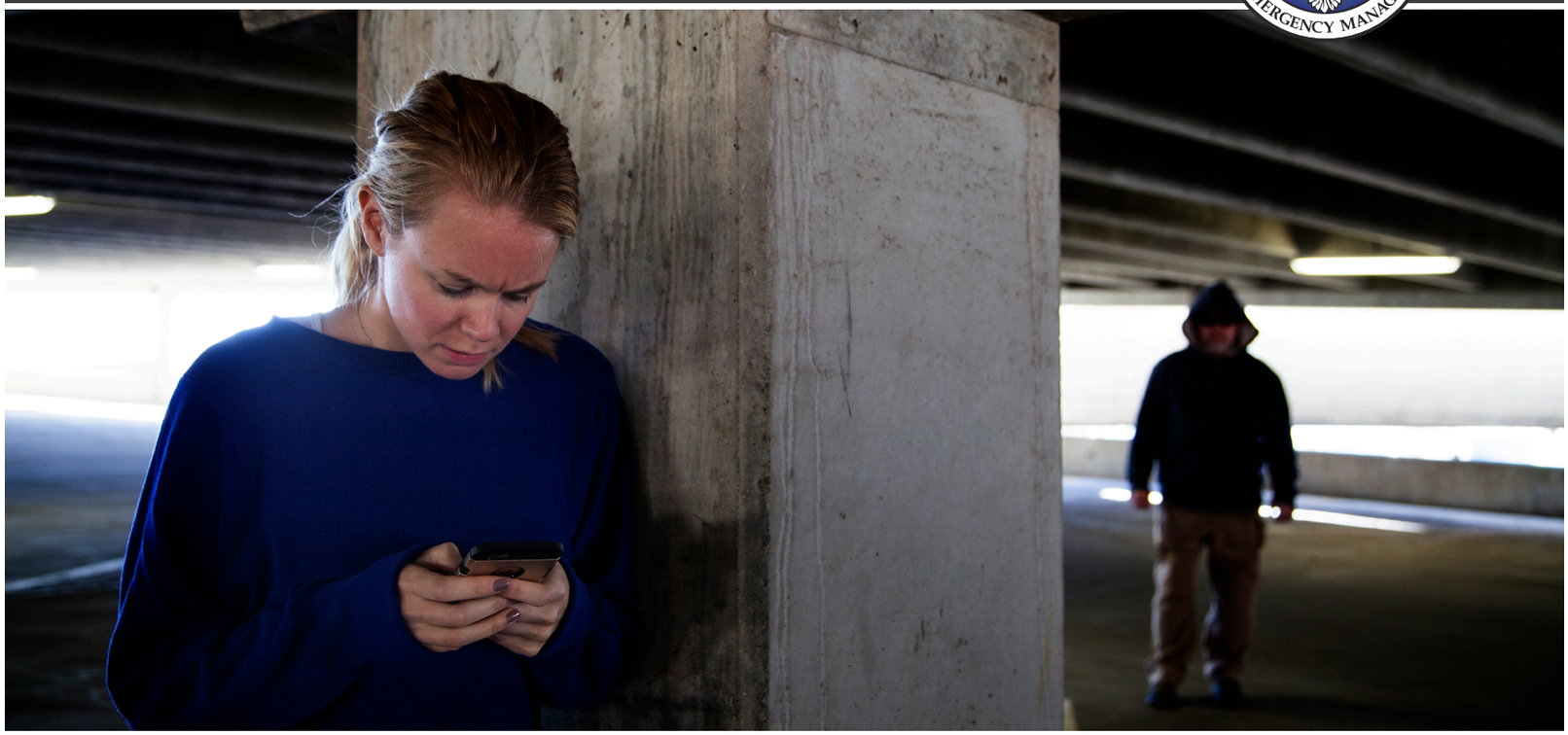
911 CALL IF YOU CAN TEXT IF YOU CAN'T



In an emergency...

It's **always** preferred that you call 911, but if you can't, text.

TEXT 911 if:

You are speech- or hearing-impaired

Speaking could cause you harm

Learn more at
homelandsecurity.iowa.gov

911
CALL IF YOU CAN
TEXT IF YOU CAN'T

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if I'm able to text 911?

As of 2017, six mobile service providers have taken the necessary steps to allow you to text 911 on your mobile phone in Iowa: AT&T, i-Wireless, Sprint, T-Mobile, U.S. Cellular, and Verizon. As the equipment in each 911 call center is adjusted to enable the receipt of texts, customers of these carriers can use the feature within a matter of days.

Why isn't Text-to-911 available everywhere in the U.S.?

Text-to-911 is a new service. As 911 call centers update their systems, it is likely to become available in more places, through more providers.

Why would I want to use Text-to-911?

Using Text-to-911 in an emergency might be helpful if you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, or if making a voice call to 911 might be dangerous or not possible. However, if you are able to make a voice call to 911 and it is safe to do so, you should call instead of sending a text. Voice calls are usually the fastest, most efficient way to reach emergency help.

If I send a text to 911, will the 911 center automatically know my location?

No. Texting 911 is different than making a voice call. When you call 911 from a mobile phone, the call center will **usually** receive your phone number and your approximate location automatically. But if you text 911, the call taker may not receive your phone number **or** location. So regardless if you text **or** call 911, it's best to provide a correct address or location as quickly as possible.

Do I need to have a texting plan to send a text message to 911?

Yes. While all wireless phones have the capability to dial 911 regardless if that phone is active on a network, you can only send a text to 911 if you use a cell phone that has an active texting plan. Your mobile carrier's regular texting rates will apply.

How do I send a text to 911?

Simply type "911" in the "To" field of a new text message. Be sure to provide your location as soon as possible, along with a short description of the emergency. Use simple words and no abbreviations. **Do not** try to text while driving. Do not try to send a text to 911 that is part of a group text.

Can I send the 911 operator a photo or video?

No. At this time, 911 call centers are not equipped to accept photos or videos attached to a text message. In addition, you shouldn't try to send emojis to 911.

What if I try to send a text to 911 where Text-to-911 isn't available?

If you attempt to send a text to 911 where that service is not available or your phone is in "roaming" status, you should receive a "bounce-back" message informing you that the service is unavailable.

Can I try to send a text to 911 to see if Text-to-911 is available in my area?

Calling 911 when there is no emergency is against the law. The same applies to texting 911. Don't "test" it to see if it works. You could tie up resources and prevent someone from receiving the help they need.