

Using 911 Appropriately

Since 911 was introduced in 1968 as a universal number for reaching emergency assistance, efforts to raise public awareness about 911 have been effective. Because most people face emergency situations only rarely, they lack firsthand experience with 911. As a result, they may have unreasonable expectations about what will happen when they contact 911 for emergency assistance.

Generally speaking, people are aware that they should call 911 in an emergency, but they are less aware of the circumstances in which they should not call 911. The result is that many calls to 911 do not involve true emergencies, which creates a burden on the system and impacts those in need of emergency services.

Calling 911 can save valuable time in an emergency. Dial 911 only for an emergency. An emergency is any serious medical problem (chest pain, seizure, bleeding), any type of fire (business, car, building), or any life-threatening situation (fights, person with weapons, etc.). You can also use 911 to report crimes in progress, whether or not a life is threatened.

When you call for help, what you say is important.

- Stay calm and speak clearly.
- Say what is wrong and what kind of help you need.
- Tell the 911 Operator where the emergency is.
- Give your name and telephone number, or you may remain anonymous.
- Follow the 911 Operator's instructions – stay on the line until you are told to hang up.

Do not dial 911 for a non-emergency. Instead, dial the non-emergency telephone number. The non-emergency number for the Marion County Sheriff's Office is (503) 588-5032. For the Aurora Fire District, call (503) 678-5966.

A non-emergency incident is a property damage, an accident, a break-in to a vehicle (when suspect is gone), theft of property (when suspect is gone), vandalism (when suspect is gone), , cars blocking the street or alleys, neighbor complaints, noise or nuisance complaints, complain about barking dogs, ask directions, report the power is out, check on road conditions, and such.

If you dialed 911 in error, do not hang up the telephone. Instead, stay on the line and explain to the dispatcher that you dialed by mistake and that you do not have an emergency. If you hang up, a dispatcher will call back to confirm that there is no emergency. If you don't answer, a police officer must be dispatched to confirm that you are okay. This will needlessly take resources away from genuine emergencies.