

Cell Phone 9-1-1

Calling 9-1-1 Using a Cell Phone

Calling 9-1-1 from a cell phone is no different than dialing 9-1-1 from a regular telephone also known as a land line. After the call is made there are many differences in how the call is connected to the 9-1-1 dispatch center. The type of information that is received by the dispatch center is not the same as a dispatcher receiving a call from a land line, the amount of information that can be obtained from the cell phone depends on where the 9-1-1 cell phone call is made, where it is routed, and how it is received.

In Minnesota when a 9-1-1 call is made from a land line the address of the call is displayed on a screen for the dispatcher. Cellular calls are mobile and therefore an address is not assigned to the phone. When a 9-1-1 call is made from a cell phone the display on the screen for the dispatcher can be the location of the cell tower the cell phone signal came from, the latitude and longitude of the cell phone, or the general area of the call.

As a cell phone user you should be aware that dialing 9-1-1 from a cell phone will get the call to the closest dispatch center based on the location of the tower the signal goes to, but not necessarily based on the exact location of the cell phone. For example, a 9-1-1 cell phone caller reports a car crash in front of the West Middle School on Highway 41, the call is received by a tower somewhere in Shorewood at the quadrant pointing South. The operator answering the 9-1-1 call for the cellular provider uses the tower data to decide if the 9-1-1 call from South of the tower should be routed to Hennepin or Carver. The incident is in Carver and it is an emergency call for Chanhassen Fire Department, but the tower receiving the signal is in Hennepin County. The dispatcher would need the information provided by the caller to be able to transfer the call to the correct dispatch center and in this case it would be Carver County Dispatch.

The bottom line regarding cellular phone calls to 9-1-1 is that they are very different from call made from a land line. Cellular callers are mobile and the signals constantly move with the cell phone. Land line callers are stationary; the call goes directly through wires. When an emergency call is made via a cell phone the computers at the dispatch center can usually help the dispatcher get close to the location, but the dispatcher must to rely on the caller to pinpoint accurate location information. Land line caller locations are much more specific.

Minnesota is a leader in 9-1-1 advancements and technology in America, some states do not have the level of technology that we do however, it is important that you are aware of where you are at all times and in all places. When you go to a park know the parks name which area you are in, which trail you are on, and which direction you are from the main access. When you are driving know the road you are on, be aware of the roads, bridges, over passes, and the landmarks you have gone by. Teach your children to know their address at home, at grandma's house and at the cabin. In 1995 every resident and commercial building in Minnesota was assigned a number and a street address. When you are using a cell phone you are responsible for getting the 9-1-1 dispatcher the information they need to get you emergency help. We can't help you if we can't find you.

If you want more information the Minnesota 9-1-1 system has a great web-site www.911.state.mn.us