

From the Office of the Sheriff:

“Call 911 – Know Your Surroundings”

Eight years ago we took a cellular 911 call where the caller was lost while driving. She actually went around a road closed barricade and drove onto a road that was submerged in water. At that time cellular technology was not advanced enough to plot her location. The driver was not from the area and could not help us locating her with landmarks and it took over an hour to find her. Times have changed and today if you call 911 on a cell phone, the map in the 911 Center will plot your location, often within a few feet. So we have your location, now we need information.

Frequently people will call 911 with too little information. There is critical information we need to know. First, what is the problem, medical emergency, family disturbance, traffic crash? We would like an exact address; this will determine which EMS and fire units respond. Often somebody in the work setting will yell for you to call 911 but you have so little information, this can be frustrating. For EMS calls we can provide a better service if we know the age, approximate weight and nature of the problem. Please do not embellish the facts, just tell the 911 operator what is happening. If you any medical history on the person, provide it. The seriousness of the problem may generate a call for a medical helicopter or paramedic unit. If a person is obese, we page additional personnel for lifting.

If you are calling from an industrial building, advise what door responders should come to. If it is a cardiac patient, do you have an AED on site? Is anybody trained to use it? If you are home and both the caller and the victim, what door should we use? If the door is locked, we may need to force entry to get to you unless you have a key hidden for access. Understand the response may feel like a lifetime but most of our fire and EMS units are staffed with volunteers and respond from work or home to the station to get the resources they need before they come to you.

The challenges we experience are few but can be improved. How can you help? Know your work setting, the address and main phone number of your place of employment. This is critical information should an emergency arise and help needs to be summoned. If you are calling from a business, know the nature and why you are calling 911, especially if it is a medical emergency. The type and severity of the situation can greatly change the type and/or speed of the response. Depending upon the circumstances, additional equipment may be needed as well. If in a business setting, know which entrance emergency services/police are to respond to. I also encourage employers to have an emergency plan and rehearse it.

Parents, please do the same for your families. If you summon EMS to your home, EMTs need medical info, all prescription drugs gathered together and the name of the family physician. If you have dogs, tell the 911 operator. If they are not friendly, please secure them in another room prior to EMS arrival. Many homes and apartments can be difficult getting the gurney in and out. If you have clutter on your steps, remove it. If furniture needs to be moved, move it.

The lesson here is you will not have advance notice when you need to call 911. When the time comes, it will be hectic and your thoughts will be with your loved one or the patient. You can help us provide greater service if you are prepared and informed. Thanks for listening, [tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us](mailto:tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us) or @sheriffnehls on Twitter.