



## **For Immediate Release**

### **Lenawee County Upgrades Its Dispatch Center Adding Text To 9-1-1 Services**

**Lenawee County, 01/17/2018,** – Lt. David Aungst 9-1-1 Director for the Lenawee County Sheriff's Office Central Dispatch announced today that Text to 9-1-1 is now available to all individuals living in or traveling through Lenawee County. Text to 9-1-1 is another means of contacting a 9-1-1 operator in an emergency situation when a caller is unable to make a voice call. Text to 9-1-1 was on the long list of improvements needed in a 5 year plan presented before voters approved a surcharge increase in 2016. It was slated to have Text to 9-1-1 functional in 2018 and we are pleased to have met that goal.

It is important for citizens to know that Text to 9-1-1 is a great addition to our dispatch center, but it should be used in a very limited capacity. It is not the preferred method of receiving emergencies. In fact, Citizens should follow this guideline; **CALL 9-1-1 WHEN YOU CAN AND TEXT WHEN YOU CAN'T.** We do not anticipate that we will receive many emergencies via text. Most 9-1-1 centers currently using text to 9-1-1 saw a very low percentage of usage.

Some examples of when texting would be appropriate are in cases where a caller cannot speak. This could be for various reasons such as they do not want a suspect to know they are notifying 9-1-1 for help. It is also another tool for our hearing impaired community to get emergency help sufficiently. Nationwide, it is estimated there are 37 million individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability. Since text is a service of wireless devices, there are times when there may not be enough coverage in certain areas to make a voice call, but a text could go through as it does not require the same signal strength to deliver a message.

To place a call to 9-1-1 using text, simply address your text to 911 (notice there are no dashes in it) and then type a quick message as to where and what your emergency is. A 9-1-1 dispatcher will begin a chat session with you to obtain the necessary information to get help on its way. When the session is over, you will be notified when the 9-1-1 operator ended the call.

According to the State of Michigan 9-1-1 Administrators Office, there are 40 out of Michigan's 83 counties that offer text to 9-1-1. Currently none of the counties that touch borders with Lenawee offer text to 9-1-1, so it is important to know that if you are traveling outside of Lenawee County you will not have the ability to text 9-1-1 until you get to a region that offers this service. The closest county that offers this service now is Calhoun County which covers the Battle Creek area and some 9-1-1 centers in Wayne County, but not the entire county. There are several counties in Michigan actively working on upgrading to receive Text to 9-1-1 including our neighboring counties.

In counties that do not offer Text to 9-1-1 services, an automated message will kick back to the sender telling them to make a voice call. It is dependent upon each 9-1-1 center to offer this to the citizens and it is only available to the geographical area within the boundaries of that 9-1-1 center.