

# Ask Amy

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## To Call or Not to Call ... 911

### *Should I or shouldn't I call 911 when I have a problem?*

Here are a few things to consider. First, is this actually an emergency? Does this situation pose an **immediate threat** to life, health, property or environment? Is there a high probability of **escalating to cause immediate danger** to life, health, property or environment?

Many calls to 911 are not emergencies; which at times may overwhelm the 911 center. These calls can be handled outside the emergency system freeing up resources for actual life threatening emergencies.

Here is a list of common issues that we receive on 911 or police department lines that can be handled in other ways:

- Requests for phone numbers – call the operator, 411, look it up online or use a good old phonebook!
- Property damage complaints due to weather such as a tree branch falling onto your car during a storm or unintentional, non-criminal acts like your vehicle being damaged while in a car wash, should be directed to the appropriate agencies that handle these problems (your insurance company, the phone number listed on the car wash in case of emergencies, etc.)
- Road and weather conditions – check the news or go online.
- Problems with your phone – contact your phone provider.

- Power outages – If it is just a general power outage and you do not know the source of the outage such as wires down, contact your power company - National Grid 1-800-867-5222, NYSEG 1-800-572-1131, Boonville Municipal Power 315-942-4461, Sherrill Power & Light 315-363-6479.
- Vehicle lockouts – Unless your vehicle is running, somebody or a pet is locked in your vehicle, most agencies (with a few exceptions) will not assist with opening your vehicle. You need to contact a tow company or an automobile assistance plan like AAA.
- DMV information such as driver's license and vehicle registration information – contact your local DMV office.
- Disagreements over ownership of property is often a civil issue and needs to be referred to small claims court or to a lawyer. If things get out of hand, though, please call 911.
- Questions about fireworks celebrations, parades, Halloween Trick or Treating times, etc should all be directed to the media or whatever agency is promoting the event.
- Non-emergency animal complaints (which is a topic all its own covered in another article) -should be directed to the appropriate resource.

Society seems to be becoming an “I want it, I need it now” society. Take the time to find the right person to handle the job correctly the first time. Doing that save the frustration you feel when having to be redirected to the proper agency to handle your problem but it also saves time and resources in the emergency services system.