

## **Why do the dispatchers ask so many questions when I call 911?**

Emergency dispatchers need to get accurate information to allow officers to make the best decision on how to approach the situation. Dispatchers handling fire and paramedic calls must also consider the well-being of the public and the safety of the firefighters and paramedics. Callers will be asked:

- Where
- What
- Who
- When
- Weapons

The information you provide a dispatcher is relayed to responding officers, paramedics or firefighters while they are on their way to the call. This allows them to help make educated decisions about how they respond to the call and what equipment they take with them.

## **If I call 911, what will they ask me?**

### **❖ Where? What is the location of the emergency? (may need to transfer to another agency)**

This is the address where the emergency is actually happening, include room # or suite #, floor, entrance, etc. If you don't know the actual address, tell the dispatcher and then:

- Give cross streets or provide landmarks, business names or parks near the emergency.
- Look at the house numbers in the area.
- If you are calling from inside a home or business, look on a piece of mail.
- If you are hunting and have a GPS, offer dispatchers the GPS coordinates.

### **❖ What is the phone number you're calling from?**

This is the number to the phone you're actually calling from. We need this in case we have to call you back.

- If you are not at home, do not give home phone number.
- Know what your cell phone number is.

### **❖ What is the problem?**

Tell us exactly what happened. Be as concise as possible. Tell us what just happened, not what led up to the event.

- %see a fight on the corner of Broadway and West End.
- %My ex-boyfriend just kicked my door in.+
- %There is a car accident at mile marker 96 northbound on I-55+

- ❖ **Who is involved?** Are you involved or witness? Suspect name if known or description. Is suspect still there or have they left? Description
  - Name
  - Male/Female and White/Black/Hispanic/Asian
  - Short/Tall . heavy/thin
  - Beard, bald, hair color and style such as blonde pony tail or dark shoulder length, etc.
  - Jacket, shirt, pants
  - Boots, Tennis shoes, sandals
  - Leave on foot or in vehicle
  - Direction of travel
- ❖ **Vehicle Information**
  - Color . if unknown was it light or dark
  - Year . newer or older
  - Make/Model . Honda Accord or Ford F150
  - Additional . Toolbox, window decals, bumper stickers, broken window, noticeable damage, etc.
  - License . Plate and state . even partial info helps

### **Why do dispatchers ask so many questions on a medical call?**

You will be asked a series of questions that will help determine the response of paramedics to the call. The paramedics will be better prepared to help the patient with the information you have provided. EMS will also be able to provide caller with proper steps to take until paramedics arrive.

- ❖ **Location of patient**
  - Address
  - Inside or Outside
  - Are you with the patient
  - Valuable time may be saved by having someone waiting outside to direct fire and ambulance crews to the patient.
- ❖ **What is happening with patient right now?**
  - Do you know what caused incident (fall, stabbed, history of heart problems?)
- ❖ **How old is patient?**
  - Age if known (child, teen, young adult, middle-aged or older person.) This can determine treatment and response. May indicate a need for law enforcement.
- ❖ **Is patient conscious and breathing?**
- ❖ **EMS may ask these and other questions**

### **If I call to report a fire what should I tell the dispatcher?**

❖ **Location of the fire**

❖ **What is on fire?**

- Building, vehicle, or grass
- How large is the fire? Estimate size such as size of football field, about the size of a vehicle or a single parking space, size of a normal room in a house, especially useful in grass fires, bigger than a grocery store parking lot, etc.
- Any structures threatened. Are there any homes or buildings that could be in danger?
- Do you know if anyone is inside the house or building?
- Is anyone injured?
- What color is the smoke or flames?

**Why would a 911 caller be put on hold?**

❖ **There are many reasons.**

- We may be getting multiple calls on the same incident and need to make sure that the other 911 calls aren't callers with more information or another emergency.
- We have a limited number of people to answer the phones.
  - Cape has four 911 trunks and if they aren't answered they roll over to Cape County.
- We may need to transfer caller to another agency. We receive calls from Southern Illinois, Cape County and Scott County. We have even received calls from St. Louis and Rolla.
- We may need to verify information to be certain that the correct responders are sent. It is better to put the caller on hold briefly than to transfer to another agency and the caller is then transferred again.
- Sometimes the dispatcher may not immediately answer your question because they are keyed up talking to the police or fire. The 911 system automatically mutes the microphone to the caller when the dispatcher is talking on the radio.

We also need to know if you're going to be at, or near, the scene when we arrive because the police may need to talk to you, or you may need to point out the exact location. We may ask you what kind of car you are in, or what color clothing you are wearing.