

Safety Tip of the Month: When to Make a 911 Call

Make the Right Call to EMS

Do you know what to do if someone is badly injured or suddenly becomes sick? You should. Just knowing how to call for help in an emergency can help save a life. Know how to *MAKE THE RIGHT CALL* – who to call for help, when to call and what to do until help arrives – in medical emergencies:

Young and Old

CALL EMS IN EMERGENCIES ONLY

- When you think someone is badly hurt or suddenly sick and in danger, **call EMS immediately**. EMS stands for emergency medical services. One call connects you with a whole emergency medical team – emergency dispatch operators, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, physicians and nurses who are specially trained to handle these situations.
- Call EMS when you think someone's life is threatened: when someone faints or collapses, has persistent chest pain or difficulty breathing or is badly injured. If you are not sure if it is an emergency, *do* call EMS.

DON'T CALL EMS FOR NON-EMERGENCIES

- Going to a doctor's appointment, bandaging a scraped knee or filling a prescription does not require professional EMS assistance. But calling EMS in non-emergencies does tie up the system and make it harder for EMS personnel to do their job responding to serious emergencies.
- Again, if you're not sure if it's an emergency, *do* call EMS.

KNOW YOUR LOCAL EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- You may know your local Emergency Medical Services as the ambulance service, the rescue squad, the fire department, the paramedics or 9-1-1. What's important is to know *how* to contact them for help.
- In communities that have a 9-1-1 system, simply dialing 9-1-1 in an emergency connects you to EMS, the police and the fire department.
- Other areas have separate phone numbers to call for medical, police and fire emergencies. Find out what they are and keep the list of emergency numbers by your telephone. In an emergency, every second counts. Don't waste time looking for the correct phone number, have them handy.

KNOW WHAT TO SAY

- The information you give the emergency dispatch operator helps EMS help you.
- Stay calm, clearly speak and stay on the phone until the emergency operator tells you to hang up.

- Tell the emergency dispatch operator **where** to find the person needing emergency care, **who** is hurt or sick and **what** happened. The emergency operator will also need to know what condition the victim is in and if any help is being given.
- Give the exact location of the emergency. Point out any landmarks-nearby intersections, bridges, buildings-that will help the ambulance driver find you. And leave your name, address, and telephone number in case the emergency operator needs to get back in touch with you.

You've called for help. The ambulance is on the way. What do you do while you wait?

- If the emergency operator gives you specific instructions, remember them and carry them out.
- *Don't* move someone who is injured unless they are in danger. *Do* try to keep them as warm and comfortable as possible.
- If someone else is with you, send them to meet the ambulance. Make it easy for the ambulance driver to spot you by turning on a porch light or marking you location with a flare or bright cloth.

What do EMS Workers Do?

- **Emergency Dispatch Operators** answer emergency calls, obtain the who, what and where information, and send help on the way.
- **First Responders** are usually police officers and firefighters who are first to arrive at the emergency scene. They assist emergency victims until EMS arrives, and are often trained as EMTs or paramedics.
- **Emergency Medical Technicians**, or EMTs, have various levels of training. Some EMTs drive the ambulance, assist with rescues and perform basic emergency care. Other EMTs are emergency dispatch operators who send ambulances and emergency vehicles to the emergency scene.
- **Paramedics** are EMTs with the highest level of training. They perform medical procedures at the scene of the emergency or in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. Using a radio to communicate, paramedics often get instructions from physicians.
- **Emergency Nurses** are specially trained to help and treat emergency patients. They are the first contact at the emergency room, they meet the ambulance, get the patient's medical information and arrange for the doctor to see the patient.
- **Emergency Physicians** are doctors who specialize in treating people who are seriously injured or who have become sick suddenly, such as heart attack victims.

A SPECIAL NOTE TO MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL OPERATORS:

Community Involvement

Students can help teach EMS lessons. You may want to plan your 911 safety presentation to coincide with community or national outreach efforts, such as during National EMS Week in May or during your Kid Safe 911 event. Recruit students to help in building awareness of EMS messages through community involvement. These activities require a coordinated effort between teachers, students, and local businesses. Your role is “director,” steering the project from beginning to end. For example:

Student TV or radio PSAs for EMS. Kids dream about being celebrities and this activity gives them the chance. Students should work in teams to write, perform and produce their own public service announcements (PSAs) for EMS. The PSAs must focus on one or more of the EMS messages presented to the class.

The audio/visual equipment your school has available will determine what media format – TV or radio – the teams should use. If no equipment is available, students may use a cassette tape recorder from home to tape radio announcements.

Before introducing the activity to the students, seek out the support of your local radio stations or cable TV stations. Ask for their participation in providing air-time for the PSAs and promoting the project to the community. Some stations may be willing to invite the creators of the best student PSAs for a professional taping session in their studios.

Turn grocery bags into posters with a message. This activity gives young artists a showcase – by turning grocery bags into works of art with EMS messages. Ask the manager of your local grocery store to participate in the activity by “loaning” the school enough large paper bags for each student. Have students use them as canvases to create EMS posters with emergency messages. Return students’ autographed posters to the supermarket to be put to practical use – bagging customers’ groceries during National EMS Week! Customers will the messages and pleasure from reading the students’ artwork.