



Media Release

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Even Before It's Official – Text-to-911 Saving Lives

Bellevue, Wash – North East King County Regional Public Safety Communications Agency (NORCOM) is thrilled to report that Text-to-911 was already saving lives in King County even before today's official public announcement of its availability in King County. During initial *"unannounced testing"* over the last month, NORCOM started receiving real-life text messages including several serious calls such as a report of a person with a knife where the caller did not feel comfortable calling 911, and a trail rescue with the caller having limited cell service.

NORCOM Acting Deputy Director Jami Hoppen explains that: *"Bringing Text-to-911 service to King County was a complex process requiring close coordination between the King County 911 Program Office, NORCOM and eleven other 911 call centers, West, and all major wireless carriers. To fully test Text-to-911, we needed it to be fully operational. This meant that we could receive real 911 calls mixed in with our test calls over the last month. I am very proud of NORCOM's telecommunicators who expertly handled these real calls efficiently getting people the help they needed."*

NORCOM is excited to make this service available to those it serves. As a top-performing 911 center, NORCOM is known regionally and nationally for its innovative approaches to the delivery of 911 services. For example, the United States Patent Office recently awarded two patents to NORCOM for an innovative life-saving technology known as RAADAR.

"People often call 911 at the worst moment in their lives," said NORCOM Executive Director Thomas Orr. *"In those terrifying moments, we want to get them the fastest possible help from police, fire, or medical first responders. Seconds count when lives are at stake. Voice calls to 911 take significantly less time so everyone should call if they can. But there are some situations, such as active shooters or domestic violence, where a caller would have to risk their life to make a simple call to 911. Texting is also often the only effective way for the hearing and speech impaired community to get help quickly. NORCOM already is in the elite in the Nation in how fast it answers and dispatches 911 calls and is ready to respond to process texts for help as efficiently as possible. NORCOM is proud to be a partner with King County in bringing this important service to the people it serves."*

The Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau, whose risk ratings are relied on by most major insurance companies to set homeowner insurance premium costs, notified NORCOM last week that it is the highest-rated 911 center in Washington State. Located in Bellevue, Washington, NORCOM provides high quality emergency service communications to a population of over 600,000 in King County including those served by Bellevue Fire, Bellevue Police, Kirkland Fire, Kirkland Police, Clyde Hill Police, Medina Police, Mercer Island Police, Mercer Island Fire, Normandy Park Police, Shoreline Fire, Northshore Fire, Bothell Fire, Woodinville Fire, Redmond Fire, Duvall Fire, Skykomish Fire, Fall City Fire, City of Snoqualmie Fire, Eastside Fire & Rescue, and on January 1, 2019, Snoqualmie Pass Fire will be joining NORCOM.

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