

## Toronto – 911 Services in more than 150 languages ... yet we can't manage two

### Description

All members of Toronto's diverse communities have access to life-saving 9-1-1 emergency services in more than 150 languages free of charge.

9-1-1 call receivers from the Police Service, Emergency Medical Services and Fire Services and have instant access to interpreters who speak many languages.

The City of Toronto wants residents to know they should always call 9-1-1 in an emergency situation even if they do not speak English. Toronto's emergency call receivers have instant access to interpreters through Language Line Services who are available to assist with calls in more than 150 languages 24 hours a day. People needing assistance should not hesitate to call 9-1-1 for help.

In the spring of 2012 the poster campaign was refreshed with new creative to reflect the use of colour from all three emergency services (blue, red and white) and to personalize the message with the adding more of the many languages that are spoken in Toronto and those most frequently used by 9-1-1 callers including the top 10 which are, Cantonese, Hungarian, Farsi, Korean, Russian, Mandarin, Italian, Portuguese, Tamil, and Greek.

The next most frequently used languages when calling 9-1-1 are, Vietnamese, Spanish, Polish, Somali, Arabic, French, Czech, Hindi, Punjabi, Bulgarian, Japanese, Ukrainian, Albanian, Croatian, Tagalog, Urdu, Macedonian, Turkish, Armenian, and Serbian.

These posters were used in advertising on-line and on electronic billboards across the City during 2012.

In the fall of 2004, the City of Toronto launched a media campaign to raise awareness of the multilingual capabilities of 9-1-1 emergency services. Multilingual posters conveying the important message, "9-1-1 = Emergency, Speak Your Language", were placed in transit shelters and on recycling bins in areas across Toronto in where large numbers of newcomers to Toronto reside, to encourage Torontonians to speak their language when calling 9-1-1 and to serve as a reminder that the service is available in many languages.

In the spring of 2005, the City continued efforts to communicate the 9-1-1 messages. Smaller versions of the posters were distributed to catholic and public secondary and elementary schools, community centres, public library branches and United Way Agencies in Toronto. In addition, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration distributed the posters to its network of agencies that provide assistance to newcomers through its Newcomer Settlement Program and Language Interpreter Service program. Bell Canada amended its emergency message in telephone books to reflect the multilingual capability of 9-1-1 emergency services.

In July 2005, Councillor Olivia Chow, the City's Child and Youth Advocate, joined by Councillor Rob Ford and representatives from Toronto Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services, conducted a

presentation to a large group of summer campers at the Humberwood Community Centre. The presentation's goal was to get the message out to kids who could convey the message to their caregivers, and remind them that summer safety includes calling 9-1-1 in an emergency.

Non-English speaking Torontonians and visitors are encouraged to call 9-1-1 in an emergency. Immediate access to interpreters means that dispatchers can assist callers in languages other than English in 150 languages efficiently and emergency crews can attend to the call without delay.

Serving one of the most multicultural cities in the world, Toronto's Emergency Services receive 9-1-1 calls for help in dozens of different languages daily. In 2004, Toronto Police received 3,400 calls and EMS received 1,400 calls in languages other than English.

## Language Line Services

Language Line Services is a contract service that provides three-way interpretation for emergency dispatchers or responders. For a list of languages available, visit [www.languageline.com](http://www.languageline.com).

## Public education and community relations: presentations to classes and community groups

Paramedics, fire fighters and police officers involved in community relations and public education programs incorporate information about multilingual interpreter services in their presentations to school classes, ESL classes, seniors groups and other community organizations.

To request a presentation from one of the emergency services, please call the appropriate number below or click on the links:

### [Toronto Fire Services](#)

Phone: 416-338-9050

E-mail: [fire@toronto.ca](mailto:fire@toronto.ca)

Toronto Police Service

### [Community Relations Unit](#)

Phone: 416-808-7080

### [Toronto Emergency Medical Services](#)

Phone: 416-392-2000 – ask to speak to a Community Liaison Officer

E-mail: [ems@toronto.ca](mailto:ems@toronto.ca)

## Non-emergency multilingual interpretation services

The City's [311 Toronto](#) agents can be contacted at 311 for non-emergency information and assistance. 311 Toronto offers [information in more than 180 languages](#) using interpreters provided through Language Line Services. TTY users can call 416-338-0TTY (0889) for information.

Information for newcomers can be found on the City's [immigration portal](#).

<http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=4e142140f1c8f310VgnVCM10000071d60f89RC>

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