

## Three Facts 911 Operators Wish You Knew

When it comes to calling 911, there are a few facts emergency dispatchers wish you knew: Information that'll increase your odds of getting help as soon as possible. This comes from *First* magazine, and Paul Linnee, an emergency-communications specialist in Minneapolis:

- **Dispatchers who repeat questions are NOT causing delays.** 911 operators want to make sure emergency teams find you as fast as possible. So, they need to get all the information right – starting with confirming the address and phone number that pops up in front of them. They often double-check even simple spellings to avoid confusing between similar-sounding places, like “Weston Street” and West Tenth Street.”
- Another thing 911 operators wish you knew: **Cell phone calls DON'T go to the nearest dispatch center.** Calls from landlines go to the nearest call center, but 911 calls on cell phones connect you to the nearest cell tower. If the tower's in another jurisdiction, your call could end up in a different city, county, or state. Even if you reach the right dispatch center, wireless carriers can only narrow your location to within 300 meters, which is an entire city block. So, if you call 911 on a cell, describe your location in detail – including any landmarks, like a nearby lake, bridge or building, and include the city and state, even if you have an exact address. Neighboring towns often have the same street names and numbers – and paramedics might show up at the right address in the wrong town.
- One final truth about 911 calls: **“Dead air” DOESN'T mean your call was disconnected.** A lot of call centers aren't certified to provide medical advice – like how to perform CPR. You may hear weird sounds and silences if they need to transfer you to paramedics for help. Also, if the dispatcher needs to speak to emergency crews while you're on the line, they may mute the conversation. The fix: Ask, “Are you still there?” If a dispatcher's on the line, you should get a response. However, if you hear a dial tone or haven't spoken to a live person in more than 20 seconds, hang up and call 911 again.

Source: Intelligence For Your Life, [www.tesh.com](http://www.tesh.com)