



Backgrounder - Phase II E 9-1-1 Wireless

If I call 911 from a cell phone, can my location be identified by the 911 system?

On February 1, 2010, enhanced 9-1-1 service for cell phone users was launched across Canada. Now, when someone calls 911 from a cell phone, the operator will receive information based on the longitude and latitude coordinates of where the cell phone caller is located. This new technology provides the approximate location of the mobile handset but does not provide an exact "pinpoint location".

Is the new service available everywhere in PEI?

Yes, on Prince Edward Island this system is fully operational. Wireless service providers (Bell/Aliant, Rogers and Telus) have deployed the technology across their coverage areas. However, cell phone users should still be prepared to provide a 9-1-1 call taker with their location as best they can.

How will I know if my service provider is providing this new enhanced 9-1-1 service in my area?

You may have already received, or will receive, information about the enhancements to 9-1-1 from your wireless service provider. Customers are encouraged to contact their wireless service provider with any questions about E9-1-1 service in their area.

Is this new service dependent on what kind of cell phone I have?

Most cell phones on the market today are designed to automatically allow the provision of handset location technology for calls to 9-1-1. Customers should contact their wireless service provider if they have any questions about their handset and/or the location identification technology used by their provider.

What if I don't want my location information supplied to the 9-1-1 centre? Can I turn off this feature from my cell phone?

GPS functionality can be turned off by cell phone users. However, the 9-1-1 call may override GPS functionality that has been turned off on a cell phone. In addition, some wireless service providers may employ non-GPS technology known as triangulation, or may be using a combination of GPS and triangulation, to provide the enhanced location information. Even though the 9-1-1 call taker may now receive handset location information, it is important for cell phone users to remember they should always try to assist the 9-1-1 call taker by providing their exact location as best they can.

Do I have to make any changes to my cell phone in order to receive this new service?

No. Most cell phones on the market today are designed to automatically allow the provision of handset location technology for calls to 9-1-1. Customers should contact their wireless service provider if they have any questions about their handset and/or the location identification technology used by their provider.

Will this work on my pre-paid phone?

Yes. The location identification information will be provided to the 9-1-1 call taker if you are using either a prepaid or postpaid service.

Can I still call 9-1-1 from a deactivated cell phone?

Possibly. In some cases, a call to 9-1-1 from a deactivated cell phone will reach a 9-1-1 operator. However, because that phone is not associated with any particular wireless service provider, the 9-1-1 operator will not be supplied with a dial-able phone number. In the event of a call disruption, the call taker would not be able to call back. The operator may receive information about the cell site or cell tower that is transmitting the call, but they will not be provided with longitude and latitude coordinates.

What happens if I am travelling outside of PEI and I have to call 9-1-1 from a cell phone in an areas where there is no 9-1-1 coverage?

Not all local provincial governments in Canada operate 9-1-1 systems. Wireless carriers endeavour to route 9-1-1 calls to an appropriate call-taking agency (the local police department, for example) in areas where no 9-1-1 service exists. However, if you routinely use your mobile phone in areas where a 9-1-1 system does not exist, you should record the phone numbers for local police, fire and ambulance services.

Should I pre-program 9-1-1 into my cell phone?

No. In Prince Edward Island it is illegal to program the number “911” on any speed dial feature of any communication device.

What should people keep in mind when calling 9-1-1 from their cell phones?

Remain calm and speak clearly. Identify which emergency services you require - police, fire or ambulance - and be prepared to provide the following information: What is your 10-digit mobile phone number? What is the location? What is the emergency? Please remain on the line to provide additional information if requested by the call-taker. Do not hang up until the operator advises you to do so. After hanging up, leave your mobile phone turned on in case the operator must call you back.

Can I send a text message to 9-1-1?

No. Currently, 9-1-1 call centres are not equipped to receive text messages.

Something to keep in mind, however, is that during an large scale provincial emergency when phone lines could be overloaded, you may be able to reach a friend or loved quicker through a text message than a voice call. And, by texting during a large-scale emergency, you can free up voice lines for emergency officials to use.

For more information contact the 911 Administration office:

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