

Introduction

The Columbus Police Communications Bureau provides a vital link between the needs of the community and the resources within the Division of Police. Its mission is to evaluate incoming calls for service, determine the nature of the request, and then dispatch the appropriate resources necessary to safely and efficiently provide the service required.

When Do I Call 911?

A 911 emergency is defined as:

- Any immediate threat to a person's life or well-being
- A crime in progress
- Any fire and/or medical emergency
- Any unknown type of call

Call the non-emergency phone number, (614) 645-4545, if you require a police response, but one of the above situations is not currently taking place. If you call 911 and a call-taker determines your call does not fit the criteria mentioned above, you will be transferred to the non-emergency line. All silent and unresponsive 911 calls will be cross-examined with a text telephone (TTY/TDD) to determine if a TTY/TDD user is attempting to report an emergency. Please note that the emergency and non-emergency numbers do not have text messaging capabilities.

Has the Situation Changed?

If you have placed a call to the non-emergency phone number, and the situation has changed to meet the criteria of a 911 call, please call 911 and provide the updated information. The call-taker will add the additional information to your call for service.

“911, What is the Address of Your Emergency?”

Your call will be answered by a trained professional call-taker who follows very specific procedures when gathering information to ensure your call is handled appropriately. Allowing the call-taker to control the call will ensure the best response. If you call 911 and receive a message advising you to hold, please stay on the line and wait for the next available call-taker.

Staying on the Line

Please stay on the line until you are told to disconnect. When needed, call-takers also have the ability to add an interpreter on the line. Call-takers will continue to ask questions in order to provide the responding officers with the most up to date and detailed information. Once the call-taker has completed this inquiry, he or she will instruct you to disconnect.

The following basic information is needed to dispatch police assistance, so please be prepared to provide it at the very beginning of the call:

Location First

- Address or intersection
- Room number or apartment number
- Type of location (a residence, business, school or medical facility)

Condition of Persons Involved

- Are there injuries?
- Is anyone currently under the influence of illicit drugs or alcohol?

This information helps the call-taker properly categorize the call, determine the appropriate service(s), and ensure the correct number of officers are dispatched to the location.

Please be prepared to provide the following additional information about the circumstances:

Weapons

Responding officers need to be aware whether anyone involved in the emergency either possesses a weapon on their person, or has immediate access to a weapon (for example, there is weapon in the person's home, vehicle, or nearby). It is very important to tell the call-taker who has the weapon, how you know they have a weapon, and what type of weapon is involved (for example, a gun, knife, etc.).

If you know a weapon is a fake, toy, or replica, it is important that you tell the call-taker of that fact. If you have called 911, and you will have a weapon on your person when the police respond, you should tell the call-taker of that fact to avoid any confusion.

Description

The call-taker will ask for a description that typically includes the following details about the person(s) involved:

Person(s)

- Sex
- Race
- Height and weight
- Hair and eye color

Clothing

The following specific order is used for clothing descriptions:

- Head to toe
- Inside-out (for example, "a white t-shirt with a black coat, blue jeans, and white shoes")

Vehicles

The acronym "CYMBALS" is used for vehicle descriptions and stands for:

- Color
- Year
- Make
- Body style
- Anything else (for example, damage, stickers, or odd paint)
- License plate
- State

Call Backs

When you call the police and request officers to respond, a call for service is entered into the police computer system. If you can safely do so, it is beneficial to the officers if you provide your name and call-back information because information from known-callers is seen as more reliable.

If a prolonged delay in the response occurs, you will receive a telephone call from a dispatcher. The dispatcher will advise you that your call is still pending and an officer will be sent as soon as one is available. It is not necessary to continue to call the police for updated or estimated times of arrival. Due to the nature of police work, it is impossible for a dispatcher to give you a specific time of arrival.