Make the Call for Help Perfectly Clear



WHAT'S AT STAKE?

What would you do if you encountered an emergency, either in the workplace or outside?

Would you call for help? Would you know who to call and what to tell them?

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

In an emergency—whether it's an injury, a chemical spill, a fire or an assault—knowing what to do can help prevent panic and it can save lives. And it all starts with summoning the emergency response team. The person who reports an emergency can save a life, by calmly giving accurate instructions.

Example

In March 2010, a 7-year-old California boy had his emergency training put to the test when armed robbers broke into his home and heldup his parents. The boy grabbed his little sister and the phone. From his hiding place in the bathroom, he dialed 911 and clearly described the emergency, explained what he needed (he told the dispatcher to send soldiers!) and stayed on the line, even after the intruders found him. Experts say his quick thinking and his regular training in calling 911 probably saved the lives of his entire family.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

In most locations in the United States and Canada, emergency dispatch centers are reached by dialing 9-1-1. But this can vary from country to country, so be sure you know which number to dial in a life-threatening emergency. If you're in a large business or school, you may have to dial another number or code to access an outside line.

When you make the call for help, take a few deep breaths to calm yourself and try to remain calm while you make your report. The emergency response team needs to know:

Where is the emergency?

Give complete directions. Don't assume the driver will know local landmarks, because ambulances may be dispatched from another town. Begin with the city, then street address, apartment number on what floor, or highway number and landmarks.

For instance, you might say “We are in Greenville at 2340 Main Road in Suite 202. The entrance is at the back of the building. You go through the gate and up the stairs.” Or, “The accident is on Highway 12, south of Mill Valley near Exit 232.”

What is the emergency?

The person at the other end of the phone line needs to know what equipment to send out, so briefly describe the emergency. For example, you might say, “Two men are pinned under a forklift” or “freeway crash between pickup and semi-truck, both now overturned. Oil has spilled across four lanes.”

How many people are, or could be, hurt?

The dispatcher will need this information to decide which ambulances and medics to send to the scene.

What types of injuries might there be?

Has someone been burned? If so, are they burned by flame or chemicals? Does it look like someone has a broken bone? Heart attack? Shock? Severe bleeding? Or your report might be “I found my co-worker unconscious and I suspect it’s because he breathed chemical vapors, which I can smell but can’t identify.”

Don’t hang up the phone until the emergency dispatcher tells you to. If you have to leave the phone, make sure the dispatcher has recorded your location, telephone or cell phone number and other information correctly.

FINAL WORD

Be mentally prepared to follow instructions. Stay calm to do what you have to do. The knowledge you have and the decisions you make during a crisis could mean the difference between life and death.