

**Myth: Officers are dispatched on 9-1-1 calls according to the order in which they are received.**

Fact: The calltaker will assign a priority to every call on which an officer will be dispatched. Priorities are determined by (1) if the crime is in progress, (2) if anyone has been injured, (3) if anyone has any weapons, or (4) the loss of property. On some calls the caller will be advised it may be up to 4 hours before an officer will be dispatched. If no officers are available and the call is to be held longer than 4 hours, the police department will contact the caller and tell them.

**Myth: It will take officers only moments to arrive at the scene of any call.**

Fact: Although the closest available officer(s) will be dispatched on the call, the officer(s) may still be quite a distance away. Due to the volume of calls, and the lack of available officers, an officer may be responding from a different patrol division than the one in which the call is located.

**Myth: Calls received from cellular mobile phones will automatically be routed to the correct police agency.**

Fact: The caller should immediately tell the calltaker which city is needed, as cellular calls are not answered according to where the phone is geographically located. They are answered by the agency in which the cell phone tower picking up the call is located.

**Myth: A police officer is required to be dispatched when a report must be made.**

Fact: It is not necessary for an officer to be dispatched to the scene in order to make a report. Officers will not be dispatched on calls that do not require an investigation or are primarily for insurance purposes. The caller may be advised to make a “walk in” report at a police station or transferred to make a “phone in report”. Calls that

may qualify for “walk in” or “phone in” include non-injury accidents, property damage, thefts, loss reports, and fraud or insufficient fund checks.

**Myth: The police department is the agency to call concerning any violation of the law.**

Fact: Not all violations of city ordinances are handled by the police department. All city services can be accessed through the City Action Center at either 3-1-1 or 513-1313. Most calls involving animals, water main breaks, or abandoned autos are 3-1-1 calls. Loud music or other noise disturbances between 7:00AM and 10:00PM are also 3-1-1 calls.

**Myth: The calltaker should be called when any type of police information is needed.**

Fact: The administrative number for the police department, 234-5000, should be used for information about police reports, directions, or other general information. The switchboard operator will handle the call or refer the caller to the proper place. The other non emergency number is 234-5111.

**Myth: Calling the operator instead of 9-1-1 from a coin phone will get the call connected faster.**

Fact: Calling 9-1-1 from a coin phone is free, so there is no need to call the operator. Calling the operator will actually delay the call, because the telephone operator can only connect you to the non-emergency line.

**Myth: If a caller does not want to be contacted an officer will not be dispatched.**

Fact: It is not always necessary to contact someone in order to dispatch an officer. The caller must be contacted only in situations where they need to make a report or sign a complaint. If the caller is a third party to the call they can often remain anonymous.

**9-1-1  
FACT  
VS.  
MYTH**

**Myth: 9-1-1 is for emergency calls only.**

Fact: 9-1-1 should be used for any call when the caller believes a police officer is necessary. However, the calltaker has the authority to determine how the call will be handled and if an officer will be dispatched. Calls for information should be made to the administrative number, 234-5000, or the non emergency number 234-5111.

**Myth: Incoming calls on 9-1-1 will be answered immediately by the calltaker.**

Fact: If calltakers are available to take the call, the call will be answered immediately. However, if the number of incoming calls is greater than the number of calltakers working, the Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system will answer the call and the caller will receive a recorded message. **The caller should remain on the line if they wish to be connected as soon as possible.** The callers in the ACD will be connected to the calltakers as soon as possible in the order that they called. **Do not hang up**, unless remaining on the line poses a greater hazard than not receiving prompt service.

**Myth: If adults or juveniles make prank phone calls to 9-1-1, nothing will happen.**

Fact: It is against the law to make false 9-1-1 calls. An officer will be dispatched to the location, the individual responsible for the phone will be given a citation and must appear in court on the charges. The police department will prosecute on false 9-1-1 calls.

**Myth: If you reach the recording, it is better to just hang up and dial 9-1-1 again.**

Fact: Do not hang up when you hear the recording. If you remain on the line you will be answered as soon as it is your turn. If you hang up and call in again, you will lose your spot in the call queue and have to wait longer. It will also generate an “abandoned” call. “Abandoned” calls stay in the system and must be called back by a calltaker. If

you hang up you not only lose your place in queue, you reduce the number of available calltakers handling calls in queue. This often results in situations where one calltaker is calling the number back and gets a busy signal because the caller is waiting in queue or because the caller is talking to another calltaker.

**Myth: If you reach 9-1-1 by mistake, it is better to just hang up to avoid wasting the calltaker’s time.**

Fact: Just like the person that hangs up to call back again, the person who just hangs up generates an “abandoned” call. This can lead to the situation where a citizen calls 9-1-1 in error, hangs up before talking to the calltaker, and makes their intended phone call correctly. While on the intended phone call the telephone operator interrupts advising you that the police are calling. The citizen hangs up on their intended call just to be called by the calltaker who asks if they have an emergency. This tied up the calltaker who could have been handling other calls and inconveniences the citizen by interrupting their call.

**Myth: It is not necessary to give an address to the calltaker when dialing 9-1-1 because the address is automatically shown on the call screen.**

Fact: Although the Automatic Call Location (ALI) screen shows an address on the screen, callers should always give the address where the police are needed. The address on the screen is the billing address of land lines or the approximate location of cellular lines. Furthermore, while the address of land lines is almost always where the call is coming from, almost always is not good enough when a person’s life is at stake. The phone companies that enter these addresses are as prone as any other organization to data entry errors. If you have moved and kept your phone number, the new address may not have been entered yet. For commercial phone numbers the billing address

shown may not be the address where the phone is physically located.

**Myth: A 9-1-1 call will never be placed on hold.**

Fact: The calltaker may place a call on hold for any number of reasons. The most common is that the call is not an emergency and they need to gather additional information to help the caller. The ACD system, mentioned previously, is another form of “hold” and happens automatically when necessary.

**Myth: The calltaker asks unnecessary questions instead of sending the police, or an officer will not be dispatched until the calltaker hangs up.**

Fact: The calltaker will ask many questions. These are required to provide proper service and to help maintain the safety of both the caller and the officer(s) sent. In addition, the calltaker may send the call to the dispatchers while remaining on the phone asking questions. Officers could very well be on the way while the calltaker is still asking necessary questions.

**Myth: It is necessary for the caller to give their name if they want an officer dispatched.**

Fact: The calltaker will always ask the caller for their name and telephone number. This information is not routinely broadcast to the officer. By asking the name and phone number the calltaker can verify the information on the ALI. It also provides a layer of safety for the caller. If there is some error in the call information and the officer cannot find the citizen or the call, the caller can be contacted by phone and the information correctly obtained.