

Using Telephone Technology During a Disaster

During an emergency, many more people are trying to use their wireless and landline telephones at the same time when compared to normal calling activity. When more people try to call at the same time, the increased calling volume may create network congestion.

We rely on technology more and more to keep in touch with our family, friends, and colleagues with the click of a button.

But what happens in the event of a major emergency? These tools can become vital in helping you and your family deal get in touch and stay informed.

So here are some tips on the wise use of telephone technology in an emergency:

Land Lines:

- Cordless phones will NOT work without electricity. Have a 'corded' phone somewhere in your home, or keep one in our Emergency Kit, to use during power outages.
- Have a family communications plan in place. Designate someone out of the area or province as a central contact, and make certain all family members know who to contact if they become separated. You may still be able to call long distance even if local lines are congested.
- Without power you will not be able to access your phone's speed dial or its contact list. Maintain a paper of your emergency contacts.
- In most cases, when you dial 911 from a land line, the address **where the phone is** will be delivered to the dispatcher. Immediately confirm this is the location of the emergency or provide the location of the emergency.
- Keep a **prepaid phone card or calling card** from your service provider in your emergency kit in case you need to use a payphone or a phone at an evacuation shelter. But remember, like food some expire.

Cellular and Smart Phones:

Cellular phones may work if land lines are down but cellular circuits often fail due to overloading the network.

- If possible, **reduce circuit congestion by texting, using** email or social media. These services use less bandwidth than voice communication and may work even when voice service is congested. You **cannot** text 9-1-1.
- If you must phone, **keep your conversation brief** and convey only vital information to emergency personnel and/or family. This will also conserve your phone's battery.

- Unable to complete a call? **Wait at least 10 seconds before redialing** to help reduce network congestion.
- **Keep extra batteries or a charger** for your mobile device in your emergency kit. Consider getting a solar-powered, crank, or vehicle device charger.
- **Keep your contacts up to date** on your phone, email and other channels. This will make it easier to reach important contacts, such as friends, family, neighbours, child's school, or insurance agent. Keep a paper copy in case your phone/computer battery dies and you can't recharge.
- If you have a Smartphone, **save your safe meeting location(s)** on its "mapping" application.
- **Conserve your Smartphone's battery** by reducing the screen's brightness, placing your phone in *airplane mode and closing apps you are not using. You never know how long a power outage will last!
- When calling 9-1-1 from a mobile phone, your location is not relayed to the Dispatcher. Provide the location and your cell number when they answer.

Remember, **in an emergency or to save a life, call 9-1-1** for help. If you are NOT experiencing an emergency, do not call 9-1-1.

***Airplane mode** is a setting available on many cell phones, smartphones and other electronic devices that, when activated, suspends many of the device's signal transmitting functions, thereby disabling the device's capacity to place or receive calls or use text messaging—while still permitting use of other functions that do not require signal transmission (e.g., games, built-in camera, MP3 player).