

# SECC and 911: A Quick Overview

City Council Handout | Buffalo, Iowa | Scott County

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Most people will call 911 at some point in their lives, but few people see what happens behind the scenes. **SECC is the emergency communications center** that helps connect residents in Buffalo and across Scott County to police, fire, and EMS response.

## What SECC does

*In plain language*

- Answers 911 and non-emergency calls
- Gathers key details so responders know what they are being sent to
- Dispatches police, fire, and EMS as quickly and accurately as possible
- Keeps radio contact with responders and relays updates as the incident changes

## Why dispatchers ask questions

Questions help responders arrive prepared:

- ✓ To confirm the exact location.
- ✓ To understand whether the emergency is medical, fire, law enforcement, or a combination.
- ✓ To identify immediate safety concerns such as weapons, injuries, or trapped occupants.
- ✓ To provide important updates to responders while they are en route.

## What happens when someone dials 911

### 1. The call is answered

A trained call taker answers, confirms the location, and starts identifying the emergency.

### 2. Information is gathered

Focused questions help determine the type of response needed and any immediate hazards.

### 3. Help is dispatched

Police, fire, EMS, or multiple agencies are sent based on the nature and urgency of the call.

### 4. Support continues

Dispatch remains involved by updating responders.

## Dispatch Communication

Our center relies on three primary communication methods to keep everything running smoothly:

- **Radio:** Instant voice communication with field responders.
- **CAD:** Digital information sent directly to officer, fire, and EMS computers.
- **Phone:** Coordination with hospitals, utilities, and other agencies.

*SECC serves as the critical communication link between the public and emergency responders.*

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## Call Prioritization

Calls are prioritized by the immediate threat or danger to life and safety. Higher priority calls are dispatched instantly, while lower priority, non-emergency calls may wait longer for an available unit.

Priority	Description
1	Life Threatening
2	In Progress / Serious Crime
3	Urgent / Just Occurred
4	Non-Violent / Investigation
5	Routine Service
6	Phone / Delayed Report

## Why this matters to Buffalo

Public safety starts before sirens arrive:

- ✓ Fast, accurate information helps get the right help started sooner.
- ✓ A strong 911 center supports local responders and the community they serve.
- ✓ Emergency communications is an essential part of the public-safety system, not just a phone line.
- ✓ **Buffalo Routing Note:** Due to the Mississippi River, cell signals may bounce to Rock Island, IL. Do not hang up. State "I am in Buffalo, Iowa," and you will be instantly transferred back to SECC.

## Common 911 myths

**Myth:** Dispatchers are just answering phones.

**Reality:** They are coordinating information, radio traffic, responder safety, and the overall flow of an emergency response.

**Myth:** 911 always knows my exact location immediately.

**Reality:** Location technology helps, but callers should still share the address or landmarks whenever possible.

**Myth:** If I hang up, nothing will happen.

**Reality:** A hang-up may still prompt a callback or an attempt to verify whether help is needed.

**Myth:** Questions slow help down.

**Reality:** The questions help send the right resources and give responders critical safety information while they are on the way.

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