

## Advice from an Expert: Emergency Situations

### When an Emergency Happens: What a Person with a Voice Impairment Needs to Know

*The NSDA interviewed Tyler Wade, a Captain for a Fire-Medical Department in Kansas, and he shared ideas on what to do in an emergency when you have a voice disorder.*

***Your entire career has been centered around emergency response, including EMT, firefighter, and ambulance response. When it comes to emergencies, what are some things we should all know to help support a good response?***

The formula for success in an emergency is to act quickly. Early intervention of any sort during an emergency increases the opportunity to mitigate loss or further damage. Your intervention should always include calling 911 to ensure a fast response from emergency responders.

You may also involve other people to assist in the intervention, which can greatly help generate a good outcome.

An important thing for everyone to know is to remain as calm as possible. When you remain calm, your ability to communicate to 911 and emergency responders and provide information will help the response.

***If a person with a voice impairment needs to manage an emergency, what are some of the things they can do to that will help with a good response?***

Call 911. Operators respond to all calls even without anyone speaking to them. They are trained to remain calm and to help with all sorts of challenges taking place for the caller. They are experienced dealing with voice impaired, hearing impaired, language barrier, children and people who can't communicate due to the emergency. They will do everything they can to get the help needed.

***Are there any tools that can help someone with a voice disorder in an emergency?***

The FCC has driven a capability within just the past few years that will greatly help anyone with voice impairments or anyone with limited use of the voice, such as instances of intruders or language barriers. It's called text-to-911. This service will allow a person to text an emergency to 911 without the need to speak during the emergency.

**About Text-to-911:**

<https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/what-you-need-know-about-text-911>

Locations currently supporting Text-to-911 which is being updated on an ongoing basis:

<https://www.fcc.gov/files/text-911-master-psap-registryxlsx>

I also carry a pen and pad of paper with me all the time and I'd suggest voice-impaired people do the same. I never know what the situation will be for the people I'm trying to help and find that writing works well. It happens frequently that I use writing to help. We will always find a way to make it work.

***Does emergency response capability vary from state to state?***

It's important to note that emergency response does vary across the country, within a state and even within a county. The variability in level and type of response is due to such things as population and resources. Despite that, rest assured that no matter where you are, there will be someone that will help you.

*The NSDA thanks Tyler for his time and for providing this helpful information for people with a vocal impairment during an emergency.*