



9-1-1: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ONLINE EMERGENCY SERVICE

Consumers who are considering buying Internet-based telephone services should be aware that not all such services provide access to the 9-1-1 network. Sometimes 9-1-1 service is provided, but it is not the full service we are used to receiving via regular wireline telephones. When a person calls 9-1-1 from a wireline telephone, emergency service providers automatically know the caller's location and can direct emergency personnel to that location even if the caller is not able to provide an address. This is not always true for 9-1-1 calls placed from an Internet-based phone.

If you are considering an Internet-based telephone service for your household, you should ask whether the offer includes 9-1-1 service. If the advertising, whether in store brochures, print media, online, or oral communications, is silent on this issue, it is likely that 9-1-1 is NOT being provided.

If the provider claims to provide 9-1-1 service, ask whether 9-1-1 calls are routed to the traditional 9-1-1 network. If yes, then the service is just like traditional telephone service. If the provider makes it voluntary or mandatory to sign up for 9-1-1 service, you may be required to go on line and enter your name and address so you can be located in an emergency. It will be very important for you to enter the information accurately and keep it up to date.

If you are considering a telephone service which does not include traditional 9-1-1 service, you should ask yourself how members of your household, including children, visitors and babysitters, will call for help in an emergency. Don't forget that they will have to know your address and be able to communicate it to emergency personnel.

If you already have VoIP phone service, DO NOT dial 9-1-1 to test your access to the emergency response network. Getting non-emergency calls can badly strain the system, and prevent a caller with a real emergency from getting help quickly. Contact your VoIP service provider for information about your connection to the 9-1-1 system. Sincerely,

Greg Abbott,
Attorney General of Texas

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