

# Know When to Make the Call

Tacoma Fire Prevention Bureau 3471 S. 35th St. Tacoma WA, 98409

## Know When to Make the Call

It is important that everyone in your home knows that 911 is the number to call for emergency help. The following are guidelines for the proper use of the 911 system for FIRE and MEDICAL emergencies in the City of Tacoma.

### WHEN SHOULD I CALL 911?

Call 911 for a LIFE-THREATENING EMERGENCY such as:

- \* Breathing difficulty/shortness of breath/breathing has stopped.
- \* Choking (can't talk or breathe).
- \* Constant chest pain - in adults (lasting longer than two minutes).
- \* Uncontrollable bleeding / large blood loss.
- \* Drowning.
- \* Electrocutation.
- \* Drug overdose /poisoning.
- \* Gunshot wounds, stabbings.
- \* Vomiting blood.
- \* Sudden fainting /unconsciousness
- \* Convulsions / seizures (uncontrolled jerking, movements the patient may fall to the floor).
- \* Severe allergic reaction (difficulty breathing/unresponsive)
- \* Major burns (white or charred skin: blisters and redness over large area).
- \* Someone who will not wake up, even when you shake them.
- \* SEVERE injuries from:
  - Traffic accidents
  - Head Injury
  - Significant falls
  - Physical entrapment (i.e. car accident with victim trapped in the vehicle)

Do not call 911 for **Non-Emergency** situations. Examples of non-emergency situations are:

- \* Minor illness or Injuries
- \* Flu/common cold
- \* Chronic (ongoing) aches and pains
- \* Emotionally Upset
- \* Routine Transportation to medical offices, clinics and hospitals

Once you reach 911, the dispatcher will ask some questions to determine whom to send. Some of these questions will be:

- \* Location of your emergency? (address where the problem is)
- \* What is the problem? (What is going on now?)
- \* What is the telephone number from which you are calling?
- \* Is the patient conscious and breathing normally?

### CELL PHONE ISSUES?

If you call 911 from a cellular phone in the Tacoma area, the call will be routed through the Washington State Patrol. Depending on your cellular phone, your location may not be identified automatically. It is extremely important to give clear and accurate instructions to the location of your emergency. Freeway interchanges are especially difficult for emergency responders who haven't been given accurate locations. Note the direction of travel and the nearest exit. It may require up to 10-15 minutes to travel to the next off ramp and then respond back to the emergency if an accurate location is not given.



### WHAT CAN I DO BEFORE HELP ARRIVES?

- \* Assure the patient that help is on the way.
- \* Keep the phone line clear after the 911 call is made.
- \* Direct someone to wait out front to meet the ambulance and lead the way.
- \* Wave a flashlight or turn on flashers of a car or porch light if it's dark or visibility is poor.
- \* Consider having an interpreter if the patient does not speak English.
- \* Secure pets, especially dogs, in a separate area.
- \* Have a visible address that is easily readable from the street.
- \* Gather or make a list of medications that the patient is using and give to emergency personnel.

### START FIRST AID

- \* Apply direct pressure to the wound if the victim is bleeding.
- \* Perform the Heimlich Maneuver if a choking victim can't breathe or talk.
- \* Begin CPR if the victim has no pulse and has stopped breathing.

**For More Information Contact:**  
**Tacoma Fire Department**  
**Public Education Office**  
**253.591.5740**

[www.tacomafiredepartment.org](http://www.tacomafiredepartment.org)

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