

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Gov. Branstad designates April as 9-1-1 Education Month

DES MOINES – Governor Terry E. Branstad has designated April as 9-1-1 Education Month in Iowa. Sponsored by the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD) and the Iowa 9-1-1 Communications Council, 9-1-1 Education Month is an opportunity to demonstrate to all Iowans the importance of 9-1-1 and the role they play in ensuring effective emergency response.

“When calling 9-1-1, remember, stay calm, and be aware of your location so you can help 9-1-1 dispatchers locate you during an emergency,” said Blake DeRouchey, Iowa’s E911 program manager.

Both the U.S. Congress and the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) have recognized April as National 9-1-1 Education Month.

Text-to-9-1-1

HSEMD is nearing completion of an upgrade to Iowa’s 9-1-1 network to an Internet Protocol (IP)-based system, which is more robust and capable of handling new messaging technology. Twelve Iowa counties are currently participating in a pilot program to test the new technology, which allows a cell phone user within county boundaries to contact 9-1-1 using text messaging. It is expected text-to-9-1-1 will be available in all Iowa counties by early- to mid-2016.

Text-to-9-1-1 allows cell phone users to send a text message to 9-1-1 in an emergency. Not all cell phone carriers have or will be providing this capability to its customers. Currently, five cell phone carriers in Iowa have committed to making text-to-9-1-1 available to customers: Verizon, AT&T, i-Wireless, Sprint and T-Mobile.

“The technology is changing, but all of the pieces are not yet in place,” said DeRouchey. “We’re working with the wireless carriers and 9-1-1 call centers as they get equipment and procedures in place that will allow them to utilize text-to-9-1-1.”

Text-to-911 was developed primarily for citizens who are hard of hearing, deaf, or speech impaired. Texting can be used in situations in which a voice call to 9-1-1 would endanger the caller, such as during a home invasion or domestic situation. Sending a text to 9-1-1 can also be helpful in situations in which a medical condition makes it impossible for the caller to speak. Iowa’s IP-based 9-1-1 network will eventually allow citizens to contact 9-1-1 using video and picture messaging.

“Even when the technology is in place to allow you to text 9-1-1, it will still be best to call if at all possible if you need help,” DeRouchey stressed.

As counties have the capability to accept texts to 9-1-1, they will notify residents of its availability.

Materials and other resources on 9-1-1 are available on the Ready Iowa website at www.beready.iowa.gov under the “Be Prepared” tab, and also on the NENA website at www.nena.org under the “Education” tab. Additional information will be available on HSEMD social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, throughout the month using hashtag #911MONTH.

The Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management leads, coordinates and supports homeland security and emergency management functions in order to establish sustainable communities and ensure economic opportunities for Iowa and its citizens.

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Link to HSEMD’s [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#) pages.