

National Telecommunicators Week, When to Call 911

Local News

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The week of April 10 - 16 is National Telecommunicators Week, and Communications Officers of the Washington State Patrol want you to know when it's the right time to call 9-1-1.

"If you need a police officer, firefighter or emergency medical help at your location, you should be calling 9-1-1," said Mark Layhew, director of WSP's Communications Division. "Beyond that, the list of reasons to call is pretty short."

WSP is especially concerned about the number of people who call 9-1-1 to get road conditions or driving directions.

"We need to keep our phone lines and our dispatchers free to handle emergency calls," said Layhew. "We would love to be helpful in other ways, but will likely end those kinds of calls very quickly with a referral to non-emergency numbers."

The State Patrol actively seeks callers who are watching impaired drivers at that moment. It's legal to use your cell phone to call police with that type of information.

"An impaired driver is an emergency," Layhew said. "We want those kinds of calls very badly."

Another reason to call 9-1-1 is with tips intended to solve some previous or ongoing crime, such as an AMBER Alert. It's easier to remember 9-1-1 than the phone number of an investigator that might have been listed in news coverage.

"Please don't hesitate to call us if you have information that will help solve a crime. We can get you in touch with detectives or others who are working the case," Layhew said.

The Washington State Patrol is hiring Communications Officers. More information on WSP's Communications Division can be found at: <http://www.wsp.wa.gov/employment/communications.htm>

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9-1-1 DISPATCHERS, America's First Responders.