



STATE OF MICHIGAN
STATE 9-1-1 COMMITTEE
LANSING

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Consumer Alert
Smart Phone Applications and 911

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The State 911 Committee* wants Michigan residents who have downloaded or are considering downloading applications (apps) that report emergency situations to be aware not all apps provide access to the "911 Network." Some apps may not provide the same functions available to the "911 Center" as a traditional call to 911.

There are many different apps, and all work a little differently. While some features may sound appealing, they are not always compatible with the existing 911 infrastructure. Before downloading any application, make sure you read and understand the details of the emergency app.

- Not all emergency apps work the same in all locations.
- The apps may or may not go directly to a 911 Call Center. Some apps automatically dial a third party call center instead of the 911 Call Center, route to a non-emergency administrative line, or get routed to the incorrect 911 Call Center.
- While some apps may state they provide additional information to the 911 Center, not all centers are equipped to receive that additional information.
- Location may need to be enabled in order for the app to provide your present location information to the 911 Center.
- Using certain apps may not allow your location to update if you are moving. A traditional voice call would provide an updated location.
- Some apps offer texting, but may only work in a one-way direction.
- Some apps notify friends or family members after it has been activated (which, in certain circumstances, could place you or them at risk).
- 911 fees are already covered in the cost of any wireless phone plan. Some of the available apps may require a supplemental cost.
- Apps may not work properly if a data connection is not available (i.e. Intermittent Wi-Fi, data limits reached, etc.).

- Some apps use the public Internet, as opposed to the safe and reliable “911 Network.”
- Data being stored by apps may not be secure. Its accuracy is often times dependent on the user and may need to be updated by the user to ensure accuracy.

It should also be noted that there are currently no adopted standards or regulations covering these applications. At present time, a voice call to 911 is the regulated, trusted, reliable, and secure way to contact emergency services. While applications hold great promise for improving public safety and emergency response, much work remains to ensure the applications intended to replace or augment a voice call to 911 are as secure and reliable as the public has come to expect from the 911 system.

**The State 911 Committee was established in accordance with Public Act 79 of 1999. The 21 members represent organizations who work together to promote the successful development, implementation, and operation of 911 systems across the State of Michigan.*

“Important Tips about Apps,” Greater Harris County Emergency Network, accessed June 10, 2016, http://911.org/Important_Tips_About_Apps.asp

“Fact Sheet: Mobile Apps and 9-1-1,” Association of Public Safety Communications Officials, April 27, 2016, http://appcomm.org/wp-content/themes/directorypress/thumbs/FactSheet_911Apps.pdf

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