

# News Release

Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security

Date: June 10, 2021  
Contact: Keli Cain, (405) 590-0120

## Accidental 9-1-1 Calls Add Stress to Emergency Dispatch Centers

Oklahoma 9-1-1 call centers are experiencing a large amount of accidental 9-1-1 calls due to safety features available on mobile devices including iPhones and Apple watches.

According to the Oklahoma 9-1-1 Management Authority and the State 9-1-1 Coordinator, 12% of 9-1-1 calls in Oklahoma are hang-ups that have to be followed up on. Almost all of these calls are considered accidents.

For each accidental 9-1-1 call, Dispatchers must follow up to determine if there is a real emergency or not, adding excess time and attention away from intentional 9-1-1 calls.

The 9-1-1 call centers also receive thousands of calls each year that are open lines, which means Dispatchers can hear background noise or people talking, but no one is telling them what the problem is. In those cases, Dispatchers remain on the line or call back to find out if the caller needs help.

Both Apple and Android devices have built in features to call 9-1-1 in an emergency; however, with recent technology changes officials are now able to see what type of device is calling. Oklahoma 9-1-1 coordinators have noted the majority of calls are coming from Apple devices as a result of the SOS Emergency call feature that is automatically enabled when new devices are purchased. In some areas, accidental calls from Apple devices account for more than 95% of the total accidental 9-1-1 call volume.

Apple users are encouraged to be aware of their iPhone and Apple Watch SOS features, review how it works, and be careful not to activate the feature by accident.

The 9-1-1 Management Authority and State 9-1-1 Coordinator advise if you do accidentally call 9-1-1, please stay on the line or call back immediately to let the Dispatcher know that the that the call was made in error. Every 9-1-1 call registers at your nearest Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) and must be reviewed no matter how fast you hang up.

There are two iPhone shortcut features that allow the user to call 9-1-1. The first is to rapidly press the power button on the side of your device five times; and the second is to hold down the power and either of the volume buttons. If the countdown option is turned on there will be a countdown before the call is actually placed.

Both of these features can be very helpful for certain circumstances where you may need to call 9-1-1 but are unable to do so by dialing the numbers. However, they can both be triggered by mistake while the phone being stored in a bag or pocket, while being played with by a child, or by other activities.

Deactivated phones that are used for toys can also accidentally dial 9-1-1 as the FCC has mandated that all phones be able to place a 9-1-1 call regardless of whether they have sim card or are on an active network.

If you do not want to keep the SOS emergency call feature enabled on your phone or deactivated phone, Apple provides an option to turn it off in the phone settings under "Emergency SOS."

The Oklahoma 9-1-1 Management Authority is made up of members from 9-1-1 programs across the state, other 9-1-1 partners, and the State 9-1-1 Coordinator, who is part of the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

###