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County of LUZERNE
9-1-1 COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

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*******NEWS RELEASE*******

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TEXT TO 911 UNVEILED IN LUZERNE COUNTY

The Luzerne County 9-1-1 Center will be utilizing Telecommunications Systems Inc. (TCS) as a solution for short message service (SMS) text messages to 911 for emergency help when a person is unable to make a 911 voice call. The Luzerne County 9-1-1 Center will be able to accept (SMS) text messages from Verizon, AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, and the Over the Top (OTT) texting application made available by Comcast XFINITY.

Text to 911 is intended primarily for use in two emergency scenarios:

- For an individual who is speech or hearing impaired and...
- For a person who is unable to make a voice call, for example during a medical emergency that renders the person incapable of speech, or in the instance of a home invasion, domestic violence, abduction, or other scenario where the caller could be further endangered by making a voice call.

****Customers should use the texting option ONLY WHEN CALLING 911 IS NOT AN OPTION. Call if you can, text if you can't.**

Using a phone to call 911 is still the most efficient way to reach emergency help.

- Texting is not always instantaneous, which is critical during a life-threatening emergency.
- It may take slightly longer to dispatch emergency services in a text to 911 situation because of the time involved, as someone must enter the text, the message must go over the network and the 911 Telecommunicator must read the text and then text back.

There are texting guidelines that should be followed.

- Providing location information and nature of the emergency in the first text message is imperative, since the Luzerne County 9-1-1 Center will receive only an approximate location of the cell phone, and will not be able to speak with the person sending the text.
- Text messages sent to 911 have the same 160-character limit as other text messages.
- SMS-911 should only be used to communicate between emergency help and the texter with no pictures, video, other attachments or other recipients appended to the message.
- Text abbreviations or slang should never be used so that the intent of the dialogue can be as clear as possible.
- Customers must be in range of cell towers in Luzerne County.
If customers are outside or near the edge of the county, the message may not reach the Luzerne County 9-1-1 Center.
- In these cases, the customer will receive a 'Bounce Back' message advising them to make a voice call to 9-1-1.

The texting function should only be used for emergency situations that require an immediate response from police, fire or emergency medical services.

- Non-emergency issues should still be communicated to the Luzerne County 9-1-1 Center through its non-emergency line at (570) 819-4916.

PLEASE, DO NOT TEXT AND DRIVE!

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