



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\***

**SAN FRANCISCO LAUNCHES TEXT TO 9-1-1 SERVICE**

*City establishes critical lifeline for people in situations where it is not possible to call 9-1-1*

**San Francisco, CA** — Mayor London N. Breed and Department of Emergency Management Executive Director Mary Ellen Carroll announced a critical tool to help people who cannot safely call 9-1-1 during the COVID-19 Stay Home Order and beyond. Text to 9-1-1 is now available in San Francisco and provides a life-saving option for people in situations, including domestic violence, where it is too dangerous to dial 9-1-1.

“Text to 9-1-1 is a great feature for our City’s emergency response to better serve all of our residents, but it has become even more significant during the coronavirus pandemic,” said Mayor Breed. “With people staying at home, it is a particularly difficult and dangerous time for people experiencing domestic violence. We’ve secured apartments for victims of domestic violence during this stay at home order, and now with text to 9-1-1 we’re making it easier for victims to contact the police safely as well.”

San Francisco’s Text to 9-1-1 service is intended primarily for use in three emergency scenarios:

- When someone is in a situation where it is not safe to place a voice call to 9-1-1;
- When an individual is deaf, hard-of-hearing, or has a speech disability; and
- When a medical emergency arises that renders the person incapable of speaking.

“We are proud to provide a Text to 9-1-1 option for San Francisco residents and businesses with police, fire or medical emergencies,” said Mary Ellen Carrol, Executive Director, and San Francisco Department of Emergency Management. “If you can call 9-1-1, that is what you should do, but sometimes it is not safe to verbally call. This is when being able to text to 9-1-1 can become the vital link between someone in distress and the help they need. We believe this true now during this global pandemic, and beyond this public health crisis.”

In general, people with police, fire or medical emergencies should call 9-1-1 if they can and text 9-1-1 if they cannot. San Francisco public safety dispatchers are trained to receive emergency calls and text messages from their workstations. When texting 9-1-1 the initial message should be short and include the location of the emergency. The person texting should also ask for police, fire or medical assistance. The next step is to answer the dispatcher’s questions and follow the instructions of the public safety dispatcher. People are advised to keep responses and short and simple.



San Francisco began live testing Text to 9-1-1 in early February to allow public safety dispatchers to receive training on the new system. Testing occurred in partnership with community providers that serve hearing and speech impaired residents and victims of domestic violence. San Francisco received 1,077 Text-to-911 messages during this period comprised of 952 tests and 125 live text messages. San Francisco dispatchers are now capable of answering calls and texts to 911 from their workstations.

As San Franciscans follow the Stay Home Order to disrupt the spread of COVID-19, the City has seen greater percentage of emergency calls related to domestic violence. Since the March 16 stay home order, 9-1-1 calls have decreased by 24% while number of domestic violence calls has remained constant. From March 17 to April 8, 2019, San Francisco had 44,461 emergency calls with 459 related to domestic violence. During the same period in 2020, San Francisco had 33,875 emergency calls with 448 related to domestic violence.

During the first week after the shelter-in-place directive, the San Francisco District Attorney's Office saw an initial spike of a 60% increase in clients referred to its Victim Services Division compared to the same week in 2019. Mayor Breed and District Attorney Chesa Boudin yesterday announced that San Francisco has secured 20 furnished apartment units for survivors of domestic violence. The temporary homes will be donated by Veritas, and are the result of a collaboration with Mayor Breed, District Attorney Boudin, the Human Services Agency, and the City's community-based domestic violence advocates. The City is also working to secure additional housing for survivors of domestic violence.

"Escaping domestic violence is a difficult for many reasons. COVID-19 has created a situation where victims have limited opportunities to call for help," said Kathy Black, Executive Director, La Case de Las Madres. "Text to 9-1-1 provides people suffering from domestic violence the opportunity to escape their abusers."

Calls to domestic violence hotlines operated by community service organizations are becoming more complex as people stay home due to COVID-19. Victims of domestic violence have limited opportunity to safely ask for help and escape their abusers. Text to 9-1-1 combined with San Francisco's recent initial acquisition of twenty private housing units are critical components of the City's strategy to assist victims of domestic violence during this global pandemic.

Domestic violence is a crime and people experiencing domestic violence should call 9-1-1 if they can and text 9-1-1 if they cannot. The following resources are also available for people experiencing domestic violence in San Francisco:

Asian Women's Shelter – 24 Hour Crisis Line  
877-751-0880

San Francisco District Attorney Victims Services  
415-553-9044



La Case de las Madres – 24 Hour Crisis Line  
877-503-1850 (adults)  
877-923-0700 (teens)  
415-200-3575 (text)

Riley Center at the St. Vincent de Paul Society of San Francisco - 24 Hour Crisis Line  
415-225-0165

W.O.M.A.N., Inc. 24 Hour Crisis Line  
877-384-3578  
415-864-4722

Cooperative Restraining Order Clinic  
415-255-0165 (Schedule Appointment)

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