



“Be Safe” Newsletter

May 2009

*Dear Be Safe: “Please tell me how a 9-1-1 call works?”
~Jennifer from West Seattle*

*Dear Jennifer: “Here are five ways a 9-1-1 call works”.
~“Be Safe” Team*

- 1. The Director of the 911 Communications Center recommends calling 9-1-1 from a land-line.** Land-lines show operators the correct address of the caller on the Operator’s Call Screen. The location of a cell phone can be tracked but it is less accurate, meaning some calls may need to be transferred to reach the right jurisdiction.
- 2. The 9-1-1 Call Center trains operators to be quick and to the point.** As the operators are listening to the callers, they are typing the information into a computer. Operators send the call to dispatchers within 15 seconds after receiving the call. The Dispatcher prioritizes calls: a crime in-progress is a high priority call. Dispatchers send calls out to police cars within 20-30 seconds.
- 3. The 9-1-1 Call Center has a gong which goes off when an incoming call has not been answered in 10 seconds.** If 9-1-1 Call Operators get multiple calls about the same incident, they ask different questions to get new information.
- 4. Callers who do not speak English can dial 9-1-1 and get connected to interpreters.** It is helpful for non-English speakers to provide the name of their language in English to the Call Operator.
- 5. Summary - How does a call to 9-1-1 work?** In an example of a shooting incident called into 9-1-1 provided by Schmidt: Several people around the neighborhood called 9-1-1 saying that they heard shots fired. Some people said the shots came from the north; others said the shots came from the south. The calls helped the police narrow down the location of the incident. Finally, 9-1-1 received a call from the person who had been injured by the shots. The victim spoke Vietnamese. The operator was able to get an interpreter on the line within 45 seconds and was able to dispatch officers and medics.

Information provided by Director Greg Schmidt
Director of 9-1-1 Communications Center,
Seattle Police Department