

## Use 911 Wisely

The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) are begging the public to stop calling 911 unless they face a true emergency, saying they are being overwhelmed by requests for directions, weather conditions and the like.

The OPP detachment in the Eastern Ontario town of Smiths Falls, for example, says about 90 per cent of the calls to its 911 call centre are not emergencies. An emergency consists of any situation where people or property are at risk, including crimes in progress, traffic accidents, fires or medical emergencies.

Instead, 911 operators have heard it all, from calls about lost dogs to requests for bus schedules—even pranks. Here are some examples:



- What is the capital of the new territory up north, Nunavut?
- Hi there, I am really sorry to bother you, I am just not sure who else to call. I lost the number to the cellphone company.
- What are the ice conditions today? We want to go ice fishing.
- I live in Kitchener. I want to go to Toronto. Can you tell me how to get to Palmerston Avenue?

The 911 number is for actual emergencies only. If it is used for any other purpose, the lines are being tied up and this means that someone with a real emergency may not be able to get through quickly enough.

The OPP say that the problem has increased in part because more people have speed-dial and cellphones. If you make a mistake and dial 911 in error, do not just hang up before the operator answers. If you do, the operator may still think it is an emergency and valuable police time may be wasted following up on the call.

(from: [www.cbcnews.ca](http://www.cbcnews.ca), Tuesday, December 6, 2005 | 5:00 PM)