



Rick Staly, Sheriff

# FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

*"An honor to serve, a duty to protect."*

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Text-to-911 Brings Law Enforcement to Aid of Domestic Violence Victim and Offender Arrested

In February of 2019, the Flagler County Board of County Commissioners and the Flagler County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) announced that Text to 911 was available in Flagler County. Text to 911 is the ability to send text messages to local 911 call centers during an emergency.

The graphic features a red sign on the left that reads "9-1-1 CALL IF YOU CAN TEXT IF YOU CAN'T". In the center, the text "TEXT TO 911" is displayed in large red letters, with "AVAILABLE IN FLAGLER COUNTY" below it. On the right, a smartphone screen shows a text message conversation: "NEW MESSAGE TO: 911" followed by a blue bubble containing "I HAVE AN EMERGENCY AT 123 MAIN STREET. PLEASE SEND HELP." and a grey bubble replying "HELP IS ON THE WAY." At the bottom of the phone screen are the Flagler County logo and the Sheriff's Office star.

SHERIFF RICK STALY | FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The goal of offering this service in Flagler County was to provide a means of reaching first responders when a voice call is not possible. This may be beneficial for people who have trouble hearing or speaking, or if someone is in a dangerous situation where speaking out loud could increase the danger to them.

This service proved helpful in the early morning hours of July 4<sup>th</sup> when a woman was fearful to make a

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voice call to 911 following a physical disturbance with her boyfriend. She waited until the man fell asleep and sent a text to 911 alerting first responders that her boyfriend had grabbed her, whacked her, and threatened her life. FCSO Communications Dispatchers were able to track the call location to a residence in Flagler Beach where the Flagler Beach Police Department made contact with the victim.

“This woman was in fear that if he heard her calling police, he would become enraged,” Flagler Beach Police Chief Matt Doughney said. “The ability to discretely contact first responders gave her the peace of mind to send the text and get help in order to get herself out of an unsafe environment. Our hope is that sharing this story reminds others that this service is available should they ever need it.”

Following the investigation, Flagler Beach Police Officers arrested the man and charged him with Domestic Battery.

“This is exactly why we implemented this technology,” Sheriff Rick Staly said. “Without this technology it is unlikely that this victim would have come forward and called on law enforcement for assistance. This technology was implemented to save lives and provide a quick response in an emergency situation and we’re grateful that she used it to get herself to safety. Remember to CALL when you can, TEXT when you can’t.”

To use Text to 911, type 911 with no spaces or dashes in the “To” field of your mobile messaging application. In the body of the message, type the exact location or provide a nearby intersection or landmark. Never use abbreviations, slang, emojis or attempt to send pictures or videos when using Text to 911. Also be sure to include the type of emergency, as Text to 911 is for police, fire or emergency medical services. Dispatch will respond to the message within seconds. If Text to 911 is not available in your area, you will receive a response alerting you to call 911. Users must have a cell phone data plan that allows texting.

Since inception, the Flagler County Communications Center has received 169 Text to 911 calls for service. For more information on Text to 911 in Flagler County, visit: <http://www.flaglersheriff.com/text-to-911>. A how-to video can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/Qi3YHnT9Hlg>.

Communicating with 911 dispatchers by voice is more effective than Text to 911. Text to 911 should only be used for a true emergency. Calling or texting 911 when it is not an emergency is a crime.

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