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Tips for Communicating During An Emergency

The following information was provided by Steve Lich, WFCA Representative on the E-911 Advisory Committee.

- » **Limit non-emergency phone calls.** This will minimize network congestion, free up “space” on the network for emergency communications and conserve battery power if you are using a wireless phone;
- » **Keep all phone calls brief.** If you need to use a phone, try to use it only to convey vital information to emergency personnel and/or family;
- » **Try text messaging when using your wireless phone.** In many cases text messages will go through when your call may not. It will also help free up more “space” for emergency communications on the telephone network.
- » **If possible, try a variety of communications services if you are unsuccessful in getting through with one.** For example, if you are unsuccessful in getting through on your wireless phone, try a messaging capability like text messaging or email. Alternatively, try a landline phone if one is available. This will help spread the communications demand over multiple networks and should reduce overall congestion;
- » **Wait 10 seconds before redialing a call.** On many wireless handsets, to re-dial a number, you simply push “send” after you’ve ended a call to redial the previous number. If you do this too quickly, the data from the handset to the cell sites does not have enough time to clear before you’ve re-sent the same data. This contributes to a clogged network;
- » **Have charged batteries and car-charger adapters available** for backup power for your wireless phone;
- » **Maintain a list of emergency phone numbers** in your phone;
- » **Have a family communications plan in place.** Designate someone out of the area as a central contact, and make certain all family members know who to contact if they become separated;
- » **If in your vehicle, try to place calls while your vehicle is stationary;**
- » **If you have call forwarding on your home number,** forward your home number to your wireless number in the event of an evacuation. That way you will get incoming calls from your landline phone;
- » **After the storm has passed,** if you lose power in your home, try using your car to charge cell phones or listen to news alerts on the car radio. But be careful – don’t try to reach your car if it is not safe to do so, and remain vigilant about carbon monoxide emissions from your car if it is in a closed space, such as a garage.
- » **Tune-in to broadcast and** radio news for important news alerts.
- » **If you have an emergency, call 911 immediately.** But if it’s not an emergency, use other options.

