



# SANTA BARBARA COUNTY COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT CHIEFS

CHIEF LORI LUHNOW  
Santa Barbara Police Department

CHIEF JOSEPH MARIANI  
Lompoc Police Department

ACTING CHIEF JAMES BROCK  
UCSB Police Department

CHIEF TANJA HEITMAN  
Santa Barbara Probation Department

SHERIFF BILL BROWN  
Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office  
Chair

CHIEF PHIL HANSEN  
Santa Maria Police Department

CHIEF MICHAEL CASH  
Guadalupe Police Department

CHIEF CATHERINE FARLEY  
Allan Hancock College Police Department

CAPTAIN CINDY PONTES  
California Highway Patrol

DISTRICT ATTORNEY JOYCE DUDLEY  
Santa Barbara District Attorney's Office

June 26, 2020

---

## PRESS RELEASE

---

### Text to 9-1-1 Now Available in Santa Barbara County

Hearing and speech-impaired members of the community, or those in a situation where it is too dangerous to dial 9-1-1, have, as of today, another option to call for help in an emergency – Text to 9-1-1.

**“Call if you can -- text if you can’t”** is the slogan developed for this new program.

The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office, Santa Barbara Police Department, UCSB Police Department, Lompoc Police Department, Santa Maria Police Department and Vandenberg Air Force Base Primary Public Safety Answering Point dispatch centers, which answer 9-1-1 calls for all law enforcement, fire and emergency medical service agencies in Santa Barbara County, are now equipped to receive and respond to mobile phone SMS Text-to-9-1-1 messages. All agency dispatchers are trained and ready to assist callers who, for whatever reason, are unable to call 9-1-1 by voice call. This service is available for use by the deaf, hard-of-hearing, or speech impaired, and in situations where it is too dangerous to make a voice call to 9-1-1. All phones or devices must include a text or data plan to send a text to 9-1-1.

Sheriff Bill Brown, the chairman of the Santa Barbara County Law Enforcement Chiefs (CLEC) Association, said, “My fellow law enforcement chief executives and I welcome the addition of this important technology to our county’s emergency dispatch systems. We are especially pleased that each Primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) dispatch center now has the ability to receive these messages. Text to 9-1-1 is especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Stay at home orders and practices can put victims of domestic violence, child

abuse and elder abuse into almost constant close proximity to their abusers and thus inhibit their ability to report crimes verbally by telephone. Text to 9-1-1 gives victims of, and witnesses to, these crimes another way to report them and obtain help.”

While the technology is evolving, it is another tool to help those who are often the most vulnerable in our communities if they cannot call 9-1-1. The benefits to consumers are significant, especially in cases when the caller cannot communicate verbally. Examples include not only when the caller is facing domestic abuse, but also when the caller is hearing-impaired, when a crime is in progress, when the caller is injured and cannot speak, or in other scenarios.

Below are the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) guidelines for how to contact 9-1-1. If you use a wireless phone or other type of mobile device, make sure to do the following in an emergency:

- If you can, always contact 9-1-1 by making a voice call, **“Call if you can – text if you can’t.”**
- If you are deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech disabled, and Text-to- 9-1-1 is not available, use a TTY or telecommunications relay service, if available.
- Text messages can take longer to send/receive and may get out of order
- If you text 9-1-1 and text is not available in your area, you will receive a bounce back message advising “text is not available please make a voice call to 9-1-1.”
- **Location accuracy varies by carrier and should not be relied upon. Be prepared to give your location.**
- Text-to-9-1-1 service will not be available if the wireless carrier cannot ascertain a location of the device sending the message.
- Text-to-9-1-1 is not available if you are roaming.
- A text or data plan is required to place a text to 9-1-1.
- Photos and videos cannot be sent to 9-1-1. They cannot be received at the 9-1-1 centers at this time.
- Text messages should be sent in plain language and not contain popular abbreviations (SMH, LOL, ICYMI) or emojis, which will not be recognized.
- Text-to-9-1-1 cannot be sent to more than one person. Do not send your emergency text to anyone other than 9-1-1.
- The cost of Text to 9-1-1 services are included in the 9-1-1 surcharge tax and funded through the State Emergency Telephone Number Account, administered by the California Office of Emergency Services, 9-1-1 Branch.
- Text-to-9-1-1 is not available in all areas of the State yet.

Whenever possible, texts should be English. There currently is no automated language interpretation for text available. This is still in development. Dispatchers will make every attempt to translate non-English texts, but this will result in a delay.

Today’s announcement comes after the nation’s four largest wireless service providers, AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, and Verizon Wireless, in cooperation with the FCC, National Emergency Number Association, and the Association of Public Safety Officials agreed in 2012 to provide Text-to-9-1-1 as a nationwide interim solution until the Next Generation of 9-1-1 is deployed.

###