



Board of Chosen Freeholders

County of Hunterdon
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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hunterdon Freeholder Lanza: 'Text To 9-1-1' Feature Available For Emergencies When A Call Cannot Be Made

"Call when you can, text when you can't"

The statewide text to 9-1-1, an alternative method of reaching out for help in critical or dangerous situations, is available to everyone in Hunterdon County, Freeholder John E. Lanza reminded residents, at a recent Freeholder Board meeting.

Freeholder Lanza, the Board's Public Safety liaison, said, "There are circumstances in which people witnessing suspicious activity, people in danger, or people desperately in need of medical help cannot talk – but are able to text. When citizens find it unsafe to talk, or for those with hearing impairment, texting is a 9-1-1 option in Hunterdon County and the entire state.

With the recent events at the Parkland High School in Florida, where students and teachers were trapped in the school, weighing heavily on our minds, this is a timely reminder that all residents should be aware of the text 9-1-1 emergency contact option."

According to the Hunterdon County Communications Division, during any dangerous situation, the phone user simply has to type 9-1-1 in the address line of the text message screen, include the address where the individual is located, and help will be summoned the same as if calling 9-1-1 by voice. Individuals should remember to put the phone into silent mode before pressing send, so that the sound of 9-1-1 replying does not give away an individual's position.

Hunterdon County Director of Public Safety George F. Wagner said, "The push for this service came from the New Jersey Office of Information Technology which recognized that keeping up to date with technological trends increased public safety and also assisted those citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing. When calling isn't possible, being able to offer an alternative solution for reaching emergency personnel allows for added safety and security, no matter what situation an individual is in."



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According to the County Communications Division, when should you text 9-1-1?

- If you have a speech or hearing impairment. It is recommended that you inform 9-1-1 that you are speech or hearing impaired so that they can inform the responders.
- If speaking may cause you harm, such as a break-in or domestic violence situation. Remember to silence your phone so that the sound of 9-1-1 replying does not give you away.
- If peer pressure is strong. You are with a group and some of the members are doing something dangerous or illegal.
- If a lack of service makes it impossible to make a voice call, you may be able to get data service to send a text message.
- Do not attempt to send videos or photos with your texts. Limit your messaging to text only. Be as specific as possible when providing your location. Provide as much of the following information as possible:
 - Exact address to include unit/apartment number and city
 - Business name
 - The names of both streets at the nearest intersection
 - Landmarks

Director Wagner noted, "Once the texting session is initiated, do not exit the conversation until the 9-1-1 operator has told you to do so. Text-to-9-1-1 cannot include more than one person. Do not copy your emergency text to anyone other than 9-1-1. Wait until you are safe to notify others of your situation. Translation services for text-to-9-1-1 are not available; please text in English only. And remember: Call when you can, text when you can't."