



## **Gov. Branstad designates April as 9-1-1 Education Month**

DES MOINES – Governor Terry E. Branstad has designated April as 9-1-1 Education Month in Iowa. Sponsored by the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD) and the Iowa 9-1-1 Communications Council, 9-1-1 Education Month is an opportunity to demonstrate to all Iowans the importance of 9-1-1 and the role they play in ensuring effective emergency response.

“When calling 9-1-1, remember, stay calm, and be aware of your location so you can help 9-1-1 dispatchers locate you during an emergency,” said Blake DeRouchey, Iowa’s E911 program manager.

Both the U.S. Congress and the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) have recognized April as National 9-1-1 Education Month.

### **Text-to-9-1-1**

HSEMD is nearing completion of an upgrade to Iowa’s 9-1-1 network to an Internet Protocol (IP)-based system, which is more robust and capable of handling new messaging technology. Twelve Iowa counties are currently participating in a pilot program to test the new technology, which allows a cell phone user within county boundaries to contact 9-1-1 using text messaging. It is expected text-to-9-1-1 will be available in all Iowa counties by early- to mid-2016.

Text-to-9-1-1 allows cell phone users to send a text message to 9-1-1 in an emergency. Not all cell phone carriers have or will be providing this capability to its customers. Currently, five cell phone carriers in Iowa have committed to making text-to-9-1-1 available to customers: Verizon, AT&T, i-Wireless, Sprint and T-Mobile.

“The technology is changing, but all of the pieces are not yet in place,” said DeRouchey. “We’re working with the wireless carriers and 9-1-1 call centers as they get equipment and procedures in place that will allow them to utilize text-to-9-1-1.”

Text-to-911 was developed primarily for citizens who are hard of hearing, deaf, or speech impaired. Texting can be used in situations in which a voice call to 9-1-1 would endanger the caller, such as during a home invasion or domestic situation. Sending a text to 9-1-1 can also be helpful in situations in which a

medical condition makes it impossible for the caller to speak. Iowa's IP-based 9-1-1 network will eventually allow citizens to contact 9-1-1 using video and picture messaging.

"Even when the technology is in place to allow you to text 9-1-1, it will still be best to call if at all possible if you need help," DeRouchey stressed.

As counties have the capability to accept texts to 9-1-1, they will notify residents of its availability.

Materials and other resources on 9-1-1 are available on the Ready Iowa website at [www.beready.iowa.gov](http://www.beready.iowa.gov) under the "Be Prepared" tab, and also on the NENA website at [www.nena.org](http://www.nena.org) under the "Education" tab. Additional information will be available on HSEMD social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, throughout the month using hashtag #911MONTH.