NEWS RELEASE

Ilene Shapiro – Summit County Executive

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: October 31, 2024

Contact: Greta Johnson
Director of Communications and Assistant Chief of Staff
Office of County Executive Shapiro
ExecutivePress@summitoh.net
330-643-2656

Text-to 9-1-1 now available throughout Summit County

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—Since early this month, all 9-1-1 emergency communications centers in Summit County are now able to receive text messages. This new service is critical for those unable to make a phone call due to hearing loss or impairment, those with speech disabilities and non-English speakers. This capability may also be lifesaving for an individual in a situation where calling is more dangerous than hiding or staying silent.

While this new service is critical in certain circumstances, it is not meant to replace all phone calls. Dispatchers are asking residents to remember this simple phrase when determining whether to call or text: **Call if you can, text if you can't**.

The following are DOs and DON'Ts for the community to remember if they text 9-1-1:

- **DO** use a text-capable phone with a wireless service plan.
- **DO** keep messages short and to the point.
- **DO** describe your emergency and include an exact address.
- **DO** use ONLY for emergencies.
- **DON'T** send videos or photos via text. Dispatchers cannot receive them.
- **DON'T** use messenger apps like WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.
- **DON'T** use abbreviations, slang or emojis.
- **DON'T** group text or send to multiple recipients.

"I am grateful for all our dispatchers, first responders and other staff who worked together to bring this new and needed service to our residents. As the technology we use in our daily life changes, Summit County strives to stay contemporary and ensure we provide the highest level of service to our residents. This accessibility and inclusivity improvement could make all the difference in an emergency," said County Executive Ilene Shapiro.

In Summit County, there are nine emergency communications centers that provide service for the county's different communities. To enhance service throughout the county, they regularly collaborate through the 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Point Working Group. This group sets

priorities for the county and identifies how to best spend state 9-1-1 funding, which comes from a small fee collected from different telecommunication device users, including cellphones.

The Working Group identified Text-to-9-1-1 as a needed improvement and began to work together to implement it in each emergency communications center. The team spent a significant amount of time researching a text application that would interface with each center's existing technology, allow for easy transfers between centers and offer the best features for locating and communicating with the individual in need. Using these criteria, the group selected Texty as the software for all nine centers.

Another example of a collaborative program the Working Group has implemented is a universal learning management system. Each center is audited annually to ensure they meet specific training requirements. With the universal system now in place, every center has access to uniform training materials and more efficient record keeping to meet auditing requirements.

To learn more about Text-to-9-1-1, visit https://summitecc.com/text-to-911/.

###