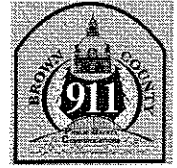


DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS

Brown County



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Jim Nickel
Director

Calling 911 for Medical Emergencies

Have you ever dialed 911 for a medical emergency and wondered why you were asked so many questions? Brown County emergency call takers are trained as Emergency Medical Dispatchers. They are trained to use a protocol system that allows an appropriate and safe response to be sent and instructions for serious situations to be given so that patient care can begin immediately.

When you call 911, the call taker will confirm your address and phone number then determine the patient's chief complaint, age, the patient's state of consciousness and if they are breathing. Once this initial questioning is completed, the call taker will ask more specific questions in order to determine the seriousness of the situation. Following the protocols, the call taker uses the caller's responses to determine a response level. This response level is given to the medical responders during dispatch so that they may understand the seriousness of the situation and respond appropriately. An appropriate response is important as the safety of the responders and citizens must be balanced with the care of the patient. When responders use lights and sirens to respond to a call it can endanger them and other drivers as it becomes easier for the responders to become involved in accidents or to cause accidents in their wake (sometimes called the wake effect). It is also important to arrive on scene quickly when time is a factor in patient care. Caller responses allow the responders to better understand the situation so they can weigh the risks and benefits of an emergency response and also make sure the appropriate equipment and man power have been dispatched.

The call taker also uses caller responses to follow the protocol in giving the appropriate instructions to begin patient care before responders arrive on scene. The call taker can give detailed instructions on CPR if the patient is not breathing or help the caller stop a patient from choking. Call takers are also able to give detailed information to help deliver a baby, even when complications arise. This allows patient care to begin immediately in time sensitive situations which, in the past, might have had to wait until responders arrived on scene.

So if you ever have to call 911 for an ambulance, please be patient with the questioning. The call takers are trying to find out as much information as needed in order to provide the best care. Also be aware that while the call taker is still on the phone with you giving you instructions, a different person is dispatching the responders so there is no delay because the call taker is on the phone with you.

If you would like further information on this topic for yourself or a group, please contact Judith Weshinskey-Price, Brown County Public Safety Communications, 920-448-7688, Weshinskey-price_jp@co.brown.wi.us