

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, May 20, 2015

### **Berkeley County to Launch Text-to-911 Tomorrow**

MONCKS CORNER, SC - Berkeley County Government announced today that it will launch its Text-to-911 service tomorrow – Thursday, May 21, 2015. The Text-to-911 service allows individuals to text message 911 through their cellular phones if they are in Berkeley County when sending the text message.

“With final testing now complete, we are proud to become one of only a few counties in the state to provide the Text-to-911 service to our residents,” said Berkeley County Supervisor Bill Peagler. “We know this new tool will further help our residents in times of emergency and are hopeful it will allow our emergency personnel to respond even more effectively in times of need.”

While this new service is available, Berkeley County’s Emergency Preparedness Director Tom Smith stressed the proven effectiveness of calling 911.

“Call 911 if you can; text if you can’t call,” said Smith. “We are excited to offer the text service, but we also want residents to know that calling 911 continues to be the best and fastest way to reach emergency personnel.”

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#### Important Information about Text-to-911 in Berkeley County:

- If the Text-to-911 service is not available, you will receive a reply message letting you know the service is not available in your area.
- A text or data plan is required to place a text-to-911.
- As with all text messages – texts-to-911 may take longer to receive, may get out of order or may not be received at all.
- If you do not receive a text response from 911, try to contact 911 by making a voice call.
- Photos and videos cannot be texted to 911 at this time.
- Text-to-911 cannot include more than one person. Do not send your emergency text simultaneously to anyone else.
- Voice calls to 911 are still the best and fastest way to contact 911.
- Translation services are limited.
- The Text-to-911 service is not available everywhere in South Carolina and the U.S.

#### Protocol for Text-to-911 in Berkeley County:

- In the first message, text the location and type of emergency.
- Text in simple words; send a short text message without abbreviations or slang.
- Be prepared to answer questions and follow instructions from the 911 operator.
- Don’t abuse 911. The Text to 911 service is only for emergencies.
- Don’t text and drive.