NEWS RELEASE

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BASTROP   BLANCO   BURNET   CALDWELL   FAYETTE   HAYS   LEE   LLANO   TRAVIS   WILLIAMSON

CAPCOG launches Text to 9-1-1 region wide
"Call if You Can, Text if You Can't."

AUSTIN, TEXAS – The Capital Area Council of Governments has deployed Text to 9-1-1 service region wide after successfully testing that the region's 31 public safety answering points (PSAPs), or 9-1-1 call centers, can reliably receive and respond to SMS text messages. The service is now activated on the four major cellphone service providers — Verizon Wireless, AT&T Mobility, Sprint, and T-Mobile — in Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Llano, Travis and Williamson counties.

"Text to 9-1-1 is a great addition to emergency response; however, the service has several limitations so residents should familiarize themselves with them before texting 9-1-1 and most importantly remember to 'Call if you can, text if you can't,'" said Gregg Obuch, CAPCOG's Emergency Communications director. A full Q&A about text to 9-1-1 is available at capcog.org/text911.

Text to 9-1-1 is the ability to send a cellphone text message to a local 9-1-1 call center. It is especially beneficial to those who are hard of hearing, deaf, or speech-impaired, but residents should only text 9-1-1 when calling 9-1-1 is unsafe or not possible.

Examples of when texting 9-1-1 would be beneficial include:

- The caller cannot speak due to a threat, illness or medical condition
- The caller has poor reception and can only send text messages
- Phone lines and cellphone towers are overwhelmed and only texts can get through

Cellphone service providers only offer text messaging as a "best effort service" meaning providers do not guarantee a message will be delivered, said Obuch, who noted that text messages also can take longer to receive or can be delivered out of order. The only way to know a text reached a 9-1-1 call center is when the center texts back. If the sender thinks a text was not received, he or she should call 9-1-1. Call centers also don't automatically receive a cellphone user's location information when texting 9-1-1.

Text to 9-1-1 only is available in English. However, 9-1-1 voice calls can be processed in multiple languages, because all CAPCOG 9-1-1 call centers provide emergency interpretive services. Text to 9-1-1 does not work if the sender texts using group messages, emojis, pictures or videos. Apps that text other app users (such as WhatsApp) or texting via social media (such as Facebook Messenger) do not support Text to 9-1-1.

Here are a few additional things to remember about how to text to 9-1-1:

1. Call if you can, text if you can't.
2. Enter the numbers "911" in the "To" field.
3. The first text message should be brief and contain the location of the emergency and type of help needed.
4. Push the send button.
5. Be prepared to answer questions and follow instructions from the 9-1-1 call taker.
6. Text in English and in simple words – do not use abbreviations.
7. Keep text messages brief and concise.
8. Once you have initiated a Text to 9-1-1 conversation, do not turn off your phone until the dispatcher tells you it is ok to do so.

CAPCOG also developed two video public service announcements which can be viewed at capcog.org/text911. They also were distributed to local jurisdictions to share with residents.

The Capital Area Council of Governments, governed by elected officials from the ten-county region it serves, has worked for more than 47 years as an advocate, planner and coordinator on important regional issues. Programs and services related to public safety and emergency response, environmental planning, economic and community development and the elderly are delivered at a regional level to leverage funding, maximize cooperation and eliminate duplication. CAPCOG serves Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Llano, Travis and Williamson counties.

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