

## News from Avon Township

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I recently had the opportunity to attend a theater production. While waiting for the show to begin, I was fascinated by the set and beautiful fixtures of the gorgeous Victorian-era theater.

However, my wife and I were among the few who seemed to appreciate our amazing surroundings. Virtually everyone around us was glued to his or her phone busily Instagramming or Snapchatting or Facebooking or texting. The theater experience seemed secondary to their personal screens.

I wasn't too surprised. Mostly, I was just sad to see how many people interact with the world primarily through their electronic devices. Fortunately, it's not all bad. There is some good news – It's Text-to-911!

You may be familiar with Text-to-911, which is a way to access emergency services. This service has been available in Minnesota since December 2017 and provides another way, other than dialing 911, to get help quickly in the event of an emergency.

The Text-to-911 feature is great for those individuals with impaired hearing who are unable to make a voice call. The Stearns County Sheriff also says that it would be a good option if “you are unable to safely make a voice call and need to remain discreet, such as reporting domestic violence, home invasions, human trafficking and suicidal individuals.”

If you should need to use this system, be sure to text your exact location and type of emergency. And avoid emojis and abbreviations.

It's still better to use a 911 voice call if you can because it is quicker, and dispatchers can get cues to your situation by background noise and voice inflections. Call if you can, text if you can't.

If you use the Text-to-911 system you will need a text or data plan on your phone. For more information visit <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ecn/programs/911/pages/text-to-911.aspx>.

We are certainly lucky in Minnesota to have multiple options available for contacting emergency services. I'm comforted to know that if there had been an emergency in the theater the night I was there, my fellow audience members could have quickly reported it via voice or

Text-to-911. That is, assuming they looked up from their phones long enough to realize that there was an emergency.