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FROM: The Cape Girardeau County Office of Emergency Management, the Jackson Police Department, Jackson Fire Rescue, the Cape Girardeau Police Department, the Cape Girardeau County Sheriff's Office, the Cape Girardeau Fire Department, the Cape Girardeau County Dispatch Center, and the Cape Girardeau Communications Center

To: All local media sources

Regarding: Text-to-911 Services

Our local first responder agencies are pleased to announce the implementation of text-to-911 services for residents in Cape Girardeau County. This service ensures that anyone in this area that uses major cell phone carriers can now reach a first responder via text when calling is not an option. These carriers currently include AT&T, Sprint, and Verizon.

Speaking directly to a 911 dispatcher is the most effective and fastest way to relay vital information in an emergency or report a serious crime in progress but for a victim or witness who is hearing impaired, or for a victim who is being monitored by a suspect, placing a call to 911 may not always be a viable option. This Text-to-911 service allows anyone to discreetly send a text message directly to a 911 dispatcher who is trained and equipped to receive this message. These incoming text-to-911 communications are answered from the same dispatchers and consoles currently used for traditional voice calls. These texts will be received and dispatched accordingly by transferring the response to appropriate emergency services, whether it is fire rescue, emergency medical, or the applicable law enforcement agency.

It is recommended that users of this service use plain English and include as much detail as possible in every text. It is also recommended that users refrain from the use of emojis as they have the potential to be blocked or left unsent. Users should also avoid the use of texting acronyms, such as BTW for "by the way" or OMG for "oh my God" as these acronyms are not universally known and often misused or misinterpreted.

This valuable service is fully supported and sustained by funds secured through the 911 Service Board Grant and the NG 911 Grant. Both grants were obtained and secured by the Cape Girardeau County Office of Emergency Management with assistance from the Cape Girardeau County 9-1-1 Advisory Board.