

Voice Carry Over (VCO) 9-1-1 Emergency Calls

For VESTA Pallas or Meridian

The Captioned Telephone ("CapTel") is a new telephone that allows deaf and hard of hearing people to receive both the voice and written captions of what the other party in a phone call says, while using their own voice to talk directly back to the other party. The captions are supplied by a captioning service for **non-9-1-1 calls**.

When a CapTel user dials 9-1-1, the CapTel phone calls 9-1-1 directly and does not route through the captioning service. This means the caller accessing 9-1-1 directly will be using **Voice Carry Over (VCO) technology** to communicate with the Call-taker. Word-for-word captions will not be available for this call. Instead, the CapTel phone will advise the caller when to speak, and show the caller all typed communications when being "spoken to" by the Telecommunicator using written TTY text, advising them not to speak during that time. This is VERY crucial for 911 Emergency Calls.

What does your PSAPs need to do?

The Call-taker will need to follow call-handling procedures for VCO. Basically, the Call-taker needs to communicate by typing messages to the CapTel user on a TTY, and then listening to the CapTel user talk back by voice. **For the purposes of 9-1-1 in Massachusetts, CapTel 9-1-1 calls will be a direct VCO call into the PSAP, with no third-party involvement.** This ensures that the CapTel user will receive the benefits of calling 9-1-1 directly, including the fastest possible access to the most appropriate PSAP, immediate telephone access to a 9-1-1 call-taker, and automatic number identification (ANI).

The Call-taker is equipped with a TTY on the VESTA system. The TTY Window is set up so that switching between TTY and audio (voice) mode is easily done using the TTY Disable/TTY Enabled toggle button. **The conversation is half in text (TTY) and half in voice.** The Call-taker's typed TTY messages show up in the display of the CapTel phone. The CapTel user can only use their voice to talk to the call-taker.

Switching between TTY mode and "listening to"/voice mode must be done each time the conversation switches from the Call-taker (who is typing on a TTY) to the caller (who is speaking over the telephone handset).

IMPORTANT NOTE: The CapTel user **does not have a keyboard to type on.** The ONLY WAY the CapTel user can communicate is to speak with their VOICE.

What is the difference between VCO, HCO and TTY?

Voice Carry Over (VCO)

VCO is a technology that combines voice and text communications over the telephone. It allows individuals who cannot hear well, but wish to use their own voice, to speak his/her side of the telephone conversation on the telephone handset and read the other person's response on a text display. The other person's "voice" responses are typed either by the person himself or by a special operator through a Telecommunications Relay Service (MassRelay).

*For the purposes of 9-1-1 in Massachusetts, when receiving a **direct VCO** call into the PSAP, the Call-taker can hear the caller speaking through their telephone handset, and hear all background noise (if any), then type directly to the caller through the TTY Window of VESTA.*

The advantage of a direct VCO call is that no third-party is involved.

Hearing Carry Over (HCO)

HCO is a technology that also combines voice and text communications over the telephone. It allows individuals with speech disabilities, but who hear well, to type his/her side of the telephone conversation to the other person on a text display (commonly a TTY) and listen to the other person's voice responses. The caller's responses are typed either to you directly or relayed verbally by a special operator through a Telecommunications Relay Service (MassRelay).

*For the purposes of 9-1-1 in Massachusetts, when receiving a **direct HCO** call into the PSAP, the caller may signal the Call-taker will initiate TTY, or the call may be received as a Silent Call. The Call-taker will receive typed communications through the TTY Window of VESTA, then speak responses through their handset.*

The advantage of a direct HCO call is that no third-party is involved.

Teletypewriter (TTY)

TTY is a technology that uses text communications over telephone lines. It allows a deaf or speech impaired individuals to type his/her side of the telephone conversation to the other person on a text display (TTY) and receive back a text response. The callers typed responses are typed either directly to anyone with a similar device, or for non-TTY users, relayed verbally by a special operator through a Telecommunications Relay Service (MassRelay).

MassRelay in the Commonwealth's Telecommunications Relay Service. It provides voice telephone access to people who use TTYs, HCO or VCO. Specially trained relay agents complete calls and stay on-line to relay messages either by TTY, or verbally to hearing parties. This service is available 24 hours a day with no restrictions to the length/number of calls placed.

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CapTel 9-1-1 calls come in to the 9-1-1 call-taker the same way it would for any voice call. The 9-1-1 call-taker will be able to hear the CapTel user, as well as any background noises. Depending on the CapTel user's level of hearing loss, the CapTel user:

- May hear very little and require captions from the beginning of the call. *In this case, the 9-1-1 call-taker will need to process it as a VCO call from the beginning.*
- May be able to hear the 9-1-1 call-taker well enough to begin responding to your initial questions, but at some point initiate captions. *In this case, the 9-1-1 call-taker will need to process it as a VCO call.*
- May hear well enough to continue the entire call as a "normal" voice telephone call. *In that case, the 9-1-1 call-taker can process as a standard voice call.*

Once in VCO mode, the CapTel phone automatically sends a TTY text message to alert Call-taker every eight seconds until the 9-1-1 call-taker responds by typing on a TTY. A TWEEDLE can be heard while listening on the handset. **This DOES NOT automatically launch and activate TTY Window of VESTA.**

Processing Incoming 9-1-1 VCO CapTel Calls

If receiving a SILENT CALL, are advised by the caller that "captions" are being used OR hear a short TWEEDLE while speaking with the caller, follow the steps below to begin a **Voice Carry Over (VCO)** call (TTY one way, voice the other way):

1. Advise the caller to **"Stay on the line while I check for TTY. Do not hang up."**

2. Click TTY button  on VESTA Toolbar to launch the TTY window.

3. Click **TTY Disable** button to activate the window.

*Button changes to **TTY Active** and TTY greeting will be sent out automatically.*

4. (ADVISED) Send the pre-programmed message again "911 what ur emergency q ga".

(Slight delay in captions during while TTY is being initiated. Under "Greeting" tab)

5. Once in VCO mode, CapTel phone will automatically send back a TTY message to confirm that the 9-1-1 "captions" has been received and to explain how the call should be handled. The message is similar to:

"USE VCO YOU MUST TYPE TO ME ON TTY I WILL TALK TO YOU BY VOICE GA"

Remember, the CapTel user does not have a keyboard and cannot type messages back to 9-1-1. The CapTel user can only use their voice to talk to 9-1-1, even though the CapTel phone has sent an automatic message using TTY code.

6. Click **TTY Active** button to disable the window and **LISTEN** to the caller's verbal response on your handset. *Button changes to **TTY Disable***

7. The TTY window will need to be **DISABLED** every time you need to HEAR a verbal response from the caller **AND ENABLED** every time you need to TYPE a question or response to the caller.

While TTY mode is ENABLED, the 9-1-1 call-taker will not have the ability to hear the caller speaking well.

8. The CapTel phone will advise the caller in the status bar on the display screen when it is "OK to Talk" (voice mode) and "DO NOT Talk" (TTY mode).

When a 9-1-1 call is made from a CapTel phone, the phone REMAINS in VCO mode until the user changes it back to "captioning" mode, allowing easy callback by 9-1-1.

Processing Hang-up/Abandoned/Outgoing VCO CapTel Calls

1. Immediate CALLBACK should be made using ANI Callback/Abandoned Callback functionality of VESTA, or by dialing the phone number in the Auto Dial Window.
2. Upon calling back...
 - If the call is a SILENT CALL, the Silent Call procedure must be followed.
 - If the caller answers and advises "captions" are being used OR a short TWEEDLE is heard while speaking with the caller, it is a VCO call.
3. **ACTIVATE TTY.** With the TTY Window launched and activated, send a message advising the caller this is 911 and ask if there is an emergency.
4. Click **TTY Active** button to disable the window and **LISTEN** to the caller's verbal response on your handset. *Button changes to **TTY Disable***
5. The TTY window will need to be **DISABLED** every time you need to HEAR a verbal response from the caller **AND ENABLED** every time you need to TYPE a question or response to the caller.

Important Notes

- **ALL Silent Calls MUST BE checked for TTY following steps 1 thru 4.**
- The CapTel phone display instructs the 9-1-1 caller to ask for "captions" by pressing a button on the phone. By doing this, the CapTel phone converts to a VCO phone.
- If the caller initiates "captions" while the phone is still ringing, a TWEEDLE may be heard as soon as you answer the phone. Even if the caller is speaking, you should still launch and activate your TTY window.
- If the caller initiates "captions" once your verbal conversation has begun, you may hear a random TWEEDLE while speaking with the caller. If this is heard, you should launch and activate your TTY window.
- Until a TTY response is received, the CapTel phone will notify the caller "Waiting for captions from 911." Because they are waiting for captions, the caller may not be able to speak to you or respond to your questions.