

While landline phones are generally accurate sources for number and location information, landline phones are not as commonly used as in previous years. A significant portion of the calls we receive stem from cell phone contact. To that end, Fairfax does not control the actual routing of the wireless calls. Routing is within the carrier's network and uses many technical factors such as signal strength, line of sight, congestion, etc. Carriers are constantly working to improve call routing/ location information delivery.

Cell phones transmit calls to the nearest cellular tower and from there to the closest 9-1-1 call center. Sometimes if close to a county or state border, a caller may be connected to the wrong 9-1-1 center, but the employees are trained to direct calls to the correct call centers. And although many modern phones and devices transmit GPS data, there is a margin of error that comes with this data, so it's still important to try to maintain an awareness of your location and surroundings in the event that 9-1-1 calls need to be made.

In cases along the Potomac River (or near any border), the possibility that a cell call will route to a jurisdiction in Maryland is very likely. Wherever possible, it is most prudent that the caller emphasizes that they are in Fairfax County as this is the easiest way to ensure that their call is properly rerouted to us without delay. The receiving jurisdiction should be providing education regarding geographic and jurisdictional boundaries to its call takers and dispatchers to further assist with properly routing calls.

9-1-1 has been established as the single national emergency number for calls by voice or text. To that end, as DPSC is the first point of contact for anyone in need of public safety assistance within its Fairfax County's jurisdictional boundaries, DPSC understands that initial contact sets the tone which may affect the outcome of any incident. Dialing 9-1-1 will always be the best practice, as doing so allows jurisdictions to receive and share vital location data.

DPSC has identified the following to best address the concerns brought forward:

- If access by wireless is a concern, the best alternative would be a landline (FIOS, COX, etc.)
- DPSC has a 10-digit emergency number that can be used and affords the caller the same access to the 9-1-1 operators as dialing 9-1-1. That number is 703-691-2233. It must be noted that we will not get automatic location information and will not know where the caller is until they articulate it to the call taker.
- Text to 9-1-1 is a third alternative but may not be the best avenue when time is of the essence, though this option does still allow for the sharing of location data.