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## News Release

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**Share!** Sprint customers can now text Durham 911 Center for emergency help; <http://bit.ly/1jj8FUd>

### **Durham 911 Center Launches Sprint Texting**

*First U.S. Municipality to Enable Direct Texting through Sprint, Verizon Wireless and AT&T Wireless*

DURHAM, N.C. – Beginning today, Sprint Wireless customers in Durham can send a text message to 9-1-1 for emergency help.

Sprint is the most recent wireless providers to enable their Durham customers to send text messages directly to the Durham Emergency Communications Center. Verizon Wireless customers have been able to send text messages since August 2011, and AT&T Wireless customers since March 2014.

The Durham Emergency Communication Center remains the first 9-1-1 center in North Carolina, as well as the one of the first 9-1-1 centers in the United States, to enable text-to-9-1-1 technology using 9-1-1 digits and live-call takers. Durham is also the first major municipality to enable the direct 9-1-1 texting feature for its residents through three different wireless carriers.

According to Durham Emergency Communications Center Director James Soukup, Durham's next-generation 9-1-1 technology allows wireless carriers to offer this service to their customers. "The way people communicate is evolving and 9-1-1 centers must adapt to the digital age we're currently living in and offer multiple ways for people to reach out to 9-1-1 when they need help," Soukup said. "We're thrilled that Sprint is now making this available for its customers in our community."

According to Soukup, texting technology is specifically designed for two types of emergency scenarios – to help potential victims who don't want to be heard making a 9-1-1 voice call as well as for deaf or hard-of-hearing residents who may be unable to speak to a 9-1-1 operator. Sprint customers in Durham should keep the following in mind if they send a text to 9-1-1:

- Customers should use the texting option only when calling 9-1-1 is not an option. It can take longer to receive a text message because someone must enter the text, the message then goes through the system, and the 9-1-1 operator must read the text and then text back. Picking up the phone and calling 9-1-1 is still the most efficient way to reach emergency help. Texting is not always instantaneous, which is critical during a life-threatening emergency.
- Providing location information and nature of the emergency in the first text message is imperative since the Durham Emergency Communications Center will not be able to access the cell phone location or speak with the person who is sending the text. Text abbreviations or slang should never be used so that the intent of the dialogue can be as clear as possible.
- Customers must be in range of cell towers in the Durham County, N.C. area. If customers are outside or near the edge of the county, the message may not reach the Durham Emergency Communications Center.
- Texts sent to 9-1-1 have the same 160 character limit as other text messages.
- Sprint customers must have mobile phones that are capable of sending text messages. Any text message to 9-1-1 will count either against their messaging plan or be charged in accordance with their wireless plans.
- The texting function should only be used for emergency situations that require an immediate response from police, fire, or emergency medical services. Non-emergency issues should still be communicated to the Durham Emergency Communication Center by calling its non-emergency line at (919) 560-4600.

This technology is accomplished through collaboration between the City of Durham, Verizon Wireless, AT&T Wireless, Sprint and Intrado. Intrado is an emergency communications technology provider that installed the next-generation 9-1-1 software that enables text messaging into the Durham Emergency Communications Center.

To learn more about text-to-9-1-1 technology, contact Soukup at (919) 560-4191, email at [James.Soukup@DurhamNC.gov](mailto:James.Soukup@DurhamNC.gov), or like at <http://Facebook.com/Durham911>.

### **About the Durham Emergency Communications Center**

The Durham Emergency Communications Center is the primary public safety answering point for the City and County of Durham. Guided by the City's Strategic Plan, the Center helps to ensure that Durham is a safe and secure community by providing around-the-clock 911 access and services to the residents and user agencies in and around Durham County. Services include, but are not limited to, emergency and non-emergency requests for assistance; dispatch of police, fire, and emergency medical services; other city/county support agencies; and other duties as required. The geographic service area encompasses 296 square miles with approximately 250,000 residents. The Center has earned the internationally recognized APCO Project 33 Certification from the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials International, Inc.; Emergency Medical Dispatch Accreditation by the National Academy of Emergency Medical Dispatch; and accreditation by the Commission for Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies. The Center was the first, and currently, one of only four centers in the world to hold these three accreditations simultaneously. To learn more, visit <http://DurhamNC.gov/ich/op/911/Pages/Home.aspx> or like at <http://Facebook.com/Durham911>.

### **About Sprint**

Sprint (NYSE:S) offers a comprehensive range of wireless and wireline communications services bringing the freedom of mobility to consumers, businesses and government users. Sprint served more than 55 million customers at the end of 2013 and is widely recognized for developing, engineering and deploying innovative technologies, including the first wireless 4G service from a national carrier in the United States; leading prepaid brands including Virgin Mobile USA, Boost Mobile, and Assurance Wireless; instant national and international push-to-talk capabilities; and a global Tier 1 Internet backbone. The American Customer Satisfaction Index rated Sprint as the most improved company in customer satisfaction, across all 47 industries, during the last five years. Sprint has been named to the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) North America in 2011, 2012, and 2013. For more information, visit <http://sprint.com>, <http://facebook.com/sprint>, and <http://twitter.com/sprint>.

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