



# FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### FREDERICK COUNTY MARYLAND'S EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION CENTER LAUNCHES TEXT to 911 for VERIZON WIRELESS CUSTOMERS

**March 21, 2013** - Verizon Wireless customers in Frederick County, Maryland can now send a short message service (SMS) text message to 911 for emergency help when unable to make a 911 voice call. This service will be available to any Verizon Wireless customer within range of cell towers located in Frederick County. Text to 911 is intended primarily for use in two emergency scenarios: for those individuals who are hearing impaired and for those unable to make a voice call, for example during a medical emergency that renders the person incapable of speech, or in the instance of a home invasion or abduction where the sound of a voice call may increase risk to the caller.

“Ensuring the safety of residents and visitors in Frederick County is a primary strategic goal of the Board of County Commissioners and our public safety agencies,” said Board of County Commissioners President, Blaine R. Young. “Text to 911 could be a life-saver, especially for people who might otherwise not be able to make a voice call. I congratulate our team members for their work in establishing this important service in cooperation with Verizon Wireless, TeleCommunication Systems, Inc., and the State of Maryland’s Emergency Number Systems Board.

Director of Emergency Management, Jack Markey, stated “Services like Text to 911 are the leading edge of the Next Generation 911 technologies that will enhance our abilities to better serve those who may need to contact public safety agencies. Our Emergency Communications Center is proud to be a part of advancing technology to more efficiently and effectively serve our customers.”

“Verizon Wireless has been at the forefront of working with public safety stakeholders to bring Text to 911 to our customers,” said Richard Craig, director of engineering for Verizon Wireless. “Our SMS911 National Gateway enables us to bring reliable emergency communications to public safety answering points (PSAPs) across the country. We were proud to work alongside the team in Frederick County and TeleCommunication Systems, Inc. (TCS), to deploy this new solution.”

**Important information for Verizon Wireless customers in Frederick County, MD**

Verizon Wireless customers in Frederick County, MD should keep the following in mind if they send a text to 911:

- Customers should use the texting option only when calling 911 is not an option.
- Using a phone to call 911 is still the most efficient way to reach emergency help. Texting is not always instantaneous, which is critical during a life-threatening emergency. It may take slightly longer to dispatch emergency services in a text to 911 situation because of the time involved: someone must enter the text, the message must go over the network and the 911 telecommunicator must read the text and then text back.
- Providing location information and nature of the emergency in the first text message is imperative, since the Frederick County Emergency Communications Center will receive only an approximate location of the cell phone, and will not be able to speak with the person sending the text. Text abbreviations or slang should never be used so that the intent of the dialogue can be as clear as possible.
- Customers must be in range of cell towers in the Frederick County area. If customers are outside or near the edge of the county, the message may not reach the Frederick County Emergency Communications Center.
- Texts sent to 911 have the same 160-character limit as other text messages.

- Verizon Wireless customers who use Usage Controls should remove this feature to ensure full text to 911 capability.
- Verizon Wireless customers must have mobile phones capable of sending text messages.
- The solution is available for customers who use the SMS provided by Verizon Wireless. It is not available for third-party text messaging applications that can be downloaded to the phone or for applications that do not use SMS technology.
- The texting function should only be used for emergency situations that require an immediate response from police, fire or emergency medical services. Non-emergency issues should still be communicated to the Frederick County Emergency Communications Center through its non-emergency line at (301) 600-1603.
- SMS911 should only be to communicate between emergency help and the texter with no pictures, video, other attachments or other recipients appended to the message.

### **About the SMS Solution**

The Verizon Wireless SMS911 National Gateway has three text to 911 delivery options: a web browser solution known as GEM911 for PSAPs (public safety answering points) with Internet access and web browser capability; a Direct IP solution for next-generation IP-enabled PSAPs with call taker workstations that have integrated text handling software; and an SMS to TTY solution for legacy PSAPs.

The Frederick County Emergency Communications Center joins the ranks of PSAPs to use the SMS911 gateway; a significant step in making text to 911 available for PSAPs more broadly. The deployment follows the recent announcement earlier this last year from Verizon Wireless and TCS to make available a national text to 911 solution. Since pioneering U.S. wireless E9-1-1 in 1998, TCS has continued to build and enhance innovative public safety solutions for wireless E911, NG911 and SMS911. A comprehensive end-to-end SMS 911

service provider, TCS offers a quick-to-deploy SMS911 portfolio with flexible and scalable options for PSAPs, regardless of their legacy or stage of transition.

### **About Frederick County, Maryland**

Frederick County is geographically the largest county in Maryland, comprised of 644 square miles. The County seat (City of Frederick) is centrally located in the County and is located approximately 40 miles west of Baltimore and 40 miles northwest of Washington, DC at the intersection of five major highways.

Frederick County is home to over 239,582 residents according to the most recent U.S. Census estimate. The Frederick County Emergency Communications Center receives all 9-1-1 calls that originate within Frederick County, which amounted to 128,049 in calendar year 2012. Together with our partner public safety agencies we answered an additional 208,157 non-emergency calls and placed 92,752 calls in support of our mission. First to deploy text to 9-1-1 in Maryland, Frederick County was also first to implement geographically-diverse next generation 9-1-1 hardware to minimize the risk of 9-1-1 failures and prepare for the move to next-generation 9-1-1 services.

For more information on Frederick County see:

<http://www.discoverfrederickmd.com/index.cfm> or [www.frederickcountymd.gov](http://www.frederickcountymd.gov)

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