

911 Telephone Outage Emergency (TOE)

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An emergency message that defines a local or state 9-1-1 telephone network outage by geographic area or telephone exchange. Authorized officials should provide alternative phone numbers with which to reach 9-1-1 or dispatch personnel.

Note: DHS IPAWS does NOT forward TOE messages to cellphones (Wireless Emergency Alert). Wireless Emergency Alerts do not include telephone numbers or URLs.

Blackout Periods.

In order to prevent awakening the public in the middle of the night for warnings of non-imminent events, and to reduce disabling of audible alarms, smartphone alerts, etc., a blackout period is recommended from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. local time. In such situations, the warning should be delayed until the end of the blackout period. Non-alerting channels may still be used, such as email notification, press releases, etc. throughout blackout periods. When significant public impact is expected and lead time is so short that immediate notification is needed before the end of the blackout period, an alert may be issued.

Telephone number Text to Speech Tips

Short telephone numbers should use spaces between numbers, not hyphens. For example, the emergency number 911 should be written as “9 1 1” (with spaces) not “9-1-1” (with hyphens). Some Text-to-Speech engines translate 9-1-1 as the date September 1, 2001 or pronounce the “dash” between the digits. This includes other short numbers like 311 and short SMS codes.

Text-to-Speech engines generally recognize U.S. 10-digit telephone numbers. The most universally recognized U.S. telephone number format uses only digits and hyphens, including the area code, such as 202-555-1212 or 800-555-1212. While some TTS engines recognize telephone numbers with parentheses, spaces, plus, star, pound and other symbols, it is not as universal. Sometimes TTS engines translate (202) KL5-1212 or 202 KL5 1212 as mathematical formulas or cardinal numbers.

For best results, messages should use the 10-digit telephone number format: 202-555-1212 or short numeric numbers with spaces 9 1 1.

911 Telephone Outage Emergency (TOE)

Emergency Alert System Elements

Originator Code (ORG):	CIV	Civil Authority
Event Code (EEE):	TOE	911 Telephone Outage Emergency
Location Codes (PSSCCC):	PSSCCC	Locations included in alert area
Duration (HHMM):	0300	3 Hours

Common Alerting Protocol Elements

Category: Infra
Event: 911 Telephone Outage Emergency
Response Type: None

Urgency: Immediate Expected Future Past Unknown
Severity: Extreme Severe Moderate Minor Unknown
Certainty: Observed Likely Possible Unlikely Unknown

Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) Text (90 characters or less including spaces):

Description of the hazard Location of the emergency Recommended action (urgency) Expected expiration if known	911 phone outage in <i>[Short Area/City/County/State]</i> . <i>[Alternate Number]</i> for emergency only.
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Computer Headline (140/160 characters or less including spaces):

Recommended action (urgency) Description of hazard Location of emergency Expected expiration if known	If emergency services needed, call <i>[Alternate Number]</i> due to 911 telephone outage in the <i>[Area/City/County/State]</i> area
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Description (Instruction + Description should be 1500 characters or less and under 200 words):

Lead sentence briefly stating the official source, hazard and location.	The <i>[Official Government Agency]</i> has an alternate emergency number because of a 9 1 1 telephone outage in <i>[City] [State]</i> .
Why do people need to act?	At <i>[Incident Time] [Day]</i> , <i>[Describe the incident, hazard and its consequences]</i> .
Where is the emergency taking place?	Areas affected in <i>[Area/City/County/State]</i> include <i>[Describe location by reference to obvious geographic features, such as roads and rivers, rather than with abstract descriptions such as a one-mile radius of some intersection. The preferred method of describing the area should use compass directions and neighborhood and landmark names where appropriate.]</i>
	People in other areas in <i>[Area/City/County]</i> are not affected by this telephone problem. They should continue to use their normal emergency numbers to report a serious emergency.

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Instruction (Instruction + Description should be 1500 characters or less and under 200 words):

What should people do?	If you have a serious emergency in <i>[Area/City/County]</i> , and 9 1 1 does not work, call the alternate emergency number: <i>[Alternate Emergency Number]</i> .
When do people need to act? (next update, expiration)	The alternate emergency number, <i>[Alternate Emergency Number]</i> , will be available for serious emergencies until the normal emergency number is repaired. This message will be updated in <i>[Message Duration]</i> , or sooner if needed.
Closing.	For more information, check www.[Official Web Site].gov , or tune to local news media. Please do not call <i>[Alternate Emergency Number]</i> , except for a serious emergency.

SAMPLE

911 Telephone Outage Emergency (TOE)

Emergency Alert System Elements

Originator Code (ORG):	CIV	Civil Authority
Event Code (EEE):	TOE	911 Telephone Outage Emergency
Location Codes (PSSCCC):	024510	City of Baltimore, MD
Duration (HHMM):	0300	3 Hours

Common Alerting Protocol Elements

Category: Infra
Event: 911 Telephone Outage Emergency
Response Type: None

Urgency: Immediate Expected Future Past Unknown
Severity: Extreme Severe Moderate Minor Unknown
Certainty: Observed Likely Possible Unlikely Unknown

Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) Text (90 characters or less including spaces):

Description of the hazard Location of the emergency Recommended action (urgency) Expected expiration if known	[Test] 911 phone outage in Baltimore City. Use 311 for emergency only.
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Computer Headline (140/160 characters or less including spaces):

Recommended action (urgency) Description of hazard Location of emergency Expected expiration if known	[Test] If emergency services needed, call 311 instead due to 911 telephone outage in Baltimore City
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Description (Instruction + Description should be 1500 characters or less and under 200 words):

Lead sentence briefly stating the official source, hazard and location.	[This is a test.] The City of Baltimore has an alternate emergency number because of a 9 1 1 telephone outage in Baltimore Maryland.
Why do people need to act?	Beginning at 8:40 p.m., calls to the Baltimore City 9 1 1 telephone number are failing or getting a recording.
Where is the emergency taking place?	This impacts all callers in the City of Baltimore using landline telephones, mobile telephones and internet telephones. People outside the City of Baltimore are not affected by this telephone problem.

Instruction (Instruction + Description should be 1500 characters or less and under 200 words):

What should people do?	If you have a serious emergency in Baltimore, and 9 1 1 does not work, call the alternate emergency number: 3 1 1.
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<p>When do people need to act? (next update, expiration)</p>	<p>The alternate emergency number, 3 1 1, will be available for serious emergencies until the normal emergency number is repaired. This message will be updated in 3-hours, or sooner if needed.</p>
<p>Closing.</p>	<p>For more information, check www.BaltimoreCity.org, or tune to local news media. Please do not call 3 1 1, except for a serious emergency. [This concludes this test.]</p>

Note: This sample 911 Telephone Outage message is based on a tweet by the Baltimore Office of Emergency Management. This sample alert reflects only partial information was available at the time, and that initial reports are not 100% accurate.

SAMPLE

911 Telephone Outage Emergency (TOE)

Emergency Alert System Elements

Originator Code (ORG):	CIV	Civil Authority
Event Code (EEE):	TOE	911 Telephone Outage Emergency
Location Codes (PSSCCC):	053000, 006007, 006011, 006035, 006063, 006089, 006093, 006101, 006115, 012041, 012085, 012111, 027003, 027037, 027053, 027123, 027139, 027163, 045091, 037019, 037167, 042045	State of Washington, Butte CA, Colusa CA, Lassen CA, Plumas CA, Siskiyou CA, Shasta CA, Sutter CA, Yuba CA, Gilchrist FL, Martin FL, St. Lucie FL, Anoka MN, Dakota MN, Hennepin MN, Ramsey MN, Scott MN, Washington MN, York SC, Brunswick NC, Stanly NC, Delaware PA
Duration (HHMM):	0300	3 Hours

Common Alerting Protocol Elements

Category: Infra
Event: 911 Telephone Outage Emergency
Response Type: None

Urgency: Immediate Expected Future Past Unknown
Severity: Extreme Severe Moderate Minor Unknown
Certainty: Observed Likely Possible Unlikely Unknown

Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) Text (90 characters or less including spaces):

Description of the hazard Location of the emergency Recommended action (urgency) Expected expiration if known	[Test] 911 phone outage in multiple states. Use alternate emergency numbers.
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Computer Headline (140/160 characters or less including spaces):

Recommended action (urgency) Description of hazard Location of emergency Expected expiration if known	[Test] If emergency services needed, use alternate numbers due to 911 telephone outage in Calif., Fla., Minn., N.C., Pa., S.C., Wash.
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Description (Instruction + Description should be 1500 characters or less and under 200 words):

Lead sentence briefly stating the official source, hazard and location.	[This is a test.] The Federal Communications Commission has reported a 9 1 1 telephone outage in multiple states.
Why do people need to act?	Beginning at 3 a.m., Eastern Time, calls to the 9 1 1 emergency number are failing or getting a recording in several counties in multiple states.

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Where is the emergency taking place?	<p>This impacts callers using landline telephones, mobile telephones and internet telephones in the State of Washington, 8 counties in California, 3 counties in Florida, 6 counties in Minnesota, 1 county in South Carolina, 2 counties in North Carolina, and 1 county in Pennsylvania.</p> <p>Callers in other counties and other states are not affected.</p>
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Instruction (Instruction + Description should be 1500 characters or less and under 200 words):

What should people do?	If you have a serious emergency, and 9 1 1 does not work; you should call the alternate emergency number in your area. Check the Blue Pages in your telephone directory for the local alternate emergency number in your area.
When do people need to act? (next update, expiration)	Alternate emergency numbers will be available for serious emergencies until the normal emergency number is repaired. This message will be updated in 3-hours, or sooner if needed.
Closing.	For more information, check www.FCC.gov , or tune to local news media. Repeating, if you have a serious emergency, and 9 1 1 does not work; you should call the alternate emergency number in your area. [This concludes this test.]

Note: This sample 911 Telephone Outage message is based on a report from the Federal Communications Commission. More likely, individual states and counties would issue separate messages. It shows the importance of coordinating alerts with neighboring counties and states to avoid multiple EAS interruptions of local media in the same market. Emergencies are often not contained by political borders.