What to expect when you call 9-1-1

You may never have to call 9-1-1 in your lifetime, but when you do, it’s important to remain calm and be able to provide accurate information. It can be a stressful experience but there are several precautions you can take to make the process run smoothly for you and the emergency dispatcher.

What information is important to know when you are calling 9-1-1?

* Where are you?
  + Try to be specific as possible (address, name of business, etc.). If you aren’t sure where you are, give the nearest intersection or be able to provide directions for the dispatcher to relay to emergency responders.
* What kind of emergency are you having?
  + Having an idea of the type of emergency allows dispatchers to send the correct response; whether it’s police, fire, or medical, or all of the above. Be able to describe the problem when asked.
* When did this event occur?
  + Just now? 5 minutes ago? 5 days ago?
* How many people are involved and what do they look like?
  + Dispatchers will ask for descriptions of all individuals involved. They will ask for various descriptors such as race, sex, height, weight, clothing, hair color, facial hair, scars/marks/tattoos, etc.
* Is there a weapon involved?
  + For the safety of emergency responders, as well as those already on scene, dispatchers will want to know if there is a weapon involved. Know what kind of weapon (gun, knife, bludgeoning tool, etc.) and be able to describe the person who had the weapon and where they are.
* Is there a vehicle involved?
  + Dispatchers will ask for the color, make, model, tag number, and number of doors when gathering vehicle description information, as well as the direction of travel and number of people in the vehicle if they leave. This helps emergency responders locate and identify potential suspects or victims if they leave the scene.
* How can we reach you?
  + Know the phone number you are calling from. This enables the dispatcher to call you back for further information or directions, and allows the dispatcher to call you back in the event that you get disconnected.

Trust that help is on the way, even if the dispatcher is still asking questions or giving instructions. While the dispatcher is talking to you on the phone, their partners are sending help. Follow all the dispatcher’s instructions while waiting for help to arrive and stay on the line – DO NOT HANG UP. All you have to do is answer the dispatcher’s questions and remain calm and we will get help to you.