

## FACT SHEET: Mobile Apps and 9-1-1

While apps hold great promise for improving public safety and emergency response, much work remains to ensure apps intended to replace or augment a voice call to 9-1-1 are as secure and reliable as the public has come to expect from our nation's 9-1-1 system. These issues are being addressed, but placing a voice call to 9-1-1 remains the best way to get help for the foreseeable future.

### FACTS:

- The 9-1-1 network is trusted, reliable, and secure.
  - It's the product of years of careful design to ensure callers are connected with the appropriate 9-1-1 center (known as a "public safety answering point" or "PSAP").
  - It's separate from the networks that handle ordinary calls and other smartphone communications (such as texts, apps, social media, Internet access, etc.).
  - When you dial 9-1-1, your service provider hands off your emergency call to this separate network, which is designed to handle communications involving the safety of life and property.
  - It's closely regulated and monitored at the federal, state, and local levels with rules that vary by jurisdiction.
- The most reliable way to request emergency services is through a voice call to 9-1-1.
  - At present, the 9-1-1 network is not capable of handling more than voice calls or, in some cases, basic text messages.
  - The 9-1-1 network is gradually transitioning to advanced, IP-based networks. These Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) networks will enable the use of text, video, and other data over reliable 9-1-1 networks.
- Mobile apps are being developed that attempt to provide advanced capabilities before NG9-1-1 arrives.
  - BUT:
    - Apps use the public Internet, as opposed to the safe and reliable 9-1-1 network.
    - Many 9-1-1 centers do not have Internet access. Those that do closely control it in the interest of security.
    - Standards must be completed to ensure these apps work nationwide and are effective for emergency response.
    - These apps often make dangerously misleading claims that they can replace a voice call to 9-1-1.
- APCO has taken steps to address several of these issues and remains committed to ensuring all public safety apps, not just those that contact 9-1-1 centers, are as effective as possible.

*The Bottom Line:* **Continue making voice calls.**