



REASONS TO CALL 911

In addition to obvious reasons such as real emergency or major criminal activity, there are some lesser but still important reasons to call 911.

Midtowners frequently call 911 about **suspicious activity**. By reporting suspicious activity police have a valid reason to at least conduct a field interview. In some cases criminal incidents can be prevented and fugitives can be returned to proper custody. Please have no concern that the situation may turn out to be nothing – a field interview will quickly dispel any cause for concern and send the officer on his way. Note also that a failure to call 911 could have the opposite result. When in doubt, err on the side of caution.

BASICS

When calling 911 it is important to maintain composure and speak clearly. **As much as possible, spend a few seconds planning your 911 call.** When people call in panic or do not present the information clearly it makes the job of the 911 operator more difficult and may have an adverse effect on an effective response. Take a deep breath if necessary.

Generally follow this formula when calling 911:

- **WHO** you are – succinctly identify yourself and the location of incident or activity. While it is not absolutely necessary to identify yourself, it can help the police respond more effectively.
- **WHAT** you are reporting – so the 911 Operator can determine whether the call will be directed to Police, Fire Department, and/or Ambulance Service
- **WHERE** the situation has happened/is happening. Be sure to mention city quadrant of the address – Most of Midtown lies in the northeast quadrant.
- **DESCRIPTION** – as applicable, state how many suspects are involved, physical description. Note as many things as possible about the suspects - clothing, height, build, demeanor, state of mind, etc. and if the subject appears to be staying in one location or moving about the neighborhood (and which direction).
- **WAIT** for additional questions by the 911 operator. The operator will likely ask about suspect description, the condition of an injured person, and more details about the location.

911 CALL PRIORITIZATION

The following "Call Priority Policy" is used by the Atlanta Police Department 911 Call Center:

PRIORITY ONE: IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY BROADCAST

Priority One calls require immediate police presence because of possible life endangerment, to prevent serious injury, or to arrest a violent felon. These calls may require an immediate response from any available unit regardless of assignment. These calls include:

- Violent felonies in progress.
- Help calls for police officers.
- Catastrophes such as rioting and looting, fires and explosions, and severe storms and floods

Dispatch will be immediate.

PRIORITY TWO: EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Calls where the immediate presence of the police may save life, prevent serious injury, prevent major property loss, or lead to the arrest of a felon. These calls require an immediate response from any available unit. These calls include:

- Any imminent threat to life or great danger nor serious physical injury or major property damage.
- Any active felony or violent crime that may result in serious injury or major progress damage.
- Any recent felony or violent crime where the probability exists that a suspect may be apprehended.
- Any serious injury where an officer can render immediate aid.
- Any incident, which in the opinion of the 911 operator, demands an immediate police response, such as snipers, threat of an explosive device or chemical leak, or other hazardous materials.
- Any traffic accident that involves death, serious injury, hit and run, or impairment of the driver of a motor vehicle due to alcohol or drugs.

Dispatch will be made within two minutes.

PRIORITY THREE: EXPEDITED RESPONSE

These calls require the presence of the police but do not meet the criteria for Priority 2:

- Any active incident that does not present a significant threat to life or property, such as minor domestic disputes or a fight that does not involve weapons.
- Any active incident that could involve a crime, such as suspicious person or vehicle.
- Any traffic accident that involves property damage to public vehicles or property, major traffic congestion as a result of the accident, or a disturbance between those involved in the accident.
- Any inactive crime scene where evidence may be lost or destroyed or where witnesses might leave before they can be interviewed.

Dispatch will be made within ten minutes.

PRIORITY FOUR: ROUTINE RESPONSE

Priority Four calls require the presence of police, but time is not critical.

- Any non-active felony, misdemeanor, or other incident that does not require an immediate investigation, such as a property crime that was not recently committed or information for an officer.
- Any motor vehicle accident that involves property damage, but does not represent a hazard to traffic.
- Any non-criminal incident, such as parking violations, traffic services, or escorts.
- Any other incident that is not active and cannot, because of its nature, be transferred to an outside agency or to teleserve for handling by telephone.
- Any call where a citizen has recovered property.

Officers may be dispatched on priority 1, 2 and 3 calls if they are currently on a priority 4 call. Supervising Officers will be dispatched on priority 1, 2 and 3 calls if time limitations outlined are about to expire and there are no units on priority 4 calls to be dispatched.

PRIORITY FIVE: TELESERVE CALLS

Priority Five calls can be handled by telephone: most larcenies, larceny from auto, larceny of auto pans, lost or stolen checks and credit cards, lost property; abandoned vehicles, harassing, obscene, and threatening phone calls; indecent exposures where the suspect is not still on the scene; vandalism and supplemental reports (example: additional stolen property). If an officer has

been flagged down and is already on the scene, he or she will not transfer responsibility for the call to Teleserve.

IMPORTANT FACTS TO BEAR IN MIND WHEN CALLING 911:

When the operator first comes on the line listen to see which of the many 911 services responds to your call. While a rare issue in Midtown, it is possible that a 911 call made from a cell phone could lead to another jurisdiction such as DeKalb County's 911 Service. If this happens, ask to be transferred to City of Atlanta 911. City of Atlanta 911 operators are trained to answer calls by saying "Police Emergency Operator" and then give their operator number. If you have any questions about which 911 service has answered your call, immediately ask for clarification as to which 911 Service you are speaking with and immediately request a transfer if appropriate.

If a City of Atlanta 911 Operator fails to give you their operator number when they initially speak with you, ask the 911 operator for his or her number.

- If you have any problems with the 911 operator, you should try to resolve them if that is possible. Remember that whatever the operator says to you and whatever you say to the operator is recorded. However, if you are not able to rapidly resolve the issue with the operator, ask to speak to the operator's supervisor.
- If during the course of your call you get the feeling that the operator does not seem to be taking you seriously or that the operator does not believe that the matter you are calling about is appropriate for a 911 call, ask the operator for the 911 Call Number. For every 911 call made, a unique identifying number, known as the Call Number or Log Number, is assigned. By getting that number you will be in a position to call 911 back if necessary to determine whether your call was properly dispatched and you will indicate to the 911 operator that you will be keeping track of what happens with this call.
- If you call 911 and no officer responds, call back and ask for the status of your call and ask when an officer will be dispatched. If the operator cannot give you a time or if you believe that the presence of an officer is imperative, ask for the Supervisor for that Beat to respond to the call. This means that a Supervisor, usually a Sergeant or Lieutenant, will be given the call. The Supervisor should rapidly respond to such a call.
- You NEVER have to give out identifying information about yourself to the operator. If you are asked for such information, politely, but firmly, tell the operator that you wish to remain anonymous.
- It is NEVER necessary to agree to speak with the responding officer in order to place a 911 Call.
- Remember that even though you are still speaking to the operator, a call is being sent out before he or she hangs up.
- The allocation of police resources on a city-wide basis is largely determined by the overall number of 911 calls made from a given area. Consequently, there is no such thing as a matter too trivial to call 911 about. Every call counts toward determining the amount of resources the APD allocates to your neighborhood.
- Please refer any complaints that you have with either the 911 operator or the responding officer, you should contact the Zone Commander. In the case of a 911 operator complaint, request that the Major secure a copy of the 911 call you made and listen to the tape with you. If the complaint involves the conduct of an officer, request that the Major investigate the matter and then contact you with the results of his investigation. As a last resort the MPSA will forward Midtown-related complaints to contacts at the Atlanta Police Department.

MPSA NOTE: Note: the foregoing information about prioritization originally appeared on the East Atlanta Community Association website. This information, with Midtown-related modifications, has been reprinted with permission of Mr. Gilgor of the EACA. The MPSA is grateful to share this with you.