

## Text-to-911 Frequently Asked Questions For PSAPs

### Is Text-to-911 Live in Massachusetts?

Yes. On December 14, 2018 the Short Message Service (SMS) payload within the Next Generation 911 network, which makes the functionality of Text-to-911 available for the entire Commonwealth.

A public announcement of Text-to-911 will take place after January 2019. Text-to-911 is available to the public at this time. If a citizen attempts a text session to 911, it will be routed to the PSAP based on the location information provided by the carrier.

### Why is the TEST text message not going to my PSAP?

A text session routes based on the location data presented to the network at the time the text session is received. This is **NOT** necessarily the location information that CallStation displays once the session is answered. (This is true for ALL call types). Every carrier and even every device, may potentially present different location data to the network. Therefore, it is likely that your text session could be routed to the neighboring community.

Text-to-911 sessions can be received by all PSAPs, and do not follow Wireless Direct routing paths and do not have the same Phase 2 location data. Please remember that all TEST messages should have the following as the initial message “This is a TEST text message for (PSAP name)” or something similar.

If the routing is extremely inaccurate (not just a neighboring community), report the occurrence to the Help Desk, making sure to provide the Call ID.

### Why am I getting a bounce back message that Text-to-911 is not available on my test?

You may still receive a bounce-back message that Text-to-911 is not available even though the Commonwealth’s text feature is live. Below are potential reasons why:

- **The text was delivered to a PSAP, but was not answered before the Ring No Answer (RNA) threshold was met.**  
*RNA is a timeframe where delivery of a Text-to-911 session is withdrawn by the carrier because it goes unanswered. While the timer limit has been consistent for all carriers at 30 seconds, you could, on occasion, see something different. If so, please notify the Help Desk.*
- Your initial location is outside of Massachusetts (especially important if you’re testing for PSAPs along the state borders).

### Why is the location information not accurate?

Text sessions do not follow the same Federal Communication Commission (FCC) location accuracy requirements as voice 911 calls, and there is no mandate on location accuracy for text.

The location displayed within the NG911 system is coarse location. This coarse location is the latitude and longitude identifying the center point for the area the texter may potentially be in, using various methods including cell tower signal triangulation, or GPS, or possibly commercial obtained location services provided to the carrier. **It is not Phase 2 location, and may not be nearly as accurate.** A 911 voice call from the same device may display an exact address match.

Telecommunicators should use the information displayed to help verify address/location information with the texter as they confirm the dispatchable location, and Retransmit when possible.

## Why is the probable location circle so large?

If the coarse location provided at the time is using only a single cell tower or has difficulty with signal strength to other towers, the device may present a broad location, covering a larger area. The result is a **large probable location circle on the map, with a large meters distance. In this case, it is likely that your text session will route to the neighboring community.**

The more towers the device can connect to, and the better the signal strength, the more accurate the location information available for routing the text session and to display on the NG911 applications.

## Can anything be done to improve the location data?

There is no way to control the location data provided by the carrier. The information provided is based on many factors, which can include the carrier itself, signal strength, if triangulation or GPS are being used, and even the device itself will affect the location data, Apple versus Android devices. **At any time after connecting, you can perform Retransmit on a text session to try to improve location, the same way you would on a voice call.**

If you are testing, you can also try the following to help improve location accuracy (when possible, and as time, staff and call volume permits):

- Step outside the building you are texting from, so that a clear view to the sky can be obtained, with no obstacles;
- Have **all** location and/or advanced locations options enabled on the mobile device.

## Why is there so little information displayed?

The information displayed for text sessions is what is being provided by the carrier. In most cases, the ANI, coarse location latitude and longitude, and confidence factor information are provided. These fields will be populated on the NG911 applications. If no class of service, no cell tower address, and no carrier information is provided, it cannot be displayed.

## Is RapidSOS location data available with text?

RapidSOS is available if the device has the necessary operating software **AND** the device has a strong data connection. If the right circumstances exist, RapidSOS location data may appear on the NG911 applications.

## Can a misdirected text be transferred?

No, not at this time.

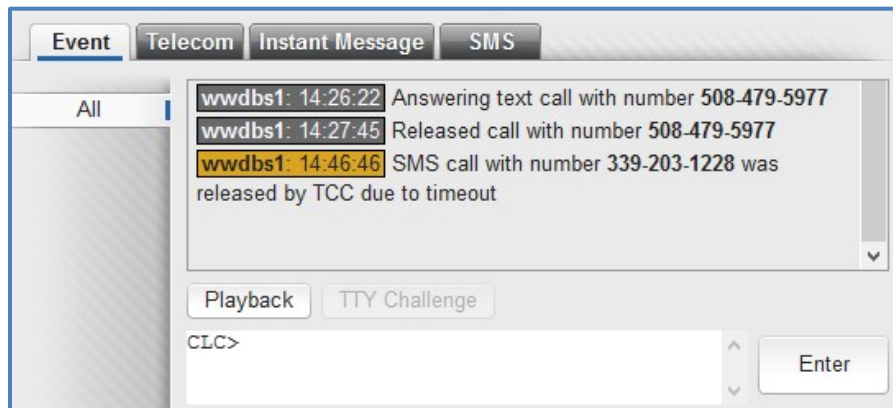
## How do I contact the another PSAP, Fire Department or EMD Resource about this text?

A voice relay call must be made to any other agency needed to assist with the incident reported by the texter. You cannot transfer to any other PSAP at this time.

You must make a voice call by **manually dialing** the phone number using the Dial Pad, Genovation Keypad or Polycom phone. The Directory entries and Softphone buttons will not work when a text session is the active call on your CallStation screen. We strongly recommend using the Next Generation 911 equipment so that the text call detail record and voice relay call can be found on the same systems. **A text session was ringing and then just disappeared before I could answer it?**

If a text is not answered before the Ring No Answer (RNA) threshold was met, the carrier's Text Control Center (TCC) withdraws the session. **Text sessions DO NOT follow Alternate PSAP routing paths.**

When the session is withdrawn by the TCC, an error message is displayed on the CallStation screen advising that the "SMS Call with number XXX-XXX-XXXX was released by the TCC due to timeout."



## How do I know if I missed a text session?

The only way to know if you missed a text is by looking for the above error message in the Event tab, or running a report in DecisionStation.

## What happens when the text session is withdrawn?

The texter will receive a bounce back message advising that Text-to-911 is not available, and to contact emergency services using another method, such as a voice call. You receive the error message on Page 3.

If the person sends another text, it will be routed to a PSAP based on the location information provided by the carrier. This may be your PSAP or another PSAP of jurisdiction, and it will ring, as it was a new text.

## Can I see the message sent when the TCC withdraws the text?

No, you cannot see what messages was sent.

## Can I text the texter back?

No, outbound text sessions are not possible.

## Do I have to callback an unanswered text session?

A voice callback to a texter should not be attempted until all other resources for communicating have been exhausted. At the discretion of the PSAPs local policies, exceptions can be made, such as when no other communication option is available and/or it is believed that texter's safety, or the safety of another, is in question.

## Can I process a voice call and text at the same time?

Yes. Text and voice do not interfere with each other. You can talk on the phone and type to a texter at the same time.

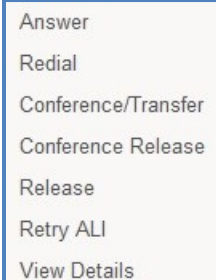
## What do I do if I am on a voice call and a text comes in?

Answer the incoming text. The alert tone will stop and you will receive the texter's first message. You can send the standard 911 greeting from the list of pre-programmed messages and still be processing the voice call.

## My PSAP has two people working. Can I Silent Monitor?

No, the silent monitor feature does not work with text sessions. However, from the Softphone Call Table, you can highlight the SMS text session, right click and choose to View Details.

This will display the active conversation within the Event tab of CallStation, and allow you to view it. However, you cannot communicate to the texter at any time. You are in an observation mode only.



- Answer
- Redial
- Conference/Transfer
- Conference Release
- Release
- Retry ALI
- View Details

## Do over-the-top text apps and third party text apps work with Text-to-911?

No. Text-to-911 uses native SMS technology, and requires a texting plan on the device in order for a text session to be generated. If there is something that you use personally or know of, we strongly encourage you to test and report back to the State 911 Department with your findings. The same text testing procedures apply for any over-the-top text and third party text apps, as they do for native SMS messages.