

Understanding 9-1-1

The following guidelines should be followed when asking for assistance or reporting an incident within Athens-Clarke County

1. When to use 9-1-1

The citizens of Athens-Clarke County should dial 9-1-1 to report any incident that requires immediate dispatch of police, fire, or an ambulance.

- a. Medical emergency
- b. Fire
- c. Motor vehicle accident
- d. Suspicious vehicle or person
- e. To report incident of auto theft, burglary, rape, arson, assault, robbery, shoplifting, disturbance, theft, domestic violence, fight, missing person, shooting, stabbing, destruction of property, any crime in progress or just occurred, etc
- f. To report road hazard, drunk driver or reckless driver, wires down, tornado, etc

If you are unsure whether your situation is an emergency, call 9-1-1

2. When to use the non-emergency number, 706-546-5900

The citizens of Athens-Clarke County should call the non-emergency number, 706-546-5900, to report non-urgent incidents that require a police response: loud music, lost property, non-violent animal complaints, etc. The same dispatchers who answer the 9-1-1 lines also answer the non-emergency lines, so be patient. 9-1-1 calls will be answered first, then the non-emergency lines.

3. When to directly call the Sheriff's Office, Police Department, or Fire Department

Residents should contact their local agencies at their regular number for information or administrative calls.

Sheriff's Office: Call the Clarke County Sheriff's Office at 706-613-3250 to request information on prisoners, warrants, or the civil process.

Police Department: Call the Athens-Clarke County Police at 706-613-3330 to request information on towed vehicles or traffic tickets, to obtain copies of reports, to follow-up on reports, or to speak with a specific officer or detective. Call the Police Department's voicemail system, 706-613-3888, to leave a message for a specific officer or detective.

Fire Department: Call the Athens-Clarke County Fire Department at 706-613-3360 to ask billing questions or to request information on burn permits, inspections, or educational presentations. The phone numbers for individual fire stations cannot be

given out.

How to Use 9-1-1

1. Dial the digits 9-1-1 from any residential, cellular, or coin operated phone. If your business or school is on a PBX system that requires you to dial another digit (often “9” to reach an outside line), dial that digit, then 9-1-1 (e.g. 9-9-1-1).
2. Report the nature of your call: police, fire, or medical. Give the location of the incident, your name, and your phone number. Be prepared to answer the call-taker’s questions in detail. In life-threatening situations, the call-taker continues to ask questions while units are dispatched to the incident location.
3. If you are reporting a crime and a person is involved, pay close attention to his or her appearance so you’ll be able to provide a physical description. Call-takers usually start with general and move to specific details: male or female, white or black or Hispanic, approximate age, height, weight, color of shirt or jacket, pants, and any identifying features. If a vehicle is involved, call-takers will ask for a description. Make and model information is very useful, but sometimes it’s enough to provide basic body style information such as pick-up, SUV, van, 2-door sedan, 4-door sedan, etc. Telling the call-taker the vehicle’s color is also very important, as well as the tag when possible, and direction of travel if the vehicle is leaving the scene. **Never place yourself in danger to obtain information.**
4. When reporting a fire, tell the call-taker what is on fire and whether anyone is in danger; for example, a person trapped inside a vehicle or structure. If you’re aware that hazardous materials are involved, tell the call-taker. **Do not place yourself in danger.**
5. If you are reporting a medical emergency, be prepared to answer basic questions about the patient. Your answers will help the dispatcher send the appropriate emergency equipment. Remember that the call-taker will continue to ask questions and provide instructions while help is dispatched and is on the way.

9-1-1 Cell Dialing

1. When calling from a cellular phone, your location is not readily known.
2. Tell the call-taker the location of the emergency and your name. This information is not displayed when calling from a cellular phone.
3. If you don’t know the address of the emergency, tell the call-taker the name of the street and the closest cross street or intersection. Use landmarks such as businesses to assist in providing a location.

4. Be patient. Cellular signals sometimes “skip” to a more distant tower and the call is routed to the wrong agency. If this happens, your call to be transferred to the appropriate agency.
5. Stay on the phone until the dispatcher has all the necessary information.
6. Be sure to leave your cellular phone turned on in case there is a need to call you back.

Frequently Asked Questions

'WHY DOES THE 9-1-1 CALL-TAKER ASK SO MANY QUESTIONS? IF I CALL WITH AN EMERGENCY, TIME IS CRUCIAL. ISN'T THE CALL-TAKER WASTING TIME BY ASKING FOR SO MUCH INFORMATION?

9-1-1 call-takers are trained to ask specific questions to determine the most appropriate response by public safety officers. The call-taker enters your information into a computer system. That information is then automatically sent to the dispatcher who dispatches the field units, often before you ever hang-up with the call-taker.

WHAT IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO ME AND I CAN'T SPEAK? HOW CAN 9-1-1 HELP ME?

When you dial 9-1-1 from a traditional telephone, one that is wired into a house or other building, the location from which you are calling is displayed on a computer screen in front of the 9-1-1 call-taker. If you are physically incapable of speaking or are being kept from talking by someone else, leave the telephone off the hook. Any noise that we can hear will help us determine the most appropriate response. In cases of domestic violence, victims often leave the telephone off the hook and call-takers are able to determine the nature of the situation quickly and send the appropriate law enforcement response.

I AM HEARING-IMPAIRED AND CANNOT COMMUNICATE OVER A REGULAR TELEPHONE LINE. WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I NEED HELP IN AN EMERGENCY?

Athens-Clarke County 9-1-1 call-takers are trained in the use of TDD/TTY. It is not necessary to dial a separate number for TDD/TTY calls or to place these calls through a relay service. If you need help, simply dial 9-1-1. Our telephone system recognizes TDD/TTY calls and your call will be handled as quickly and efficiently as calls placed by non-impaired callers.

CAN I CALL 9-1-1 FROM MY CELLULAR PHONE?

Yes. Keep in mind that wireless calls sometimes present special problems for 9-1-1 centers and callers. Calls from wireless phones are answered by the 9-1-1 center closest to the cellular tower relaying the signal. For example, a call placed to 9-1-1 from Athens-Clarke County might be answered by Oconee County because the nearest cell tower relaying the signal is actually in Oconee County. Be aware of this possibility when placing cellular 9-1-1 calls. Your call may take a few extra moments to be routed to the correct agency.

Also, wireless 9-1-1 calls do not automatically display caller locations, as do calls placed by traditional phones. Cellular technology does not yet pinpoint caller locations for 9-1-1 systems. If you don't know your exact location, it is crucial that you give as much information about your surroundings as possible. If you have access to a traditional telephone in an emergency, use it. Although wireless telephone providers, the FCC, and 9-1-1 organizations are working together, we are still a years away from making cellular 9-1-1 as efficient as traditional 9-1-1 services.

CAN I SEND TEXT MESSAGES TO 911?

No. Current technology does not support the use of text messaging from a cellular phone to send messages into the 911 Center.

WHY AM I CHARGED A 9-1-1 SUBSCRIBER FEE ON MY TELEPHONE BILL?

9-1-1 subscriber fees support the operation of your 9-1-1 systems, from salaries to training and equipment. Without the 9-1-1-subscriber fee, we could not continue to provide 9-1-1 services.

HOW DO I BECOME A 9-1-1 DISPATCHER?

You must be prepared for an exciting, challenging, and stress-filled career. The minimum qualifications are the ability to pass a criminal background check, physical examination, and drug screening. A high school diploma or its equivalent is required, as well as the ability to type on a computer keyboard, to hear within a required range, and to speak the English language clearly. All employees are required to be available to work any shift (7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.), weekends, and holidays.

9-1-1 Don'ts

1. **Don't** call 9-1-1 to ask when the power will be restored during outages or to report power outages.
2. **Don't** call 9-1-1 to ask for weather reports.
3. **Don't** call 9-1-1 for school reports such as closings.
4. **Don't** call 9-1-1 to ask about scheduled events in Athens-Clarke County such as fireworks, sporting events, or the times of Halloween.
5. **Don't** hang up when you call 9-1-1 in an emergency. Other people may be calling about the same incident and call-takers answer the calls in the order they're received. Stay on the line until the call-taker answers. Hanging up and re-dialing will only move you further down the line and slow down the call-takers who will still have to answer the line you abandoned.
6. **Don't** hang up if you dial 9-1-1 accidentally. Call-takers have to call the numbers back

and police officers will be dispatched to your address to ensure your safety.

7. **Don't** play with 9-1-1 or make false calls. It is a violation of the law to do so.
8. **Don't** call 9-1-1 to request directory assistance. 411 is the correct number.
9. **Don't** call 9-1-1 to discuss legal problems, legal issues, or questions about laws.
10. **Don't** call 9-1-1 to ask for directions.