

Social Media and 9-1-1 Alerting

Twitter, Facebook and other social networking sites have created methods of communicating that are a primary method of communicating between individuals, especially with teens and young adults. Social networking is the predominant method of keeping individuals informed about a variety of current events on both a personal level as well as events in a global community. The popularity of social networking applications has been facilitated by the offering of numerous free or low-cost applications and the mobility provided to consumers through smart phones. This has created a phenomenon where the public may be made aware of a public safety incident prior to the first 9-1-1 call being received at the PSAP to report the emergency.

That being said, the National Emergency Number Association [NENA] would like to stress that while social media sites such as facebook and Twitter are a popular means of alerting your friends of events it does not take the place of 9-1-1 in the event of emergencies. [Texting to 9-1-1 is still in the development stages in most areas and prioritizing of text is not expected. That means that when texting to 9-1-1 does become available there is no means to make that text get to its destination any quicker than any other text message. Unlike 9-1-1 where it is delivered on a separate network and therefore a priority.] Law Enforcement Agencies are just beginning to ease into the social network environment by creating facebook pages [like Fayette County Sheriff's Office page on facebook]. There have been instances where friends have alerted Law Enforcement of events they learned through social media [facebook] but as a means of notification facebook is not recommended. It is used primarily as a tool for outgoing notification and public information, it is not something that is managed continuously so dial 9-1-1 for emergency situations.

*** Social Media Posts Urge Americans to call incorrect Emergency Number ***

You may have seen recent posts on social media sites urging people in the U.S. to dial 1-1-2 rather than 9-1-1 in certain emergencies. This is bad advice.

The posts claim that 1-1-2 is especially effective if you are being pulled over in your car and want to ensure that you are dealing with the police. It also claims that by dialing 1-1-2, your call will be answered faster and may go directly to the police.

Here are the facts:

FACT: 1-1-2 is the European emergency number. Several wireless providers offer mobile phones that can use either system for emergency calls, depending on the user's location.

FACT: While dialing 1-1-2 in the United States may work on certain devices and on certain wireless networks, the only way to ensure that your call for emergency assistance gets through is to dial 9-1-1. When a caller tries to use 1-1-2 in the United States, the call may not go through. Even if it does, 1-1-2 provides no special emergency call handling – in fact, it adds a delay due to it having to be converted to "9-1-1" and then routed to the appropriate 9-1-1 call center.

FACT: No one should ever call 1-1-2 just to "test" if it works; you'll tie up public safety resources and waste valuable time for people facing real emergencies. The bottom line is that anyone calling for

emergency assistance in the United States or Canada should always dial 9-1-1 for the fastest and most effective response.

Help NENA pass on the 9-1-1 FACTS, using #112hoax and @911NENA911; and/or share our post on Facebook at www.facebook.com/911NENA911.