emergency help is needed.
- Be clear - Send a short text message without abbreviations or slang.
- Stay Calm - Answer questions and follow instructions from the 9-1-1 call taker.

#### 2. Don't Abuse 9-1-1—Text-to-9-1-1 service is **ONLY** for emergencies.

- It is a crime to text or call 9-1-1 with a false report. Prank texters can be located.

#### 3. The text-to-9-1-1 service will have many challenges.

- As with all text messages, messages to 9-1-1 may take longer to receive, may get out of order, or may not be received at all.
- 9-1-1 call takers will not be able to hear any background noise that could help with assisting during the emergency.
- Voice calls are real-time communication and text-to-9-1-1 is not.
- **Text-to-9-1-1 service is only available in some areas of the State, and by some wireless carriers in Texas and the U.S.**

If someone sends a text to 9-1-1 from outside of Harris and Fort Bend Counties or from a wireless carrier without text-to-9-1-1 service, they should receive a bounce-back message saying that text 9-1-1 is not available and to contact 9-1-1 by other means. This service is being implemented in phases, and is anticipated to be available for customers of all four carriers by the end of October, 2014.

GHC 9-1-1 is the largest 9-1-1 system in Texas and one of the largest in the U.S., providing service to nearly 5.2 million residents. [www.911.org](http://www.911.org)

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