

## Texting to 911 when a voice call isn't possible

**The nation's emergency dispatch system – the 911 call network – is on the verge of another breakthrough, text-to-911.**

In most locales, 911 remains a voice-only network, but recently four major wireless phone companies began providing text-to-911 service to local governments that want it and have the technology to use it. Text-to-911 allows emergency communications for those who cannot make a voice call: the deaf, those in domestic abuse situations, those in hiding during a home invasion, etc.

When you own or run a residential building, you have the safety and security of many families in your hands, and they trust you to take that responsibility seriously. Apartment and condominium managers and owners have a unique presence in the community and can use that exceptional position to promote the welfare of the local citizenry by advocating for improvements in emergency response capabilities.

Currently, local governments in just 16 states enable text messages to report emergencies, and only Vermont offers the technology statewide. Sprint, Verizon Wireless, T-Mobile and AT&T voluntarily provide the service, and all cellular service providers are required by the Federal Communications Commission to offer it by the end of the year, but that doesn't mean your local government is required to adopt it. Nor does it mean that everyone will have the capability since cellular service is spotty in some apartment and condo buildings.

These two areas of weakness are where your management and stakeholders can step in and make a difference. Residents can make their voices heard at their local and state government levels to demand implementation of the technology at fire and police stations, and your board can make those policy demands a priority for local advocacy. Management and other stakeholders can also take steps to ensure cellular service is available throughout your residential complex. Having weak or no reception in certain areas leaves safety gaps that could mean the difference between accessing emergency assistance and having an otherwise avoidable tragedy.

Getting rapid emergency response for fires, crimes, accidents, natural disasters and other catastrophes minimizes property loss, injury and death. Text-to-911 capability for all residents and employees is a risk-reduction technology that offers substantial benefits to the multiunit property industry and is one item that you should add to your next condo board or property manager meeting. Your advocacy with wireless providers and government agencies matters. Take your safety program to the next level with text-to-911 technology and full cellular service throughout your residential community.

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