



# KENOSHA JOINT SERVICES

## PUBLIC SAFETY SUPPORT SERVICES

Sheriff • Police • Fire • EMS

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## Text-to-911 service now available across Kenosha County

KENOSHA – Mobile phone users in Kenosha County now have a new way to access emergency services.

Text-to-911 capabilities were recently enabled for all of the cellphone providers that serve the county, Kenosha Joint Services announced today.

But while people can now text their emergency to 911, officials note that dialing in and talking with a dispatcher remains the most efficient way to get help in most circumstances.

“If you want help fast, call us,” said Mike Blodgett, public safety communications manager for Joint Services, an independent organization that handles dispatch and other services for Kenosha city and county law enforcement and fire and rescue departments.

Where text-to-911 could be beneficial, Blodgett said, is for members of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, for those calling from areas where cell service is limited and calls might not be able to be placed, and for those in situations where talking on the phone could place a person in danger.

If texting 911 seems like the best option, Blodgett said it is very helpful to include in the message your location (including address, if possible, and the municipality where you are located) and a brief description of the nature of your emergency. Blodgett cautioned that dispatch is not able to pinpoint the exact location of texters.

Also, Blodgett noted, there is no guarantee that a text message will be delivered as intended. Those who do successfully transmit a 911 text to Joint Services dispatch will receive an automated return message confirming delivery.

Text-to-911 was one of the components Joint Services sought in a 2017 upgrade of its 911 software system. Joint Services then had to negotiate adoption of the service with each of the cell carriers that serve the area.

Cellphones from out-of-area regional carriers that are roaming in Kenosha County will not be guaranteed text-to-911 service here. Cellphones must also be on an active phone plan to text 911. Other messaging services, such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, are not able to reach 911.

Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser said that while text-to-911 has some limitations, it is a valuable service to offer to residents and visitors of the county. Kenosha is one of just a handful

of counties to enable this service in southeastern Wisconsin; others include Waukesha and Rock counties.

“I echo our partners at Joint Services in urging people to still call 911 when in need, if they can,” Kreuser said. “But for cases where sending a text makes the most sense, I’m pleased that we’re able to offer another way for people in need to access life-saving services.”

Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian also celebrated the arrival of the new service.

“The Joint Services text-to-911 service provides another level to public safety in the City of Kenosha, continuing our commitment to put citizen safety first,” Antaramian said. “It will be a great asset for the city and county alike.”

Any road that can be traveled to help people reach dispatch to get help is a positive step forward, said Kenosha County Sheriff David Beth.

“I love the fact that this is another tool in our belt that we can use to help people,” Beth said.

A few 911 texting tips from Joint Services:

- Don’t use text abbreviations; use full words.
- Don’t text and drive.
- If you are in a situation where talking on the phone could put you in danger, remember to silence your phone before texting 911.
- In your text, state your location, including address and the municipality where you are located (such as Kenosha, Somers, Pleasant Prairie, Salem Lakes, Wheatland, etc.).
- Include a brief description of your emergency.
- If your text is successful, you will receive an automated return message confirming delivery.
- Voice calls are best!

For more information about Kenosha Joint Services and the public safety services it provides, visit [www.kenoshajs.org](http://www.kenoshajs.org).

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